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# The Church often needs apparent failure

Fr Noel Connelly

In 1910 the World Missionary Conference gathered in Edinburgh. It was a remarkable meeting. It was the starting point of modern mission and the launch pad for the ecumenical movement. It was also the peak of Western mission.

The delegates were so confident of their mission and of the progress of science and improved means of travel and communication that they believed this was a sign of God's providence and the whole world would be Christian by the year 2000. But within decades their hopes were dashed by the trenches of World War I, the Depression, World War II, the end of colonialism, the end of Christendom and the rise of the Third World and its Churches.

It was a similar story with Catholic Mission. In a century we went from supreme confidence to a malaise in mission so that Pope John Paul II felt compelled in 1990 to write *Redemptoris Missio*, an encyclical to assure missionaries of the "permanent validity" of mission.

It's an irony of life that when we are successful we believe that God must be on our side and when our works fail then we despair and feel deserted by God. Yet **the church has always needed apparent failure and suffering to become fully alive to its real nature and mission.** It is all too human to confuse our plans and our successes with God's plans for the world. Through failure we come to recognise that mission is God's mission, not ours, and we must allow God the freedom to save in the way God wishes. Our task is to be faithful and hopeful.

It is easy to be hopeful when bolstered by the optimism of everyone around us but it requires



faith and courage to trust that all will be well when everything seems to be going against us and God seems absent.

Recently I read a statement by Timothy Radcliffe which inspired me. "Christianity does not offer a road map, but it does have a story." It is Jesus' story. It is a story of failure, misunderstanding, betrayal but also of faithfulness and self-sacrificing love.

It was the same for the disciples frequently, but especially with Jesus' death, their hopes for the future were dashed. Yet somehow they managed to hang on, to be as faithful as they could because of their confidence in Jesus.

Most of us would love life to be simple and trouble-free but we slowly learn to be grateful for the crises we face. A crisis-free existence for the Christians and the Church is unhealthy and strangely soul-destroying. It's in crises that we come close to God and are converted and rejuvenated.

Fr Noel Connolly  
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## *A good news Rotary story from the Solomon Islands*

Back in 1989 at **St Joseph's, Tenaru**, during the Principalship of Br Paul Murphy, a somewhat diminutive **Joseph Aaron** was a Form 3 student.

In the Annual Magazine of that year Joseph described how he spent his holidays: "As a boy from Golden Ridge, it is best to spend my holiday at home and pan gold to get my school fees for the next term." As for his schooling, Joseph wrote: "Learning does not only mean you come to school to learn to read and write only, but is also includes doing something practical according to the subjects you take. Such subjects are Agriculture, Business Studies, Industrial Arts, Home Economics and Typing."



Joseph in Form 3, front row second from the right

This enthusiasm and practical bent stood Joseph in good stead when he became a teacher himself at the Don Bosco Rural Farm, Terere, (some 23 km east of Honiara on the main island). In 2007 he was awarded a Royce and Jean Abbey Agricultural Scholarship under the sponsorship of the Rotary Club of North Balwyn through the assistance of the Director of International Service, Bob Bott.

The North Balwyn Rotary Club has been involved in many projects in the Solomon Islands, from renovating the hospital and school in the town of Tulagi (located in Central Province) to supporting the redevelopment of the abandoned rice fields at the Don Bosco Rural Farm, Tetere.

Rice had not been grown commercially in the Solomon Islands for a number of years and local families simply could not afford the cost of imported rice.

Through the Scholarship, Joseph was able to spend three months in Australia, attending classes at the Rice Research Centre - Jerilderie, NSW. He also undertook extensive field work with his Rotary Host Families.



Joseph learns about rice growing in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

One of the highlights of Joseph Aaron's visit to Australia was an address to a 900+ audience of Rotarians and friends at a District Conference in Shepparton. He won the admiration of all through his enthusiasm and sincerity, promising that on his return home he would "work hard, give his best as a teacher and pass on to his students all that he had been privileged to learn from his training at the Rice Research Centre Jerilderie, NSW".

Immediate success has been achieved under Joseph's supervision at the Don Bosco Rural Farm. The harvest has yielded, on average, 100 kilos of rice for the families of students who worked hard under his direction. Previously, each student would have been lucky to take home 20 kilos.



Further development of the rice fields at Tetera are underway with new "paddy rice" planting having commenced in mid January this year plus a variety of vegetable crops to preserve the fertility of the soil. The drilling of three new wells has provided a ready supply of water.

Continuing its support, the Rotary Club of North Balwyn provided the funds for the wells to be constructed as well as the purchase of



pipes for the water to be evenly distributed throughout the rice fields.

So, certainly a good news story of a former Marist student now teaching rice-growing skills in a Salesian College thanks to the North Balwyn Rotary Club.



Fr Ambrose, Joseph & Rotarians Bill Oakley & Bob Bott



Joseph proudly showing off his house

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# Father Damien of Molokai



“His cassock was worn and faded, his hair tumbled like a school-boy’s, his hands stained and hardened by toil; but the glow of health was in his face, the buoyancy of youth in his manner; while his ringing laugh, his ready sympathy, and his inspiring magnetism told of one who in any sphere might do a noble work, and who in that which he has chosen is doing the noblest of all works. This was Father Damien.”

- Charles Warren Stoddard, who visited Kalawao in 1884



No person is as central to the history of Kalawao and Kalaupapa as Joseph De Veuster, or, as he is best known to the world, Father Damien. He arrived during the early days of Kalawao’s history, when people with

Hansen’s disease were being rounded up throughout the Hawaiian Islands and shipped to the isolated settlement on Moloka`i.

Joseph De Veuster was born in Tremeloo, Belgium, in 1840. Like his older brother Pamphile, Joseph became a priest in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart. Pamphile was to serve as a missionary in the far distant “Sandwich Islands,” but when it came time for

him to depart he was too ill to go. His brother Joseph went in his place.

He arrived in Honolulu on March 19, 1864. There he was ordained in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace on May 31 and took the name of Damien. His first calling was on the big island of Hawai`i, where he spent eight years. He often travelled great distances to minister to the people of his districts of Puna, followed by Kohala and Hamakua. In 1873 he learned of the need for priests to serve the 700 Hansen’s disease victims confined on the island of Moloka`i. He and three other priests volunteered to go in succession. Damien was the first, and soon he was on a boat carrying cattle and 50 patients bound for Kalawao.

Damien was the most famous but not the first caregiver or religious worker to arrive at Kalawao. He followed Congregational ministers, Catholic priests, Mormon elders, and family and friends of patients who went voluntarily to Kalawao to help. Slowly, Kalawao became a place to live rather than a place to die, for Father Damien offered hope. He spoke the Hawaiian language. Assisted by patients, he built houses, constructed a water system, and planted trees. He also organized schools, bands, and choirs. He provided medical care for the living and buried the dead. He expanded St Philomena Catholic Church.

Not a “retiring” personality, Damien did not hesitate to badger the Hawaiian government and his church for more resources. These efforts attracted worldwide attention, resulting in a heightened awareness of the disease and the plight of its victims.



St Philomena Catholic Church - Kalawao

During Father Damien's years at Kalawao, others came to help. A number of priests spent varying lengths of time. In 1886 Joseph Dutton arrived, followed in 1888 by Mother Marianne Cope and two of her sisters from the Order of St. Francis. They, along with four Brothers of the Sacred Heart who arrived in 1895, carried Damien's work into the next century.

Father Damien had lived in Kalawao 12 years when it was confirmed that he had contracted Hansen's disease. Although the disease is not highly contagious, Damien had not been careful about hygiene. Over the years he had done nothing to separate himself from his people. He dipped his fingers in the poi bowl shared with other patients. He shared his pipe. And he did not always wash his hands after bandaging open sores.



Damien was 49 years old when he died April 15, 1889, at Kalawao with Mother Marianne at his bedside. Shortly before his death, he wrote his brother Pamphile, "I am gently going to my grave. It is the will of God, and I thank Him very much for letting me die of the same disease and in the same way as my lepers. I am very satisfied and very happy." He was buried in the cemetery next to his church, St. Philomena. The people of Kalawao had lost their strongest voice.



Damien's death was widely noted throughout Hawai'i and in Europe. As the years passed, his life of devotion served to inspire thousands. Because Kalaupapa remained an isolation settlement and the world could not come to his church and grave, Damien's remains were exhumed in 1936 and reburied at Louvain, Belgium. In 1995 a relic composed of the remains of his right hand was returned to his original grave at Kalawao, to the great joy of Kalaupapa and the rest of Hawai'i. Damien's life of service to the sick and outcast continues to serve as an inspiration.

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# The car and the pine cone



John Dear, SJ. *On the Road to Peace*  
*National Catholic Reporter*: October, 2009.



There are many facets of nonviolence. We're just beginning to plumb the mystery, the possibility, the hope of becoming a nonviolent people. But there is, I think, one basic straightforward and practical measure of our nonviolence -- how we drive.

Surely, in the closing days of fossil fuels, the ideal is not to drive at all. Meantime, until cars fall into obsolescence, in this day of road rage and texting on the road and talking on the cell phone, the principles of nonviolence would have us drive centered and aware, peaceful and calm, so as not to hurt a soul.

That means, of course, no offensive driving and no handheld devices. Rather we embrace good, old-fashioned courtesies. We go the speed limit; we offer a nod to let cars in ahead of us. Without citing the word "nonviolent," *Road and Travel* magazine offers a nice litany of tips for nonviolent driving: don't tailgate, don't cut others off, be magnanimous, offer leeway, don't express anger, don't get drawn into a confrontation.



Of course, these days, it's easier said than done. I violated several of these recently while driving through an

unfamiliar town. A side street beckoned, a shortcut to the main road. Thirty miles per hour

read the sign on the post. I turned in, only to find myself behind a driver crawling along like a farmer flogging a lazy mule over a hill. In fits and starts we moved ahead, sometimes as slowly as five miles per hour.

I was flooded with annoyance. Why won't she go faster? I thought. My frustration level rose. Is she lost? What possible reason is there for this? Soon we came to an

intersection. Inwardly I pleaded with her: "turn right, turn left, go anywhere but straight."



At the intersection she stopped, and stayed stopped long beyond a reasonable hiatus. Then finally, off she crawled -- to my disappointment, straight ahead -- at the rapidity of a tortoise. Alas, she would be my pacesetter for another block.

By now, I had had enough. I pressed on the horn and blasted the air, a blast good and long. That ought to get her moving, I thought.

Her car lurched to a stop. Out came the driver, apoplectic, a young woman with fury in her eyes. She stormed over to my car window, eyes popping out of her head, and screamed. "What are you doing? Why are you in such a hurry? You're scaring me!" On the instant, my anger eased, and I fell into an instant case of sheepishness. "I'm so sorry. You're right." Back

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to her car she stomped, twice looking back with a fierce glare.

As we again crawled ahead, I wondered: what had happened? It was only later that it dawned on me. My boorish behavior had little to do with her or her driving. Rather it had to do with an old pain. That morning, a Jesuit I had visited casually uttered the name of a certain Jesuit provincial, one who had written me last year, urging me to leave the Society of Jesus because of my anti-war work (a fairly regular occurrence for me; not a day or a week goes by without some severe criticism). I thought I had let go and moved on. But here it was again, the wound reopened and another bout of anger and resentment -- which I unleashed on the poor driver ahead.

Such is the mechanics of road rage. Some hurt or bitterness stirs anger within us, and along the highway we take it out others. We cut them off, lean on the horn, and fling in their direction a choice and unflattering name. And in the process we put each other in harm's way.

There is a story by a German member of the Order of InterBeing, Thich Nhat Hanh's community. His name is Karl, and he spent a lot of time on the road with Nhat Hanh. Once in Austria, on the way to a retreat, while at the wheel, Karl started picking up speed. Along he went with gusto, far above the speed limit, the great Thich Nhat Hanh sitting beside him. Soon Nhat Hanh put his hand gently on his arm and said, "Please, Karl, it seems you are driving very fast now." Embarrassed, Karl slowed down and maintained the speed limit.

Later, during a rest stop, Nhat Hanh vanished into the woods for a little "walking meditation," and then returned. "I have a gift for you," he told Karl. It was a pine cone. Put it on your dashboard, he said. "Every time you drive faster than the speed limit, it should remind you of my wish that you mindfully take your foot off the gas pedal."



I've taken the story to heart myself. While hiking alone in the Rocky Mountains National Park in Colorado recently, I found a beautiful pine cone and placed it in a

conspicuous spot in my truck. It reminds me to drive more nonviolently, more slowly, more peacefully. Sitting there, it also makes me smile; it calls to memory Nhat Hanh's gentle and wise way of teaching us how to be more mindful.

Life is short. I don't want to spend it hurting others; I don't want to hurt anyone ever again. Neither do I want to waste it in useless anger, impatience, or frustration. Nowadays I'm adding to my spiritual disciplines the practice of peaceful driving. As I move along, I listen to music, say my prayers, and enjoy life. I try to avoid the rush and impatience.

Nonviolence is ever unfolding, ever new, ever challenging. It requires vigilance, creativity, helpful reminders and constant reflection about each aspect of our lives. It's a journey, but even so, a nonviolent journey. The deeper we go into the mystery and mysticism of Christian nonviolence, the more we realise there's no rush. We've already arrived.

As Nhat Hanh would say, we're already home.



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## *Newman College students become immersed in Aboriginal Culture in northern W.A.*



Sacred Heart Church,  
Beagle Bay

In the last week of Term 3, nine Year 11 students from Newman College, Churchlands, headed north to Broome and then further north to Beagle Bay to undertake an immersion experience.

Their intention was to gain an appreciation of aboriginal culture and the starting point was the University of Notre Dame Australia's Broome Campus. Here the Indigenous staff members provided them with an introduction to Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal Australian historical and contemporary issues.; including Aboriginal Spirituality and Dreaming, kinship systems, language, the importance of country and numerous policies and government legislation that have impacted on the Aboriginal people over the last 120 years.

The students visited two Aboriginal organisations in Broome, the Nirrumbuk Skills Centre and Goolarri Media Enterprise, where they gained an insight into how Aboriginal organisations are governed and the way they co-exist with non-Indigenous organisations.

Broome Campus lecturer, Joe Edgar, accompanied by his brother Jim, both members of the Yawaru community, hosted the group on an excursion to Mungala-gun (Crab Creek) where they learnt about Yawaru



Western Beach at Cape Leveque

seasons and heard the dreaming stories of the area. Joe and Jim introduced them to bush tucker and bush medicine, showed them how to recognise animal tracks and helped them to find dinosaur footprints.



Jim Edgar shares a Dreamtime creation story  
told through drawing in the sand

A valuable opportunity for the students was to meet Leonie Kelly, a local aboriginal woman, who grew up in the Beagle Bay Mission which was established by the Sisters of St John of God who had travelled from Ireland to work with the Aboriginal people of the Kimberly.



During their time in the Beagle Bay community the students spent three days at the school working with the children in the classrooms. On their last day a group of students from One Arm Point taught them bark painting and fishing in the traditional way with a hand-crafted spear. Their efforts were rewarded with a couple of fish, a stingray and some crabs which were cooked and consumed as they listened to stories by some of the Bardi Elders.



In their feedback on the experience the students spoke highly of the value of the program and, for some, how they found it life-changing. One student wrote: "Until now I only knew of the stereotypical Aboriginal portrayed in the media. This immersion experience has given me a greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal people and their culture."

In turn, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Director of the Nulungu Centre, Professor Lyn Henderson-Yates, said that it had been a pleasure to host the staff and students from Newman College and for those at the Broome Campus to have the opportunity of sharing the story of the Aboriginal people.



Dinosaur footprints in Crab Creek

Story from The Record, October 7, 2009

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# How do these people survive?



Recently, when I went to McDonald's I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9 or 12 Chicken McNuggets.

I asked for a half dozen nuggets. 'We don't have half dozen nuggets,' said the teenager at the counter. 'You don't?' I replied. 'We only have six, nine, or twelve,' was the reply. 'So I can't order a half dozen nuggets, but I can order six?' 'That's right.' So I shook my head and ordered six McNuggets.



I was checking out at the local Woolworths with just a few items and the lady behind me put her things on the belt close to mine. I picked up one of those 'dividers' that they keep by the cash register and placed it between our things so they wouldn't get mixed. After the girl had scanned all of my items, she picked up the 'divider', looking it all over for the bar code so she could scan it. Not finding the bar code, she said to me, 'Do you know how much this is?' I said to her 'I've changed my mind; I don't think I'll buy that today.' She said 'OK,' and I paid her for the things and left. She had no clue as to what had just happened.



A woman at work was seen putting a credit card into her floppy drive and pulling it out very quickly. When I inquired as to what she was doing, she said she was shopping on the Internet and they kept asking for a credit card number, so she was using the ATM 'thingy.'



A mother calls 911 very worried asking the dispatcher if she needs to take her kid to the emergency room: the kid had eaten ants. The dispatcher tells her to give the kid some Benadryl and he should be fine. The mother says, 'I just gave him some ant killer.....'

Dispatcher: 'Rush him in to emergency!'



## An Important Message

### to all Marists

The organisers of the Marist Youth Festival, which was to be held from 12-15 December this year, regret that due to difficulties experienced in preparing for the event we have had to cancel. Such an event requires all aspects of the organisation to operate effectively and unfortunately we were not able to achieve this to our satisfaction and to the requirements that you would expect.

We regret any inconvenience that this might cause and we hope that you understand that we have cancelled in the best interests of all involved.

Should you wish to discuss this with us further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

The Festival Coordination Team.

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### Our deceased and their families

- **Fr Gavin Fitzpatrick**, brother of Br Majella, Sale.
- **Norma Dimmock**, aunt of Br John Furlong, Adelaide
- **Mr A. O'Connor**, uncle of Br Peter Howes, Templestowe
- **Maurice Ludeman**, husband of Janet
- **John Moloney**, former student from Kyneton.
- **Kathleen O'Brien**, aunt of Br Anthony.

### For those who are unwell ...

- **Betty Segafredo**, undergoing major surgery. Betty and husband Dan have been great supporters of Notre Dame in Shepparton.
- **Br. Kevin Hogan**, Netley.
- **Br Des Crowe**, Somerton Park
- **Brother Charles Howard**, Sydney.
- **Br. Anthony O'Brien**, recovering from heart surgery. Traralgon
- **Br Brian McGrath**, Forbes
- **Tom Lambert**, first lay Principal, Mitchell Park. Treatment for lung problems.
- **MaryAnne Needham**, sister of Br Mark
- **Noel Granger**, cancer patient; cousin of Br Kevin Langley.
- **Melanie Meehan**, wife of Matthew - nephew of Br Linus Meehan.

### And also for ...

- Courage and guidance to respond generously to the calls from the **General Chapter**.
- **Members of the new General Council** as they take up the work of leading our Institute.



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