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Our Say Learning from conversations we've had

When adults engage in conversations in an authoritarian or rigid way we resist them. Perhaps the more polite will say he/she has strong opinions. The less polite might say he/she is rude and insensitive. The psychologists might say he/she is insecure and feels compelled to cover up this insecurity with false confidence.

Whatever the reasons, it is not the sort of thing that promotes human relatedness, care and concern. Genuine conversation dies with such behaviour and with it community.

What does it feel like to be on the receiving end of this kind of treatment? Typically, we feel frustrated and angry. We feel of no account because the other will not listen to us. Such an encounter evokes, in some measure at least, a certain rage of impotence. We are not permitted to be a genuine part of the conversation. This is pseudo conversation. It is not surprising if people avoid these kinds of engagements or try to restructure the conversation so a more fruitful and lifegiving relationship can be fostered and celebrated.

The French historian of spirituality, Louis Bouyer comments on the influence of the 2nd century lawyer, Tertullian:

Where Tertullian's influence has proved most harmful is, perhaps, in the kind of polemics he succeeded only too well in acclimating in ecclesiastic circles: combining an abstract and completely *a priori* logic with the supposition (candid or implied) that the adversary must be a fool or else dishonest.

Bouyer points to a kind of pseudo conversation of which any of us may be guilty. The Church's self-understanding until recently, in fact, could have provided fertile ground for this to happen (cf Bishop Robinson's essay inside this issue).

It is sometimes argued that the kind of exercise of authority and conformity which bypasses conversation & the hard task of listening to the other, is necessary for good order. That is not the point. The point is the nature of the Church and the Person and teaching of Jesus whom we believe to be the Christ, and the example He gave us on human relationships.

There is hope in the vision set for us by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. They invite us to think anew about the Church and how we, as Christ's faithful, will live together in this world.

It is possible for us to engage each other in good conversation. It is not appropriate for any of Christ's faithful to lord it over others, called as we are to serve as He served.

We could meditate on the words of John XXIII's Opening Speech for the Council to set the mood for the kind of conversations that are possible:

At the outset of the Council, it is evident as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. □

This journal is one of the works of
the Sydney based group
Catalyst for Renewal.

These are the founding members:

Marie Biddle R.S.J., Marie Byrne,
Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue,
Kate Englebrecht, Michael Kelly S.J.,
Robyn Lawson, Stephanie Long,
Chris McGillion, John Menadue
Tony Neylan, Josephine Scarf,
Martin Teulan, Ruth van Herk,
Michael Whelan, S.M.

The following is its mission statement:

We are believers who are attempting
to establish a forum for conversation
within the Catholic Church
of Australia.

Our aim is to prompt
open exchanges
among the community of believers,
mindful of
the diversity of expression
of faith in contemporary Australia.

This springs explicitly from
the spirit of Pope John XXIII
and Vatican II:

"Let there be unity
in what is necessary,
freedom in what is unsettled,
and charity in any case"
(*Gaudium et Spes*, n.92).

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The Four Arrows & the Cross symbolise
diversity giving rise to communion in and
through the Paschal Mystery. Those who
are diverse by nature & culture, in and
through Christ find lifegiving unity.

The Human Face

Caroline Jones AO

My name is Caroline Jones. I was
born with the war. My father en-
listed in the army and was away from
home for the first five years. I grew up in
a household of women in the small
friendly country town of Murrurundi. I
felt secure. People cared about each
other. Friends on farms brought us eggs
and gathered us in for Christmas.

Granny, with whom my mother and I
lived was a beautiful lady from the Victo-
rian era - gracious, hospitable, the epit-
ome of a good Christian. She was de-
scended from Flora MacDonald, the
young Scotswoman who engineered the
escape of Bonnie Prince Charlie to
France after the rebellion of 1745.

We went to the Anglican church.
Harvest Festival was an annual highlight.
Granny was on the Women's Guild. My
mother played the organ.

At twelve I went to boarding school.
No doubt it was sensible to send an only
child to boarding school to make friends
and receive a good education. But I expe-
rienced leaving home as an abandon-
ment, the beginning of existential loneli-
ness. That piercing loneliness was part of
my life until my mid-forties when I came
to an understanding that I was made in
the image and likeness of God, & loved
by God, & through that, that I was con-
nected with everything else.

While I was still a young woman, my
mother died. She was a beautiful, creative
woman, but she suffered from a lack of
self-confidence & meaning in her life.
Her suffering put me on a search for
meaning and is the deepest motivation
for what I now see as my vocation: a de-
sire to encourage others to find hope,
purpose and happiness.

But at the time, her death was devas-
tating & I fled from it into work, finding
an extraordinary energy born of flight
from unresolved grief. It was on that en-
ergy that my career in current affairs re-
porting in radio & television was built.
But that sort of energy is finite. Eventu-
ally it vanished. The pain in my heart
was sitting there, waiting to be attended
to, and it asserted itself, after twelve
years, as loneliness, fragmentation &
exhaustion.

In the midst of celebrity I was person-
ally lost. Confused, I walked away from
the work which had been my life. I en-
tered a time of dark night of the soul. The
structures of work on which I had built
my identity and emotional security were

gone because I had no energy or spirit to
continue. It was time to cease profes-
sional, objective questioning of the world
and look within. It was intensely painful.
I went searching into literature and the
texts of spiritual traditions. I went to
people doing charitable work, searching
for clarity, trying to discern what I should
be doing, where I might belong indeed
who I really was.

The best help I received came from
people who just listened to me. Two of
them were Catholic priests. This was a
turning point. Then I met Catholics who
seemed to live with a joy and optimism I
lacked. Invited to a facility run by the
Daughters of Charity to open an art
show, I experienced the spirit of the Be-
atitudes, framed on the walls, lived out in
real life, as the sisters cared for their
Down's syndrome residents. Their light-
hearted, trusting happiness attracted me.
I wanted to know its source. I began to go
to mass and the ritual spoke to me per-
sonally. To my amazement I felt that I
had come home, after many years in the
wilderness.

Slowly I awakened to the reality of
the Cross, something I had been taught in
my youth but had never assimilated. I
saw that, in Christ, suffering (which is
otherwise annihilating) can contain the
seeds of hope and new life. It was a
revelation. It gave me a template of
meaning to place upon any setback from
that time on.

I became a Catholic in 1985. I find
the Catholic intellectual climate stimu-
lating. Its focus on what it means to be
human embraces all the vital questions of
our time. I treasure the Sacraments. Rec-
onciliation gives me a safe and sacred
place to take stock of my life. Eucharist
remains a crucial sign of God with us, a
tangible source of nourishment. I belong
to a CLC prayer group based upon the
Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The gift of
faith has brought salvation, meaning and
peace to my life, for which I thank God. □



Your Say Scrutinising the signs of the times

by Jim Carty SM, Provincial of the Marist Fathers

Although he did not live to see its completion, Pope John XXIII will be remembered as the man who had the vision, the courage, the insight and the initiative to launch the Second Vatican Council. This decision has already profoundly affected the lives of millions throughout the world and will continue to do so for centuries to come.

In the Vatican Council document entitled *The Church Today - The People of God* - the role of the Church is clearly articulated:

The Church offers to humanity honest assistance in fostering that brotherhood (and sisterhood) of all which corresponds to their destiny. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: To carry forward the work of Christ himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served.

Soon after, in the same document, we find under the title "The Situation of Men & Women in the Modern World - hope &

anguish" these words:

To carry out such a task the Church has always had the duty of scrutinising the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation the Church can respond to the perennial questions which men and women ask about this present life and the life to come and about the relationship of the one to the other.

The document then goes on to speak about the extraordinary changes taking place throughout the world and the effects, both good and bad, these changes are having on the lives of men and women in every nation and in every culture. Because of these great upheavals, the Synod urges creative initiatives and profound reflections on the social, economic, racial and ideological implications:

Caught up in such numerous complications very many of our contemporaries are kept from accurately identifying permanent values and adjusting them properly to fresh discoveries. As a result, buffeted between hope and anxiety and

pressing one another with questions about the present course of events, they are burdened down with uneasiness. This same course of events leads men and women to look for answers. Indeed it forces them to do so.

Therefore, in the spirit of the Vatican Council and its call for ongoing renewal and the inculturation of the Gospel message, I applaud the two initiatives you have taken - "Spirituality in the Pub" and the journal entitled "The Mix" as two creative fora for the exchange of ideas and for stimulating ongoing conversation among believers within the Christian tradition in contemporary Australia.

I look forward to receiving copies of the journal and have promised myself an evening or two at one or more of the gatherings in the pub during 1996.

Finally, please extend my congratulations to all the Editorial Staff and my sincere thanks for what I am sure will be a wonderful contribution to the vitality and search of the people of God in these exciting years as we approach the third millennium.

Letters

I write in support of the *Catalyst for Renewal* group and its journal *The Mix*. Any venture which enables the Church to be "a sign of hope in a world which cries out for such a sign", and which at the same time provides a forum for thinking adult Catholics to explore today's questions in the context of Catholicism, is to be commended.

Jan Geason rsm, National President, Institute of Sisters of Mercy Australia.

No one would argue that we are living in difficult times, when all the known landmarks seem to be failing. Tradition is under attack from all sides and much of the criticism is justified. However, while we are in a transitional period, where great change and the courage to face and make great change is needed, it is truly delightful and most encouraging to see a group like *Catalyst for Renewal*, who are willing to walk the extremely difficult, but life-giving path of accepting, creating, and implementing change without resorting to rebellion and revolution. I wish you all the success your group deserves. You have chosen the more difficult but more genuine approach to our global problems of necessary change. Too many

reject totally that which already is, attacking it from the 'outside' with a view to its destruction. Anyone can destroy. It takes real love and dignity to create.

Emma Pierce, Sydney

Allow me to join many others in congratulating you on the first issue of *The Mix*. I feel it is particularly important for me in my job as Retreat Director, because of necessity I am removed somewhat from the coal face. However, my vision of the Retreat house is not that of a spiritual holiday farm, but rather as a seat of mission for the Kingdom. We would like the people in your network to know they would always be welcome to join us here at Douglas Park. Blessings on you all in this ministry.

Fr. Terry Naughton MSC, Retreat House Director, Douglas Park, NSW.

I congratulate you on what you are attempting with *Catalyst for Renewal* and wish the venture every success. I believe you are spot on in what you are doing. This is precisely the kind of positive proactive thinking we need in the Church today, and I encourage you to keep it up. I

recently had a note from a young adult who said the guiding issue that came to her from *Spirituality in the Pub* was of being empowered and feeling able to do something amongst all the complacency in the local parishes. This is the type of thinking I believe St Paul would be employing were he here today.

Bishop Peter Ingham, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Sydney

Warm congratulations on SIP and *The Mix*. I think both are very exciting adventures. My only regret is that I doubt that I will be able to be a frequent attendee at SIP. On the other hand, if I re-organize my priorities there is no telling what might eventuate! Congratulations on a great initiative.

Br Michael Hill FMS, Provincial, Marist Brothers Sydney Province.

What an exciting prospect - *Catalyst for Renewal* and *The Mix*. I pray for its continuing progress and success.

Bev Hincks, Swansea, NSW

READERS' LETTERS WELCOME!

Essay - Signposts for an emerging Church

by Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

My reflections concern the vocation and mission of all Christ's faithful, in the Church and in the world. A lot of wonderful things have happened in this regard, but there is still more to happen. In order to highlight the movement of thought in this regard, I will consider first of all a mindset that prevailed in the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. Then I will consider the vision and spirit of the Council in so far as it is discernible at this point in history.

A helpful place to start our reflections might be two papal statements from the beginning of the century we are now ending. Firstly, Leo XIII - pope from 1878 to 1903 - wrote:

It is beyond dispute and quite unambiguously clear, that two ranks exist in the Church that are quite different in nature: the pastor and the flock. In other words, the leader and the people. The first of these two ranks has the rank of teaching, governing and directing people in life, and establishing the necessary rules. The other has the duty of submitting itself to the former, obeying him, carrying out his orders and paying him honour.

Secondly, immediately following Leo XIII as Pope was St. Pius X - pope from 1903 to 1914. He wrote:

In the hierarchy alone reside the power and the authority necessary to move and direct all the members of the society to its end. As for the many, they have no other right than to let themselves be guided and so follow their pastor as an obedient flock.

Both quotations reflect many centuries of thinking. That thinking is also reflected in the Church's Code of Canon Law of 1917. A contrast between that Code and the new Code of 1983 offers us both an insight into the way the Church's self-understanding has changed and some sense of where that thinking is now headed.

These two books of Church law cannot be considered the most important documents of this century. But they are certainly significant and powerful documents in how they represent the Church's self-understanding and the understanding of its mission in the world. Each can be seen as a point of arrival in the Church's

self-understanding. Each is, as it were, a window on its own era.

The ideas expressed by Popes Leo XIII and Pius X - and other writers of the time - are basic to the 1917 Code of Canon Law.

The 1917 Code was set out under the heading of "persons" - a very Roman law, juridical term. It began with those "persons" who were "Clerics", then those who were "Religious", and ended with those who did not fit either of these categories and were referred to as "Laity".

'There are no members of the Church who have a greater dignity than any others, and there are none who have a higher mission than any others.'

Every level of the Church's life was determined according to the clerical office at that level - moving from the Pope down to the curate. For example, there was no treatment of the diocese or the parish. Instead the Code treated of the Bishop and the Parish Priest.

Lastly, in a quite brief section of forty four canons, the Code dealt with the laity. This section began with two introductory canons. The first said the laity had the right to receive the sacraments from the clergy. The second said the laity were not to wear clerical dress. The remaining forty two canons dealt with Third Orders, Confraternities and Pious Unions, which were not recognised unless they had been established or approved by the hierarchy.

It must not be forgotten that many of us grew up with this view of the Church. Our Catholic sub-culture reflected it and fostered it. We might therefore ask: to what extent are the ideas still prevalent?

There will be a great variety of responses to this question. Many have more or less left this view behind them. Perhaps

many have not. Whatever the answer to this question in our regard as individuals, the Church as Church is struggling to move to a more sound self-understanding. Guided by the Spirit it seeks to renew itself in every age. This is part of the renewal to which we are all called as Christ's disciples. It demands a generous response that is at once urgent and patient.

There is much hope and encouragement to be gained from the vision of the Council. There is also much to be done to bring that vision to fruition.

Let us now consider the 1983 Code. This is a document with the same standing and authority as the 1917 Code, and destined, one hopes, to have the same influence as that earlier one.

We must, however, clarify a misunderstanding before we look at the 1983 Code. Many have interpreted this Code as a reaction to the marked decrease in the numbers going into seminaries and novitiates, and the general problems of the Church over the past few decades. In fact, the 1983 Code does nothing new. It simply reflects the Second Vatican Council and does not go beyond it.

At the time of the Council, seminaries and novitiates were full around the world. It was almost a peak time. Who could have foreseen the developments of the ensuing decades?

The Council presented its ideas because they believed in them. They were not reacting against problems that, as it were, forced their hand. The new Code of Canon Law arises from the vision and spirit of the Council, not the turbulence that followed. It is a document that embodies the Church's desire for renewal.

So what do we find in the new Code? It is divided into seven Books. After an introductory Book entitled "General Norms", the Code then describes the community for which these laws are enacted. This second Book is entitled simply "The People of God". Part I of this Book is entitled "The Christian Faithful" and the first canon reads:

The Christian faithful (Christifideles) are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own man-

ner. they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one."

The 1983 Code makes a significant shift in focus, from speaking of "persons" to speaking of "the People of God" - a far richer theological term that gives us a very different perspective. It gives primacy to baptism and the community of Christ's faithful - Christifideles. All other sacraments, roles and structures find their place in this context.

It is important to understand that "Christifideles" is not synonymous with "laity". The concept arises from the theology of baptism developed at the Second Vatican Council. It embraces equally every single person incorporated into Christ through baptism. Thus it includes equally the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a baptised inhabitant of a village in the New Guinea highlands, a nun, a parish priest, a baby baptised this morning, and every other person baptised into Christ.

The word Christifideles does not apply to any one of them more than to any other. The Code stresses that each is equal in dignity and action. Thus, there are no members of the Church who have a greater dignity than others, and there are none who have a higher mission than any others. Baptism into Christ unites us and is the sum of our dignity. All else is simply a further expression of this reality we share in common, a particular way of living out that baptismal vocation. Baptised into Christ, we give witness to Him who is the life of the world.

Such a significant shift in the Church's self-understanding demands a significant shift in our understanding of all the different facets of the Church's life. How might this, in particular, affect our understanding of the concept "laity"?

The English word "laity" is an interesting one. In common parlance it means "unqualified". So that, for example, around a hospital those who are not medical personnel are "laity" or "lay people". In religious circles it has acquired a similar negative meaning - that is, "not clerical".

The English word is rooted in the Greek word "laos", simply meaning "people". This original Greek meaning pointed to what was held in common. It did not have the same negative meaning of today's English usage.

The thinking of the Second Vatican Council, manifested in the 1983 Code, begins and ends with what we have in common through our baptism into Christ. When the term "laity" is used, we must always read it in this context of inclusivity. The term therefore implies more the *inclusive* meaning of the Greek word than the acquired *exclusive* meaning of the English word.

'The clergy are not the basic point of reference for understanding the People of God. Those baptised into Christ provide that basic point of reference.'

An analogy might help. We are all citizens of our country. Most of us are also civilians. But this term "civilians" is both negative and relative. It really means "non-military" and only has meaning relative to the military. In a social setting defined from the perspective of the military, civilians have some rights and responsibilities. But the major rights and responsibilities belong to the military. Outside that military perspective, our major rights and responsibilities flow from being citizens. The negative and relative term "civilian" misses the fuller meaning of being a citizen.

In a similar way, I suggest the term "lay persons" - with its negative and relative connotation - cannot adequately express the whole reality of those in the Church who are not clerics. The

clergy are not the basic point of reference for understanding the People of God. Those baptised into Christ - Christifideles - provide that basic point of reference. We need to re-think very carefully our understanding and use of the term "laity" as it has significant implications for our understanding of the Church as such.

To see this even more clearly, take the perspective of the sacrament of marriage. From this perspective we may divide members of the Church into 'married' and 'unmarried'.

Almost all clerics would come under the heading of 'unmarried'. They would rightly object if this became the dominant perspective. If books were written from this perspective, most clerics would be classed simply as 'unmarried' and nothing more would be said of them. This would not express their real role in the life of the Church and would therefore not do justice to their potential.

In speaking of the whole Church, the sacrament that should determine the dominant perspective must surely be neither marriage nor orders but baptism.

From this perspective, Christifideles - Christ's faithful - becomes the root term in our speaking of the Church. Different groups of Christ's faithful would be spoken of - married or unmarried, male or female, older or younger, vowed religious or not vowed religious, cleric or non-cleric.

Each group would be given its proper importance, neither denigrating nor underestimating its place within the community united by baptism. This will require a profound change of thinking on the part of us all. □

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson is an Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Sydney. He has a Doctorate in Canon Law.

**"Nothing else in the world ...
not all the armies ...
is so powerful as
an idea whose time has come"**

(Victor Hugo, *The Future of Man*)

Words for a Pilgrim People

"If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32).

*

"Only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness. Our contemporaries make much of this freedom and pursue it eagerly; and rightly so, to be sure. Often, however, they foster it perversely as a license for doing whatever pleases them, even if it is evil. For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man be left 'in the hand of his own counsel' (Ecclésiasticus 15:14) so that he can seek his Creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him. Hence man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice. Such a choice is personally motivated and prompted from within. It does not result from blind internal impulse nor from mere external pressure" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) n.17).

*

"Religion alive confronts the individual with the most momentous option this world can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks, and deserts of the human spirit. 'Who are the greatest benefactors of the living generation of mankind?' asks Toynbee. 'I should say: Confucius and Lao Tzu, the Buddha, the Prophets of Israel and Judah, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed and Socrates'". (Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, Perennial Library, 1965, 11.)

*

"To say I am made in the image and likeness of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. ... Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name." (Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New Directions, 1972), p.60.)

The Bible

The bible is a record of events before it is a record of people. The event which is recalled again and again throughout the bible is the Exodus Event. In the Old Testament, everything is written after this Event and in the light of it. Similarly in the New Testament. Everything is written after the New Exodus and in the light of it. The bible only makes sense in the light of those Exodus Events.

The Exodus Events are about liberation, freedom. The first thing to recognise about these Events of liberation is that they are pure grace. They spring from the initiative of a loving God - a God who forever after will be known as the God who saves, who loves people into freedom (cf. Ex. 4:32-40).

At its most obvious level, the first Exodus Event is about liberation from political, economic and social oppression. Thus the people are led out of Egypt where they had been slaves. But where are they led? To the desert, the place of death! Some liberation! Yet, here the drama moves to a greater depth. The liberation from Egypt is a harbinger. In the desert a much deeper liberation can occur. There, stripped of everything, the people will learn to trust God and form an intimate relationship with the Eternal Mystery. In the uncharted places the people must turn to the One with the map. The freedom at stake here reaches to the depths of a person's being.

The bible is to take us even deeper in this drama. The first Exodus points to the New Exodus of Christ's Passover. In Him, with Him, through Him, we find the freedom for which our hearts long. All other forms of freedom are mere echoes or shadows of this ultimate freedom in Christ. The disciples of the Lord are those who submit to this Exodus in every moment of every day. It is a dying to live. As we enter the uncharted places of life we abandon ourselves to the Eternal Mystery. Life is Exodus!

Suggested Reading: C. FitzGerald, "Impasse & Dark Night" in T. Edwards, *Living with Apocalypse: Spiritual Resources for Social Compassion*, Harper & Row, 1984, 93-116 - a brilliant explanation of "the dark night" in contemporary living, with a special focus on women; D. Dumm, *Flowers in the Desert; A Spirituality of the Bible*, Paulist Press, 1987 (esp. Chs. 1 & 2) - unfortunately this book is out of print but you might get a copy from a library or friend; it is an excellent book.

The Tradition

There are three foundational truths that run persistently through the history of Christian spirituality: we are made in the image and likeness of the Eternal Mystery; we are "fallen"; we are redeemed in Christ. We can call these the three pillars of Christian spirituality. Leave one out, over-emphasise or under-emphasise one and the entire edifice becomes lopsided or perhaps collapses altogether.

It takes constant vigilance and effort to keep all three truths in creative tension. Prior to the Second Vatican Council there was a tendency to over-emphasise our "fallenness", under-emphasise - even ignore? - our being made in the image and likeness of the Eternal Mystery, and thus distort our redemption in Christ.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen (329-389) says poetically: "The Word of God took a lump of newly created earth, formed it with his immortal hands into our shape, and imparted life to it: for the spirit that he breathed into it is a flash of the invisible godhead". St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 - younger brother of St Basil, who was a dear friend of Nazianzen): "You alone have been made the image of the Reality that transcends all understanding, the likeness of imperishable beauty, the imprint of true divinity." By nature the human person is a mystery because made in the image and likeness of the Eternal Mystery.

The same early writers borrowed an image from Plato to describe the experience of disharmony, of ever falling short of what we know in our hearts we are made for. We live, they said, in "the land of unlikeness". We are pilgrims in a strange land. We are all, in some measure at least, strangers to ourselves and those around us. "But trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home" (Wordsworth).

St Ireneus: "The Son of God was made man so that man might become son of God". The tradition is in no doubt about the grand potential of the human person in both nature and grace. Thomas Merton: "To say I am made in the image and likeness of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. ... Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name."

Suggested Reading: A. Squire, *Asking the Fathers*, Christian Classics, 1993 (esp. Chs. 1-4); J. Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, St. Paul Publications, 1985; G. Maloney, *Man The Ikona of God*, Dimension Books, 1976; T. Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, Anthony Clarke, 1961.

News in Brief

• The 1995 "Woman of the Year" award in Germany was given by the main ARD TV network to Maria Loley, a Catholic refugee worker in neighbouring Austria. The station said the 71 year old had given an example of "civil courage and deep humanitarian responsibility" during 30 years of work for refugees in cooperation with the local Catholic Church. In 1994 Loley had received an award from the UN High Commission for Refugees. She survived a neo-Nazi letter bomb attack last year which damaged her face and hands.

• The German Catholic Church's leading charity - *Renovabis* - received record donations during 1995 for projects in Eastern Europe. More than 20 million Deutschmarks was distributed to 431 new East European Church projects. Most of this money came from tithing within the local churches in Germany.

• Cardinal Martini, Archbishop of Milan, has forbidden Archbishop Milingo to continue his healing services within the Archdiocese of Milan. Archbishop Milingo, former Archbishop of Lusaka, was investigated in 1983 by the Vatican. It was suspected at that time that certain 'magic' practices were getting mixed up with the Archbishop's healing ceremonies. Since 1983 he has been special delegate to the Council for Migrants and Itinerants at the Vatican.

• The Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea have called on the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) to stop their violence. In recent months 14 government soldiers have been killed. The Bishops have also requested the government to exercise restraint.

• A group calling itself Jubilee People provides a network in Great Britain of groups and individuals promoting change within the Church. In the wake of the recent Cricklade statement of the Bishops of England and Wales which explicitly acknowledged the plight of Catholics who feel "hurt or angry or excluded", this network has strengthened its ties. It includes Catholics for a Changing Church, the Catholic Women's Network, Catholic Women's Ordination, the RC Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, the St Joan's International Alliance and Seven Eleven. They are inviting other Catholic groups to join with

them in their efforts to promote renewal within the Church. Jubilee People can be contacted c/- The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0QZ, England.

• The latest in a series of annual conferences under the general title of "The Face of God in Contemporary Society", was held at Douai Abbey Berkshire. This conference focused on the exercise of authority in faith. It was stressed that believers, who found themselves living in small Christian communities in pluralistic societies, had often adapted reasonably well to that fact. The hierarchy within the Church needed to recognise, in their exercise of authority that the people had moved on from what was the case thirty or more years ago. These conferences have been held under the presidency of Dr Jack Dominian for the past twenty years.

• The 18th European (Taize) Youth Meeting was recently held in Wroclaw, Poland. There were 70,000 young people present from all over Europe. The Canadian-born spokesman for Taizee, Brother Emil, spoke of the need to awaken in young people a sense of ecumenism. He said whilst the notion of 'reconciliation' means something to the young, 'ecumenism' does not seem to hold much meaning for them. Br Emil also emphasised that Taize tries to operate within the Churches, encouraging people to be involved in their local Church. Br Emil said there were a growing number of Orthodox Taize groups.

• Fr Bruno Hussar OP, a convert from Judaism who promoted peace among Jews & Palestinians, died at age 84 following a short illness. Hussar was the founder of Oasis of Peace, a community designed to foster peaceful co-existence among the Muslim, Jewish and Christian people of Israel. Hussar and the village, known also by its combined Hebrew & Arabic names, Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam, were nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize. Hussar participated in the Second Vatican Council and was an author of the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

• The Catholic, Episcopal & Evangelical Lutheran bishops of south-west Pennsylvania recently signed "a call into covenant". The Catholic bishop of Pittsburgh, Donald Wuerl, said this was "not something new. It is a continuation. It marks a milestone along the journey we have been making for thirty years". At the time of the Council, Cardinal Wright -

then Bishop of Pittsburgh - was one of the first bishops to heed the Council's call to ecumenism. This most recent agreement pledges the parties to cooperate in prayer, fellowship, education & social ministry.

• The Conference of Religious of El Salvador wrote an open letter to Pope John Paul II before his February visit to that country. Here is the text of that letter: "May the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your heart and guide you during these days when you are preparing your visit to El Salvador. In the name of all the religious in our country, I send you our warmest greetings and inform you how deeply happy we are that you are coming to El Salvador. At the same time I would like to tell you something of how we are thinking and feeling about your visit to our country. El Salvador is going through a post-war period which, for the poor, who are the vast majority, is a time of great disillusion and despair. After paying the price of so much bloodshed during the war, the people hoped for more tangible results in better living conditions for the poor. But what we have from the government is a neo-liberal economic plan which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. There is much corruption of political leaders of all tendencies, a huge problem of violence and delinquency, and a general economic crisis since the cost of the basic necessities has risen sharply while wages have remained the same. People are deeply tired after so many years of suffering but there is no rest for the poor since their post-war economic situation is desperate. For rural peasants the land problem remains unsolved. Many still have none. They have to pay for the land handed over to them in accordance with the Peace Agreements which is almost impossible since the little they earn from farming barely suffices to feed them during the year, and sometimes not even that. There is an urgent need to re-negotiate the payment for these lands since, as things stand, there can be no solution. The government does not want to hear of this. You will certainly receive much more information about the present situation ... But I wanted to tell you in the name of all the religious that you have a wonderful chance to say a word of hope for these poor people when you come here. Our hope is that you will encourage everyone in the country to work for a just distribution of economic resources and for an economic model that gives preference to the basic needs of the poor. The figure that has always given so much hope to our people is that of Monsignor Romero, martyr & faithful witness to our Lord Jesus Christ who, being rich, made himself poor in order to enrich us through his poverty. We hope for a word or gesture from you in support of the canonisation process of our dearly-loved pastor, Monsignor Romero. Yours sincerely in Christ, Sr Jean Ryan OSC, President, CONFRES.

"Foxes have holes & the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8:20)

