

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

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Synodal Church: small groups

Jim Consedine

The future of the synodal Church in the western world lies mainly in small groups. That has become abundantly clear as numbers attending regular services in mainstream churches continues to decline. This is not new but consistent with past surveys going back several decades.

The latest NZ statistics (*The Press*, 12 March 2025) highlights this trend, partially offset for Catholics by Filipino immigration. Nearly 60 percent of respondents ticked the 'secular' box when asked about their religious identity.

This doesn't mean that people are necessarily less spiritual. But it does mean that the influence by churches is continuing to fade and most people no longer look to them for spiritual identity or guidance.

The lack of connection many young people feel at Sunday worship, geared as it usually is to older people, is a massive turn-off. Inadequate sterile sermons often straight off the internet, sometimes only slightly disguised, are another. If priests don't speak from their hearts of their experience of life and love, how can they expect to touch the hearts of others? Even if they bumble and stumble their way through a homily, at least people know they are relating to a real person and not just to a set of ideas from someone else.

The days of thinking in terms of huge church congregations is over. In one sense, this will be sobering news to many who see numbers as an

important indicator of influence. But does it really matter how many people may claim to be Catholic, Protestant or Christian, if their lives don't reflect gospel values and have a personal link and commitment to Christ and the teachings of the scriptures? Simply belonging to the tribe isn't enough! The same applies to other religious traditions.

No one will be asked, at the end of their lives, "Which religion or denomination did you belong to?" They will be asked, "How much loving did you do in your life?"

Jesus taught, *by their fruit you shall know them.* (Matt 7/16). The models he presented were that his disciples were to be the salt in the mixture, the yeast in the bread, and that service lay at the heart of true leadership, not domination, power and control.

In what proved to be his last Will and Testament outlined on the night before he died and recorded at the Last Supper in John 13, he made this very clear. Humble service, yeast, leaven sat at the heart of his message of discipleship. Pope Leo XIV restated this in his opening homily soon after his election.

Misleading statistics

Statistics are often misleading as they do not show the level of commitment nor the depth of identity. This forms part of the puzzle for older people of seeing Catholic schools expanding yet few young people translating that into regular parish involvement as adults.

The reasons for this are complex. The deluge of material young people are faced with daily about what constitutes a worthwhile life in a consumer



society is probably the biggest. Buy, buy, buy – and be happy! This of course is totally false, a huge lie. Social media promoting widespread propaganda is an additional obstacle older people didn't have to face in their time.

But there are more domestic reasons. The lack of connection many young people feel at Sunday worship, geared as it usually is to older people, is a massive turn-off. Inadequate sterile sermons often straight off the internet, sometimes only slightly disguised, are another. If priests don't speak from their hearts of their experience of life and love, how can they expect to touch the hearts of others? Even if they bumble and stumble their way through a homily, at least people know they are relating to a real person and not just to a set of ideas from someone else. A further obvious reason is the unhealthy continued strangulation by many clergy of leadership roles in wider parish communities.

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 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

Pope Francis railed against abuse of power (clericalism) for a decade, arguing it was killing the Church. The statistics appear to be bearing this out. It drove him in recent years to seek a wider Church participatory model of synodality, which recognises the various roles of leadership that the laity can play alongside the priest. These would be best developed and supported in small groups with the whole parish continuing to come together for Sunday Eucharist. Synodality has yet to unfold locally in Aotearoa.

The Church's Mission

The Church's mission is the same as ever – to proclaim the mission of Jesus, and to form supportive communities to do so. In Luke 4, Jesus is given his mission: the Reign/Kingdom of God is at unfolding now and he is given the mandate, 'to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, give justice to the oppressed.' Simple, straight forward, easily understood, but radical and challenging in its application in our self-centred consumer day and age.

Today's lopsided Western world, (in the US, three white males are wealthier than 170 million fellow Americans!), has largely lost its collective spiritual base in pursuit of money and material gain. Now is the time to recognise an important insight of the age: that good things happen better in small groups. Bearing in mind the oft-quoted scripture verse, 'without a vision the people perish', (Prov 29/18), in small groups people can better hold to a vision, relate to one another at a personal level, hold one another accountable, friendships can be built, support and positive affirmation be more forthcoming.

Larger mainstream Churches in our country can learn from these experiences. Relationships sit at the heart of the Trinity and at the heart of creating Christian community. We are called to reflect the loving divine interaction by the way we live.

In Aotearoa, unlike other western countries, we have been hugely blessed by a dramatic resurgence of our nation's indigenous Māori culture and spirituality (including the use of te reo) as witnessed in recent times by the hundreds of thousands who attended the tangi for Kiingi Tuheitia in August 2024, in the Toitu te Tiriti week-long march on Parliament later that year opposing any change to the Treaty of Waitangi, in the gatherings around Maori and Polynesian festivals like national and regional kapa haka events and ASB Polyfest, te Matariki and te Matatini this year. These were deeply spiritual events and reflected

whanaungatanga at its best: groups gathering in friendship and common purpose, feeling a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves, forging friendships, developing relationships, affirming and nurturing one another.

Larger mainstream Churches in our country can learn from these experiences. Relationships sit at the heart of the Trinity and at the heart of creating Christian community. We are called to reflect the loving divine interaction by the way we live.

A Way Forward

One starting point towards building a synodal church in every parish could be to develop and encourage a network of family or neighbourhood-type groups of 4-12 people, who meet regularly (weekly, fortnightly, monthly) to reflect, share their lives, pray together, study the scriptures, the Church's social teachings (almost ignored these days and largely untaught!), affirm each other, develop

friendships, better live the gospels. It is a simple positive way forward of being Church, reflecting life in the early days of Christianity.

The Church's mission lies in our hands. Small groups are a primary way of being the synodal Church Pope Francis wanted, of guaranteeing its future and of developing our own spiritual growth. It is so obvious and self-explanatory

Following in the tradition of Dorothy Day, the Catholic Worker movement doesn't normally challenge institutional Church structures nor dogmas and practices. It rather prefers to focus on promoting a spirituality reflecting the life-changing teachings of Jesus. We are making an exception in this article because of the challenges the Churches face of irrelevancy, in an age which, as Pope Leo says, needs their message of hope more than ever.

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, using starvation as a weapon. 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 – 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 700 000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland 76 years ago, 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 and Syria, have gradually killed off any high moral standing it may have earned through their rich religious history and 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 Francis – the prophet, the legacy

Despite being very frail, on Holy Thursday this year Pope Francis again visited Regina Caeli prison in Rome to meet with inmates. ‘I have always loved coming to the prison on Holy Thursday to do the washing of the feet like Jesus’, he told the prisoners. This visit was a fitting epitaph for Francis, who died four days later on Easter Monday. He left his entire estate to a juvenile detention centre for youth programmes!

Francis was a spiritual colossus during his lifetime, along with David Attenborough, lifetime the most singularly positive moral force in the world, a giant among the People of God, and, at a most difficult time, an amazingly inclusive leader of a very diverse Church.

His 12-year tenure as Bishop of Rome will go down as one of the most significant in the history of the 2000 years of the Papacy. It was hard to believe, but a few days after his final prison visit, he was lying dead in a simple coffin in St Peter's Basilica awaiting burial, with millions filing past and paying tribute, and 250 000 attending his funeral mass.

Despite as pope being officially head of the Church, the starting point for Francis was not the institution but always the Gospel. He was transformed by the gospel. He showed that by truly living it in his daily life and turning the values of the world on their head. In the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matt 5/1-12), he became an international outspoken voice for the poor, immigrants, the disenfranchised, for climate justice, a committed peacemaker in a world constantly at what he called ‘piecemeal’ war, a holy and prayerful man of God, and a kindly soul with a great sense of humour. There was no pretence about him. He was the real deal!

Converted by the poor

After a decade of ‘preparation’ as archbishop of Buenos Aires, where he frequently rode the buses and frequented the slums, his new position as pope required him to tread a pathway between not just competing powerful factions in the Church but also speak to and represent millions of others who looked to him for leadership. These were those trapped in demeaning lifestyles dominated by structural violence, social coercion, abject poverty, state control, racial and ethnic discrimination, conditions which allow little room to act or even think freely.

That Francis responded with flair and a freedom unseen in a Church leader in recent times is a matter of public record. His building of toilets, soup kitchens, shelters and showers for the homeless inside Vatican City itself are an indication of this pastoral care. His extraordinary 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* will nourish and encourage generations in their care for Planet Earth. Yet history may well show that his greatest structural legacy was the promotion of synodality as the best way of being Church is our time.

If he had blind spots, it was in the way he initially mishandled sexual abuse by clergy and his slowness in responding to both the Vatican banking scandals and to the emerging desire of many women to engage in ministry more fully in the Church. He may well have seen the latter as an appropriate response to his desire not to fracture the Church further at this time.

But it will be for his genuine love of the poor and his openness and outreach to them that he will be best remembered. That made him so like Jesus – upon whom he had modelled his life.

May he now enjoy the company of Jesus and the saints in the eternal Kingdom forever.

—Jim Consedine

Pope Francis: Address to US Congress (2015)

When social concerns are so important, 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.

How much progress has been made in this area in so many parts of the world! How much has been done in these first years of the third millennium to raise people out of extreme poverty! I know that you

share my conviction that much more still needs to be done, and that in times of crisis and economic hardship a spirit of global solidarity must not be lost.

At the same time, I would encourage you to keep in mind all those people around us who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They too need to be given hope. The fight against poverty and hunger must be fought constantly, on many fronts, especially in its causes. I know that many Americans today, as in the past, are working to deal with this problem.

It goes without saying that part of this great effort is the creation and distribution of wealth. The right use of natural resources, the proper application of technology and the harnessing of the spirit of enterprise are essential elements of an economy which seeks to be modern, inclusive and sustainable. *'Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving the world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the area in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good'* (*Laudato Si'*, 129).

This common good also includes the earth, a central theme of the encyclical which I recently wrote in order to 'enter into dialogue with all people about our common home' (ibid., 3). *'We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all'* (ibid., 14).

In *Laudato Si'*, I call for a courageous and responsible effort to 'redirect our steps' (ibid., 61), and to avert the most serious effects of the environmental deterioration caused by human activity.

Four representatives of the American people

I will end my visit to your country in Philadelphia, where I will take part in the World Meeting of Families. It is my wish that throughout my visit the family should be a recurrent theme. How essential the family has been to the building of this country! And how worthy it remains of our support and encouragement! Yet I cannot hide my concern for the family, which is threatened, perhaps as never before, from within and without. Fundamental relationships are being called into

question, as is the very basis of marriage and the family. I can only reiterate the importance and, above all, the richness and the beauty of family life.

In particular, I would like to call attention to those family members who are the most vulnerable, the young. For many of them, a future filled with countless possibilities beckons, yet so many others seem disoriented and aimless, trapped in a hopeless maze of violence, abuse and despair. Their problems are our problems. We cannot avoid them. We need to face them together, to talk about them and to seek effective solutions rather than getting bogged down in discussions. At the risk of oversimplifying, we might say that we live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. Yet this same culture presents others with so many options that they too are dissuaded from starting a family.

A nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as **Abraham Lincoln** did, when it fosters a culture which enables people to 'dream' of full rights for all their brothers and sisters, as **Martin Luther King** sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as **Dorothy Day** did by her tireless work, the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogue and sows peace in the contemplative style of **Thomas Merton**.

In these remarks I have sought to present some of the richness of your cultural heritage, of the spirit of the American people. It is my desire that this spirit continue to develop and grow, so that as many young people as possible can inherit and dwell in a land which has inspired so many people to dream.

God bless America!

Solidarity with Sexual Minorities

Methodist Church of NZ

The Methodist Church of New Zealand stands in unwavering solidarity with our LGBTQ+ whānau, in response to recent attacks from Destiny Church and others who seek to harm and marginalise.

We acknowledge the deep pain, frustration, and exhaustion of those who must constantly defend their own existence. Faith-based discrimination has caused profound harm, and we grieve the misuse of Christian language and symbols to spread exclusion and division. Without hesitation, we affirm that all people are made in the image of God and are inherently worthy of dignity, love, and belonging.

As *Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa*, our commitment to bicultural partnership, justice, and grace calls us to be a Church that truly welcomes

and affirms all people. Silence is not an option when our whānau are under attack. We call on churches, faith communities, and people of goodwill to reject hate and stand in support of LGBTQ+ communities.

We are grateful for the leadership of those within our Church and across Aotearoa who are organising expressions of support. We encourage individuals and congregations within our Connexion to take meaningful action—whether through public statements, community engagement, or pastoral care—to ensure that our LGBTQ+ whānau know they are not alone.

The Gospel calls us to love one another as Christ has loved us. Love does not tolerate harm, nor does it stand by in silence. Love acts. We choose love.

Treaty Principles Bill - A Dog's Dinner

John D Corcoran

This year marks 46 years since I arrived in New Zealand, but I have known about the country for quite a bit longer than that. I remember sitting around the table at home in Liverpool discussing, as a family, emigration to New Zealand. They were looking for teachers. However, my father was loath to the idea of more world travel after his experiences as a soldier in the Second World War.

However, he did tell us how highly he thought of New Zealand soldiers, both Māori and Pakeha. In his own words, 'They were a fine body of men.' My father was in the Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to the 3rd Indian Division, and spent most of the war fighting alongside Kiwis, and knew them in the best of times and the worst of times.

I came to New Zealand on the recommendation of a friend who described it as the best place in the world to practice my profession of an outdoor educator. My mother also recommended I come here. After visiting my sister who had migrated already, she thought I'd like it.

I did like it, from day one, and quickly grew to appreciate the land and the people, the whenua and the tangata. Much of my early work involved working in South Auckland, with Māori and Pacific Island youth, and I had the pleasure of making friends with Māori teachers Pat Heremaia and Ra Kōhere. Later on I got to know Kepa Stirling. These people were important in inculcating my understanding of Te Tiriti. They educated me and they were critical people in building the culture that values the Treaty in this land.

This Treaty Principles Bill is a dog's dinner piece of legislation that in no way attempted to benefit all, to grow our community or seek after the common good. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy the social unity and unanimity of purpose of the people who live here.

In this time my family and I have come to value the unique situation and relationship of a society that has valued the common good of all its citizens, yet at the same time recognizing tino rangatiratanga of the Māori population as guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi. There are, as in any nation's history, moments and times of shame, and times of acclamation for the way that society functions, but in essence I believe that Aotearoa New Zealand has a unique set of circumstances that makes us all able to

live here with honour and pride.

The Treaty Principles Bill

This Treaty Principles Bill is a dog's dinner piece of legislation that in no way attempted to benefit all, to grow our community or seek after the common good. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy the social unity and unanimity of purpose of the people who live here. It is an obscene wedge driven into our society by a small minority, accepted and enabled in order to give power to a privileged 'sorted and wealthy' few. Its purpose is to limit, destroy, and sideline the very document that is the foundation of my right to be in this country and the right of any other people who are not tangata whenua.

It is a duplicitous process that pretends to acknowledge the rights of the Māori people as guaranteed in the Treaty, yet in fact abrogates the rights of both parties to one party, that is, the Crown.

The process this bill would produce (and is already producing by its sheer audacious and invidious existence!) is, as it were, to lift our house, smash its foundations, and drop it again upon the rubble, laying claim to having improved our living circumstances. Any levelling of ground here, in fact, is destroying what we have. Our circumstances by living here are not broken. They don't need fixing. The bill should be consigned to the rubbish bin of history. It's not something that is in any way the product of 'a fine body of men' (or women!). It's not something that I, my children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren, can have any pride in. It is a shameful mockery of the legislative process. That a bill may be brought to the House with no intention of its fulfilment shows that this shameful process is recognised widely.

We as a country lower ourselves in the eyes of the world by threatening to rewrite our seminal document without even the courtesy of consultation with the other party. The nation has already demonstrated its dissatisfaction with both the process and the bill itself. In a time when privilege is enabled by the duplicitous insemination of the world politic to remove truth and justice in order to further advantage those already privileged, we as Kiwis need to reject this totally.

This abridged submission from veteran CW supporter, John Corcoran, was made to the Justice Select Committee in January 2025. The Bill did not pass its third reading in Parliament.

Around the Traps

Death of Bishop Owen Dolan – Owen Dolan was a bishop with a heart for justice. It was shown at every opportunity and gave an extra dimension to his life and ministry. In many ways, he was so like Pope Francis. He was a particular friend to the Catholic Worker movement in Aotearoa, subscribing to *The Common Good*, visiting some of our houses from time to time and being a generous donor. He died 28 April 2025, aged 96. May he rest in peace.

NZ's unique wildlife declining – A major new report on NZs environment has revealed a worrying outlook for its unique species and highlighted declining water health, while also noting some improvements in air quality. The report painted a sobering picture for NZs indigenous animals, with 76% of freshwater fish, 68% of freshwater birds, 78% of terrestrial birds, 93% of frogs and 94% of reptiles threatened with extinction, or at risk of becoming threatened.

—*The Guardian Weekly, 11 April 2013*

Thousands of children have started school without uniforms, shoes, food and stationery because of the cost. In one instance, a child took in empty food wrappers to make it appear he had something to eat.

According to KidsCan, some children are so ashamed that they are choosing to not go to school at all. Their study of 200 New Zealand schools, found cases of siblings being forced to share uniforms and in one instance, the first one up would be the one to go to school.

According to Stats NZ, there has been an increase in material hardship children were facing. In the year to June 2023, one in eight children in NZ were living in households that were unable to afford things like fresh fruit and vegetables, an unexpected \$500 expense and doctors' visits. That number was one in five for tamariki Maori.

—*The Press, 28 January 2025*

Regulatory Standards Bill – Submissions are now open on this hugely significant piece of legislation – see article on pages 9-10.

No to Junk Food Ads – Research has shown that Kiwi children are exposed to twice as much advertising for junk food and drinks than for healthy products, likely increasing the harm from dental cavities to cancer. The research found children see

an average of eight advertisements every hour outdoors, 90% for unhealthy food or drink. Children in deprived areas saw much more advertising of unhealthy items than those in more affluent areas.

—*The Press, 16 April 2025*

#Rocket Lab to develop Hypersonic Weapons - Rocket Lab has branched deeper into the arms industry (the killing industry!) by modifying its Electron rockets into a weapons testing platform for the US and British militaries. Rocket Lab said they had adapted their Electron rockets so they could deliver heavier payloads, including 'glide and ballistic' payloads weighing up to 700 kg, at speeds of 27 000kph, but not into orbit.

Rocket Lab, which was founded in New Zealand but is now based in the US, has frequently used its Electron rockets to launch satellites for military customers, but this appears to mark a direct move into the armaments industry.

—*The Press, 16 April 2025*

#Deadly USAID Cuts – The Trump Administration decision to terminate 90% of USAIDs foreign aid contracts has stunned the aid world. In the hours following the announcement it was cutting US\$60 billion in funding, termination letters followed to NGOs across the world. They advised their programmes providing life-saving assistance against hunger and disease and performing other humanitarian work were being ended. His has had a devastating impact.

Across Africa, bombed out Sudanese cities, Kenyan clinics and Ethiopian refugee camps among hundreds of others, the policies of the Trump Administration are already having profound consequences for millions of the world poorest people. For example, in Somalia alone, US-based Alight programme closed the doors to its sole health clinics in 13 communities and stopped therapeutic nutrition for 1700 malnourished children a day.

Last year, USAID spent \$40 billion on foreign aid, providing food, healthcare and clean water for tens of millions of people. The USAID suspension, implemented by Elon Musk for the Trump Administration, means for example, that 8 million people in Sudan alone with extreme levels of hunger could die of starvation.

—*The Press, 1 March 2025*

a bolt of lightning

(on the death of Pope Francis, 21 April 2025)

under darkening skies
ecclesial storms brewing
he stepped onto the balcony
knees knocking yet smiling
bringing a spring to our step
moral leadership to the world
the common touch
freshness to humanity
a renewed sense of purpose
to ancient beliefs

Christ his focus
social justice the driving force
compassion, mercy
generosity of spirit, humility
divine tools of connection

love all people he said
welcome refugees
everywhere and regardless
especially the poorest
most marginalised

Francis of Rome
a bolt of lightning

—Jim Consedine

Anzac parade

every April like clockwork
we put on rose-tinted glasses
polish our buttons
clean our boots
and march in solidarity

recalling granddad, his brothers
Uncle Hemi, cousins galore
who died bravely
invading foreign lands
serving the cause of empire
guts spilled in muddied trenches
brains splattered
for reasons they knew not

their anguish, crippling fear
the squalor of trench life
we ignore as we gather
medals adorning
proud breasts

ah, the insanity of war

—Jim Consedine

on pilgrimage

I have glistened memories
when my thoughts seemed
to run clear within me
before the waters turned murky
and I could no longer see
that all is vanity
and I was chasing after a reflection that was
quickly vanishing
in a season of slow gently drownings
and I was being dragged down
into a depth of emptiness
where all I had were the dregs of my faith left.

But my Lord works in mysterious ways
from the cradle to when I reach the grave

I had fallen on black days
but I have come to a place
when I'm face to face with the fact
that I need to seek the light
to wipe away my sins, and the tears from my
eyes
and to learn from all my mistakes
and swim against the tides that have tried to
tempt me away
from doing what I know in my heart is right,
so this is where I begin
and finally end the battle within.

For I must cherish what I love
or what I love will perish

— Kieran Doody (1985-2025)

Rocket Lab poised to ‘serve Pentagons interests’

Phil Pennington

Rocket Lab is poised to launch a satellite from Mahia Peninsula for a US company which is looking to bolster military and spying operations. BlackSky's plan is to add laser optic links later to its Gen-3 satellites to give ‘war-fighters real-time access to imagery during time-sensitive military operations worldwide’.

This comes shortly after Rocket Lab won a part in a mega-deal to help develop hypersonic weapons for the Pentagon, prompting the firm to state it was ‘ready to serve the US Department of Defence’.

The New York-listed, New Zealand-born company has also completed a design review for 18 military satellites in a contract worth more than \$800 million, for the Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA), which is putting up a web of low-orbit satellites for missile tracking and battlefield comms.

That deal, which was signed last year, cemented Rocket Lab as a ‘prime’ - or lead - defence contractor in the US. The Mahia launch is set down for some time shortly and will be the first of several Gen-3s for BlackSky, which has used the site near Gisborne since 2019.

The government last year dismissed pro-Palestinian protesters complaints it breached rules on launches. The new satellites have more powerful cameras effective in haze and at night. The optical links, to be added after a study funded by the US Navy, aim to boost image volume by five times and the speed of sharing images to the ground by 10 times, the company said.

The launch of four Gen-3 satellites was approved by the Minister for Space in 2023, to join BlackSky's operational constellation ‘for the purpose of Earth observation’, the MBIE approval document said. Six months ago, BlackSky said it would make Gen-3s

compatible with military networks. It won a \$175m satellite contract with an unnamed international defence customer last month. Its constellation of small satellites also has civilian uses, such as in mapping natural disasters.

Rocket Lab's share price in the US has surged since it won big Pentagon contracts. It said it was committed ‘to delivering world-class satellite solutions for national defence... that will strengthen US defence capabilities in space’. Defence contractor stocks are volatile. They have surged in Europe as NATO has come under the hammer to raise spending.

But uncertainty surrounds the new US administration. It has let Elon Musk loose on Pentagon spending, and wants a cut in conventional spending, but at the same time signalled it wants rapid take-up of ‘emerging’ military technologies, which could be good for space or intelligence operators like Peter Thiel's Palantir.

Rocket Lab's Electron rockets are the second most launched annually in the US, behind only SpaceX. It has signed on as a subcontractor to a five-year hypersonics contract worth up to \$2.5 billion, won by San Diego firm Kratos. This aims to provide ‘rapid and affordable hypersonic flight testing’.

Rocket Lab has already done multiple hypersonic test launches from its Virginia launchpad. These were ‘testament to our dedication in advancing hypersonic innovation for the nation [US]’, it said.

Hypersonic missiles can reach Mach 5-plus and are highly manoeuvrable in flight. Russia used one against Ukraine last November.

This story was first reported in NZ Herald, 14 February 2025

URGENT: Submissions close soon on the RSB

Barbara Corcoran

More than 20 000 submissions were made to the Orwellian-sounding Ministry of Regulation earlier in the year as the **Regulatory Standards Bill** was being finalised for Cabinet approval – but if you wrote one of those (of which apparently 90% didn't get read!) don't be fooled – that was only practice. The real submission process is open now, closing quite soon. The Coalition government has agreed to pass this thrice-failed neoliberal legislative effort ‘as

soon as practicable’ and one hope might be that if enough submissions opposing it are received, they will realise it is **not one little bit practicable**.

According to Rawiri Waititi MP, ‘This is not even the Treaty Principles Bill 2.0. It's not that at all. What we've got is the absolute annihilation of the Treaty of Waitangi from legislation. What it does is put the power into the hands of the Attorney General and the Minister for Regulation, David

Seymour. It actually takes away the power of Parliament to make those decisions once that regulatory standard goes through. So even the legislators who are democratically voted into Parliament also lose their ability to be able to change some of the laws that the Regulatory Standards Bill will have influence over. What it also does is privilege private property over public good, like health, the environment, and even Māori and indigenous rights. ...It is a dangerous law, it ignores the Treaty of Waitangi, it allows Aotearoa to open its doors to international greed and exploitation.’ (Rawiri Waititi together with Debbie Ngarewa-Packer on **BHN News Te Pāti Māori Special 27 May 2025**, available on YouTube).

Professor Emeritus Jane Kelsey has made her submission on the proposed bill available to the public (search on her name and Regulatory Standards Bill). It gives a good in-depth timeline of the origins of this bill as well as the risks of enabling this legislation. Dr Kelsey says, ‘The objective is to bind governments forever to the logic of economic freedom (libertarianism) by setting overarching rules and principles within which all future political decisions must be made.’

Film Review

***Ocean* – documentary starring David Attenborough, May 2025, directors Colin Butfield and Toby Newland, 1 hr 35 min. Showing now in NZ cinemas. Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

It is difficult to adequately review this stunning documentary and do justice to it. It has been made at a time when the world has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the oceans, available to everyone online. Yet we continue to destroy them at a mind-numbing rate.

This is a must-see documentary/movie for all who care about the future of our planet. David Attenborough continues to be unquestionably one of the world’s leading moral voices in our time. This is perhaps his final great gift to humanity: to challenge, indeed beg, the world to take proper care of the wonderful asset we have in our oceans. Simply put, the planet cannot survive without them and neither can we.

In this big screen documentary, he makes a passionate case against the devastation caused by industrial overfishing and what the *Guardian UK* (24 May 2025) called, ‘the sinister mega-trawlers (more than 400 000) which roam everywhere raking

This is dangerous stuff, diametrically opposite to anything resembling the common good.

There’s a great piece in E-Tangata summarising some of the potential outcomes of passing this bill. It includes a submission builder tool which can simplify the process. Ryan Ward: ‘*How the Regulatory Standards Bill gives companies more rights than public*’, www.e-tangata.co.nz.

Submissions do not need to be lengthy or contain copious detail, but they do need to state clearly whether you are in favour or opposed to the legislation. There’s general information at www.parliament.govt.nz and that is another way to make a submission, through the Get Involved tab.

—Barbara Corcoran

**Regulatory Standards Bill
SUBMISSIONS CLOSE
1.00 pm
Friday 23 June 2025**

the seabed night and day with their vast metal nets, brutally and wastefully hoovering up fish populations of which the majority of the catch is simply thrown away, depriving developing countries and fishing communities of their share.’ Because it is largely a handful of wealthy countries responsible, Attenborough calls this ‘a new form of colonialism’.

The United Nations World Oceans Day, celebrated annually 8th June since 2008, has sought to highlight the role oceans play in planetary life for all living species, including humans. Everything is inter-connected. The UN is campaigning to have 30% of the world’s oceans preserved from exploitation. Currently, under 3% have that status!

The planet’s oceans contain an amazing diversity of life, with mountains up to three kilometres high and prairie-like swathes of life teeming everywhere. They are extraordinary landscapes developed like underwater cities in what Attenborough calls, ‘a giant second planet of whose existence humanity has long been unaware but which now seems in grave danger’.

Ocean is a desperate call to the world community to heed the cries of this wonderful living galaxy of life lapping on our shores, before it is too late. At 99

years of age, David Attenborough challenges us to show that if we can make forests on land safe from logging and exploitation, why not the oceans?

Despite the devastation, his final message is one of hope. He says that it is not too late to halt this destruction and points to whales, which a generation ago were heading for extermination but are flourishing now since protections were brought in. He also highlights small areas of 'no take zones,' in

the oceans where within a short period of time rejuvenation has occurred, sometimes even better than before. By preserving selected areas of the ocean from overfishing, we can give time for species to recover and spill over into other zones. There are no fences in the oceans!

If you have the opportunity, beg, borrow or steal a ticket to this amazing documentary.

Letters

1/164 North Parade,
Christchurch 8013

Kia ora Jim,

The world watches and, it seems, waits to see out the extermination of a beautiful race of humans. How is it that a far-right Government is able to murder so many innocent civilians? By lies, of course. The Israeli Zionist Government (which does not represent large numbers of Israeli citizens) is expert at propaganda and we in the West seem programmed to accept their narrative. The crimes against humanity by Israel of and on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank will be remembered.

The West will have no credibility with the 'South' countries. The least our Government could do is to back the Greens' call for Sanctions and proclaim Palestine as a State. Any influence we have on the United States and United Kingdom should be used to express our horror at their complicity in the current carnage.

Yours faithfully,.

Marie Venning

Christchurch

Dear Jim,

The Anti Bases Campaign (ABC) is delighted that the Methodist Church has taken the decision to divest from Rocket Lab. To quote from the Methodist Trust Association (MTA, the Methodist Church's investment body): Special congratulations to Brian Turner, a retired Methodist minister from Christchurch (and one-time President of the Methodist Church) for his patient and unrelenting lobbying of both the Trust Association and the Church to divest from Rocket Lab.

Rocket Lab may once have been a plucky little number 8 wire Kiwi start-up, but it is now (and has been for a long time) simply a New Zealand subsidiary of an American corporation, one which is getting further and further enmeshed into the US military and intelligence war-fighting machine.

Rocket Lab no longer pretends to be anything other than an increasingly vital part of that war machine. Recent headlines trumpet that it is ready to 'serve the Pentagon' and that it is going to help the US and UK develop hypersonic missiles.

The Methodist Church is well out of it. Other New Zealand institutions and individuals with a conscience should likewise divest from Rocket Lab.

Best wishes,

Murray Horton

Secretary, Anti Bases Campaign

12b/57 Ropata Cres
Lower Hutt 5010

Dear Father Jim,

A letter of encouragement. I pray your poem in *The Common Good*, Lent, 2024, on prayer very helpful. The work of seeking peace and harmony is still very necessary – in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, in the Congo, to name only three places. Also prayers for our new Pope Leo and that the great Pope Francis may rest in peace.

With sincere best wishes,

John Sellars, aged 78.

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Read *The Common Good* online at catholicworker.org.nz

The Common Good

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



“Among the most important duties of employers, the principal one is to give all workers what is justly due them. Assuredly, to establish a rule of pay in accord with justice, many factors must be taken into account. But, in general, the rich and employers must remember that no laws, either human or divine, permit them for their own profit to oppress the needy and the wretched or to seek gain from another’s want.”

—Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* 1891

