

PEOPLE OF THE EUCHARIST AND TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

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The Church in our country is greatly indebted to the Religious Orders to whom the “Māori Mission” was entrusted. These were mainly the Society of Mary, the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, the Mill Hill Missionaries, and the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. Their work continues to bear fruit, and any alterations to pastoral practices need to safeguard the right of Māori to continue to experience the life and worship the Church in ways that are natural to them.

Nevertheless, a Māori Mission running in parallel with parishes had serious unintended side-effects: the parishes became European-monocultural, and diocesan priests received little or no training for ministry to Māori. These factors ensured that most Māori would not feel ‘at home’ in our parish church celebrations of Eucharist.

Against that background, our more concerted efforts in recent years to introduce te reo into parish Masses seems a tiny gesture, but it has to do with recognition of tangata whenua, inclusion and belonging. Of course, it would be mere tokenism if it were not to follow through in all the ways required by respect for the rights of Māori in wider society, and for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Eucharistic life involves the rejection of racial prejudice and discrimination wherever these occur.

Prejudice is mainly unconscious, which is why it is often denied. But it can also be mischievous. Affirmative action has long since been accepted as an important way of off-setting serious disadvantages experienced by various groups within society, and of meeting “special needs”. It is about creating equality of opportunity, and is sometimes called “levelling the playing field”.

But when affirmative action of various kinds is proposed as an offset to disadvantages experienced by Māori, it somehow turns out to be “privilege based on race”. Familiar examples follow, but the point here is that ‘land settlements’ on their own do not undo the down-stream social and economic consequences of the land confiscations, and other losses that cannot be measured in monetary terms. This has particular application in the areas of health and education. Redressing harmful imbalances is a matter of natural justice, and would have been so even if there had been no treaty.

“Co-governance” is a way of accepting cultural diversity, as well as a form of affirmative action. The inclusion of Māori wards on local councils, for example, is intended to off-set the disadvantage of people whose cultural perspectives can be excluded when “one person one vote” ensures domination by a majority’s cultural perspectives. It does not involve separatism, as some falsely claim; it is a way of *working with* each other. Other openings for representation and participation, based on subsidiarity, power sharing and partnerships, help to ensure that ‘one person one vote’ does not become a tyranny. Importantly, it allows different cultural perspectives, like those relating to the management of water and conservation practices generally, to be included in decision-making.

The refrain “one law for all” is also discriminatory because it is based on the assumption that people are “equal” only if they are all treated “the same”. This is naïve because people’s basic needs can be different – whether they result from personal circumstances, cultural differences, historical injustices, or social and economic deprivation.

Similarly, bland references to us being “one people” contradict the very idea of a treaty which is an exchange between two peoples (tangata whenua and tauwiwi), entered into at the time of their coming together to form one nation. The obligations accepted in the articles of the Treaty carry over

into the future, otherwise the Treaty simply has no meaning at all. Even in our multicultural society, there are still tangata whenua, and those who came more recently.

Legal arguments about the status or the interpretation of the Treaty do not excuse from responsibility. There is still a moral obligation to ask what was the reason for entering a treaty, and what the parties hoped to achieve.

When the Colonial Secretary asked Captain Hobson to seek out a Treaty with the 'Natives', he gave this explanation: "... I have already stated that we acknowledge N.Z. as a sovereign and independent State... Admission of their (Māori) rights is binding on the faith of the British Crown. The Queen disclaims for herself, and for her subjects, every pretence to seize on the islands of N.Z., or to govern them as part of the Dominion of Great Britain, unless the free and intelligent consent of the Natives shall first be obtained." (Whatever about subsequent actions of others, this explanation of British intentions does not reflect the so-called doctrine of discovery.)

The preamble to the articles of the Treaty shows that the need for effective government was the principal reason for the Treaty. In article one of the Māori text, the term *kāwanatanga* was coined to indicate governance which was being ceded to the Crown, and in article two the term *tino rangatiratanga* was used to indicate Māori's continuing chieftainship over their lands, customs and all else that was important to them. Bishop Pompallier, who had participated in the proceedings, noted in his diary what he understood by this: "Their (the Māori) idea is that N.Z. is like a ship, the ownership of which should remain with the N.Zers (Māori), and the helm in the hands of the Colonial authorities."

Our celebrations of Eucharist are meant to feed into our daily lives. In this way, the use of *te reo* in parish Masses should whet our appetites for the kind of hospitality, listening, sense of community and inclusiveness that we have been talking about on the synodal journey. Perhaps a next step is to experience Mass on a marae and to recognise Māori's warm and welcoming ways, and how these properly belong to the gathering stage of coming together for Mass.

Respect for the rights of the home people can be only a first step in our reaching out to the many others in our society who suffer from inequalities which derive from social and economic policies, or from 'special needs'. It also involves our support for other ethnic groups who can be victims of racial prejudice. Anything less than a prophetic stand for all these is less than Eucharistic.

Failure to address racial and cultural prejudice as well as failure to redress disadvantages deriving from personal, social or economic conditions affecting any groups in society, can be evidence of the Second Vatican Council's claim that "the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age. (G.S. 43).