

A DISCUSSION PAPER

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON OUR COMMITMENT TO THE MAORI PEOPLE

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Introduction

In 1983 I circulated a document entitled Towards a Greater Commitment of the Whole Church to the Maori people. It had been said, rightly I think, that our diocese (and formerly the Archdiocese of Wellington) had never developed a clear policy, and so the Maori missionaries had been largely left to work out for themselves what they were supposed to do. After consultation, I issued what I described as a "developing policy". There were some subsequent discussions with Maori groups and with priests, but by and large the whole matter was sidelined by a "business as usual" approach by some, and "it doesn't concern me" approach by others.

Our unresolved problem has its roots in this country's early colonial history. Before the influx of European settlers, the missionaries were shaping Church life according to the needs of the Maori people. This changed when they turned to meet the needs of the European settlers. It is wrong to assume that the Maori people never "fitted into" the Church's life; historically, it was the European settlers who did not enter into, and in some instances walked away from, the mode of Church life that was already in place before they came.

It is understandable that European Catholics did not feel "at home" in the Maori way of worship. It is also understandable that the Maori people did not feel "at home" in the Church that developed in response to the needs and demands of the European settlers. The Maori people's sense of not feeling "at home" in a Church geared to the needs and style of Europeans is well known, and their avoidance of it indicates their instinct for survival against the dynamics of assimilation.

Our situation today is the direct heir of that history. But the point is: we are still at it. This statement is not intended to accuse or to blame; it is only to say: let us know what we are doing; let us check whether it really is the right thing to do. We are not just the heirs of what is happening but the agents of it.

The Situation and Why it is a Problem

By reason of our history and by reason of what we are doing, parish life, parish programmes, parish apostolates and institutions are geared to the needs and tastes of Pakeha Catholics, who are the "majority users". And so, Maori Catholics, in order to live the faith in the Maori way, seek their own company and their own ways of practising, centred around the marae and the Maori mission station. The result is two modes of Church life in parallel, i.e. they do not really "touch" each other.

The problem is not that either group chooses different ways or different venues, but the fact that in doing so they then presume it is in order to live and practise the faith largely ignoring the existence of the other group. In this sense, each group is being marginalised by the other. (In another sense, it is usual to speak of the dominant group marginalising the non-dominant group; but this would imply that Church life centred around the marae is on the margin, whereas from the Maori perspective, it is at the centre.)

I am not saying the solution is for Maori Catholics to give up their own ways and come to the parish churches and do things the Pakeha way. And I am not saying the solution is for Catholics of European descent to live the faith in a Maori way. At this point, I am only saying that to prevent the marginalisation of each group by the other we need to bring each into the consciousness of the other. This requires that there be points of contact.

No doubt, it will suit some to say "why change the situation if everybody is happy with it? The Maori people are happy with their way; we are happy with ours." My answer is that we are hardly entitled to be happy with a situation in which each group can live and practise the faith in a way that is no different from how it would be if the other group did not exist.

And so the question is: at what point and in what ways should the two come together? What should be the points of contact? There are different possibilities, but before we come to these, it is necessary to identify the basic principles of any right solution.

Two Basic Principles - Unity and Diversity

1. As the body of Christ, the Church is intended to be a sign of the reconciliation of all people in the same body - cf Eph. 2:16, Gal. 3:27, 28, etc. The Church cannot be this sign if this reconciliation is not visible. Signs are not signs if they are not visible. (Those who have worshipped in large gatherings of people from many nations know how this experience puts into relief the very thing that makes them one, namely their common faith in Christ.) Witnessing to the reconciliation achieved by Christ is an essential aspect of witnessing to the gospel.

2. It is a need and a right of the Maori people to live the faith in a way that is truly theirs. This is based on the need and right of all people to be themselves and to function in ways that are truly their own.

Equality does not mean uniformity. It is important to recognise the diversity and complementarity of one another's cultural riches and moral qualities. Equality of treatment therefore implies a certain recognition of differences which minorities themselves demand in order to develop according to their own specific characteristics... (The Church and Racism, Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax", 198, n.23)

This recognition of differences is a necessary precondition for a people's sense of identity and self-worth, and for true integration as distinct from mere assimilation. It is meaningless to talk about integration if we fail to recognise its prerequisites.

This is also what underlies the Church's commitment to inculturation, (cf below). All these considerations are what lay behind Arbuckle's advice to us in 1976 that efforts to absorb Maori Catholics into the parishes as they stand would be wrong. Moreover, failure on our part to promote the right kind of "separate space" would only help to drive Maori people towards the banner of total separateness.

It follows from the first principle above that parallel developments which do not come together at any point fail to witness to reconciliation and therefore are in conflict with the Church's nature and mission. There cannot be a "Maori Church" and a "Pakeha Church".

It follows from the second principle above that any coming together

that ignores the Maori people's right to develop the faith in their own way is in conflict with natural law and the gospel. There cannot be a Church which blurs and smothers God-given differences.

And so, it further follows that an appropriate policy will provide for both the "space" that Maori Catholics need to practise the faith in their own ways, and points of contact that make visible the unity of the body of Christ. The question now is, what are those points of contact?

Points of Contact

Theoretically, the points of contact could be the parish, the diocese, or the Church at national level. In each case, the parish or the diocese or the Church at national level would umbrella the Maori and Pakeha modes of being Church. A coming together at any one of those points would prevent parallelism, which involves no point of contact.

1. Unity at National Level

In this hypothesis, Maori and Pakeha Catholics would come together only at national level and each group would operate independently of the other at diocesan and parish level.

This corresponds approximately to what many Maori Catholics intended when they asked the Pope for a Maori bishop for the Maori people throughout the whole country. In this arrangement, the point of contact between Maori and Pakeha Catholics would be the Bishops' Conference, and whatever other national bodies to which Maori and Pakeha Catholics might be appointed.

A comparison can be made with the position of Catholic people living in military bases. Regardless of what diocese they live in, they all have the same bishop, and he is a member of the Bishops' Conference, not only as bishop of his diocese, but also as the bishop of Catholic military personnel and their families. The difference, however, is that military personnel are not just one ethnic group. The Holy See was concerned not to create a precedent of making an appointment that related primarily to ethnic identity.

Further reflection needs to be done on whether separate "space" right through to national level is needed as the prerequisite for true development and integration. (This seems to be the direction

in which the Anglican Church in New Zealand is moving.)

2. Unity at Diocesan Level

In this hypothesis, the point of contact for Maori and Pakeha Catholics would be the diocese. At parish level they would function in parallel, which is largely what happens now. The Maori missionaries minister directly to the Maori people, and are accountable to the bishop in the same way that priests of parishes are accountable to the bishop. The point of contact, therefore, is the bishop, and whatever diocesan bodies to which both Maori and Pakeha Catholics might be appointed.

This system has the advantage of providing a close working relationship between the Maori missionaries and the Maori people, and this closeness is very important to the Maori people. But it means that the ministry of the parish priest is limited to mainly, or even only, the Pakeha members of the parish. In other words, it contributes to the present monoculturalism of the "parishes".

3. Unity at Parish Level

In this hypothesis, the point of contact for Maori and Pakeha Catholics would be the parish itself. This would require us to perceive the "parish church" and the "Maori mission station" only as two different places within the parish, and to perceive the parish as encompassing both groups of people. In other words, both groups belong to the parish, and one group is not the "parishioners" more than the other group.

In this hypothesis, priests of the parishes would be priests for the whole people, Pakeha and Maori, and not just for the Pakeha people.

For the same reason, Maori missionaries would not be semi-autonomous chaplains acting, as it were, alongside the parish; they would be assistants to the priests of the parishes. They would be specialists, helping the parish to minister to the Maori members of the parish.

Unity at this level does not mean the Maori missionaries and the Maori people would be cut off from each other; it does mean that the

parish priests would not be cut off from one section of the parish community, viz. the Maori people, and it means that the priests of the parishes would not be serving only their Pakeha parishioners. There will always be times when helping the parish priests means providing Masses at which the parish priests are unable to preside, whether in the Church or on the marae. But instead of this being a non parish based ministry, it would be an expression of the parish's care for the Maori members of the parish.

Nor does this mean that the priests of the parishes would be expected to do things they cannot manage; it means they would do what they can and the Maori missionaries would assist them with as little or as much assistance as they require. A primary task of the Maori missionaries, which presupposes the goodwill of all priests, is to help the rest of us learn about ministering to the Maori people. This should eventually mean not fewer priests in the service of the Maori people, but all of us.

The reaction of the Maori people to this hypothesis has so far been one of fear: fear that they would lose the services of the Maori missionaries without gaining the services of other priests. It is a genuine fear that already busy priests will not be able to take on an additional commitment to them. It is also a fear that they would be expected to fit into Pakeha expectations, or even deprived of opportunities to do things their own way because of non-understanding by priests of the parishes.

What, then, are to be the points of contact that both respect the Maori people's need for their own "space", and bring Maori and Pakeha Catholics into the consciousness of each other? We need a solution to this question that is practicable, sustainable, and able to be reviewed from time to time.

Inculturation/Evangelization/Conversion

Inculturation is a two-way interaction of the gospel and culture. "Culture" means a people's way of perceiving the world, of finding

meaning, and relating to one another. These ways are rooted in the consciousness and unconsciousness of the group, and find expression in the customs, institutions, historical memories, myths and symbols which are theirs and which identify them. "Inculturation" means that the gospel takes root within all of that, and at the same time purifies it of those distortions which have their origins in sin.

Evangelization and conversion are about letting the gospel put down deep roots, transforming the way people think and act, as individuals and as a people; (cf Pope Paul VI, Letter on Evangelization, nn 62, 63) For all of us, this transformation is never finished, which is why Pope Paul VI was able to say that in order to evangelize, the Church itself needs to be evangelized (cf *ibid.* n 15)

The unfinished nature of this task among the Maori people is highlighted by a significant paradox. On the one hand, there is the deep and pervasive spirituality of the Maori people. That "split between faith and daily life" which the Second Vatican Council said was one of "the more serious errors of our age" (Church in the Modern World, n 43), is foreign to Maori spirituality. Likewise, the Maori people have not succumbed to the individualisation and privatisation of faith that has plagued Western Christianity. In these respects, Pakeha Christians have bigger problems to solve.

On the other hand, the strengths of Maori spirituality only put into sharper relief the extent to which the gospel has not yet taken deep root. It is estimated that 17% of the Maori population would have been baptised Catholic. Of these only 1%-2% would attend Sunday Mass regularly (compared with 30%-40% of Catholics of European and other Polynesian descent). And, of this percentage, only a fraction of Maori Catholics would attend the Sunday liturgy in parishes where the majority of parishioners are non-Maori. This low level of involvement does not necessarily signify lack of faith or religious indifference, because where there are Masses in the Maori language, or in places that are specifically Maori, or at specifically Maori events, their involvement is much greater.

Again, there is among Maori Catholics a serious lack of understanding of how the Christian Churches are different and why these differences

really matter. Indeed, the tendency to fudge the differences, or not take them seriously, is often spoken of as if it were a particular virtue of the Maori people.

Further, there seems to be a considerable gap between the number of baptised Maori and the number who later come forward for Confirmation.

What is the significance for all of us, and for the health of the Church, that so many Maori Catholics have not even completed their initiation into the Church?

It is to be hoped that the minita-a-iwi programme for which the Maori people deserve to be congratulated and supported, will gradually overcome these problems. But we can also expect that as the Maori people take more responsibility for their faith, they will feel the need for real and authentic inculturation.

Pope Paul VI described inculturation in terms of "transposing" the gospel in a way that has consequences for "liturgical expression, catechesis, theological formulation, secondary ecclesial structures and ministries" (Apostolic Letter on Evangelization, n.63). Pope John Paul II says that true catechesis will "help to bring forth original expressions of christian life, celebration and thought from a people's own living tradition" (Apostolic Letter on Catechesis, n.53). For these remarkable developments to happen, it is necessary to till the Maori soil in which the gospel is to be sown so that it can produce these "original expressions" of Christian faith and practice. Mere grafting is not enough and has not worked. Evangelisers, pastors and catechists will have to ask themselves what the difference means for the way they do their work.

Inculturation will not be easy for those Maori Catholics who have internalised some of the more negative attitudes to their culture that came with some of the early missionaries. It will require them to distinguish between the substance of the faith and the historical and cultural forms in which they at first received the faith. For others it will mean not allowing themselves to be seduced by claims that the gospel of Christ and Maoritanga are incompatible.

For Pakeha Catholics, deeper conversion will mean learning how to recognise the subtler forms of prejudice that can be part of us even without our noticing.

Prejudice generally results from ignorance rather than from ill-will. The prejudice of uniformity, however, is particularly active. People's prejudice in this way assumes that justice means all people should be treated in precisely the same way, no matter how different individual needs happen to be. Of course, being treated in "precisely the same way" means in practice ignoring the special needs of minority groups and relating to them as though they had needs the same as those of the dominant cultural group (Arbuckle, G, Dress and Worship; Liturgies for the Culturally Dispossessed, 1985, p.3)

It can easily happen that one section of a country's population, especially if it happens to be the majority group, fails to notice how it dominates other groups. In New Zealand, the Pakeha people have shaped New Zealand's social customs, education system, laws and other institutions according to a European way of thinking. This is a natural tendency; it happens even without any conscious racial prejudice. But it is nevertheless a form of domination. It assumes that one people's way of thinking should be normative for everybody, and it does not leave sufficient room for people of other cultures to do things their way - except on their own. It forces a kind of separation between the races; (P.J. Cullinane, Concerning Daily Business and Religious Faith, p.27).

For Maori and Pakeha Catholics together, deeper conversion will mean reaching beyond all secular categories and recognising each other as members of the same household of the faith. To focus narrowly on the tangata whenua - manuhiri relationship is to overlook the fact that when the tangata whenua share their mana with the manuhiri, a new relationship is formed - hunga kainga. This presupposes and never disregards the basic tangata whenua - manuhiri relationship, but it goes further. It means they belong to the same household.

For an even greater reason, this is the reality for Christians

So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22)

Resourcing

The dignity of all people requires that they help themselves as far as possible. The gospel ethic goes further by requiring that the stronger support the weak; witness the collections taken up by St Paul.

The disadvantages experienced by the Maori people as a result of a social and economic order geared to the needs and preferences of Pakeha New Zealanders is well known. These disadvantages also affect their ability to resource their own Church needs. One of the most constructive ways the Church as a whole tries to compensate for this is by providing education for Maori students. This represents a very considerable financial contribution.

In addition to education, the diocese carries out among the Maori people an apostolate that for the year ending 31 March 1990, cost \$62,334.36. This cost was met from several sources: Clergy Trust Fund (stipends of Maori missionaries), \$16,770; the annual Maori mission collection, \$10,944; grants from the Catholic Charities Foundation, \$10,000; additional diocesan contribution, \$24,620 (which equates to 15.6% of the levy on parishes for diocesan works.) The total cost of funding the Maori apostolate, not including education, equates to 10.8% of the diocese's annual budget.

Bi-cultural Involvement

This diocese has tried to promote bicultural partnership in several ways. In the twin belief that education is one of the most significant ways of helping others, and that people need to be in charge of their own destinies, we have ceded the proprietorship of Hato Paora College to a Trust Board, which effectively puts the management of the College and the farm into the control of the Maori people, while maintaining our own involvement, and maintaining the link with the Catholic Education Management Board.

We have also provided for Maori membership on the Boards of Directors of two of the diocese's most significant agencies, namely Catholic Social Services, and Religious and Pastoral Education.

Likewise, until the untimely death of Mr Rua Cribb, Rua and Reti Cribb provided Maori representation on the Diocesan Liturgy Commission. Our diocesan representatives on the National Commission for the Laity are both Maori, namely Rauna and Ray Edwards. Representatives of the Maori District Councils are also ex officio members of the five Deanery Pastoral Councils.

Maori people are also members of the staff of Catholic Social Services, but this is not yet the case in the staffing of our Religious and Pastoral Education team, youth ministry, diocesan administration, etc.

Appendix - Natural Law

What has been said above concerning equality and the rights of the Maori people has been based on natural law, not on the Treaty of Waitangi. This is not to say we ignore the Treaty; on the contrary, we see it as an expression of international law, which is itself based on natural law.

Under the Treaty, the new settlers recognised the Maori people as a sovereign people (tangata whenua) with the right to protect their identity, their heritage and their environment. The Maori people in turn, consistent with their own ideals of hospitality, undertook to share their homeland with the new-comers (manuhiri). The Treaty's fundamental disposition was that the Maori people retained their proprietorship and chieftanship (tino rangatiratanga), but ceded the right to govern the country, (kawanatanga) to the British government. (In the image used by Bishop Pompallier who attended the signing, New Zealand was like a ship, the ownership of which remained with the New Zealanders, i.e. the Maori, and the helm was put into the hands of the colonial authorities.)

One of the more fundamental problems is that the relationship between ownership and governance is not entirely clear. It seems certain that the Maori signatories considered they were sharing the right to govern, not ceding it, and that this arrangement would enhance, not diminish, their own authority.

Some Churches are trying to shape their Church life according to the Treaty. It is arguable that this involves the danger of asking the

Treaty to say more than the signatories had in mind. For Catholics, the need to do this does not arise, because of our natural law tradition. The requirements of natural justice reach into the whole of life, encompassing our lives as members of society and as members of the Church - with or without any treaty.

Natural justice is also the basis on which the manner of honouring treaties must take into account changed circumstances and requirements of justice wider than those specified in treaties. Sovereignty is itself relative to the rights of all people, including their right to a homeland, to migrate and to choose nationality. It is the right and duty of a State to facilitate and co-ordinate the rights of all its people whatever their origin. (cf Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax", *ibid* n.29) This makes possible a genuinely multi-cultural society.

In the context of Aotearoa-New Zealand, this involves positively promoting the rights of the people who have shared their homeland with the rest of us. This primary recognition of the Maori people's rights under the Treaty of Waitangi makes the difference between whether the rest of us are here by covenant or by conquest.