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A spiritual prison tale

by

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There were two Maori men up in the prison, young men in their twenties. The social worker called me in to see them. The prison psychiatrist believed they were mentally ill – they were very disturbed and were ‘seeing things’ – and he had made arrangements to transfer the boys to the psychiatric hospital the following day. So I went up to see these men, and I took a Pakeha priest to accompany me. The psychiatrist was there too. They were in an underground cell. It seems that a man had once been hanged in that cell. They could see the spirits of that man and they were very afraid. I took some water from the tap and blessed it, and I sprinkled it over the boys and over the room, and said some prayers. I told the spirit that it had no business being there and to leave the men alone.

The next day the prison psychiatrist rang me and said, ‘There’s nothing wrong with those men now tell me what you did’. I said, ‘You saw what I did’, and I was so angry. He was from a European country somewhere, and I felt like saying ‘Why don’t you go back to your own country. There are plenty of unemployed Maori people who could do these jobs better than you.’ You see, if Maori are mentally ill, you should have an understanding of the culture when you work with them to enable them to heal, but the Pakeha doctors just put drugs into their bodies.

Anyway, the only side effect of my treatment was that the two Pakeha men who were sharing the cell complained that my holy water had wet their beds!