

# The Common Good

## *Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor*

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

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## Technology and the Gospel

Jim Consedine

There have been an amazing number of important technological advances in recent years. Much of the world now runs on these developments. Without them, it is hard to imagine life today. Truly, many are absolutely amazing. I have a transplanted kidney as a result of technological advance. Practically every aspect of our lives is now influenced, if not controlled, by modern technology. Many advances reflect the creative genius of the human spirit.

But should all technological advances be greeted as positive? Clearly not. There is a shadow side to contend with that can be far-reaching.

### Technology's shadow side

A recent New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) report showed that 46% of New Zealand jobs are at risk from automation in the next two decades, with up to 75% of labouring jobs going. This view is backed in the US in 2014 by the PEW Research Centre in a widespread survey of experts.

Beside massive job losses and increasing inequality, consider the arms race. Would the devastation currently being enacted in Syria and Iraq be possible without the technological advances made in weaponry these past two decades? Over half the world's scientists work fulltime for armament companies on new technologies to improve killing ratios. Surely this is self-destructive madness? Think of drones being directed from an office in Washington to kill in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq. No human contact. Just death from the skies through new technology.

Many technological developments remove basic rights that help people become fully human. If eventually one's every need can be met by an automated device, what happens to human community? Inasmuch as technology isolates people, it undermines community. Even the internet can have an isolating effect on those with an addiction to it. And what about cyber-bullying? It is widespread.

As grassroots CW theologian Rex Knight points



out, 'It's not the huge changes made possible by ever increasing computerization and automation that is necessarily the problem. It's the ideologically driven way in which these new technologies are implemented. We could live in an age of sufficiency for all, with more time for family, the arts, recreation and social interaction, time to support those in need. But technology is being hi-jacked to generate obscene, unbelievable wealth for an elite, wage slavery for most, and misery for the ever-increasing number of unemployed. It's not the technology, it's the misuse of its benefits.'

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***can have an isolating effect on those with an addiction to it.***

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The massive consumption of resources by our technologically driven consumer culture, rapacious in its appetite, knows no limits. It follows no known human sense of morality, following a driving dictum to accrue ever more profits regardless of the human cost. It has no understanding of the common good. The transnational backed TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), TTIP (Trans-Atlantic), RCEP (China-led), CETA (Canada-Europe) and TiSA (Trades and Services Agreement) secret negotiations seek to internationalise this rapaciousness. We are being robbed on a global scale right now and it is going to get worse.

### 'Good Work'

As Christian teaching has taught for centuries, 'good work' (productive, useful) is essential for our development. It helps human beings grow as God intended. 'Bad work' (dangerous, underpaid, anti-social or exploitative) is sinful and counters human development. So when everything becomes automated and more jobs go and greater numbers become unemployed, what happens to people's right to work?



How are their families to be supported? This creates even greater inequality.

Another question. Who protects the social bonds including employment that holds communities together? Market forces certainly don't. They undermine them at every turn. The market has no soul, no heart. Like a piranha, it gobbles up and spits out. Aided by new technologies, increasingly it is spitting out jobs in the interests of greater profits developed through new technology.

Small communities suffer the most, as the Patea-based movie *Poi E* showed. With advanced technologies, better profits could be made elsewhere with less workers and cheaper labour. The freezing works closed. The town is still reeling. The technology shadow has a long reach.

### **Morality and technology**

There are huge moral issues at stake here. In the past several thousand years, work generally has had a moral basis to it, built on human need, family necessity and the common good. With plenty of exceptions, until recent times there was arguably a shared vision and some semblance of communal morality for what we worked for and the tools we used. That vision has largely been decimated in our modern consumer neo-liberal economic culture which is built entirely on materialism. And greed

#### **Who are we?**

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since 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 peacemaking, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

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

around profit margins. This culture undermines the common good and runs counter to the gospel.

It helps maintain grossly lopsided and sinful social structures where basic necessities like clean water, food and shelter are denied to billions. Pope Francis has been vociferous in his condemnation of it. The misuse of many technologies takes basic resources away from the needy. The prophets in the Sacred Scriptures, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos, screamed warnings about such unjust practices millennia ago. As do prophets today. Jesus came with a prophetic people-centred vision and warned those who mistreated the poor of their condemnation (Matt 25). Radical stuff, but still largely ignored. Where is it being preached in our churches?

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Technology per se has no moral base. It is morally neutral until put to use. It can certainly be used for good moral purpose. Where used productively in human and not just monetary terms, it gains a moral purpose. Alternatively, if it is used to erode basic human rights, (eg the right to work, the right to play) or is used for destructive purposes (eg armament manufacturing), then it assumes an immoral base. It becomes anti-human and against the evolving plan of God for humanity.

Home-gardener Kerry McCarthy writes 'In the end technological advances are inevitable. But we can argue for their benefits to be shared more equally in line with Gospel values. With job reductions, some type of universal income looks an imperative for the future.'

### **Catholic Worker philosophy**

The Catholic Worker has a Manifesto which for 80 years has promoted the value of 'good work' and its place in human development. It warns, 'human need is no longer the reason for human work. Instead, the unbridled expansion of technology, necessary to capitalism and viewed as 'progress', holds sway.' It points out that workers are too often trapped in work that does not contribute to human welfare.

The Catholic Worker, based on what is best for the common good of all people and not just an elite, continues to promote a 'small is better' approach to life generally. Such an approach enables greater personal responsibility to be taken and defuses more power into local communities. It defies the 'we are merely small cogs in a great machine' philosophy developed over this past century. We believe it helps people to become more human and have greater control over what happens in life. As Jesus teaches, 'By their fruit you shall know them' (Matt 7:16).

New technologies can be wonderful gifts, but they can also be destructive. Without proper moral evaluation, we run the danger of making gods of them.

## Editorial 1 Integral ecology - everything is connected

At this time in history we are all encouraged to reflect, judge and act ecologically. This encouragement is a call to conversion. The invitation involves transforming disconnected thinking into something more holistic and complete.

The recent Encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* (2015) reminds us over and over again that everything is connected. Such a vision is an integral ecology of one planet and one interconnected system of systems, that is a relational whole. The precious waters of Mother Earth are a relational whole. In the form of oceans, ice, vapour, rivers and lakes they are essentially one watery system.

An example of this oneness was in the world news recently. July 2016 is on the record as the hottest month ever recorded. In the Middle East (Kuwait in particular) temperatures soared to 54 degrees Celsius. In this heat everything thirsts, everything dries up immediately, only extremophiles (heat loving organisms) survive this blistering heat. Evaporation here is instantaneous, the vapour goes up and off somewhere else on the planet. In this case it went up and off to China where torrential rain caused great floods on the Yangtze River. So, one place thirsts and another drowns. What happened in Kuwait is connected to what happened in China.

Climate scientists call these excesses, extreme weather events. As we alter Earth's atmosphere with our industrial economies, we can expect more of these extremes in every nation on Earth.

When a person, plant or place thirsts, a state of stress begins. If the thirsting goes on for long enough, the stress becomes distress. If the distress endures, death occurs. There are watery places on Earth now called dead zones. These are river mouths, so contaminated that they are essentially lifeless.

Industrial agribusiness is now the norm in many places in Aotearoa/NZ. Where once there were small scale family farms, we now find industrial scale agriculture. Large herds of dairy cows put stress on our waterways both in the form of irrigation needs and effluent. Even where I live in Ōtaki, more effort needs to go into the planting of dairy farm creeks and streams (riparian revegetation). Stock in our high country too, with easy access to mountain rivers and lakes, continues to be a contamination issue.

Carefully fenced and planted waterways both look appealing and become longterm investments in the health of waterways. Such planting increases biological diversity and can bring balance into systems suffering the imbalance of pollution.

It seems that the recent contamination of the Havelock North water supply has more to do with upstream watershed management practices than anything else. The answer to healthy potable water in cities and towns lies not in the downstream addition of 'purifying' chemicals, rather it lies in upstream ecologies of care.

A unique part of an integral ecology in Aotearoa/NZ, involves consultation with iwi Māori. In this consultation process it's possible to come to an appreciation of guardianship/*kaitiakitanga*. Done as a matter of course, this consultation would avert many of the current impasses facing people, land and waterways. A clarion cry from iwi all around Aotearoa/NZ is: 'Talk to us, participate in the relationship that is the substance and spirit of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*'.

No-one wants to thirst to the point of distress or to drown. We only need clean potable water, enough for today, for our children and their children.

*Peter Healy sm*

## Editorial 2 Online Schools - a Social Disaster

The proposal by the Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, to allow education to be done with an accredited online education provider without a child ever needing to go to school, is a classic case exposing the dark shadow side of technology.

While the consumer culture defines us as individual consumers, the truth is that we are social beings born to relate to one another and work out our role in life through those relationships. Individualism, as defined and promoted in the culture, is a dead end street in terms of social development.

The Minister's reasoning is that this type of schooling will give the child 'the edge' in an increasingly digital age. This raises the questions – the edge in what? And for why? The edge in digital skills. Maybe? Certainly not the edge in human development and social skills.

Teachers and principals have condemned the idea saying that the whole point of school is about learning and playing with other children, not working in isolation behind a screen. Naenae College principal John Russell

said that the whole thing was 'scary, and devoid of any humanity, and what it means to be a learner and a social being.'

School provides opportunities to learn socialisation skills and to develop lifelong friendships. Children are entitled to the beauty and joy this brings to life as they learn and mature with others of their own age. They have a basic right to play with other children. They won't get this peering at a screen all day.

We are ignoring so much wisdom accrued over centuries in following such ideological stupidity. Education is much bigger than just schooling. And life is more than jobs and better money.

The questions we all (and especially parents) need to constantly ask include, will new technology help produce a more rounded child, a more mature teenager, a more socially adaptable adult? Surely these are qualities we want our children to develop?

Will offering online-only schooling help with that?

*Jim Consedine*

## Editorial 3 A modest proposal for peace

During this 21st century, the overriding human task is to save the planet.

And who will we need to save the planet from? Ourselves! More than anything else, what the world needs from those of us who claim to be Christians is a rediscovery and a putting into practice Jesus' nonviolent ethic of loving one's enemies. It is the greatest gift our faith tradition can offer the future.

Today the Roman Catholic Church has two official positions on the issue of war. The most dominant one is the Just War Tradition. This tradition goes back 17 centuries, back to St. Augustine and the Roman Empire. Until just recently, it was the only position the Official Church accepted and practiced. (This is being reconsidered now in 2016 among the church leadership in Rome. Ed)

The second position is both the newest recognized position and the oldest held position on this issue. It is the newest because it has only become an acceptable position for modern-day Catholics to embrace since the Vatican Council II. It is also the oldest held position because it dates back all the way to Jesus and the 1st Century Church. It is the Pacifist tradition.

Right now Catholics can choose either position when dealing with the ethical issue of war. The Just War Tradition, however, is the most widely accepted position. It is the position embraced and put into practice by the Official Church and its institutions.

The Pacifist position is the lesser position in the life and body of the Church. It is only an option reserved for those Catholics who in good conscience cannot accept the use of violence or killing even in a just cause for just war. It is considered something only an individual can embrace. It is not binding on the Faith Community as a whole. It is strictly an individual thing.

### Proposal

My proposal for the Church is that we keep both positions, the Just War Tradition and Pacifist Tradition, but flip-flop our emphasis and institutional practices. By this I mean from now on **the Church would emphasize**

**the non-violent pacifist position, the earliest and oldest tradition practiced by the Church.** The Church would put all its resources and institutional backing and practice behind this tradition and not the Just War Tradition. The Church would no longer bless and support any more wars or the preparation for war. When wars happen, we would universally condemn them as wholly out of spirit with the demands of the Gospels and recommend Catholics not to take part in them in any way or manner.

We should leave open the possibility for individual Catholics, who in good conscience cannot embrace the higher ideal of non-violently loving their enemies, to embrace the lesser Just War Tradition. But this should only be allowed as an individual choice, a choice the larger Church would counsel against but tolerate grudgingly.

What would happen if the Church were to embrace such a proposal? Would wars cease to happen? I doubt it. But at least the world will know where we stand. We are against it and it should be the same way with war and killing.

If the Church were to follow this suggestion in time our re-commitment to the original nonviolent spirit of Jesus' ethic of loving your enemies will start to take form and shape within our Faith Communities. It may well help the larger world see nonviolent options to human conflicts that have previously been hidden or not thought possible in the past. I know one thing for sure, we will never know unless we try.

If we, who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, are not willing to embrace his radical ethic of loving our enemies, who will? I believe the integrity of our Faith, if not the future of the human race, demands we try.

*Frank Cordaro*

*The prophet Frank Cordaro has been a member of the CW in Des Moines, IA for 40 years. Twenty years ago, he wrote this appeal from prison where he was serving time for non-violent resistance to war.*

### Soup that nourishes

A well bound scrum is stronger than the eight forwards who comprise it are when they act alone. All God's children on Earth are part of the Oneness which is life. In our task of building and sustaining the Kingdom, we are a great all-encompassing soup, NOT a multi-tiered wedding cake, with the mass at the base supporting a hierarchy of layers topped by a peak decorated with tinsel and a pair of cherubs. We as people bring diverse talents, the wise, the prophetic, the strong, the charismatic, the organisers, the carers, and perhaps most importantly, the strugglers, most of us, who so often are those who provide the bulk of that most necessary ingredient, love.

In this soup, we do not lose our individuality or self-worth, but we become part of a nurturing whole. The best soups are not a bland amorphous mush. The carrots are still carrot, the leek is still leek; the bits of meat boiled off the bone, the lentils, the peas -- all retain their individual identity. They're all there, combining to nourish. All ingredients are important. But overdo the chilli, chop in too much garlic, or upend the salt container, and the balance is spoiled, the broth ruined. No one ingredient should dominate. With teamwork comes harmony, though there's always a boil-up and a bit of excess steam from time to time!

*Rex Knight*

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# He who clothes the flowers

Jack Leason

Providence. As I sit and reflect on the last year or so this word seems to be a recurring theme, a mysterious truth that is hard to explain but true nonetheless.

In 2015, as a lanky 19-year-old, I felt God's call to step into the unknown. This led me to the New York Catholic Worker where I met Elliot Martin, with whom I would embark on a wild and life changing journey of faith. Together we hitch-hiked through the US staying with CW communities and working in soup kitchens and community gardens.

As Jesus had instructed his disciples, we chose not to travel with money but rather to rely on the goodness of strangers and thus be more open to God's voice. We could never have planned the adventures or encounters we experienced and as we prayed together each day we marvelled at God's goodness.

This journey inspired me in many ways but most of all it taught me to trust in God's Providence, and that when I foolishly let go of worldly securities and have faith, I can be more available to God's voice in my life. A seed was planted in my heart and I began to dream into how this would affect the direction of my life.

On returning to Aotearoa, I spent six months with my family in Otaki, working the land as I prayed and discerned about vocation. I knew I had a heart for the poor and social justice, and that I felt drawn to community life in the CW tradition. But how would I actually live this?

After much reflection I stepped out blindly again, this time moving into a derelict house in Newtown with the dream to start a CW community. This felt very foolish indeed and I clearly remember the fear rising in my chest that first night alone, even clutching a hammer under my pillow. Soon joined by Tim Webb and my brother Finn, we cleaned the rooms, fixed broken windows and covered up the Nazi graffiti, slowly turning

the squat into a home. Unfortunately, this season did not last long and we were eventually kicked out by the property's owner.

The next three months I stayed with a lovely community in Newtown called Ink, all the while praying and searching for a house to bring this dream to life.

It was over this time that I met Chris Duthie-Jung and a conversation began concerning *Kohanga*. This beautiful three-storey building had been used for Catholic tertiary chaplaincy, but Chris said they were open

to trying something new.

One thing led to another and, by God's grace and the generosity of the Church, *Berrigan House* (named after late priest and prophet Daniel Berrigan) came to life at 4 Kelburn Parade, Kelburn.

Five of us live here at the moment, including my brother Finn, and many come through our doors every day, from students to street people. We are a Catholic Worker community seeking to live out the justice and mercy taught by Jesus through daily prayer, practising the works of mercy, building peaceful relationships with others, and non-violently resisting this exploitative capitalist system.

Looking over these adventures, from travelling to squatting to community life here at Berrigan House, I am filled with wonder and gratitude for the God who provides.

Maybe a better way to say providence is divine irony. That in foolishly stepping into the unknown and trusting the One who clothes the flowers, ensures dreams can be realised and the unbelievable, the ironic and even the miraculous can happen.

*Jack Leason and his brother Finn have helped start Berrigan House CW in Kelburn, Wellington. Ph 021 025 28003.*



**Berrigan House**

*"Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams. Love in dreams is greedy for immediate action, rapidly performed and in the sight of all. Men will even give their lives if only the ordeal does not last long but is soon over, with all looking on and applauding as though on the stage. But active love is labor and fortitude, and for some people too, perhaps, a complete science."*

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (a favourite quote of Dorothy Day)

## missing in action

protected by empire  
despots play politics  
unleashing slaughter  
stone age devastation  
half a million Syrians dead  
and counting

immaculate tailored suits  
celebrating bloated coffers  
sip champagne on Wall Street  
lapels unstained  
capitalism without conscience  
dripping in blood

six thousand miles away  
kids at play, blown to pieces  
missiles, cluster bombs  
their friends bloodied  
mothers brutalised  
missing in action

*Jim Consedine*

## hard hats, hi vis

a frosty early start  
twelve-hour shift today  
night work tomorrow  
through 'til dawn  
thousands of workers  
invisible, taken for granted

throbbing graders, trucks  
beside Avon River bridges  
spread shingle, pour asphalt  
lay burning hot tar-seal  
bitumen by the mile  
smelly, sticky, dangerous

tired legs, tired feet  
hold lollypop signs  
all weathers, minimum wage  
vital to the city's reconstruction  
yesterday, tomorrow, next week  
a job is a job is a job

hard hats, hi vis  
backbone of the rebuild

*Jim Consedine*

## Easy Essays by Peter Maurin

### Yes! I am a Radical

To be radically right  
is to go to the roots  
by fostering a society  
based on creed,  
systematic unselfishness,  
and gentle personalism.

To foster a society  
based on creed  
instead of greed,  
on systematic unselfishness  
instead of systematic selfishness,  
on gentle personalism  
instead of rugged individualism,

is to create a new society  
within the shell of the old.

### What the Catholic Worker Believes

The Catholic Worker believes  
in the gentle personalism  
of traditional Catholicism.  
The Catholic Worker believes  
in the personal obligation  
of looking after the needs of our brother.

The Catholic Worker believes  
in the daily practice  
of the Works of Mercy.  
The Catholic Worker believes  
in Houses of Hospitality  
for the immediate relief of those in need.

The Catholic Worker believes  
in the establishment  
of Farming Communes  
where each one works according to his ability  
and gets according to his need.

The Catholic Worker believes  
in creating a new society  
within the shell of the old  
with the philosophy of the new,  
which is not a new philosophy  
but a very old philosophy,  
a philosophy so old  
that it looks like new.



## Around the Traps

**# With this edition No 79, *The Common Good*** enters its 21st year of publication. It is still based on the 83-year-old Catholic Worker spirituality lived by its co-founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. It remains free of charge and without commercial advertisements or sponsors, and continues to promote a spirituality suitable for our times. We are immensely grateful for all who continue to support us.

**# Our annual appeal is enclosed for hard copy readers.** Electronic readers are invited to donate to 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.

**# Congratulations to Matt Whittle,** the Recycling Man on Facebook, a welcome regular at our Wednesday night CW gatherings, who featured (much to his embarrassment) in the Good Sorts segment of TV1 News, Sunday 4 September. Matt showed how he witnesses to a cashless society by recycling furniture, paint, clothes, books, anything really, and being paid for them with canned food which he donates to groups feeding the hungry. He does it all from his home garage. Well done Matt, our rising TV star! Ph 021 08439932

**# Lovely to have Bishop John Osmers** from Zambia visiting and speaking at our Wednesday night gathering. Now retired, Bishop John is Christchurch-born, with family here, but has lived in Southern Africa for 58 years as an Anglican priest and bishop. An outspoken opponent of apartheid and champion of refugee resettlement, he was banned from South Africa and expelled from both Lesotho and Botswana. He became the first Bishop of Eastern Province, Zambia, and is now retired and living in Lusaka.

**# Lorraine Larsen RIP.** We extend our sympathy to Caroline Larsen, a regular member of our Wednesday night community, on the death of her mother Lorraine in October. May Lorraine rest in peace.

**# Battle of the Somme Centenary** - On 1 July 1916, 150 000 French and British soldiers climbed from their trenches and advanced towards German lines on the Somme in Northern France. By nightfall, 20 000 were dead and 40 000 wounded. By the end of July, the advance had hardly moved 5 kilometres and 200 000 more had been killed, along with 160 000 Germans. In addition, by the end of September, 2111 NZ soldiers had been killed on the Somme. By war's end in November 1918, the number of NZ soldiers killed on the Western Front would exceed 12,000. What madness! All for what? *The Press*, 10 September 2016

**# Pope Francis is giving 'very strong recognition' to a landmark conference held at the Vatican last spring** that called on the global Catholic Church to reject its long-held teachings on just war theory. According to Cardinal Peter Turkson, the head of the [Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace](#),

the decision by Francis to focus his message for World Peace Day in 2017 on nonviolent strategies to prevent and stop global violence, was partly caused by the discussions at the conference, which promoted 'another thinking - Gospel nonviolence, or nonviolence as Jesus was nonviolent.' The Vatican [announced in August](#) that Francis' World Peace Day message for 2017, which will be officially promulgated on the first day of the year, will be given the title 'Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace.' *NCR*, 25 September 2016

**# The latest Household Income Report** from the Ministry of Social Development found that the poorest households sharing housing costs compared to household income had risen from 29 percent in 2013 to 49 percent in 2015, thus spending nearly half their income on housing. Its other findings include that the number of children experiencing material hardship – living in a cold damp house, or owning only one pair of shoes – rose from 145 000 to 155 000 during the previous 12 months. 5000 more children had moved during that period into 'severe hardship', bring the number of NZ children living in severe hardship to 85 000. Social Development Minister Anne Tolley said the report showed NZ was 'on the right track.' *The Press*, 9 September 2016

**# In its release of the [first ever Sustainable Development Goals Report](#),** Thomas Gass of the UN offered the first baseline on how the global body will monitor progress for the 15-year effort, which was formally initiated in 2015. The world faces massive issues. About 800 million people still live in 'extreme poverty' and experience hunger; nearly six million children die annually before reaching the age of 5; more than 59 million children of primary school-age do not attend school; nearly 2.5 billion people still do not have access to adequate sanitation. *Global Sisters Report*, 2 August 2016

**# UN to vote whether to outlaw nuclear weapons.** The United Nations has adopted a landmark [resolution](#) to launch negotiations in 2017 on a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons. This historic decision heralds an end to two decades of paralysis in multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts. The resolution will set up a UN conference beginning in March next year, open to all member states, to negotiate a "legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination". The negotiations will continue in June and July. *October 27, 2016*

**# During the 1968 - 75 secret US war in Laos,** 270 million cluster bombs were dropped, 80 million never exploded. It could take hundreds of years to clear them. They have since killed a further 20 000 people, and maimed tens of thousands more. The US Govt has been paying \$15 million per year to clear these bombs. It is now doubling that figure to \$30 million. Acknowledgement but no apology from President Obama. Asean Conference, September 2016.

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# Hiroshima Day 2016

Yoshito Ishido

Barack Obama deserves recognition for being the first presiding American president to visit Hiroshima, attend the Memorial Ceremony for those who died in the atomic bombing and deliver a speech. Furthermore, he should be lauded for meeting, if only briefly, with several A-bomb survivors in person.

On the other hand, his visit could be seen as lacking somewhat in that he spent a mere ten minutes visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, expressed no words of apology for the bombing, and didn't meet with greater numbers of survivors.

One wonders what exactly he was shown, what he viewed in those brief ten minutes in the Museum. Indeed, is there anything in the Museum that could be viewed in a mere ten minutes?

And is it possible, I wonder, to really invoke 'the preciousness of peace' without saying a word of apology as a representative of the country that unleashed a bomb on Japan that caused such devastation and an unprecedented number of casualties.

Of course, it is unfair merely to criticize Obama; the Japanese government almost certainly made the arrangements and determined the details of his visit.

What concerns me more is how the mass media, the newspapers, TV, and radio, were so full of praise and the subsequent reports that many Japanese, including survivors, were deeply moved by Obama's visit and speech. Is this truly the case?

Imagine that the prime minister of Japan visited China's Nanking and, without apologizing for the Nanking massacre by the Japanese Imperial Army, delivered a serious speech about peace in general. Would the people of China feel deeply moved by his words? And how would the people of the Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Pacific Island countries and Russia feel under similar circumstances?

What is clear is the Japanese media's 'colonial mentality', their manipulation of public opinion, their pampering of those in power in favour of reporting the truth. It was recently reported by the 'Reporters without Borders' that since Shinzo Abe became prime minister, Japan's ranking in terms of 'freedom of the press' has fallen from its 2010 position of eleventh in the world to sixty-first last year, and then seventy-second this year. One after the other, journalists and newscasters expressing concerns about the current situation in Japan have resigned or been forced to resign.

It recently came to light, as a result of ground

samples taken by Green Peace Japan, that sediment taken from the shores of a river in Fukushima's Soma region contains two thousand times the amount of radiation of Lake Biwa's shores in Western Japan. This area has not been re-designated for evacuation.

Furthermore, samples taken from the seabed near Fukushima's nuclear power plants contain levels of caesium hundreds of times higher than in 2010. And then, there has been a spike in the number of children with thyroid abnormalities or cancer in the Fukushima region, but merely reported officially.

In Aomori's Rokkasho Village, they are pushing ahead with plans to recycle uranium and plutonium from nuclear waste. If these plans are put into action, based on a report by Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited, 80 billion becquerel of plutonium 241, 16 billion Becquerel of caesium 16 (approx. 1/8 of that produced by Hiroshima's A-bomb), and 12 billion of strontium 90 will be released into the atmosphere each year. There is no need to worry, say the company and Japanese government, as these will be diluted in the atmosphere.

In the recent elections, the current government, led by Prime Minister Abe, secured two thirds of the seats in the Upper House. This gives them sufficient numbers to propose the amendment of the Japanese Constitution. Members of the Japan Conference, with which the prime minister is affiliated, have been openly demanding the amendment of the constitution, and the elimination of the three fundamental pillars of the current constitution - peace, basic human rights and the people's sovereignty.

I find it extremely worrying that none of these matters are being taken up, or can be taken up, by the mass media. If things continue along the same lines, before we know it we will find ourselves repeating the mistakes of the past.

What purpose could there be in creating plutonium when there is no sign of Japan being able to successfully convert it into nuclear fuel? The only answer would appear to be that Japan intends to use it for developing nuclear arms.

I believe we need to inform as many people as possible of these developments and try to stop them from going ahead. This is one course of action we can take now to ensure 'No more Hiroshima, No more Nagasaki'.

*Yoshito Ishido, a Japanese national, gave this Hiroshima Day speech in Christchurch, 6 August 2016.*

**Funeral Choice**  
**[www.funeralchoice.co.nz](http://www.funeralchoice.co.nz)**  
*A Catholic Worker project*  
*Cheaper alternatives to consumer*  
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Leading articles from the first 20 years of  
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Alternative funerals  
Restorative justice  
Other theological issues



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# Mason Street Musings

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In preparation for our 30th anniversary celebration for the Worcester CW, I went through all 179 past issues of our monthly magazine *The Catholic Radical* as well as 65 binders of articles, leaflets, and letters. What struck me most is the amazing number of people who have come in contact with our small Catholic Worker community. Literally hundreds of individuals have volunteered here and well over two thousand have been guests. Hundreds of vigils, marches, and other peace campaigns have been organized to oppose the blood lust of American presidents, arms manufacturers, foreign leaders, and other secular and religious apologists for taking lives.

The past and present members of our community have been tried, jailed, and endangered here in the US as well as in various war zones. We have hosted speakers, Masses, prayers, and gatherings for many hundreds, including the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the Catholic Worker Movement. We have bitten off so much more than we could reasonably chew that it becomes obvious there must be a living God helping us out. There certainly have been an enormous number of generous individuals who have kept us afloat.

But anniversaries are not just good times to look back, but also to take stock and look forward. While daily requests make it abundantly clear that there is still a need for us to offer shelter, we increasingly find ourselves in a smaller and more grey group at peace vigils. Most local activists rolled up their banners when Barack Obama was elected and did not unroll them despite the fact that he never stopped killing people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Younger people come for service projects, but do not seem overly concerned about war, nuclear weapons, abortion, or the death penalty. Perhaps they have become inured to violence by the media. We took hope from their

enthusiasm for the Occupy Wall Street, Stop the XL Pipeline, and the Black Lives Matter movements, as well as the campaign of Bernie Sanders, but there seems to be little appetite for confronting endless war.

When I read Dorothy Day, though, I see how she confronted the vagaries of public opinion, which sometimes lauded her as a saint and at other moments derided her as irrelevant or hopelessly nostalgic. She once said that a commentator described the Catholic Worker in the early 1960's as 'lingering on.' But, as Peter Maurin knew so well, the fantastically good news of the Gospel leaps into popular imagination again and again when anyone takes it seriously. As he so rightly reminded us, moaning about what others aren't doing is a poor substitute for doing what is right ourselves.

So, here we go trying to live out with joy and hope a message so old that it looks new. So many of you magnify both emotions for us.

At this moment, we have a negative bank balance, multiple projects that need funds, and no plan to obtain them. After thirty years, we are as poor as we were when we began. Our economics are a slap in the face of the American dream and, to many, a sure recipe for disaster. 'How in the world will you survive in old age?' they ask. But such concerns did not overly trouble Dorothy Day and the saints she invoked for God's help. As Saint Teresa of Avila said so well, 'Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing affright you.'

We are confident that the good God will continue to provide whatever we need to accomplish whatever needs to be done.

*The Catholic Worker in Worcester MA (US), led by Scott and Claire Schaeffer Duffy, celebrated 30 years of service and witness in August. We join in honouring them for their decades of faith-filled inspiring work.*

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## Lamentations at Pine Gap

Jim Dowling

I have just returned from my sixth pilgrimage to Pine Gap. It is 3000kms from where I live. For some reason I seemed called to go, not to a holy place, but to the gates of hell. It is no exaggeration to say that hell will be unleashed if the Pine Gap base gets to serve its final purpose – the waging of a Nuclear War.

Richard Tanter from the Nautilus Institute informs us that the so called "Star Wars" program, started by President Ronald Reagan seemingly a lifetime ago, is nearly finished. Pine Gap plays an essential part in this multi-billion dollar project. The idea is to make a first strike nuclear war possible by shooting down the enemy's nuclear weapons from space before they can reach US targets, at the same time destroying the enemy

with our own nuclear weapons.

But for many victims of US and Australian wars of aggression, the end has come long before WW3. From Vietnam to Syria, Pine Gap has played and continues to play an integral role in all those wars. Essentially Pine Gap is a huge intelligence gathering centre. It collects radio transmissions, thermal images, and cell phone messages via satellites. This information is used for targeting purposes, essential to conventional as well as drone warfare. It would also be essential for fighting a nuclear war.

Over 800 people work at Pine Gap. Most of these are employees who work for the world's biggest arms dealers or their subsidiaries - Raytheon, Northrop

Grumman and General Dynamics. Only 10% are employed by the Australian Government and 20% by the US government. The other 70% work directly for private corporations - the aptly named "Masters of War," who happily rake in the billions of dollars from human misery. Pine Gap is just one part of their income.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Pine Gap treaty. A number of peace groups organized around this anniversary. Catholic Workers and friend, focused on a theme of "Lament" - with music and prayer, inside and outside the gates of Pine Gap.

We lamented firstly the frontier wars which dispossessed the aboriginal people of this nation. Local Arrernte tribal member Vince Forrester told of the 'Killing Times' from the late 1800's till the 1930's when so many of his people were killed to make way for white settlers and their cattle.

In 1966 one more piece of land was taken over by foreigners - Pine Gap. This time it would largely be used to kill people from other countries. No permission was ever sought or given by Arrernte traditional owners for this, land to be used by the US war machine.

CW Franz Dowling and Margaret Pestorius composed a lament for guitar and viola, while Paulie played harmonica and sang. The Lament was first played at a gathering in the Alice Mall. Later it was played at a ceremony to change the name of a street in Alice Springs. The street in question, Willshire St. had been named after a certain constable who had been famous for murdering

Arrernte people. Vince Forrester recounted his terrible deeds below the street sign bearing the name while the sad lament played.

Later we travelled to the front gates of Pine Gap and played the Lament against the backdrop of a beautiful sunrise. When the busloads of workers arrived we briefly blocked their path, before being dragged away by police.

Finally, in the early hours of the 29th September, we took the Lament into the base itself. We climbed over an outside fence at the rear of the base, and then climbed the small hill closest to the Raydomes. As we climbed I held out a large picture of a child victim of a US bomb in Iraq. All the while Franz and Margaret played the Lament as in a funeral procession. It was a very moving moment when we reached the top of the hill and the brightly illuminated domes of Pine Gap stretched out before us.

Soon after, the police also arrived. We were arrested and charged under the Defence Special Undertakings Act" which carries a maximum penalty of 7 years in jail for trespass.

Four days after our action, Peace Pilgrim Paulie from Cairns also entered the base, sang songs of lament and prayed before being arrested and released without charge.

*A CW for 40 years, Jim Dowling and his son Franz are members of the Brisbane Catholic Worker*

## Film Reviews

***The 5th Eye* – NZ Documentary, 112 minutes.**

**Directors: Errol Wright and Abi King-Jones**

**Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

This brilliantly made documentary, which premiered at the NZ film Festival, follows the story of Catholic Workers Sam Land, Adi Leason and Dominican friar Peter Murnane OP in 2013, as they prepared for and carried through a non-violent act of resistance, to the presence and function of the Five Eyes spy base at Waihopai, outside Blenheim. (The other four eyes are the US, Canada, the UK and Australia, hence the title.)

Their action, their subsequent arrest, trial and acquittal have been well documented with much original footage shown here. But what is different about this film is that it places in context the establishment of the facility, the lies and propaganda that flowed about it from successive governments, and the secrecy that has allowed what is essentially a US military intelligence base to be set up on NZ soil without scrutiny from our parliament. It confirms the total post-war sycophantic dependency of NZ on the United States which in 2016 is stronger than ever under the Key Government and has led us into wars overseas.

The faith of the 'bumbling trio', after much prayer and preparation, getting into the base at night through electronic fences and electric wires is a story of great courage and determination. Even when the best laid plans



went horribly wrong and it seemed the mission might be aborted, their faith came through and they pressed forward. They felt they were guided at every step by the Holy Spirit and this film is testament to that faith, a rare thing in public life in NZ.

While scary in that the film confirms how much of a 'surveillance society' we have become with all our emails and electronic communications now passing by US eyes in Washington, it is also hopeful about the human spirit in revealing through interviews and old footage the wide range of people who oppose this type of mass surveillance. They realise that it makes us less human and less free. And less democratic.

*The 5th Eye* is highly recommended to all who are tired of deceit and still have hope in a better future.

***Hautu – Peace People of WWII.* A film by Kathleen Gallagher. Director: Steven Arnold. 58 minutes. DVD \$30, plus \$3 p/p. Orders to - [wickcandlefilm@yahoo.com](mailto:wickcandlefilm@yahoo.com) Reviewer: Patrick O'Connor**

Whilst driving across the causeway 15 minutes after attending the premier of *Hautu – Peace People of WWII*, the stunning sunshine penetrating its rays through my windscreen was nourishing in balance as I reflected on this insightful film by Kathleen Gallagher and Steven Arnold.

Kathleen, the poet, playwright, author, filmmaker, mother, wife and deeply committed Christian and political activist, can aptly be described as a prolific producer in the above creative genre. Always producing challenging creative social commentary material, often of a reflective justice theme, this film is no exception. Kathleen has written a piece worthy of wide acclaim, as it traverses the glorious courage of conscientious objectors in World War II and the inglorious bigotry, hatred and torment such brave people were subjected to.

The audience were riveted by skilfully portrayed images, filmed with beautiful subtle light and stunning facial close ups of the pain experienced by Catholic and Methodist cell mates, both of whom had unswerving conviction - war and killing are simply wrong, wrong, wrong.

The film leaves the viewer unambiguously aware of both Gallagher and Arnolds' conviction in exploring the theme. What is further cause for celebration that some Peace and Disarmament Education Trust and Quaker

funding has ensured that children at 250 schools will benefit from exposure to a phenomenon most of them will be unaware of. This film captures and communicates graphically the futility of war versus the faith-inspired strength of personal sacrifice.

No viewer could have been left without the impression that war is a farce in the eyes of many, and that through the committed energy of such dedicated people, as Kathleen and Stephen and their 100 plus team of co-contributors, people will be reminded of the intestinal fortitude of those who take a stand against immorality. Bravo. Go and see it, buy it on DVD, get it out.

## Letters

Howick

Dear Jim,

Very many thanks for continuing to send *The Common Good* and keeping me in the loop. Thanks too for your obituaries on Fr Dan Berrigan. In the late 1960s, I found coming up against the compulsory military training regime in NZ as a conscientious objector a pretty lonely business. At that time the witness and writings of both of the Berrigan brothers, Dan and Phil, helped me as I was still a young man finding my way.

All the best for your noble apostolate,

*Peter Robertson*

### We were just sitting there talking...

We were just sitting there talking when Peter Maurin came in.

We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying, "We need bread." We could not say, "Go, be thou filled." If there were six small loaves and a few fishes, we had to divide them. There was always bread. We were just sitting there talking and people moved in on us. Let those who can take it, take it. Some moved out and that made room for more. And somehow the walls expanded.

We were just sitting there talking and someone said, "Let's all go live on a farm." It was as casual as all that, I often think. It just came about. It just happened. I found myself, a barren woman, the joyful mother of children. It is not always easy to be joyful, to keep in mind the duty of delight.

The most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty, some say. The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone anymore.

But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, 'a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.' We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know him in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.

Postscript of her autobiography *The Long Loneliness*. By Dorothy Day

| <b>In this issue</b>  | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Technology and the Gospel - Jim Consedine .....                 | 1-2         |
| Editorials - Peter Healey SM, Jim Consedine, Frank Cordaro..... | 3-4         |
| New Catholic Worker - Berrigan House .....                      | 5           |
| Poems and Around the Traps .....                                | 6-7         |
| Lamentations at Pine Gap - Jim Dowling.....                     | 8           |
| Hiroshima Day remembrance.....                                  | 9           |
| Film reviews, letters .....                                     | 10-11       |

## **The Common Good**

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## **The Secret of Life**

The secret of life is to let every segment of it produce its own yield at its own pace. Every period has something new to teach us: The harvest of youth is achievement; the harvest of middle age is perspective; the harvest of age is wisdom; the harvest of life is serenity. The Rule of St Benedict tells us to do all things with counsel, to learn from those around us who have already gone the way before us, to ask the opinion of the entire community when making major decisions. Those are all good lessons. They can save us from ourselves. They can stop us from forcing butterflies before their time. They can make the harvest full.

—from [A Monastery Almanac](#) by Joan Chittister