

# THE MIX



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## Our Say - The Church and her social teaching

The Church has some very enlightened social teaching. The Second Vatican Council's expression in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* is typical:

The protection of personal rights is a necessary condition for the active participation of citizens, whether as individuals or collectively, in the life and government of the state (n.73). .... The choice of government and the method of selecting citizens is left to the free will of citizens (n.74). .... It is in full accord with human nature that juridical-political structures should, with ever better success and without any discrimination, afford all their citizens the chance to participate freely and actively in establishing the constitutional bases of a political community, governing the state, determining the scope and purpose of various institutions, and choosing leaders. Hence let all citizens be mindful of their simultaneous right and duty to vote freely in the interest of advancing the common good (n.75).

Here we see a reiteration of the individual's rights and responsibilities to participate in and contribute to the life and government of the society in which he/she lives.

There are forums within the Church where this teaching on collegiality is practised. Most religious congregations, for example, would go to great lengths to assist all the members of the congregation to play their part "in the life and government" of the institution. The same could be said of some parishes and dioceses.

It is a matter of grave concern, however, that the spirit - if not the letter - of the Church's social teaching, has not been energetically embraced by all of those in positions of authority in the Church and applied to the society of the Church. The Church is vulnerable to the accusation that she does not live what she proclaims.

If the spirit of the Second Vatican Council is to be remembered for one major theme - after its general call for *aggiornamento* through both a renewed fidelity to the Gospel and an intelligent listening to the signs of the times - it must surely be that of collegiality. The Council clearly envisaged much more consultation for, and participation in, the governance of the Church than had previously been the case in a clerically dominated Church.

Pope John Paul II makes a strong statement in his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of 1989, *Christifideles Laici*, about Church governance:

The recent Synod has favoured the creation of Diocesan Pastoral Councils, as a recourse at opportune times. In fact, on a diocesan level this structure could be the principle form of collaboration, dialogue, and discernment as well. The participation of the lay faithful in these Councils can broaden resources in consultation and the principle of collaboration - and in certain instances also in decision-making - if applied in a broad and determined manner (n.25).

The Church will find it difficult to participate effectively in public debates if she is not clearly seen to be pursuing her own best principles in a "determined manner". Much can be done to increase the level of consultation of the baptised and their participation in the life and government of the Church. Certainly this move will be fraught with difficulties. But refusal to move in the "determined manner" - called for by the Pope - towards greater collegiality, will be quite simply destructive. □

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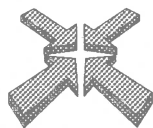
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The Four Arrows & the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature & culture, in and through Christ find lifegiving unity.

## The Human Face

MY NAME IS PHILLIP YUILE. I WAS BORN IN Sydney and spent the first few years of my life in Bundanoon. I grew up in Sydney, mainly Enfield, and went to school at Newington where I received a good education and grounding for life. Medicine always held a fascination for me, even as a child. Later I developed a particular interest in cancer, why it happens and so on. I went to NSW University where I graduated in medicine in 1973.

My family has been a major influence on my life - particularly my mother - to whom I was very close. Also my mother's mother who lived with us for more than 20 years. She died a remarkable death at the age of 95. My wife Kathryn and I were both present at her hospital bedside. She was comatose, the Methodist minister came and held her hand, in the middle of the night, sang the hymn "There is a Green Hill Far Away", she opened her eyes, looked at him, smiled, mouthed some words then died. Nan was a very important part of the whole family.

Apart from the influence of my own and Kathryn's family, Fr Carol Grew has been a significant part of my faith journey. He celebrated our wedding, the baptisms of all our children and has been a great friend. When I became a Catholic about 5 years ago, he was also there to celebrate that with us. (When I was young I said I would never marry a smoker or a Catholic - and I got the quinella!)

Some of the things that initially turned me away from Catholicism - like the teaching on the infallibility of the Pope and the place of Mary in the Church - I eventually came to understand differently and appreciate. Carol Grew was a great help - over some long lunches, beers pies and chips at the Newport Arms.

We have also been involved with Parish Family Groups for more than 10 years. Originally I wondered how I would have the time but it has been tremendous. All of this has been part of a general evolution of my faith, as has my work at the Mater with the Mercy Sisters and Staff. Their unique care of the sick and their general attitudes to life set me thinking. I still treasure the Methodist tradition of hymn singing and love to play those hymns in the car as I drive.

My work of specialization in the treatment of people with cancer has had a very special spinoff. About 5 years ago we had a cobalt machine for which we had no further use, although it was in good working order. We offered the machine to World

Vision. To cut a long story short, they ended up giving it to the people in Da Nang, Vietnam, where they were setting up an oncology unit. Our engineer, who went over and installed it, told us of the poor state of health care there. Kathryn and I and some others took a couple of weeks off and went to see for ourselves.

The conditions are in fact appalling - total amputations, brutal mastectomies, awful radiation burns etc. Much of the cancer treating equipment goes back to the 40's and 50's. Many of the techniques are outdated and the availability of medication - such as pain killers - is very limited.

Now we go up there about twice a year and organize others to do the same. All go at their own expense. We have, for example, a palliative care physician who went up with us. He was so moved, he now goes on his own initiative and is involved in advising on setting up hospice care in Ho Chi Minh City - the first in the country.

If a person becomes sick in Vietnam it has enormous ramifications. Not only is the sick person no longer able to work, but other family members have to care for that person. If he/she has to have serious medical treatment that generally means selling a buffalo or the like. For example, a CT scan in Vietnam costs about \$US100 and the average annual income is about \$US250. Since there are only 2 CT scanners in Vietnam for 72 million people few people actually receive this level of sophisticated treatment. We take these things for granted in health care. On Sydney's North Shore, for example, there are some 20 CT scanners for a few hundred thousand people. It is for these reasons of inequity of care and access to good medicine and facilities that we have set up *Australians for Cancer Care in Vietnam*. We not only try to help with cancer related activities, although that is the major thrust, but aim to assist in all areas of medicine. □

*(If you would like to assist Philip in his aid program you can phone him on 02 9983 0162)*



Phillip Yuile

# Your Say - Beware the too hard basket

by Bill Welsh

The Catholic bishops propose a major inquiry into the role of women in the Church, conceding that the extent of women's contribution to the church has been long neglected.

On their admission, this initiative is long overdue! (by 1500 years?). Nevertheless, it is to be applauded and supported with as much informed response as possible, given the **intense issues** of the changing roles of women, in society and in the Church; of their equality and leadership; of the Church's patriarchal sexism. Let's hope as many people as possible, both women and men, active and non-active Catholics, lay people and clergy, own, examine and assess these issues, and tell it as it really is. The desire and need for more dialogue are growing.

When the final reports of this inquiry come in, let's expect the messengers are not shot!

"There ought to be an honest and critical covering of the facts, not an ... excursion into fruitless controversy," said Cardinal Clancy. And likewise, Bishop Manning promised the church would concentrate on "establishing facts rather than entering into ... controversy." What is really meant by this? We truly hope and expect that establishing the facts will be the point of the whole exercise.

## Letters

*The Mix* is a joy to me as it keeps me up to date on some matters within the Church that one cannot find elsewhere and it keeps me hopeful for the future Church. Thank you.

Marie Carey, Epping, NSW

Delighted to discover *SIP* and *The Mix* on a recent trip to Sydney. It has certainly revived my drooping spirits. I look forward to receiving copies of *The Mix* and also introducing it to others in Tassie. Thank you for your wonderful article *'Tis Death that Makes Life Live*. The courage and hope of people like yourself and Bishop Robinson has inspired me to keep going.

Maureen Holloway, Dilston, TAS

Israelites, Chinese and an African: What do I see they have in common? Long marches!! My recent long march through the Bible (a few pages each day) took 464 days. The Chinese did not take as long on their Long March. Mandela outstripped them all. I've now set out on savouring

To me *controversy* sounds a bit like the *too-hard basket*. To mention a few significant items in that basket:

- the changing roles of women and their rightful claim for equal rights in the church, where they are full participants. (Rome has declared the women-priests issue infallibly off limits. Yet, the issue is still very much alive and well, if you listen to rank-and-file Catholics);
- the gap between Church teachings and the convictions of many faithful on the meaning of human sexuality;
- the human rights of all persons be defended, regardless of their sexual orientation;
- the equality of all the faithful;
- the ways the official church makes decisions.

Women are more than 50 per-cent of a Catholic church which, in these times, has to include, and attend pastorally to, people who are divorced and re-married; a church where priests have left, and got married; a church whose voice with the youth and the young-adult generations is barely audible; a church where theologians and others exercise freedom of speech, requiring by way of official response honest dialogue, academic freedom, and due process.

Joan Kelly, Sydney, NSW

Recent events in the life of the Church and my reading of the life of Pope John XXIII lead me to reflect upon how I might be involved in promoting the spirit of Vatican II. It was at this time that I received a copy of *The Mix*. Congratulations to you and your team on launching *Catalyst*.

Chris Ford SDB, Chadstone, VIC

Congratulations on *The Mix*. It is a very welcomed and much needed publication as it gives people who are searching ways to follow Christ, a forum to express their desires, frustrations etc. and at the same time it gives them information.

Pat Ryan RSM, Dubbo, NSW

If these issues, which engage the minds and hearts of Christian women, are not candidly expressed and examined, there is every possibility that this worthwhile project could be hijacked by the so-called radical sections in the church.

Cardinal Bernardin, in launching the *Catholic Common Ground Project*, 12 August, 1996, put it this way:

The Church's leadership, both clerical and lay, must reaffirm and promote the full range and demands of authentic unity, acceptable diversity and respectful dialogue, not just as a way to dampen conflict, but as a way to make our conflicts constructive, and ultimately, as a way to understand for ourselves and articulate for our world the meaning of discipleship of Jesus Christ.

We want to encourage our bishops in **this task ahead for all of us in the church**. We hope they continue, and choose to remain in the conversation, with total candour and courage, and begin to deal with the controversy, no matter how intense or hot it may become. Otherwise, they are not dealing with some of the relevant facts, which deeply affect all Catholics, women included. The too-hard basket neither empties nor destructs of itself.

Bill Welsh, Ormiston, QLD

*Catalyst for Renewal* excites me ... a movement well worthy of support, as is any effort to further the implementation in our lives the ground-breaking fresh air of Vatican II. I can't do very much more than 'to pray and pay' to aid this worthy project. I am an 81 year old full rate pensioner.

Eric Mathys, Sevenhill, SA

Delighted with *The Mix*. The content is challenging and thought provoking. Offers one a healthy stimulus where doom and gloom and control, power and a quick retreat into yesterday are so rampant. Thanks.

John Frauenfelder, Albury, NSW

Stimulating and challenging! ... I rejoice in the establishment of *The Mix* and trust that it will be a light to those who read it and a catalyst to a new spring in our Australian Church.

Peter Harrington, Nth Ryde, NSW

# Essay - The pulpit, the parliament and the public domain

by Frank Brennan

The following is an edited version of a lecture which Frank Brennan gave at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1996

In the midst of the national debate on euthanasia and following the death of Mr Dent, why was I less than helped by the observation reported in the national media by Father Gino Concetti, a Vatican moral theologian said to be close to Pope John Paul II, that "One remains stupefied and horrified by this shocking case of euthanasia that was requested and granted." Why was I disheartened to see the variety of official church comment from Cardinal Clancy's description of the euthanasia law as arrogant and irresponsible, saying, "Euthanasia is an ugly thing. It has two names, either murder or suicide"; to the general secretary of the Uniting Church Board for Social Responsibility, the Reverend Harry Herbert, saying he was disappointed by the reaction of the churches which were failing to listen to people. He said: "I think there may be occasions when a person is within a few days of death, when a person has quite a deal of pain when voluntary euthanasia might be an appropriate thing".

In the middle as the voice of reason was the Primate of the Anglican Church and Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Keith Rayner, warning that what was now an act of choice would soon turn to 'subtle pressure' to end life, so people could avoid becoming a burden on family and friends. "It will not be long before economic factors intervene," Dr Rayner said. "It will be a short step to justifying the taking of a life that is no longer productive." The most heartening comment I have read is this morning's observation of Morris West in *The Australian*: "The pronouncements of religious leaders will carry more weight, will be seen as more relevant if they are delivered in the visible context of a truly pastoral function, which is the mediation of the mystery of creation, the paradox of the silent godhead and suffering humanity".

In other words, those of us from the pulpit do best in the public domain when we are seen exemplifying the finest qualities of the pulpit rather than poorly aping the shock-horror one minute grab of the politicians in front of the news camera. This is no rationale for withdrawing from the public domain. Reflecting on our reactions to each of these church interventions

may give us signposts how best to put ourselves squarely into the public domain.

Those influenced by Rawlsian liberalism hold the view that, in a well ordered society, there is no place in public debate for religious views. Religion at best is seen as the private wellspring for individual imagination and energy, but it has no place in shaping the arguments or positions held in the public domain. Religious views about the common good and the dignity of the poor and dispossessed are sidelined as romantic luxuries for those spared the burdensome responsibility of public office. In his *Political Liberalism*, Rawls postulates a threefold division of public, non-public and private. For Rawls, the public is essentially political, the realm in which determinations are made about the coercive use of state power. The non-public is the sphere of civil society, "the culture of daily life, of its many associations: churches and universities, learned and scientific societies, and clubs and teams." Church leaders belong in the non-public arena. They lead their flocks, not the public. They are heard in church halls, not on the national air waves. They are said to have no place and to be abusing their position in agitating their concerns about euthanasia, abortion, casinos, 24-hour shopping, the dismantling of the welfare net, Aboriginal rights and the rights of minorities. The pulpit is viewed essentially as a place for private discourse among like-minded persons who might then emerge from the night of religious practice into the day of public reason and civic activity.

***"The pronouncements of religious leaders will carry more weight ... if they are delivered in the visible context of a truly pastoral function, which is the mediation of the mystery of creation, the paradox of the silent godhead and suffering humanity"***

Christians with a vocation to work for the breaking in of the kingdom here and now, affirming and nurturing their hope in the kingdom to come, do not restrict themselves to a Rawlsian vision of the world. They see that they have a threefold mission for justice: by direct service and accompaniment of the poor, by developing awareness of the demands of justice joined to the social responsibility to achieve it, and by participating in social mobilisation for the creation of a more just social order. These Christians need faith and works to pray authentically: "Thy kingdom come."

In our parliaments and in the public domain, the controversial question is rarely: "Is this conduct right or wrong?" More often the question is: "What conduct ought be sanctioned by the state - either banned or prescribed?" It is one thing to teach: "I believe euthanasia is wrong. I would never do it. I would never encourage my family, friends and co-religionists to do it." It is another to advocate: "There ought to be a law against it." In the personal realm, as people of conscience, we debate what is right and wrong. In the non-public arena, we discern what we would want others, for whom we care and with whom we seek community, to be, to do and to profess. In the public domain, we need to be able to discuss with public reason not only the fundamental values we espouse and the principles we apply, but also to debate fundamental rights, the common good and the needs of the disadvantaged. By the common good, I mean the social, economic and political conditions which are necessary to assure that the minimum human needs of all will be met and which will make possible social and political participation for all.

People of good will confronting new social problems are limited as to how far they can impinge on the private realm, whether they be legislators, judges or preachers in pulpits. The preacher as much as any other citizen is bound by the requirements of public reason in the public domain. Emotive claims about right and wrong are usually nothing to the point. Rather there is a need to consider four questions:

1. Does what is proposed violate a fundamental value espoused by the majority?
2. Does it threaten a fundamental right of any person or group?
3. Does it threaten the common good or public interest?

4. Does it unduly disadvantage any group (usually the poor)?

Unless at least one of those questions can be answered in the affirmative, there is no case for a law or government policy. If the fundamental value be espoused only by a minority there will be a need to demonstrate an interference with fundamental rights or the common good.

Stepping from the pulpit into the public domain in a pluralistic and increasingly secular society, we Christians expect to be slighted and suspected. Just in the last week on the euthanasia debate, we have had Professor Baume, Chancellor of the Australian National University (one I count as a friend) discounting Christian arguments about the sanctity of life in these terms:

Voluntary euthanasia is opposed by many who wish to impose their views on others. Sometimes opponents appeal to some higher power, putting great store on their own version of revealed truth and sometimes stressing "sanctity of life" in their arguments. Since they are sometimes the same people who support capital punishment and who send clergymen to bless and to serve in armies devoted to killing human beings, or are supporters of those who waged religious wars, or of those who burned and tortured people who disagreed with them, who encourage both sides in Northern Ireland, it is hard to take their arguments about "sanctity of life" seriously.

Imagine if the argument were to be put: "Voluntary euthanasia is supported by many who stress the importance of self-autonomy and self-determination. Since they are sometimes the supporters of those who have put down the Palestinians, it is hard to take their arguments about self-autonomy and self-determination seriously". These sorts of *ad hominem* arguments and group caricatures are characteristic of the church's portrayal in the public domain in Australia. Churches are easily portrayed as the last bastion of irrationality.

Unless we people of the church abuse our public trust, we are as entitled as anyone else in the public domain to seek civic courtesy. When we do abuse our public trust, as in our failure adequately to deal with pastors known to be involved in cases of child sexual abuse, we need to demonstrate afresh the gospel values and civic virtues of honesty, integrity, forgiveness and justice.

Anyone stepping from the pulpit into the public domain expects no smooth ride or ready acceptance. To make the move, we must bear in mind seven points:

1. From the pulpit, we expect to hear dispassionate analysis of social issues and proposed measures by assessing their impact on individual rights, the common good or public interest, and how they further the preferential option for the poor, disadvantaged and dispossessed.
2. With declining church attendances and a more educated laity, people are now less concerned with the authority of the speaker. It's no longer a question of "Who's speaking" but "Who's listening". It is not so much an issue as to what position the person holds in the church. Rather, what is the cogency of the statement? What value does it add to the debate? Critics are more likely to look at the practice of the church rather than its statements, and more likely to size up the company in which the speaker is placed than the particular statement. In the public domain, people are more likely to be attentive to the church's structures and actions rather than words about rights, liberty and the common good. The less democratic, inclusive and transparent a church, the less likely its message to be heard in the public domain of contemporary Australia. Our actions and structures speak more loudly than our words.

*Australian Christians moving from the pulpit to the public domain have a special imperative to work for recognition and justice for indigenous Australians so that the nation may be reconciled to itself through its history and shared commitment to a future secure for all*

3. The need to distinguish law and policy as sanction, educative device and hallmark of identity.
4. Churches are easily parodied in the public domain as antiquated ghettos of anti-intellectualism and illiberalism rather than as havens of charity and reflective thought.
5. Gone are the days when churches can retain their internal consistency by distinguishing the pastoral and the normative in their statements and by withholding themselves from ecumenical dialogue. We see this most clearly at the moment with the constant parodying of the Catholic position.
6. Emotional rhetoric aimed at holding the party line is no substitute for rational discourse attractive to those outside the fold attracted by the fruits of our action - in democratic process, excelling our opponents

by displaying true respect for our opponents, giving them the benefit of the doubt, presuming the best motives and seeing their point of view, utilising their reason, their experience in the light of our Scripture and our traditions.

7. Australian Christians moving from the pulpit to the public domain have a special imperative to work for recognition and justice for indigenous Australians so that the nation may be reconciled to itself through its history and shared commitment to a future secure for all, especially for those who have no claim on any other country or culture. They must also counter the rising tide of racism and xenophobia, so that all may be one. Australia has been spared the political violence of a Wounded Knee, Oka or Bastion Point. No matter what the electoral mandate of the government of the day, we need to be attentive to the voice of the moderate Aboriginal leadership - those Aborigines wanting to establish the place of their own communities, while remaining open to dialogue and negotiation with the rest of us. We cannot simply prefer the view of those wanting assimilation for themselves, even if they be a silent majority as the present government suggests. While there is disagreement about the justice of Aboriginal claims, churches have a contribution to the civil discourse, influencing the public life of society in accord with strongly held religious convictions about the claims of the poor, the orphan, the widow, the stranger and the dispossessed. Given that those who answer opinion polls are also in the pews, there is a desperate call for conversion and that call should be heard from the pulpits and the parliaments so the public domain may guarantee participation for all individuals and groups.

In conclusion, if we indeed be living in a new era of free speech, the voice of the preacher should be heard more often, not less. Let us take to heart the observation of Morris West: "The pronouncements of religious leaders will carry more weight, will be seen as more relevant if they are delivered in the visible context of a truly pastoral function, which is the mediation of the mystery of creation; the paradox of the silent godhead and suffering humanity". But at all times in this public domain we must speak with the voice of public reason. Therein lies the tension. □

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*Frank Brennan SJ is Director of UNIYA Jesuit Social Justice Centre in Sydney. He is also a Fellow at Australian National University and has made a marked contribution to the work of reconciliation with the Aboriginal peoples.*

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**What's a man's first duty?  
The answer's brief: To be himself**

Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, IV, i

Peter went up to Him and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy seven times'. (Matthew 18:21-22)

In the long run is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith? It must not happen that the pressing need to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes should cause us to forget this form of proclamation whereby an individual's personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique word that he or she receives from someone else. ... Yet one can never sufficiently stress the fact that evangelization does not consist only of the preaching and teaching of a doctrine. For evangelization must touch life: the natural life to which it gives a new meaning, thanks to the evangelical perspectives that it reveals; and the supernatural life, which is not the negation but the purification and elevation of the natural life. (Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), nn.46-47)

An elder said: Do not judge a fornicator if you are chaste, for if you do, you too are violating the law as much as he is. For he who said thou shalt not fornicate also said thou shalt not judge. (Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert*, New Directions, 1970, 41)

He who has a heartfelt love for God is known by him. For a person grows in the love of God in the measure in which he takes that love into his inmost soul. Which is why, afterwards, such a one passionately longs for the illumination of knowledge to the point of feeling in his very bones, no longer aware of himself but wholly transformed by the love of God. Such a one is in this life without being in it. He still lives in his own body but unceasingly goes out to God through love by the very momentum of his soul. Henceforward, his heart burning with the fire of love he adheres to God with a sort of irresistible desire, as if quite torn away from the love of self by the love of God. (Diadochus of Photike - Office of Readings, Week 2 of Ordinary Time, Friday.)

## The Bible

If we were to think of the oral and written forms of communication today we would have no trouble in identifying many literary forms. And we are at home with these various forms, allowing each its place in the process of dealing with truth. Thus we have various forms of poetry and fiction, minutes of meetings and journalists' reports, eulogies and panegyrics, sermons and lectures, after dinner speeches and occasional presentations. When we confuse or fail to take sufficient account of particular forms, we can misrepresent the intention of the writer or speaker.

Literary form is simply the method or style of expression adopted by a particular writer or speaker to suit the intention for which he or she writes or speaks. The infinity of truth cannot be adequately expressed by any one form. In particular, factual statements are extremely limited in their ability to express the truth. Not infrequently a poem or piece of fiction is far more able to convey truth than any merely matter of fact statements.

The Bible too has its literary forms. Failure to take account of these forms can lead us into misinterpretations of the Bible. For example, if we read the Book of Genesis as if it were the kind of literary form one might find in a late 20<sup>th</sup> century science text book, we will never understand it. "The interpreter must determine what modes of writing, so to speak, the authors of the ancient period would be likely to use, and in fact did use. ... What those exactly were the commentator cannot determine as it were in advance, but only after a careful examination of the ancient literature of the East. .... For the modes of expression which, among ancient peoples, and especially those of the East, human language used to express its thought, none is excluded from the Sacred Books" (*Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1963)).

Most of the literary forms used in the Bible were initially spoken rather than written. In some instances it was centuries before the written expression took shape. It would be useful when reading any part of the Bible to be familiar with the literary form of the text you are reading. *The New Jerusalem Bible (Standard Edition)* is probably the simplest reference as it contains both the biblical text and brief readable commentaries by good scholars.

**Suggested Reading:** See under *literary forms* in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, Ch.4; Wilfrid Harrington, *Key to the Bible, Volume 1*, Ch.3; Joseph Jensen, *God's Word to Israel*, pp.284-288.

## The Tradition

The specific religious concept implied by the Greek word *gnosis* is one that has caused a good deal of confusion. The Greek word literally means *knowledge*. Our English words *ignorant* and *agnostic* are rooted in this Greek word. However, *gnosis* is generally used to mean *special religious knowledge*. It is sometimes claimed that this concept was borrowed by early Christian writers from Greek philosophy. In fact, modern scholarship reveals a Christian use of *gnosis* that pre-dates its emergence as a specifically religious concept in Greek thought.

St Paul writes to the Ephesians of his prayer for them: "... to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (3:19); he reflects in his Letter to the Philippians: "... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (3:10). St Paul very clearly has in mind a specific kind of religious knowledge or *gnosis*. It is the *gnosis* of faith in which a mystical intimacy is forged between the believer and God in Christ our Redeemer. This is the same kind of knowledge referred to in John's reflection on the parable of the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:14-18) and Matthew's record of the special knowledge that is given to the disciples (cf. Mt. 13:11). These New Testament writers are in turn dependent on traditional Jewish thought for their use of the word knowledge - or *gnosis* - as implying a specifically religious concept. This original usage in the Bible owes nothing to Greek usage.

The use of *gnosis* in Greek thought as a specifically religious concept, only begins to emerge with Philo (30BC-50AD), the Hellenic Jewish apologist. Significantly, Philo uses *gnosis* in the specifically religious sense only when he refers to texts from the Bible. Later Christian writers such as Justin Martyr (105-165), Irenaeus (125-202) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215) spent a good deal of their time refuting pseudo-*gnosis* and explaining true *gnosis*.

The word *Gnosticism* has generally been applied in the tradition to those heresies that lost sight of the essential Gospel message in their attempts to accommodate various religious and quasi-religious philosophies. *Gnosticism* is generally characterized by syncretism, dualism, subjectivism and salvation through self-awareness and special knowledge (*gnosis*).

**Suggested Reading:** Louis Bouyer, *History of Spirituality, Volume 1*, pp.211-302; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Volume 1*, pp.256-277; Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp.33-41.

## News in Brief

• **The Catalyst Dinner on October 31<sup>st</sup>** was a wonderful success. The 220 guests heard thoughtful and probing presentations from the two guest speakers - Justice Margaret Beazley and Geraldine Doogue. The texts of these presentations will be published early next year in *The Mix*. The waiting list of more than 50 indicates the popularity of this forum. More such events will be scheduled for 1997.

• **The Statistical Yearbook of the Church (1994)** reported that, in parishes worldwide, 73% had a resident priest serving as pastor and 27% have no resident pastor. In raw numbers that means that when these statistics were taken, 60,350 parishes were without a resident pastor. Of these, 55,542 were entrusted to a non-resident priest pastor, 373 to a permanent deacon, 1,474 entrusted to lay people, 1,109 entrusted to female religious, 116 entrusted to male religious and 1,736 entirely vacant.

• **The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales** recently released a statement on Catholic social teaching entitled *The Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching*. In a preface, Cardinal Basil Hume stresses the "social dimension of the Gospel", noting that religion is "never just a private affair". Cardinal Hume noted that social action is not enough: "The future of humanity does not depend on political reform, social revolution or scientific advance. Something else is needed. It starts with a true conversion of mind and heart". The document itself goes on to say, among other things, that the dignity of the human person must be the criterion by which every institution or policy is assessed and that "no law should be passed without first considering what effect it would have on family life and especially on children". The Bishops' statement goes on to stress the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. In particular,

the statement recalls Pope Pius XII's teaching that the subsidiarity principle means the state should not usurp the functions of subordinate groups and that to do so "is a grave evil and disturbance of right order".

**Pope John Paul II has appointed a co-adjutor bishop in Hong Kong with the right of succession to Cardinal Wu.** The new co-adjutor is a Salesian priest, Joseph Zeng. Zeng was born in Shanghai and has taught in Bishop Jin's officially recognised seminary at She Shan, Shanghai. At the same time Fr John Tong has been appointed auxiliary bishop. Both appointments are seen as an attempt to strengthen the Church's leadership in Hong Kong in the face of the coming handover to the People's Republic in 1997.

• **The Catholic Bishops' Conference of PNG and the Solomon Islands** has recently made two public appeals for peace in Bougainville. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, they condemned BRA leader Sam Kaona's threat to kill 5 prisoners, saying "the actions you have threatened are against the law of God, against the principles of mankind in general and certainly against the beliefs of the late Bishop Gregory Singkai. We appeal to all Catholics to reject such an obviously wrong response." On October 14<sup>th</sup>, the Bishops endorsed the words of Archbishop Karl Hesse after the assassination of Theodore Miriung: "This killing is another horrible atrocity in this sad crisis ... It is obvious there are people desperate to stop the peace process. It is just as obvious that most people in Bougainville yearn for peace. It is obvious to us all that Premier Miriung has sacrificed his life in the quest for peace. Let us all condemn this heartless, sinful act and let us honour this man who laid down his life for his people".

• **On October 31<sup>st</sup>, John Paul II sent a**

**telegram to Bishop Ngabu, head of the Episcopal Conference of Zaire on the occasion of the tragic death of Archbishop Ngabu.** The Archbishop was killed together with many of his people by rebels in Bukavu. In that telegram the Pope said "I strongly encourage Christians to be in their brothers' and sisters' midst as tireless witnesses of Christ's charity and mercy".

• **On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the Holy See Permanent Observer Mission to the UN published a press release explaining why it cannot offer a contribution to UNICEF activities in the coming year.** It noted that the withholding of this "symbolic offering" was a result of the "Holy See's increasing preoccupation with the changes in UNICEF's activities which have begun to divert some of its scarce economic and human resources from the care of the most basic needs of children to other needs outside of that specific mandate given by the UN. In particular the Holy See is concerned about "1) the failure of UNICEF to provide accountability for funds ...; 2) the participation of UNICEF in the publication of a UN manual advocating the distribution of abortifacient 'post-coital contraceptives' ...; 3) evidence of UNICEF involvement in advocacy to alter national legislation regarding abortion; and 4) credible reports that UNICEF workers in various countries were distributing contraceptives and counselling their use."

• **Shusaku Endo died on Sunday September 29<sup>th</sup> in Tokyo.** Endo was a Catholic novelist best known in the West for his portrayal of missionaries and Christians in 17<sup>th</sup> century Nagasaki in the novel *Silence*. Endo, who won nearly every major Japanese literary award, was often referred to as Japan's Graham Greene. His best selling 1993 novel, *Deep River*, has recently been made into a film.

## Bulletin Board

• **Catalyst for Renewal is holding a morning of reflection for all Friends on Saturday November 30<sup>th</sup>, 10am-1pm, at St Ignatius College, Riverview (Memorial Hall).** There will be input with the opportunity for prayer and quiet time. Participants will also meet other Friends and help to promote conversation for renewal. No charge. BYO lunch. Tea/coffee provided (Info: Michael 02 9816 3614)

• **Spirituality in the Pub for 1997 is currently being planned.** Eight sessions will

be held at The Bellevue Hotel, Paddington, on the first Wednesdays of the months March through October, and 8 at The Pymble Pub, Pymble, on the third Wednesdays of the same months. The sessions begin at 7.30pm. The overall theme in 1997 will be "The Good Life" with emphasis on the virtues that constitute "a good life".

• **An Interfaith Seminar on Wednesday November 27<sup>th</sup> 1996 will bring together four speakers from different faith traditions to address the theme: A Spiritual**

**Ethos for Modern Australia.** The seminar will be held at St James Hall, 169 Phillip St Sydney, commencing at 7.30pm. A light supper will follow. (Info: Meredith 02 9969 8913)

• **Cross Reference is a newsletter of the Epiphany Association for Catholic priests who have resigned from the active ministry and for their families.** The newsletter is available from Bill Welsh, 44 Oak Street, Ormiston, Q. 4160. Tel: 07 3286 5679)

