

Keeping hope alive

Patriarch Michel Sabbah

After a year of constant war, as the cycle of death continues unabated, we feel the need as Christians and as citizens to seek out the hope that comes from our faith. First, we must admit that we are exhausted, paralyzed by grief and fear. We are staring into the darkness. The entire region is in the grip of bloodshed that continues to escalate and spares no one.

Before our eyes, our beloved Holy Land and the entire region are being reduced to ruins.



work is blocked and families have difficulty putting food on the table. In Israel too many are in mourning, living in anxiety and fear. There must be another way!

Our catastrophe did not begin on October 7, 2023. The cycles of violence have been unending, beginning in 1917, peaking in 1948 and in 1967, continuing ever since,

until today. And today has the Zionist dream of a safe home for Jews in a Jewish state called Israel brought security for Jews? And the Palestinians? They are caught up in the reality of death, exile and abandon for too long, waiting while persistently demanding the right to remain in their land, in their towns and villages.

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Daily, we mourn the tens of thousands of men, women and children who have been killed or wounded especially in Gaza, but also in the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon and beyond in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Iran. We are outraged at the devastation wreaked on the area. In Gaza, homes, schools, hospitals, entire neighbourhoods are now heaps of rubble. Disease, starvation and hopelessness reign. Is this the model for what our region will become?

Around us, the economy is in ruins, access to

International response

Shockingly, the international community looks on almost impassively. Calls for ceasefire and an end to the devastation are repeated with no meaningful attempt to reign in those wreaking havoc. Weapons of mass destruction and the means to commit crimes against humanity flow into the region.

As this all continues, the questions resound: When is this going to end? For how long can we survive like this? What is the future of our children? Should we emigrate?

As Christians, we are faced with other dilemmas too: Is this a war in which we are simply passive bystanders? Where do we stand in this conflict, presented too often as a struggle between Jews and Muslims, between Israel, on the one hand, and Hamas and Hezbollah supported by Iran, on the



other? Is this a religious war? Should we isolate ourselves in the precarious safety of our Christian communities, cutting ourselves off from what is going on around us? Are we simply to watch and pray on the sidelines, hoping that this war will eventually pass?

The answer is a resounding No. This is not a religious war. We must actively take sides, the side of justice and peace, freedom and equality. We must stand alongside all, Muslims, Jews, and Christians, who seek to put an end to death and destruction.

We do so because of our faith in a living God and in our conviction that we must build a future together. Though our Christian community is small, Jesus reminds us that our presence is powerful. Confident in his resurrection, we have the vocation to be like yeast in the dough of society. With our prayers, our solidarity, our service and our living hope, we must encourage all of those around us, of

all faiths and those with no faith, to find the strength to lift ourselves up from our collective exhaustion and find a path forward.

Need to respond together

But none of us can do this alone. We look to our Christian religious leaders, our bishops and our priests for words of guidance. We need our shepherds to help us discern the strength that we have when we are together. Alone, each one of us is isolated and reduced to silence. Only together, can we find the resources to face the challenges.

In our exhaustion and despair, let's remember the paralytic man (Mark 2: 1-12) who could not get up. It was only when his friends carried him, when they used their imagination to create a hole in the roof and lower him down on his mat, that he was able to reach Jesus, who said to him: 'Get up and walk.'

We need this help not to despair, not to fall into the trap of hatred. Our faith in the Resurrection teaches us that all human beings are to be loved, equal, created in the image of God, children of God and brothers and sisters of one another. Our belief in the dignity of every human person is manifest in our service to the wider community. Our schools, hospitals, social services are places where we care for all in need, indiscriminately.

So it is with us. We must carry one another if we are to go forward. We must use our imaginations, rooted in Christ, to find openings where there appear to be none. When we have reached the limits of our hope, together we carry one another, as we turn to God and ask for help.

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It is also our faith that motivates us to speak the truth and oppose injustice. We are believers in a peace that Jesus has given us and that cannot be taken away. 'He is our peace' (Ephesians 2:14). We must not be afraid to speak out against any form of violence, killing and dehumanization. Our faith makes us spokespeople for a land without walls, without discrimination, spokespeople for a land of equality and freedom for all, for a future in which we live together.

Who are we?

Members of 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 two houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peace-making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate regular liturgies at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch. The Common Good:** Editor: Jim Consedine, jim.conse@xtra.co.nz.

www.catholicworker.org.nz

Peace in our time

We will only know peace when the tragedy of the Palestinian people is brought to an end. Only then will Israelis enjoy security. We need a definitive peace agreement between these two partners and not temporary ceasefires or interim solutions. Israel's massive military force can destroy and bring death, it can wipe out political and military leaders and anyone who dares to stand up and oppose occupation and discrimination. However, it cannot bring the security that Israelis need. The international community must help us by recognizing that the root cause of this war is the negation of the right of the Palestinian people to live in its land, free and equal.

A peaceful future depends on a togetherness that extends beyond our own community. We are one people, Christians and Muslims. Together we must seek the way beyond the cycles of violence. Together with them we must engage with those Jewish Israelis who are also tired of the rhetoric, the lies, the ideologies of death and destruction.

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Let us set forth, carrying one another. Let us keep hope alive, knowing that peace is possible. It will be difficult, but we remember that we once lived together in this land as Muslims, Jews and Christians. There will be many moments when the way appears blocked. But together we will carve out a path forward, rooted in God's hope, and 'hope does not disappoint us.' (Romans 5:5). Our hope is in God, in ourselves and in every human being upon whom God bestows some of His goodness.

Patriarch Michel Sabbah, a Catholic Palestinian born in Nazareth, is a former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Backed by other Christian leaders in Jerusalem, he wrote this to commemorate the first anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel and start of the latest Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, 7 October 2024.

The Arms Trade

'Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.'

--Pope Francis, May 2024

Editorial 1 Israel's soul is dying

The genocidal war launched by Israel on Gaza as a response to the Hamas attack has been so excessive and persistent that it can only be seen now as ethnic cleansing. Among the clearest consequences of this will be the slow but sure death of the soul of the nation of Israel.

Israel cannot wage such an unjust murderous war involving thousands of troops and conscripts and conduct such evil destruction on so many innocent people – already 50 000 dead and hundreds of thousands displaced - without something dying within. What is dying is the very soul of a nation.

How can these soldiers and airmen, admittedly fuelled relentlessly by Zionist state propaganda, hope to return home to families and resume normal life after the genocidal policies they have conducted over months? Most simply won't be able to being so damaged themselves by the deadly activities they have been engaged in for so long.

It is not hard to find a demonic spirit behind such evil and to know what a legacy it will leave for generations. Like Nazi Germany and Japan post-WWII, and South Africa during apartheid days, Israel will be treated as a pariah state internationally by many for generations after what it has done and continues to do.

At one level such a pariah status seems like a degree of justice. But it will also penalise the tens of

thousands of peaceful Israelis who hate what is going on and seek to oppose it in whatever ways possible. The huge protests earlier this year are a sign that this is a country divided and split about how to advance Israel's own safety and security while allowing the same for their Palestinian neighbours.

The current war is not one that started on 7th October 2023 with the Hamas attack – but generations earlier! Over 750 000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland 76 years ago – 15 000 killed, their villages destroyed, crops burnt, their land and assets seized by the new state of Israel. Their descendants were forcibly driven into what have become the ghettos of Gaza and the occupied territories of the West Bank, as the land grab continued. Ever since that time, Palestinians have harboured memories of this huge injustice.

What price the death of a nation's soul? Israel's current excessive genocidal attacks, particularly on Gaza and now into Lebanon, have gradually killed off any high moral standing it may have earned through their rich religious history and sadly will leave its people bereft of any positive spiritual base for the foreseeable future.

In war, destruction is universal, there are no winners.

— *Jim Consedine*

Editorial 2 Weaponising Space

When I tell someone I protested against the New Zealand Aerospace Summit, they often react with confusion. People ask hesitantly: 'What's wrong with aerospace? I thought that was just GPS satellites and space missions!' And I don't blame them.

The aerospace industry does huge amounts on public relations to paint itself as a benevolent, science-focused industry. It's been pretty successful in its greenwashing efforts. The summit, hosted in Ōtautahi in September, was themed Aerospace for Good, its [website](#) flooded with buzzwords like 'sustainability' and 'diverse'.

But beneath this glossy corporate veneer lies a violent truth about aerospace. Its ties to foreign militaries and weapons companies mean that the industry is steeped in blood. A closer look at the Aerospace Summit reveals links to weapons of destruction. The summit was attended by representatives from and Lockheed Martin and

Boeing, the world's biggest and fourth biggest weapons manufacturers respectively. Boeing Sustainability lead Kimberly Camrass spoke at the conference.

Meanwhile, thousands of Boeing guided missiles have been shipped to Israel and [used to target aid workers and civilians this year](#). A Palestinian father, whose family was killed by a bomb with a Boeing serial number, [described](#) how 'the bodies were reduced to shreds'. The only recoverable piece of his baby daughter's body was her hand. Weapons executives who are profiting from the deaths of children were welcomed into Christchurch.

Rocket Lab's nefarious role

A key sponsor of the Summit was Rocket Lab, a New Zealand/US aerospace company that conducts suborbital launches for various corporate interests. Their launches for the US military could be, according to the Public Advisory Committee on

Disarmament and Arms Control, [breaking New Zealand's nuclear free law](#).

Last year they launched four Haste (Hypersonic accelerator suborbital test electron) tests for American weapons contractor Leidos, and they have plans to launch [further Haste tests](#) in the coming year. The purpose of these tests is to facilitate hypersonic weapons development for the US military.

Rocket Lab and the aerospace industry present themselves as peace-loving and science focused but are only too happy to assist the most powerful military in the world to build vast weapons systems.

As we protested outside the Aerospace Summit, that was our message. We can't keep looking away as companies like Rocket Lab drag our country further into the control of murderous foreign militaries. We can't keep looking away while executives from weapons companies speak in our city while their pockets are lined by the slaughter of children overseas. And we can't keep turning away from the violence that New Zealand's aerospace industry facilitates.

—Aurora Garner-Randolph is spokesperson for *Stop the Space Waste*.

Editorial 3 Wisdom in Today's World

What is wisdom? The Book of Wisdom says it is more valuable than gold or jewels, or political power. Wisdom is even more precious, it says, than health or beauty... qualities which we affluent people today spend so much time discussing and trying to cling to.

What is wisdom? It could be described as seeing the bigger picture, understanding that there is a world beyond our limited vision and our often selfish, short-term desires. Astronauts and cameras orbiting our planet help us to begin to understand that this whole ball of rock and water, flesh and blood, is but one thing, with no borders or boundaries. Around the earth, the good of everything and species depends on the good of every other. It is wisdom to begin to see that everything must have been created by a Mind, which loves all it has made with an endless love; and that we can respond to that love.

How can we gain wisdom? By being still; by meditating and praying. When we are still, we have let go of less important things: today's activities, concern for our own comfort. We can learn that it is not essential to possess things or maintain our so-called lifestyle.

It may seem nonsense to say that silence, stillness, emptiness can be fruitful. But those who take time to meditate each day assure us that this paradox is profoundly true and seems to prove that we are not merely physical, material bodies. We find, as many wise people have claimed, that the Consciousness which created us, the Divine Spirit, is within us more than in any church or temple.

In a recent Sunday gospel reading, Jesus challenged a rich person to let go of their wealth and invited them: 'come follow me' in a kingdom based on truth and love. Jesus was not just trying to gain another disciple, but to help that person to see that

their wealth was blocking them from becoming wise. But the rich person just couldn't do it. Jesus then gave us that unforgettable metaphor, that until we have let go of our possessions, trying to become wise, trying to enter 'the reign of God' is as absurd as trying to push a camel through a needle's eye.

Current crises

What is wisdom for our human family today? Surely it is to see the crisis we have brought upon our planet by our own excesses. The industrial revolution brought many benefits, but over time our consumption of coal, gas and petroleum; and our industrialised agriculture, is raising the world's temperature, leading to increasingly disastrous storms, bushfires and droughts. The icecaps and glaciers are melting, and sea levels rising. We are approaching 'tipping point' and need great wisdom to make changes so that the planet will remain liveable for all species.

Are we wise enough to reduce radically the enormous quantities of 'stuff' that needlessly fills our shops, homes and landfills? Most people in the world live in poverty. Might it be wisdom to rethink our personal lives, so as to better share resources with those who need them?

Above all, could wisdom mean facing the truth about the crisis of the Nazi-like genocide that Israel's Zionist government is committing against Palestinians in Gaza, using weapons supplied by USA, Britain, Germany and Australia? If we cannot find the wisdom to speak this truth, we are losing our humanity, letting international law become a fiction, and risking self-destruction in a monstrous war.

CW friend and supporter, Dominican friar Peter Murnane OP, works with the poor in Sydney.

Closure of Cardijn CW House

Jim Consedine

Because of the sale of Cardijn House by its owners, we have been forced to close down its CW operation after 35 years. The move has led us to a mixture of emotions but grateful hearts for the years when we were able to offer hospitality to many and have a stable operating centre for our fledgling movement.

It was our first CW house opened in Christchurch (and NZ) on Nagasaki Day, 9 August 1989, when Francis Simmonds and Jackie Amahanga moved in after a blessing. Named by Francis after the great Belgian priest, Joseph Cardijn, founder of the international Young Christian Workers movement (Jocists) of See, Judge and Act fame, it has hosted hundreds of people since including the current family of six who have made it home for the past 8 years. Prior to those 12 years we had about five families in for varying periods.

We have all been sad to see it close down to make way for a housing development but are thankful for the opportunities provided by understanding landlords, Kevin Campbell and Julia and Lee Golding during these past decades, enabling us to continue our outreach.

The work has been amazing, particularly through early years. Besides being a local centre for peace and justice action in the city, it formed the base for scripture study led by Ray Scott for some years, for a chiropractic health clinic run by John Duggan, for the Unemployed Workers movement led by the



Jim Lamb, and a variety of other justice-centred activities. We held regularly Eucharist celebrations, Lenten Stations of the Cross (around the house and streets), an annual Christmas dinner for the masses, and supported weekly pickets at the US military base at Harewood.

An intern period at Cardijn House proved to be the launching pad for starting CW houses in Whirinaki (about 50 plus from the Land family camped there for a period sussing us out!!) before starting St Francis CW farm in the Far North. Then about 100 Leasons (give or take a few) came from Otaki, imbibed the spirit and returned there to start a huge operation for the poor and the marginalised which is ongoing today. Others came to see and returned home to start up a CW themselves. Maybe it was the cold outside toilet that proved to be the critical factor in such positive responses. If so, we will be ever grateful for that tiny but serviceable dunny!

We held a final gathering of thanksgiving and farewell on 16th October 2024. We thanked God for the amazing work carried out over those decades, remembered the four people who had died there and other deceased supporters and friends, honoured those who had kept us alive financially through all those years, heard stories about the trials, triumphs and tribulations of those times, sang our final hymns, said a closing prayer and blessing.

Then we closed the doors and left.

God is weeping

rockets, missiles, bombs
purchased from money
stolen from the poor
rain down like hailstones
on victims unable to escape
indiscriminate death from the skies

a scorched earth campaign
collective punishment on Gaza
administered as state policy
genocide of the innocent
women at their kitchen sinks
the elderly in market squares
children at play centres
babes in cots and prams

the arms barons, merchants of death
criminals every single one
knowing war is good for business
watch the stock exchange rise
from Wall Street offices
high above the fray
or loll on sunny beaches
in the tax-free Caymans
manicured hands dripping blood
visible to all, except themselves

facing this carnage
the Divine Spirit of Love
the non-violent Jesus
Te Atua, Allah, Yahweh
bombed repeatedly night and day
gassed with white phosphorous
driven from flattened homes
riddled with bullets
buried daily in poisoned soil
crucified again, again and again

weeps uncontrollably

—*Jim Consedine*

the pursuit

our God
the Good Shepherd
who leaves the ninety-nine
to find the One ...

would God have had to leave the throne
gripped by panic and desperation,
panting and breathless,
howling solitary at the moon;
making pursuit
up the steep hills,
down the scrubby gullies,
up past the treeline
with only a kea for company
down to the dark and rocky streambeds ...

if it wasn't for you
who spurned the One
in the first place?

—*Margaret Ingram Melamed*

on the margins

on the margins
where Christ prowls

sheltering with the homeless
out of it on drugs
eating from dumpsters
depressed by day

locked behind bars
asleep under bridges
scarred by pain
fearful of the future

on the margins
scorned by the masses
God dwells
under cover

—*Jim Consedine*

Around the Traps

Death in the family

Kiwi-born Margaret Ingram, an Israeli-based CW, died after a long illness in late August. A friend and former flatmate of Kathleen Gallagher's in student days, Margaret was married to Alon, an Israeli conscientious objector. For 40 years, they lived on a kibbutz by the Sea of Galilee where they raised their family.

Years ago, she chose to identify as a Catholic Worker ('I'm the only one in Israel') and kept in contact and gave a regular contribution to our mission. She regularly prayed in Israel (10am in the morning) coinciding with our regular Wednesday night 6pm services. Through her occasional visits to the CW in Otautahi, we maintained regular contact with her until the end. She was a courageous battler for peace and justice in that volatile part of the world and remained steadfast to the end. May she rest in peace.

Russian War Victims

September was the deadliest month for Russia's army since the start of the war in Ukraine. The average daily rate of those killed was 1271 soldiers. The MoD (UK) said that Russia has now lost 650,000 soldiers since its invasion in February 2022.

The Press, 9 October 2024

Pope calls for Universal Basic Income

Pope Francis has met with representatives of Popular Movements and encouraged the fight against social injustices, reiterating his proposal for a Universal Basic Income and higher taxes for billionaires. He called on the wealthy to share their resources, reminding them: 'Wealth is made to be shared, to create and promote fraternity.'

The Pope acknowledged that some criticize him for speaking more about the poor than the middle class, but he reaffirmed that the Gospel places the poor at the centre.

Independent Catholic News, 20 September 2024

US to sell additional \$20 billion worth of weapons to Israel

The US plans to send roughly US\$20 billion worth of additional weapons over the next several years in addition to the billions of dollars of weapons it already sends. The deal includes F-15 fighter jets, 120mm tank ammunition, tactical vehicles, anti-aircraft missiles and high-explosive mortars.

The Press, 15 August 2024

Clothing waste

Textiles from unwanted clothing are mounting enormously. Fast fashion impacts not only the environment but has created concerning consumer behaviour with alarming global statistics. Globally:

- one in three women consider a garment 'old' after one wear
- on average 80% of the items in our wardrobes are never worn
- the fashion industry is responsible for 40 million tonnes of textile items going to waste each year.

NZ Herald, 20 September 2024

A modern anti-slavery law needed in NZ

Modern slavery is not confined to the history books. A report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that 50 million people worldwide live under modern slavery, about 10 times the population of New Zealand. According to the Walk Free Foundation, about 8000 people in New Zealand live in modern slavery.

Food and agriculture is one of the high-risk sectors. The apparel you wear may have been produced with forced labour. Or the coffee you drink may have been harvested by workers in debt bondage. The recent decision by the NZ Government to shut down its advisory group is a backward move. The law matters and we need to upgrade NZ law to keep pace with overseas developments.

The Press, 2 August 2024

NZ's burden of booze

A new study has shown the burden alcohol places on the New Zealand health system with 901 deaths, 1250 cancers and almost 129 000 ACC claims attributable to alcohol in a single year. The study has shown alcohol use, both at excessive and moderate levels, is costing NZ taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each year in healthcare costs.

The Press, 20 August 2024.

Bursting with Gratitude

Jim Consedine's second book of poetry

Price \$20 (includes postage)

Ploughshares Publications, August 2024.

Available from the Catholic Worker,
PO Box 33135, Christchurch 8244

Common vision: Pope Francis and Dorothy Day

Robert Elsberg

It did not come as a total surprise when Pope Francis, while visiting the United States in 2015, invoked the name of Dorothy Day. From the beginning of his papacy, it had almost seemed that he was channelling her spirit. More remarkable was the context—in an address before a joint session of the US Congress and named among a group of ‘four great Americans’ (including Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thomas Merton) around whom he organized his remarks. ‘In these times when social concerns are so important,’ he stated, ‘I cannot fail to mention the Servant of God Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker movement. Her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed, were inspired by the gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints.’

But there is another, personal level on which Day would connect with a Pope who could describe himself simply as ‘a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon.’ Her early life was marked by her passion for social justice but also by much sadness and moral confusion. In her early life, following an unhappy love affair, she had an abortion and twice tried to commit suicide. As she later wrote in her diary, ‘Aside from drug addiction, I committed all the sins young people commit today.’

It was later, while living on Staten Island with a man she deeply loved that she again found herself pregnant, an experience that struck her this time as a sign of God’s mercy and grace. In joy and gratitude she decided to become a Catholic. It was a choice marked by great sacrifice—separation from the father of her child, the love of her life, who refused to have anything to do with marriage. Looking back on all of this, she could observe: ‘God has been so good to me.’ In the end she had found a way to combine her faith with her commitment to the poor and oppressed.

For Dorothy Day, gratitude was the final word—for the life and faith she had been given and for the vocation she had found.



Today’s holy people

We are accustomed to thinking of saints as people who stand out for their heroic faith and witness to gospel values. But before their bold and courageous actions, perhaps what distinguishes such people is their way of seeing and interpreting reality. They look at the world through a gospel lens—and in doing so they see things according to a new scale of value. What would it mean if we saw in the poor and homeless, as Dorothy Day did, the face of Christ?

We might not immediately open our homes, as she did at the Catholic Worker. But perhaps we would not be so susceptible to what Pope Francis calls ‘the culture of indifference.’

Compare that to Day’s words: ‘*What we do is very little. But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the rest. What we do is so little we may seem to be constantly failing. But so did he fail. He met with apparent failure on the cross. But unless the seed fall into the Earth and die, there is no harvest. And why must we see results? Our work is to sow. Another generation will be reaping the harvest.*’

This of course has much bearing on the Pope’s strategy for change, both in the church and in the world. Many people focus on seizing power, occupying space—but for the Pope the key thing is planting seeds, initiating processes. The revolution of the heart, the revolution of tenderness, does not depend on seizing power, or occupying space. But it initiates a process of change that may in the end prove more durable.

That is the basis of his vision of synodality. As Pope Francis writes, ‘We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force.’

Robert Elsberg is the Managing Editor of Orbis Books, and a former editor of the NY Catholic Worker.

Death without Debt

The NZ Catholic Worker movement has long advocated hands-on funerals, not just because they're cheaper, but because it enables better and more direct grieving. On September 25th, lobby group and DIY funeral advocates, *Death Without Debt*, were invited to brief Parliament's Health Select Committee to talk to them about how to tackle the systemic causes of funeral debt.

Contrary to the picture painted by established DIY funeral guides, including government sources, DIYing a funeral process isn't a realistic option for most New Zealanders. Many obstacles stand in the way, but the two big ones are the absence of publicly owned crematoriums in half of NZ's districts and official paperwork requirements – particularly with cremation – which also deliver the funeral industry a captive market.

Death Without Debt supplied the Select Committee with a draft Bill which would make pre-cremation paperwork a medical responsibility and put a stop to the thoughtless, and highly destructive,

medical practice of referring bereaved families to the funeral industry to get official paperwork done.

Also inserted in the bill was a requirement that privately owned or operated crematoriums accept bodies for cremation at a set fee – thus outlawing the blatant extortion so common in areas where there is a private crematorium monopoly. These two measures will make DIY easier, expose industry prices and behaviour for what they are, and in so doing, bring down the price of funerals for everyone.

Death Without Debt is also calling for a 'Commissioner of Death' to sort out a myriad of other systemic biases which supply the funeral industry with a captive market. For instance, delays in medical attendance to expected home deaths force hapless whanau into the arms of the funeral industry for a variety of reasons.

To find out more about *Death Without Debt*'s work, and to lend your moral support, go check out www.deathwithoutdebt.org.nz and subscribe (for free).

Review

BURSTING WITH GRATITUDE, Jim Consedine, Ploughshares Publications, August 2024, 70pp. Available from the Catholic Worker, P O Box 33134, Christchurch 8244, cost \$20 (incl. postage) Reviewer: Bernadette Hall

I love this quote from the American poet, John Berryman: 'Poetry is a terminal activity, taking place out near the end of things where the poet's soul addresses one other soul.' And he likened it to prayer.

In Jim's book, his second collection and one that marks his 80th birthday, I find much that speaks to me of prayer. The kind of prayer that is capable of outrage, that shouts out at the horrors of war, the anguish of poverty, injustice, the degradation of Mother Earth. The kind of prayer that slows down and notices, tiny signs of hope and renewal, like new

shoots of garlic in his garden.

There are 50 poems here written over the last five years. The title, he says, arises from his own faith journey. I was struck by the brilliant cameos he produces like little playscripts. His interaction with troubled individuals, the ensuing dialogue. An addict, an ex-prisoner, a girl begging out on the street at night. Jim has the humility to admit to his own mixed feelings, even his failures. A fabulous poem about his dad is unforgettable.

Jim's poems are full of vigour. They are down to earth, we recognise his word choices but they can still surprise us. 'Hearts are intricate vessels' he writes, 'the size of a sausage roll/ or a lunchtime pie / bought from your local dairy.'

I'm sure you'll agree when you read his book that his heart is a thousand times bigger than this.

Letters

Vigil behind Bars,
JVA Koblenz Prison
Germany.

Dear Jim,

Thanks for sending the latest *The Common Good*, and for including our peace statement in your

newsletter. Well do I remember your visit to me at FCI Dublin in California all those years ago and sharing holy communion and our lives that day. Thanks for your visit.

The US nuclear warheads are still at Buchel Air Base here in Germany. The new upgraded and more

powerful B61-12 warheads will soon be delivered from the US to the base. And after the summer NATO conference in Washington DC, we heard that even more weapons from the US are scheduled to arrive at a new NATO base in Germany.

In continued response to all this war preparation and war threats, the peace community in Germany continues to vigil, march and speak clearly about the need to disarm and the connections between war-making and preparations, and the climate crisis. The military emissions of greenhouse gases are not counted by the countries involved, but in fact are so large that if we want to mitigate and adapt to climate change, we need to start cooperating with the other countries instead of calling each other enemies and work to reduce our emissions.

The prison I am now in IVA Koblenz OVA has a program where we can go out to work in the community if we have a job. In supporting the peace community, one of the pastors has hired me so that I am not sitting in a cell all day. I do some yard work around the church and am able to talk to people in the community about nonviolence and hear how they feel and think about war. One of the Russian women I have met tells me, 'we don't want war – it has no use – only kills people and destroys homes, regardless of the ideology that justifies the war.'

Thanks for your reflection about the Catholic Worker spirituality or ideology in the last CG. I always think that ideology is a theory separated from practice, a set of beliefs that have no basis in the real-life world of peace and justice. Anyway, thanks for writing and all the stuff you sent me. I was able to read it all, providing me with a beacon of hope.

Thanks and peace,

Susan Crane

25 September 2024
Archbishop of Canterbury,
London.

Dear Archbishop Welby

The signatories of this letter are Jews from a wide range of perspectives, united in our outrage at Israel's savage war on the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We greatly welcome your recent statement (August 2nd) that, in the light of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19th July, Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories is illegal and Israel should immediately withdraw.

We write now to urge you to take full account of

the diversity of Jewish opinion on Israel and Palestine, both religious and secular, and to widen the range of Jewish organisations that you listen to and meet with.

We deplore the unfailing backing Israel receives from the supposedly official voices of British Jewry, the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BOD) and the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. The BOD regularly insists that its is the sole legitimate voice, and that other Jewish voices, which it does not hesitate to denigrate, must be ignored. Equally concerning is the fact that mainstream politicians and media seem to accept the BOD's claim to be the sole representative of British Jews. The result is that British Jews are generally portrayed as supporting the occupation of Palestine, the proliferating illegal settlements, and, now, the mass killings in Gaza.

We ask you to reflect on the shame and horror we feel at being represented as approving of the murderous oppression of Palestinians by the self-declared Jewish supremacist state of Israel. To be tarred with the brush of complicity in its programme of land theft, house demolitions, pogroms and, now, mass killing, connects us, viscerally, to our own historic experience as victims of pogroms and the Nazi genocide. In the light of this alone, we are resolute in our condemnation of Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their lands.

We are deeply concerned at the systematic deployment of the charge of antisemitism against those, including Jews, who criticise Israel. The charge of antisemitism has particular impact on members of Muslim communities who, as reported to us, too often feel unable to speak freely on Palestine and Israel. Their perspectives and concerns are being silenced by the amplification of establishment Jewish perspectives.

Many Jews dissent from the position of the BOD and Chief Rabbi Mirvis, as witness the array of Jewish organisations critical of Israel - Jewish Voice for Labour, Jewish Network for Palestine, Na'amod, Black-Jewish Alliance, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Jewish Socialist Group, as well as the Haredi communities. The national marches for Palestine incorporate a Jewish Bloc, sometimes more than one thousand strong.

It is desperately urgent that dissenting Jewish voices should be heard.

Yours Sincerely

Avi Shlaim

Emeritus Professor, St Antony's College, Oxford University, and 114 others

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The Common Good

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The great and sad mistake of many people – among them even pious persons – is to imagine that those whom death has taken leave us. They do not leave us. They remain! Where are they? In the darkness? Oh no! It is we who are in darkness. We do not see them but they see us. Their eyes, radiant with glory, are fixed upon our eyes full of tears. Oh infinite consolation! Though invisible to us, our dead are not absent.... Death is for the good, a translation into light; into power; into love.

— Karl Rahner SJ