



THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4

JULY 1996

Giovanni Farquer

To love others from our uniqueness 2

“Angela”

A call for honesty 3

Geoffrey Robinson

The role of the laity in the Church 4

Rosemary Hutchens

An open letter to Bishop Geoffrey Robinson 5

Recommended Reading

Lay initiatives, priestless Sundays, autobiography 8

Our Say - Getting to the foundations

There is a way of thinking that is *foundational*. This way of thinking is marked, first of all, by a commitment to the Truth. It therefore grounds itself in listening & attentiveness.

Foundational thinking proceeds by way of questions such as “What is happening here - with me in particular and with the situation in general?”; “What are the foundational principles involved here?”; “Are there any unacknowledged assumptions at work here?”; “Where is the Truth in all this?”.

Foundational thinking waits upon the situation, involves itself in the deeper processes of what is happening, knowing that the best outcome will be when the Truth is allowed to emerge freely. Foundational thinking knows that the Truth overtakes us, we do not overtake the Truth.

Foundational thinking calls us out of ourselves, beyond egotistical designs. It is therefore the enemy of ideologies, dogmatism, fundamentalism, rigidity and authoritarianism of all kinds. It is the servant of true debate and genuine conversation. It never preempts the outcome of a debate or conversation because it desires nothing more than the triumph of the

Truth. It is not eager to win nor fearful of losing. It knows when it does not know and is humble enough to admit uncertainty and doubt. Foundational thinking produces the kind of thought that reconciles.

Foundational thinking is in contrast to a way of thinking that focuses on *issues*. This way of thinking is oriented towards solving a particular problem, changing concrete circumstances, getting something done. It proceeds by way of questions - such as “Why don’t we do this?”; “Why haven’t they done that?” - and statements - such as “This is what should be done”; “That is wrong”.

Issues thinking calculates, gets on with it, tends to be impatient to produce a result. It is not so much concerned with what is happening or the foundational principles that are involved. Tangible results are everything. Typically, the issues thinker is a pragmatist - if it works it is true.

In the face of the bigger struggles of life, issues thinking is prone to leave us egocentred, vulnerable to our own personal agendas. It tends to be a lightning rod for the unresolved conflicts of the individuals addressing a complex or emo-

tionally laden matter. It can thus produce destructive power struggles, where one individual or group of individuals fights for victory over another individual or group of individuals. Too often it produces the kind of thought that divides rather than reconciles

We live in a culture that is dominated by issues thinking, one that is not at ease with foundational thinking. We are a product oriented culture, impatient to get things done. We act as if life was merely a series of disconnected problems to be solved rather than a coherent Mystery to be lived. We are anxiously obsessed with control.

When challenged by the current crisis in the Church and world, with its demand for radical changes to the way we live, we could make the fatal mistake of responding merely out of issues thinking.

Foundational thinking is difficult & painstaking work. The longer this work is postponed the more likely it is that issues thinking rather than foundational thinking will determine the outcome in our efforts for renewal. Some may be pleased by the immediate results but those results will simply delay the real renewal. □

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).

This journal is published eight times
each year, April to November.
It is sent to all Friends of
Catalyst for Renewal.

The Editorial Committee is:

Fr. Michael Whelan SM
Ms. Joanna Thyer
Ms. Geraldine Doogue
Fr. Michael Kelly SJ
Ms. Kate Englebrecht

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No.255003/02125

Address correspondence to:

Fr. Michael Whelan SM
PO Box 139
Gladesville NSW 2111
Australia
Tel: 61 2 816 3614
Fax: 61 2 817 1073



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

MY NAME IS GIOVANNI
FARQUER. My family lived in
country Victoria, in a little town called
Romsey. I have a beautiful married sister
who is two years older than I, and a
brother who died when he was four. Ours
was a battling family. Amidst that I am
very conscious of being loved. When I
entered the convent a rather eccentric
priest wrote a reference for me. He said:
"Contrary to what appearances might sug-
gest, this young lady was not brought up
with a silver spoon in her mouth".

The Sisters of St Joseph taught us in
the small school in Romsey. I was always
very impressed with each of those sisters
as individuals. I guess they stirred up in
me a spirit of adventure & excitement, par-
ticularly in relation to the outback and
people in more remote areas than mine.

I could not wait to get out there and
teach children and work with families.
When I was fourteen I went to the Junio-
rate of the Sisters of St Joseph at Hunter's
Hill. I have very happy memories of girls
who were there at the time. Many of them
were very gifted.

My parents gave me no particular en-
couragement to enter the convent. In fact
my father worried about me. He thought
that my going to the Juniorate might get it
out of my system & he emphasised to me
that I could come home at any time. Both
my parents did, however, recognise that
going to the Juniorate was an opportunity
to get a good education - something not
readily available to children in country
towns unless they went away to boarding
school. I did get an excellent classical edu-
cation at the Juniorate - Latin, French, the
Histories, Mathematics, Literature, Music
- and I was at a stage in my life where I
drank it all in. I loved learning.

Our family did not wear its faith os-
tentatiously in any way but there were very
deep values there. Whilst I did not ques-
tion my faith as such, at a very young age I
did question a lot of expressions of the
faith. For example, when I went home
from the Juniorate as a fifteen year old and
went to the local dances I danced with the
Freemason and Protestant boys. That was
frowned on by some.

My parents never took me to task over
such behaviour. They in fact, encouraged
me to be an individual. Someone said I
seemed to have a deep faith without the
tribalism. I think there is truth in this. My
family, although very much part of the
Catholic culture, always maintained an
independence and a willingness to break
boundaries.

It has been one of the graces in my life
to have a strong appreciation for my indi-
viduality. In religious life this has at times
been a liability. We were never trained to
stand out in the crowd.

A friend once said to me: "Giovanni,
the marvellous thing about you is that
you've always had job satisfaction." She
did not like teaching. I loved it from the
first time I went into the classroom. It was
my stage, my workshop. It was wonderful.
I found there - conducting choirs, creating
music, classroom teaching and just work-
ing with young people - I could transcend
much that otherwise might have been op-
pressive. It was a legitimate avenue for my
creativity and individuality in a world that
demanded much conformity. When we
began to recognise diversity and different
expressions of the one charism, that gave
me enormous heart. Nothing or nobody is
going to stop me from living out the Jose-
phite charism as myself.

From a very early stage I had friends
amongst the sisters. In some instances at
least, they were unlikely friends. But I was
always able to break through the trappings
and get to the person. Real human bonds
were developed.

Today we religious are virtually
stripped of all our raiment and stand be-
fore the world as simply human. We have
our aspirations and fears and fragility in
common with everyone else. This experi-
ence is a means of binding us to humanity
and, particularly as Josephites, discovering
the poor in our midst - the young people
who are confused & afraid, the families
under enormous stress, the people who
have lost jobs and their hope, the emotion-
ally deprived, those damaged by the
breakdown of human relationships. I hope
we can be honest and authentic in all this.
That is the big challenge. □

(*Sr Giovanni Farquer is the Major Superior of
the Sisters of St Joseph, (North Sydney).*)



Sr Giovanni Farquer R.S.J.

Your Say A call for honesty

by "Angela"

I am a married woman with a family. More than thirty years ago I was sexually abused by a Religious. I was a young teenager at the time and the incident caused me confusion and a feeling of numbness.

Maria Goretti was in the news then and I can remember my mother saying somewhat authoritatively: "Oh, she would have told her mother!" I could understand Maria Goretti not telling her mother as I did not tell mine. In fact, I did not tell anyone at the time, probably because I lacked the knowledge and language to do so. I feel sorrow for the Brother, but am not angry. I am aware that he had left home as a very young boy to go to the Juniorate.

Aware of my own experience I was angered by a report recently issued in which it was claimed that only a few were involved in sexual abuse within the Church. I was - and still am - puzzled when I read this report. Who can say how many, like me, have been abused and have not told their story and perhaps never will tell their story?

About five years ago it dawned on me that I am part of this mess that the Church

is forced to struggle with. It came as a shock. I did not - and do not - want to be part of it, but I am - whether people know about it or not. When Bishop Geoffrey Robinson appeared on television and said he was ashamed for what had happened and wanted to apologise, I felt life inside of me. No amount of "compensation" could equal that. It was a healing moment.

On the other hand I feel both cynical and helpless when I hear representatives of the Church trying to sweep the matter under the carpet. That is not going to heal anything. Such evasiveness will, I believe, only cause me more pain as it further erodes the Church's credibility as a sign of truth in the world.

Such behaviour makes it difficult for me to trust Church representatives. I wonder what else is being evaded, or simply not faced. Are there other victims - not necessarily of sexual abuse - who are not being acknowledged?

Perhaps we all should examine ourselves in this matter. Deep within, what are your thoughts of the victims of the abuses? Does your loyalty to the Church whisper

that it would have been better had they kept quiet? Could you ever admire their courage in airing their hidden shame? Do you believe that justice will be done?

And what of the many victims of other abuses? How authentic are we rich Christians, for example, in our ministry to the poor? To neglect the victims in our midst - be they the victims of our behaviour or that of other people - is only to add further to our collective guilt and shame, no matter how active we choose to be in other ministries.

When I ask myself whether or not I think justice will be done in the matter of sexual abuse, deep inside I fear the honest answer is "No". Perhaps I am learning to live with and in a thoroughly human Church. I have much to learn because I grew up in a Church that was very confident of itself. A better Church has got to emerge from this, surely. It will if we face each other in the truth and avoid that crippling spiritual and emotional corrosion that is the inevitable fruit of denial. □

The author's real name has been withheld on request

Letters

Be re-assured that I spread the word about Catalyst & SIP. I sometimes think I talk about these things too much, but there exists such interest from others that I'll continue to do so.

Jenni Gilhorne, St Ives, NSW.

Wishing you well in this enterprise. I am looking forward to receiving *The Mix*.

Kathleen Collins SSPs, Carseldine, QLD

I am glad to be able to catch up with the exciting new ventures you are involved in - congratulations.

Ann Marie Webb, SM, Provincial of the Marist Sisters, Haberfield, NSW

Congratulations on Catalyst for Renewal - it is a venture needed at this time. I am glad you found me at Goondiwindi ... God bless each of you - and please keep a big vision plus ample compassion for all.

Agnes Ryan MSS, Caloundra, QLD,

I am continually awe struck at how the Holy Spirit is working in and through our lives. When I received *The Mix* I knew it was one of those cherished moments.

Irma Durham, Iluka, NSW

Keep up the good work!

Doreen Jones MSS, Buddina, QLD

A very good project!

Benedict Cruysmans, Bellevue Hill, NSW

We desperately need a journal such as this. Your editorial of Vol. 1, No. 1, speaks directly to me: "... many are feeling frustrated in their attempts to participate effectively in the life of the Church". Yes, I am willing to be "faithful, accepting both the rights and responsibilities that come with our baptism" and also "those choices we make might demand much of us". In fact they do demand much of us - it is the cost of discipleship, and it's a cost I must be prepared to bear if I am to be true to myself. My great concerns include the sobering thought about what kind of a Church will be there for my grandchildren. I want "It" to be a "Living Church". So I support the Catalyst for Renewal Group and wish you all well.

Patricia Panton, Thornleigh, NSW

During a recent visit to Sydney we attended Mass at St Patrick's, Church Hill, and there came upon *The Mix*. (What a great name!) We found it very stimulating and thought-provoking and are keen to

receive further copies.... Our best wishes for great success in this venture.

Jackie & Barry Wappett, Lismore, NSW

Congratulations! It is one of our signs of hope to see initiatives like this flourishing. There is a hunger amongst intelligent believers for a spirit of openness, freedom and vitality to take hold of our Church.

Bill Johnston, Centacare, Sydney

Your efforts have given fresh hope and sparked much discussion among sections of sodden hearted believers.

Paul Coleman SJ, North Sydney, NSW

I have been very encouraged to receive copies of *The Mix* & to know of SIP. The ferment of interest that is being engendered, evokes a new enthusiasm in me for renewal. ... Thank you for having a go.

Terry Sullivan, Bondi, NSW

Thank you for the great work you are doing. We have certainly been born in an exciting time but it is very painful. We all need support, and I am finding it through activities such as SIP and open discussions.

Aileen Kelly, Wahroonga, NSW

Essay - The role of the laity in the Church (Part 1)

by Geoffrey Robinson (Part 2, by Kate Englebrecht, will appear in the next issue of *The Mix*)

On the evening of June 20th, we held our first Catalyst Dinner. The intention was to use the congenial atmosphere of a meal to promote conversation. We chose the topic of "The Role of the Laity in the Church" and invited Bishop Geoffrey Robinson and Ms Kate Englebrecht to address the guests and stimulate the conversation. In this issue of *The Mix* we have the text of Geoff Robinson's presentation, together with a response from one of the guests. The next issue of *The Mix* will carry the text of Kate Englebrecht's presentation.

There are two ways of measuring the progress of a group or community on any issue. The first is to study its position at a given point in the past and compare that with its present position. The second is to compare its present position against an ideal of perfection. The second is the more common way but it is comparing a reality with an ideal and there can be many different understandings of what the ideal should be. The first is the fairer method, for it compares two realities.

On the subject of the Catholic Church and the laity, let us compare the beginning of our century with its end. Let Pope Pius X summarise the beginning.

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 pastors as an obedient flock.

In the period between the two wars this attitude began to change. People like Joseph Cardijn and Frank Duff began to involve laypersons in quite daring initiatives and there was much talk of Catholic Action and the lay apostolate. This work then bore fruit in the Second Vatican Council and many important principles concerning lay involvement in the Church were solemnly proclaimed. For the sake of the future it is important to recognise the progress that has been made rather than spend all our time comparing today's situation with our own understanding of what the ideal should be.

Having said this, I would like to spend the few minutes available to me speaking of the two blockages that I see in the way of further progress. They are sepa-

rate but closely linked. The first concerns language, the second power.

Both the Council and the Synod of 1987 sought to give a positive definition to the term "laity" by saying that laypeople were those Christians who were "in the world". I was present at the Synod and went through this process but I remain convinced that it is a misguided exercise. The term "laity" is and will always be both negative and relative.

To take an analogy, all people are citizens of their own country. Most are also civilians, but this term is negative and relative: it really means "non-military" and it has a meaning only in relation to the military. Some rights flow from being a civilian, but the major rights flow from being a citizen. If we read a document that constantly refers to the majority of citizens as "civilians", we know we are reading something written from a military perspective. In the same way, in the Church "laypersons" means "non-clerics" and has a meaning only in relation to clerics. Some rights flow from being a layperson, but the major rights flow from being a Christian. If we read a document that constantly refers to the majority of the Church as "laypersons", we know we are reading something written from a clerical perspective. Many Church documents assume this perspective.

In all matters personal relationships are of the greatest importance

The clerical perspective starts from the sacrament of priestly orders, but in speaking about the whole Church the sacrament that must determine the dominant perspective must surely be baptism. A document written from this perspective would use a term common to all the baptised. Latin texts are today using "Christifideles", but the translation, "Christ's faithful", is not gaining popular acceptance and I believe that it is unlikely to do so. The most obvious term is "Christians", though there might be times when the context demands the use of "Catholics".

Documents written from this perspective would speak about Christians throughout. In speaking about them, it would eventually begin to speak of differ-

ent groups: on the basis of gender, it would speak of women and men; on the basis of age, it would speak of the young and the old; on the basis of marriage, it would speak of the married and the single; on the basis of ordination, it would speak of clerics and non-clerics; on the basis of religious profession, it would speak of religious and non-religious. It would give each group its proper importance, neither overestimating nor underestimating the role and contribution of that group.

To some it may seem to be talking only of the meaning of words but I believe the matter is important. The constant and unwarranted use of the word "laity" when the word "Christian" or "Catholic" is more appropriate only serves to legitimise the clerical perspective that has been so dominant. For progress language is important.

Turning now to the question of power, the Second Vatican Council said many excellent things about the rights of all Christians, but it left all power at the universal level with the Pope, at the diocesan level with the bishop and at the parish level with the parish priest. The restrictions on the power of any of these are minimal. In order to combine this with the many good things it was saying about the role of all Christians it invented the term "hierarchical communion". Hierarchy expressed the vertical element of authority, communion expressed the horizontal element of consultation and cooperation.

It is not easy, however, to keep vertical and horizontal elements in harmony. Some bishops and priests are consulting better than others, but it all depends on the individual and there are no guarantees. This has led to a conviction in the minds of many Catholics that their opinions are not listened to, while at the same time creating a rod for the back of bishops and priests, for no matter how hard they try, they can never convince all people that they are genuinely listening. This situation is creating much ill will and tension. The Council saw all authority in the Church as coming solely from priestly or episcopal ordination and this needs much further thought. Until these matters are resolved, they are the great blockages to progress in this field.

Can the present model be made to work? Where there is goodwill, yes. There are certain attitudes that we might look for from the hierarchy and from the communion. From the hierarchy (including priests in their parishes) we might look for:

- 1) a recognition that all authority in the Church is an **authority to serve**.
- 2) a willingness to run the risk of **delegating** authority to others rather than **keeping** everything in one's own hands.
- 3) the genuine **empowering** of lay persons by supporting and encouraging them, allowing them to make their own decisions and their own mistakes.
- 4) serious application to the difficult task of **consultation** with all the people who would be affected by a particular decision and a commitment to consensus whenever this is possible.
- 5) a desire to keep people **informed** concerning what is happening, why it is happening, the priorities that are being followed and the decisions that are being considered.
- 6) a **sensitivity** to the needs of others and an understanding of the genuine concerns of others.
- 7) a serious attempt to provide **inspiration and leadership** to the community.
- 8) a realisation that in all matters **personal relationships** are of the greatest importance.

From the communion we might look for:

- 1) a willingness to work within the **present system**, even if at the same time trying to work towards a different one.
- 2) a respect for the **power of ideas**, that is, a conviction that a good well thought-out idea will often prevail, and the person who developed the idea has made a greater contribution than the person in authority who did no more than implement it.
- 3) an attempt to see the **whole picture** of the Church's activity rather than only the particular activity with which one is involved.
- 4) whenever a problem is presented to a Church authority, to accompany this with an **offer of help**, either in the form of a suggested solution or in a personal willingness to be involved.
- 5) an acceptance that a Church authority may well receive different and **conflicting** advice from many quarters.
- 6) a willingness to **resolve differences** with other members of the Church rather than appealing to authority to decide in one's favour.
- 7) a **consistency of theological models** of the Church, not reverting to an authoritarian model in order to make other people do something.
- 8) an acceptance that in all dealings with a Church authority, **personal relationships** are of the greatest importance, for the person in authority is also a human being.

As well as helping us to cope better with the present, I believe that these attitudes would also help to create the atmos-

phere in which the underlying theological questions could be resolved.

In summary, we can acknowledge the progress made in this century, we can use a more correct language ourselves and promote it in others, we can help to make the present system work better and we can create the atmosphere in which the deeper questions can be faced in a calm and constructive manner. □

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson is one of three Auxiliaries in the Sydney Archdiocese.

OPEN LETTER TO BISHOP GEOFFREY ROBINSON

I commend your affirmation of *the People as the Church* at the Catalyst for Renewal Dinner in June. You are right when you say we must stop asking "When is the Church going to do something about ...?" without realising that we are the Church and it is up to us to effect the change we see is needed.

The difficulties arise, however, when the people, in good faith, act on this assumption. For many of us, Bishop Geoffrey, these words have proved to lack substance - a wonderful ecclesiology on paper, but one to which those with the biggest investment in the present power structures have no real or active commitment.

Let me give you an example that I am most familiar with.

Many Christians express dissatisfaction with our liturgical celebrations and with the present parish structuring of Church. The issues would be familiar to you. Socio-religious issues around clergy (age? numbers?), youth disinterest and declining Mass attendance. Justice issues around women's exclusion from ministry, non-Catholics' exclusion from the Eucharist, the absence of the poor and the marginalised, non-inclusive language, the unjust distribution of power and resources. Theological issues around the meanings of the Eucharist and ministry, and ordination and *koinonia*. Parishes are too big, people are wanting a more participatory and inclusive Eucharistic celebration commensurate with the early Church's experience and faithful to Jesus' mission towards justice and liberation.

Many of us have worked with Church structures for 20, 30 or 40 years before deciding that the best way we can be catalysts for renewal is to move beyond the structures, to claim, as Kate Englebrecht called it, *our own prophetic*

ministry, our own authority, to be who we need to be as the people of God, the Church in the world.

Small house churches where people gather to celebrate the Eucharist, reflect on the Scriptures and their lived experience, and support one another's ministries, are ONE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD to deal with the issues raised above, to be catalysts for change. These small groups are often ecumenical and have a strong commitment to justice. Some members continue to participate in local parishes once a month, others try to network with the wider Church through Church organisations such as WATAC (Women and the Australian Church) CCJP (Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace). All are committed to dialogue and ongoing relationship with the wider Church.

How does the hierarchical Church view these people Bishop Geoffrey? In my experience, with suspicion, mistrust and disdain. They are labelled, ostracised, discriminated against, even black-listed for employment within the Church.

The Catholic Church has certain control mechanisms in place which make it very hard for the people to exercise their prophetic function. Catholic education, for example, the church's largest employment sector, has strict criteria, one of which is regular Sunday Mass attendance in the parish church, which determine suitability for employment and promotion. One could intelligently argue that this, on its own, is a superficial or incomplete indicator of a person's faith commitment and church involvement.

Yes, I, too, believe it is good to work within the structures (#1 on your list of challenges to laity) in order to effect the change. Sometimes, however, painful as it may be, it is also necessary to step outside of the structures. In situations where the structures are tied up with control, this may be the better option or the only option.

Yes, I, too, believe that to measure progress, we need to look back and recognise how far we have come. Equally important is the necessity to look forward, to envisage possibilities, to imagine what might be, and to work towards it with passion and surrender. Christ was such a visionary, and it is His vision that motivates you and I both to work for change. Let us keep the conversation flowing. □

Rosemary Hutchens, Kingsgrove.

Words for a Pilgrim People

I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father. (Jn. 10:14f.)

The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power. (Declaration on Religious Freedom, (1965), n.1)

The human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all people are to be immuned from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs ... the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed Word of God and through reason itself. ... It is in accordance with their dignity as persons - that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility - that all people should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. (Declaration on Religious Freedom, n.2)

*Grandeur or mystery is something with which we are confronted everywhere and at all times. Even the very act of thinking baffles our thinking, just as every intelligible fact is, by virtue of its being a fact, drunk with baffling aloofness. Does not mystery reign within reasoning, within perception, within explanation. (Abraham Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, Octagon Books, 1972, 74-5)*

*Philosophy is, strictly speaking a homesickness. He who does not know what homesickness is, cannot philosophize if - and because - we do not feel at home anywhere, because we are increasingly being pushed up against Being, against that because we feel at home nowhere except on the way to the total and essential. We are without a native land and are restlessness itself, living restlessness. (Martin Heidegger, cited by A. Naess, *Four Modern Philosophers*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, 174)*

The Bible

The Bible is pervaded with a potent sense of mystery. Every story, report, description, poem, and statement of the sacred text emerges from a mindset deeply sensitive to mystery and always points back to mystery. Modern Western readers of the Bible will not find access to the world of its varying texts unless we can gain some affinity with that same sense of life as mystery. A sense of awe, wonder and amazement are every bit as important as the gift of faith when we are reading the Bible.

The source of the mystery is the great Mystery beyond the mystery. This is beautifully portrayed in the Book of Exodus. Moses was looking after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro (3:1). An utterly mundane context is set. The burning bush is sighted by Moses (3:2f.). The novelist Francine Prose has one of her characters muse: "Maybe the bush had been burning all along but Moses just noticed it that day". The mundane conceals and reveals the Mystery beyond, depending on our readiness, receptivity and attention.

The Mystery emerges in the mystery of the ordinary and engages Moses. The conversation that is recorded has puzzled scholars. What is clear is that this is about an intimate relationship - a personal Mystery engaging us as persons. It is not about *the existence of God* but the *positioning of God*. In the end, the critical questions for the people of old, as for contemporary searchers are questions about relationship with the Ultimate: Is the Mystery with us? Can the Mystery be trusted? Is the Mystery a source of life or death, compassion or hate, care or indifference? Does the Mystery make any difference to my life?

What is revealed to Moses is not factual information, a *name* that would allow Moses and the people to feel comfortable, but an invitation and a promise: "I am there, with you and for you, but I shall be there on My terms - as Mystery; when you are in the desert, I shall be there; when you are prospering, I shall be there; when you are under the heel of the oppressor, I shall be there; when you and your children are cruelly and unjustly done to death, I shall be there; I shall be there as who I am". □

Suggested Reading: J. C. Murray, *The Problem of God*, Yale University Press, 1964 - esp. Chap. 1, "The Presence of God": a masterful discussion of Exodus 3:1-15; D. Dumm, *Flowers in the Desert*, Paulist Press, 1987 - esp. Chap. 5, "Prophetic Guidance" - relates "the mysterious divine name" to conversion, growth & journeying; M. Whelan, *Living Strings*, E. J. Dwyer, 1994, - esp. Chap. 7, "Images of God: The Mystery Beyond the Mystery"; A. J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, Octagon Books, 1972 - a sense of the mystery pervades Heschel's writings.

The Tradition

The best of the tradition has always maintained a creative tension between knowing and not knowing, between speech and silence, between analysing and waiting upon. We speak of *the positive way* to acknowledge that we can and must know and name certain aspects of reality. We speak of *the negative way* to acknowledge that we must admit our ignorance and remain speechless in the end. St Thomas Aquinas epitomizes this tension when he said at the end of his life: "Such things have been revealed to me that everything I have written seems to me rubbish".

The benefit of *the positive way* is that it forces us to acknowledge and struggle with the knowable. It demands a rigorous intellectual engagement with life. The monastic tradition placed great emphasis on the intellectual life. St Teresa of Avila emphasised the importance of study and learning in guiding people in the spiritual life. However, it can draw us away from lived reality into a world of theoretical abstractions. Thus the anomaly of "the theologian" who does not believe. Meister Eckhart was alert to this in the 14th century: "One person who has mastered life is better than a thousand who have mastered only the contents of books".

The benefit of *the negative way* is that it forces us to acknowledge and struggle with the unknowable. A lively appreciation of this prevents us from being seduced by the illusion of mastery. It fosters humility and abandonment to the Mystery. St Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) in his *Life of Moses* describes the movement of life as an ascent into divine darkness - the more we know, the more we are struck by what we do not know. In another of his works - *Homily on the Beatitudes* - Gregory observes: "(As the soul comes closer to God it finds itself on the edge of the slippery, steep rock that affords no basis for our thoughts." However, over-emphasis on this way may make us forgetful of the responsibility to struggle humbly with the intellectual quest, knowing and naming what can be known and named. □

Suggested Reading: Gregory of Nyssa, *The life of Moses*, Paulist Press, 1978; A. Louth, *Dionysius the Areopagite*, Morehouse-Barlow, 1989; S. Tugwell, *The Ways of Imperfection*, DLT, 1984; J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire For God*, Fordham University Press, 1966/1988; A. Van Kaam, *The Music of Eternity: Everyday Sounds of Fidelity*, Ave Maria Press, 1990.

News in Brief

• **Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, recently gave the Pope Paul VI Memorial Lecture in London.** He noted that development assistance from wealthier countries to poorer countries has been diminishing over the recent past. Cardinal Etchegaray suggested there are a number of reasons for this development, one of which is particularly worrying: the emergence of political programs which reject solidarity. These programs range from isolationist to "positive uninterest". He went on to say "the Church must take the lead in concerted effort to re-establish the centrality of the concepts of solidarity and common responsibility as essential principles of the human endeavour". In response to the idea of declaring the year 2000 a Biblical Year of Jubilee, the Cardinal stressed the need for "a jubilee reflection": "In the jubilee perspective, international debt should be forgiven in order to restore justice, equity and harmony, so that the poorest nations can make a fresh start, can truly turn a new page in their history".

• **Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini, of San Marcos in the west of Guatemala, has been the object of a press campaign against him and even death threats.** Along with the members of the Land Pastoral, he is standing firm in his defence of peasants who are the victims of injustice. In Guatemala, 2% of the landholders own 67% of the arable land. The bishop, among other things, accompanies and advises the peasants in their attempts to achieve equitable wages.

• **Archbishop Bertone, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has written a letter discouraging "official" pilgrimages to Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina.** A similar statement was made by Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the same Congregation, in 1990. The local

bishop of Mostar and his predecessor have been strong opponents for a number of years of the Medjugorje pilgrimages. An estimated 20 million pilgrims have gone to Medjugorje over the past 15 years since it was alleged the Blessed Virgin appeared there to a number of Croatian children. Pilgrims from all over the world - including bishops, priests and religious - continue to go to Medjugorje.

• **Pope John Paul II has appointed 11 cardinals and bishops to a planning body for a pre-2000 synod for Oceania.** The cardinals include Pio Taofinu'u of Western Samoa, Thomas Williams of Wellington, New Zealand, Edward Clancy of Sydney and two curial cardinals, Edward Cassidy, head of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Jozef Tomko, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Representatives will also be present from Fiji, New Caledonia, Guam and Papua New Guinea.

• **The Japanese bishops' commission on social issues has asked the Japanese government to comply with recommendations of the UN Commission on Human Rights on compensation for World War II 'comfort women'.** These women were mostly Korean and were forcibly 'employed' in 'comfort stations' for the Japanese military. The bishops said the Japanese government should accept legal responsibility and take steps to restore the women's dignity. (The Japanese government has in fact set up a fund for the purposes of compensation for the 'comfort women'. However, no government money has been used - it is entirely made up of private donations.)

• **In England and Wales in 1995 there were 67 studying for the diocesan priesthood, 55 for the permanent diaconate, and 35 women entered the convent - 19 of**

them with enclosed Orders. (There are 23 dioceses in England and Wales.)

• **Sr. Roberta Hakendorf IBVM attended international conferences in London and Chicago focusing on renewal within the Church.** Representatives of the European Network - representing 11 countries - met in London in January. Out of that the British Jubilee People Network was formed. An affiliation between the US Call To Action network and the European Network has also been forged. There were over 4,000 at the Call To Action conference in Chicago in November 1995. (For further information write to Roberta at: Loreto Convent, 316 Portrush Road, Marryatville, SA 5068)

• **The Catalyst Dinner held on June 20th at Hunters Hill was a great success.** More than 200 people provided a wonderful evening of conversation and celebration. (Apologies to those 15 or so people who could not get tickets because we ran out of room! Keep your eye on the Bulletin Board below for developments.) Kate Englebrecht and Geoff Robinson both gave the guests much to chew on apart from the good food. The text of their presentations is being reproduced by *The Mix* - in this issue and the issue following.

AN INVITATION

Pray the following prayer daily as you seek to participate ever more deeply in the renewal of the Church, the Body of Christ:

Take O Lord & receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess you have given me. I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to your most holy will. Give me only your love and your grace - with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more.

(St Ignatius of Loyola)

Bulletin Board

• **Spirituality in the Pub continues.** Paddington on the first Wednesdays of the month at 7.30pm (Info: Michael 02 816 3614) and Pymble on the last Wednesdays of the month (Info: Marie 02 869 8101).

• **Catalyst for Renewal will sponsor a visit to Australia in mid-1997 of two internationally renowned Maryknoll Missioners: Bill Frazier & Larry Lewis.** Those who were fortunate enough to encounter these two lecturers when they came to Australia in the late 80's will look for-

ward to their return. Bill Frazier will lecture on "the liberating Cross", Larry Lewis on "the spirituality of the misfit". Further details will be published in later issues of *The Mix*.

• **Benedictine Abbey, Mountain Pass, Jamberoo - space, freedom, contemplation, retreats, the monastic spirit in an Australian setting, 2 hours south of Sydney.** (Info: 042 360533)

• **Celebrating the Past, Creating the Future.** National gathering to celebrate the

centenary of the Australian Student Christian Movement, John XXIII College, Canberra, Sept. 20-23. (Info: Nan 02 876 6666 or Betty 07 378 2544)

• **Cardinal Martini will be speaking at St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill on Sunday August 4th at 6pm.** Cardinal Martini is the Archbishop of Milan and is in Australia as the guest of the Marist Brothers. If you are going on the 4th, you will be one of more than 1000 - get there early! (Info: Br Charles 02 819 6622)

Recommended Reading

• "Laity: Take the Initiative" - a series of articles in the journal *Priests & People*, Volume 10, No. 2 (Feb. 1996).

Paul Hypher, in his essay "Can We Be A Collaborative Church?" (45-49) says that "the Church must be more explicitly geared to enabling lay people to be both ministers and evangelisers". Bishop John Crowley of Middlesbrough speaks of ministries that spring from the heart of the community in "Lay Initiatives" (50-54). Mervyn Davies emphasises the practical needs for strategic thinking and ongoing formation and offers some concrete advice in "Liberating Ministry" (55-59). Mary Coke reflects on the pioneering work of women in France in response to the secularization of state schools in France last century in "Women Who Broke New Ground" (60-65). Daniel Cadrin speaks of his experiences of promoting the formation of adult faith in Canada in "Forming Adult Faith" (65-69). Mary Forrest details one example of how a diocese is developing leadership from within the community in "Training for Lay Leadership" (70-73). These articles are practical, concise and stimulating. They may hold some creative insights for those seeking to promote renewal within parishes and dioceses.

• W. Johnston, *Letters to Contemplatives*, Orbis Books, 1991, pb, 112pp.

Most will be familiar with the work of this Irish Jesuit who teaches at Sophia University in Tokyo. His books such as *The Inner Eye of Love*, *Christian Mysticism Today* and *Silent Music*, have brought good scholarship together with ease of presentation to expand our understanding of mysticism and its place in the human story. In particular, few have done as much as Johnston to promote conversation between East and West in this matter. *Letters* is personal, easy to read and brings the reader in contact with the deeper realities. In our quest for renewal we would do well to listen carefully to voices like the one that is heard in this book.

• J. Dallen, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays*, Liturgy Training Publications, 1994, index, extensive referencing, pb, \$19.95.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that "the Eucharist is the source and summit" of the Christian community's life. Every Christian community has both the right and responsibility to celebrate Eucharist. So what is the dramatic decline in the number of ordained priests saying to the Church? Dallen addresses this issue with solid reference to the tradition, without becoming polemical. The danger is that we might lose our appreciation for the Eucharist - and with that our sense of

being a genuinely Christian community - if we are not very careful. The 'Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest' (SWAP), approved by the American Bishops' Conference, is a retrograde step the author argues. The Church needs to examine more closely the current structures of ordination, Dallen argues, and just how Eucharist - rather than a substitute - is to be celebrated in the Church today. This book is as rich as it is readable, a timely and wise contribution to a most complex and urgent matter. Highly recommended.

• J. Carroll, *An American Requiem*, Houghton Mifflin, 1996, hb, 279pp., \$35.

Autobiography that is at once one man's story and the story of a generation. Carroll came from a strict Catholic family, father a US General; he became a priest, got involved in the civil rights movement, is now a married man living in Boston. A good read for anyone who remembers the Second Vatican Council, the Vietnam War or the day Martin Luther King died. Carroll is a child of his time, full of energy and expectations of a better world, full of sadness and unanswered questions.

**"Know that I am with you always,
to the end of time"**
(Mt. 28:20)

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