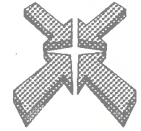


# THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

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## Our Say - God enfleshed

There are two major feasts in the Church's year: Christmas/Epiphany and Easter/Pentecost. All other liturgical celebrations in one way or another bring us back to what these two feasts remember. Christmas/Epiphany remembers the Incarnation - *incarnatus est*. Our word *incarnation* means literally "is enfleshed". God is enfleshed. God enters the human condition in this particular historical moment and cultural context. Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfilling of the Great Promise - "I am with you!" - in the most amazing way possible: the enfleshing of God. As the life of the enfleshed God unfolds among us it appears even more amazing.

Easter/Pentecost remembers the Paschal Mystery. Jesus enters fully into the human condition, even unto death. In this He is both example and Way. By living to the utter limits he liberates the flesh. In Him, with Him and through Him we are each called more deeply into our own unique and communal humanity to discover there the liberation His death brings.

Theologian von Balthazar sums it up this way (see John Thornhill's essay, p.5):

the dazzling darkness and divine beauty of a love which gives itself without remainder and is poured out in the world in Jesus Christ in the form of human powerlessness.

The Gospel is the revelation of an infinite and utterly incomprehensible act of love. Whatever else we say about the Gospel we must never forget that. It is the Good News of humanity liberated in Christ; it is the proclamation of the truth that we are made in love, called to live in love, enabled to live in love and destined to be in love for eternity. This is the meaning of the Incarnation.

The Sacred Scriptures do not impose, they expose. Similarly Jesus, in His person and teaching, does not impose, He exposes. In Him God points and invites. The pointing is to our *humanity*. The invitation is to *enter* that humanity.

Ironically religion can be its own worst enemy. It can displace God. It can also draw people away from their humanity, promoting a sort of *excarnation* rather than *incarnation*. Christianity is as susceptible to this as is any institutionalised

form of religion. When this happens the liberation of the Gospel tends to be replaced by the imprisonment of a system.

Christmas helps us to remember. It helps us to remember the relativity of doctrines and rules, organisational structures and roles. It helps us remember the originating event of a loving God at work in the world calling us *into* our humanity not out of it. It also helps us remember that everything we do or say or establish or maintain ought to implicitly or explicitly serve that ultimate relationship all people have with God, the Great Mystery of Love, with themselves in their own humanity with all its needs, limits and possibilities, with others in their humanity, and with the wider world in which humanity must pursue its vocation.

The Church is called to be a sign to humanity of its very humanity - as Jesus was. We should let nothing prevent us from living this sign. The true disciple is one who lives her or his humanity in Him, with Him and through Him. Thus He lives in us, with us and through us. □

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

These are the current Members:

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Dr Ann Bye, Marie Byrne,  
Aidan Carvill SM, Marea Donovan,  
Geraldine Doogue, Kate Englebrecht,  
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Chris McGillion, John Menadue,  
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Martin Teulan, Joanna Thyer  
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).

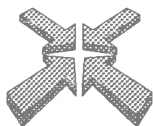
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**The Four Arrows and the Cross** symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find lifegiving unity.

## The Human Face

**C**HRIS RILEY grew up near Echuca, where his family had a dairy farm. He has three brothers and a sister. He boarded at Salesian College, Sunbury for secondary schooling and very quickly grew to like the Salesians and their life. At fifteen he made up his mind he wanted to be a Salesian. Nothing ever changed in that regard. He was particularly attracted by the fact that they ran Boys Town.

Chris says he is very close to his mother. She is not a Catholic and found it very difficult to see him go away to the seminary. He says "she wanted me to put it off for a year but there was no way I would do that". His grandmother was fairly important to him in terms of his faith. Since he has been a Salesian there have been a number of significant people who have helped him. He observes of himself: "In some ways I'm really impetuous and go like a bull at a gate. The ones who have trusted me have been really significant to me. My philosophy of life is that you don't take backward steps. A lot of people in the order are not in favour of what I am doing because I am outside community. But I've always thought we should be working with the poor. I could never see myself teaching kids in a middle class school all my life. Those who have been prepared to stay with me have therefore been important to me".

Chris refers to a turning point in his work with street kids: "I can't remember exactly when it was but it was about six years ago, when I was in my mid-thirties. I came to an acceptance of dying. That was the last thing I needed to step out into this work. I was, if you like, happy to die if that's what it came to. Working with this kind of clientele, it was important to come to that acceptance".

Chris and his volunteers form one of the biggest agencies in this sort of work, with eight different services for the street kids. He believes one of the most important things he does is to play with the kids. Chris notes: "Part of our Salesian vision is that recreation time is most crucial for kids. I ride horses and play basketball with them. That keeps me pretty centred too. This is not a job for me, it's a lifestyle".

He tries to take set shifts in the different services. He spends a lot of time in the courts and gaols trying to help kids. He also does a lot of teaching, seeing that as "one of my best contributions to the kids".

"The big thing these kids need," says Chris, "is a safe place - a home. I think one of the things I am able to give the kids is safety. They feel secure with me".

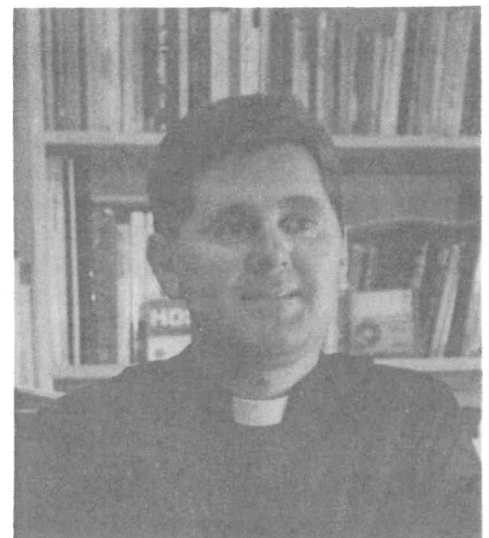
The agency has a non-denominational charter. "The only thing officially Catholic about our services is me" says Chris. Because I am freed from hierarchical control I am able to respond to need. So, for example, we've opened five new services this year. If I had to go through the bureaucracy I wouldn't have had one opened this year. The people in the pews have been my strength though. That represents, if you like, the official recognition by the Church.

The Government has given some funding for the Marrickville place. "But basically," says Chris, "the Minister says to me he lives in the real world and I don't. He says the real world is when I have to go to the Government and ask for money and they say there isn't any. I ask him to tell me when he last cut a kid down who hanged himself or was at the bedside of a kid who has slashed her wrists or overdosed. But the Department remains fairly hard nosed about it all".

Most of the staff is voluntary. Christ notes that some "people in the field object to this, saying you never know who you're letting in with volunteers. However, most of the abuse of kids in this work is done by professional staff. I think our places are pretty special because we have normal Mums and Dads and Grandparents in here working with the kids. It creates a really nice home environment. Our street work is done completely by volunteers. We take the kids hot meals and also provide them with information as to how they can find a home if they want it".

Chris believes we need to work on adult-children relationships in our society "very strongly". "If someone is stranded in the ocean," he notes, "we'll spend \$2 million on a rescue. But when it comes to kids on the street we don't have the same sort of enthusiasm".

*(If you would like to assist Chris you can phone him on 02 9564 2263)*



*Chris Riley SDB*

# Your Say - RCIA - the path to belonging

by Julie Kelly

I was received into the Catholic Church on a balmy October evening in 1958, after some weeks of private instruction in the presbytery. I had just left my mother in tears at home. She was so hurt that the Church which I was about to join would not trust as valid the Baptism which she had so lovingly arranged when I was an infant. In spite of this, I was looking forward to the ceremony which was about to take place.

As the priest, my fiance and his friend (who was to be my godfather) and I entered the darkened church (the only light being above the baptismal font) I noticed the lone figure of a woman kneeling in prayer. For a moment I felt uneasy that there was someone else there, a stranger... but as we walked down the aisle she lifted her head and turned to me..... It was my mother, She gently told me that she knew this was a very important moment in my life and she simply **had** to be part of it.

Almost forty years later I have come to realise, through my work in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) or the Catechumenate, what a profound sense my mother had of the need for a witness to this wonderful event and its essential communal nature, when a new member joins our Church.

How different it all is now in the parishes where the catechumenate process has been adopted as the normal way in which new members are welcomed into the community of faith. After the winds of change have swept through the Church in the years following Vatican II we see a completely new scenario. Here is a process

designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts (RCIA Intro. n.1).

The document goes on to say that

the people of God, as represented by the local Church should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised .... (RCIA n.9).

This is a whole new ball game .... and why? Why change from the one-on-one instruction in the presbytery and the private reception? Precisely because of the change in the way we see ourselves as mature Christians since the Second Vatican Council. We are no longer solitary souls, working out our lonely way to salvation, but, rather we are members, of the

Body of Christ, a community of believers, and we are called to play a vital part in welcoming, nurturing and celebrating the entrance of adults into our communities.

The RCIA is about conversion, about the spiritual journey of the whole person. It takes seriously the life story of the candidate and listens to that story with great respect, humility and loving acceptance. It is an introduction into a community, not just an introduction to the Parish Priest and the rules of the Catholic Church. It is not so much about information as it is about transformation to the Gospel way of life.

Each year on the first Sunday of Lent, as I stand in the Sanctuary of St. Mary's Cathedral and I see the hundreds of candidates walking forward eagerly to meet the Bishop, my mind flies back to that moment in the darkened church so many years ago and a quiet voice within me makes a promise to these people: "I will try to be better for you, to make my little bit of this Church more worthy of your trust".

*(Julie Kelly is a Catechumenate Consultant with Catholic Adult Education in the Archdiocese of Sydney)*

## Special Feature: Saviour and Life-giver of the world

**The following is the essential part of a statement issued by the Bishops of England and Wales after spending a week in prayer together in September 1995 at Cricklade.**

We need to become a church more conscious of our own *need for repentance*; we realise afresh the radical truth proposed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the measure for all that we are. Before that truth, we need to repent. We too easily become comfortable; we find ourselves sometimes excluding people whom Christ may well have invited into his company. We want to become a church able to recognise the wounds of our own body, confident that repentance will bring us joy.

From our repentance, we can discover afresh *the compassion we desire to offer in our world*. There are many who are victims or who become voiceless. It has always been God's call to the church to suffer with such people and to speak for them. When we turn to those who are victims, we will

discover the presence of the crucified and risen Lord. The body of Christ must be present in the places *where reconciliation is most needed*. Above all, the Gospel message proclaims that all sin can be redeemed. Jesus, the sinless one, has taken upon himself all sinfulness. Whatever our past failures, our lives can be re-created.

We know all too well that this is a costly process; forgiveness is not easy or painless. Christ's risen body still carries the mark of his wounds. If we are willing to seek the risen, wounded Lord, we and our world can be transformed.

To become a repentant, compassionate, reconciling church, we *need to deepen our spirituality*. We need to value the diversity which brings richness to our communion. The fabric of our common mind and heart must be deepened and reformed in prayer. We must open ourselves more fully to each other in faith. In these ways, we will reflect the life of the-Trinity.

A jubilee church needs *bold and faithful shepherds*. We have thought much

about the heart of our ministry. We have realised anew that we are apostles, and that our primary task is to give witness, to testify by our lives to the teaching we have received and hand on. Like the Lord's first apostles, we often fail. We are vulnerable in many ways. But if we recognise our fears and remember the liberation which is God's gift and promise, in the Lord such vulnerability can be life-giving.

There is greatness and beauty in the world which God has redeemed. There is abundant growth, hope and strength in the church. We build on strong foundations from our past. Yet our confidence and strength come from the Lord. Before we are leaders, we are followers, disciples among the baptised.

We trust that in collaboration with priests and all Christ's faithful we can fashion the new relationships which will show to the world that no-one is outside the embrace of God's love.

We say to all in our dioceses: come with us. □

# Essay - The future of the Australian Church

by Bill Uren

The following is the text of a speech which the Jesuit Provincial, Fr Bill Uren SJ, gave in response to Cardinal Martini's speech at the Australian Jesuit Alumni Association Dinner held in Sydney in August 1996.

One of my earliest memories of Jesuit education was at my first speech night and prize-giving at Xavier College in 1949. I was just thirteen years of age, and I had come to Xavier in Year 9 - all my previous schooling had been with the Sisters of St Joseph and the De La Salle Brothers. The guest of honour at the speech night was the Archbishop of Melbourne Archbishop Mannix. He was then 86 years of age, and had been Archbishop of Melbourne for 33 years. He was a patriarch in every sense of the word, and he did not hesitate to rebuke his people: "I see your doctors, your judges, your lawyers, your engineers, your academics and professors, your businessmen, your other leaders in commerce and the professions. But where are your community leaders: your politicians, your trade union leaders, your councillors?"

It was a rebuke, I later learned, that he was accustomed to deliver at many a speech night of upwardly mobile Catholic Colleges in the 1950s. It was a sobering reminder that the investment which the Church had made particularly in Catholic education was not intended merely as a ladder for Catholics to the glittering prizes of professional expertise, success and affluence. It was also meant, as a consequence of the foregoing, to prepare Catholics to take their place in the dialogue of cultural and religious values that constitutes the community of ideas on which our Australian society rests.

I wonder whether, if Archbishop Mannix were here today, he would believe that his rebuke had been taken to heart. Do we believe that the commission which he and other Church leaders gave us has been, and remains, part at least of the future of our Australian Church? The Australian Catholic education system, and its parallels in health and social welfare, are an enduring monument, in the first instance, to the innovative imagination, the faith and the commitment of our Catholic forbears at the end of the 19th Century. Once founded, these systems were built, brick by brick, on the resourcefulness and ingenuity especially of the bishops, parish priests and

religious in continuing the initiative during the first half of this century. They were, of course, supported by the extraordinary generosity of parents and parishioners. And in these latter times, in the second half of the century, the laity have responded even more generously to the challenge of maintaining these institutions, in the face of declining numbers of religious and clergy, by partnership in, and then leadership of, the Catholic educational, health and welfare systems.

You do not need me to tell you that almost one third of Australia's children are presently educated in the Catholic school system, that the Catholic hospital system is by far the largest alternative to that of the government, that the St Vincent de Paul Society is the largest non-government social welfare agency in Australia, and that in each system new and exciting initiatives are being constantly undertaken. New public hospitals in developing areas are being underwritten by religious congregations and their lay colleagues. There is a proliferation of Catholic non-government agencies to respond to the plight of the marginalized and underprivileged. And continuing initiatives in primary and secondary education are now being complemented by Catholic tertiary institutions that will prepare lay Catholics to carry on with dedication and expertise the tasks of evangelization hitherto reserved to clergy and religious.

*The Society of Jesus  
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mission of the Church  
in this great moment of  
history'*

But, of course, there are also hiccups, there are challenges, there are strong differences of opinion, there are massive financial burdens. The future of the Australian Church depends on our ability to meet these challenges, to tolerate these differences (rather than to involve ourselves in

internecine crossfire), and to continue to respond with the extraordinary generosity that has characterised the Catholic people of Australia for more than 150 years. This is at least part of the contribution that the Catholic Church must continue to make to the community of ideas that constitutes our Australian society.

At the beginning of 1995 I was privileged to attend the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, the 34th in 455 years of the Society's existence - not a frequent occurrence. There were 223 representatives of the 23,000 strong Jesuit Order, representing over 90 Provinces and Regions in 128 countries of the world. The most significant moment in that conference, I believe, occurred in the third reading of the draft on: *Cooperation with the laity in ministry*. The two previous drafts had addressed the question: "How can the laity assist us, the Jesuits, in our various ministries?" The third draft, however, inverted the problematic, so that it now read: "How can we, the Jesuits, assist the laity in their mission?" That changed problematic is reflected in the opening paragraph of the final draft of the *Decree on Cooperation with the Laity in Mission*.

A reading of the signs of the times since the Second Vatican Council shows unmistakably that the Church of the next millennium will be called the "Church of the Laity". The Society of Jesus acknowledges as a grace of our day and a hope for the future that laity "take an active, conscientious, and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great moment of history." We seek to respond to this grace by offering ourselves in service to the full realization of this mission of the laity, and we commit ourselves to that end by cooperating with them in their mission. Jesuits are both "men for others" and "men with others". The Society of Jesus places itself at the service of this mission of the laity by offering what we are and have received: our spiritual and apostolic inheritance, our educational resources and our friendship.

The Church of the Third Millennium will be the Church of the laity (as, indeed, was the Church of the first two centuries). But if that will be true of the Church as a whole, it will be true *par excellence* of the Australian Church. Australia is recognized to be one of the most secular countries in the world. It has a short history, no common religious heri-

tage, a fragmentary moral sense, little or no respect for authority, a yearning for independence. It was never likely to be effectively evangelized by a Romanist Church that owed much to the excessively hierarchical and clericalized European *Ancien Regime* and little to the principles of 1789 - liberty, equality, fraternity - that were enunciated just one year after the first European settlement of Sydney Cove.

Quite paradoxically - and perhaps the Spirit is even much more clever than we give him (or should I say her!) credit - recent Vatican *pronunciamentos*, taken apparently with little collegial or general consultation, particularly in the area of sexual morality and the position of women in the Church, have convinced so many Australian Catholics that the future of the religious tradition which they have inherited can no longer be left exclusively, or even principally, in the hands of clergy and religious. In so many areas - and not only in education, health and welfare - they are girding themselves for genuine dialogue with both the indigenous and the developed distinctive Australian culture. In this mission I would hope clergy and religious can play a supportive, a consultative and a complementary role. Any other alternative, I believe, will only lead to dissolution, nominality or ghettoization. I believe the Australian Catholic laity are increasingly responsive to this challenge. It is in confidence, in faith and in hope that I say then: Roll on the third millennium! □

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## Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Sadness

by John Thornhill

The following is the text of a talk given by John Thornhill SM in August 1996 at the Bellevue Hotel, Paddington, as part of the Spirituality in the Pub series.

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I am going to talk about modernity and the roots of this sadness, how it came to be and what the Church can bring to this modern world.

We are, in this present age, at a turning point in humanity's experience. One of the crucial factors in this is that, for the first time, we can take in the whole of human history and experience and begin to assess it and make sense of it. That gives a new sense of responsibility for the world and for ourselves. It opens up new possibilities for the world and for the Church.

Let's take first of all the twentieth century picture. Why is the world feeling discouraged? Why did this century begin with boundless hope and optimism and end in near despair?

In the twentieth century we have been disillusioned with the ideology of progress. It was a very superficial ideology that became extremely powerful during the nineteenth century: technology, steam engines, telegraphic communications and so on. It seemed there was no problem that was insoluble. Then the two Wars came. Gradually that hope abated. We realise that technology will not solve our problems. The problems are deeper and we must come to terms with them somehow but we do not know how at this time.

The modern world began in the fifteenth century. One of the encouraging things for me as I have studied this in recent months, is that when we come to understand the modern world it is not nearly as intimidating as it seemed. We can understand how the modern world came to be and recognise its shortcomings.

Modernity was a reaction against medievalism. The medieval world in the fifteenth century was past its great achievements and was living on past capital. The thinkers of the time belonged to closed systems, with free floating dogmatism, relying on authority in what they had to say. They did not do their job as thinkers.

Something had to be done. Modernity was the reaction. Now a reactionary movement finds it very hard to identify itself because it is always against. Essentially, modernity was seeking autonomy for the secular order. The medieval Church ran the world. That wasn't a good thing. In the end, the culture demanded autonomy.

Part of that autonomy was to be an intellectual autonomy. So the founders of modernity tried to set up a new, scientific approach. It was necessary. This bankrupt thought of the late medieval period needed to be challenged. But unfortunately these new thinkers did not look back to the real achievements of medieval thought.

*In (Jesus') story,  
do is revealed,  
an the ways of do,  
the hope of humanity  
an the possibilities  
of human existence*

The scientific method would look to what was quantifiable, leaving out qualities. It's a sort of fundamentalism and it's taken over the Western world. It's immensely successful in developing technology and the world has been transformed by these technological achievements.

But the whole approach had a basic flaw. You cannot discuss what is most important in human life in merely mathematical and empirical scientific terms. So there is a deep frustration that is part of the sadness at the end of this century.

During the nineteenth century Romanticism had tried to answer this. It spoke of the mysterious depths in the human spirit and in nature. It included attempts to express this in music, art, literature and poetry. Tremendous achievement!

Modernity was excessively reactionary in its early phase, making human reason the only measure. More than that it made the quantifiable the measure. Now there is a disillusionment with that. We now distrust science that once was the source of so much optimism and we're wary of it. Science is not only not giving all it promised, it is tending to destroy the very atmosphere we depend on for life. So there is a mood in our culture that looks beyond mere reason.

The second phase of modernity as a reactionary movement must acknowledge the achievements of modernity. But it must add that broader context beyond what human reason and mathematics can measure. There is the reality of life, human qualities, human existence in all its mysterious and wonderful dimensions. Now we must rediscover those things.

This is where the Church, the Gospel, the Truth given to the world in Jesus Christ is all important. We made the big mistake, in bringing Christianity to Australia, of bringing doctrines and old disputes. We didn't bring the Gospel story. I'm not against doctrines but I want to relativise them. In themselves they can be tyrannical. Jesus Christ must be the measure against which all doctrine stands. In His story, God is revealed, and the ways of God, the hope of humanity and the possibilities of human existence.

Let me end with a quotation from the theologian von Balthazar. He speaks of the Gospel as "the dazzling darkness and divine beauty of a love which gives itself without remainder and is poured out in the world in Jesus Christ in the form of human powerlessness". That is the truth. That is the ultimate measure. That is what we need to heal the world and bring back that joy and hope we have lost in this mood of sadness and discouragement of late twentieth century. □

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*John Thornhill SM lives in Sydney and is internationally renowned as a lecturer and writer in the field of systematic theology. He has served on the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith in Rome and is the author of the highly acclaimed Making Australia: Exploring Our National Conversation, E J Dwyer, 1992.*

## Words for a Pilgrim People

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Romans 14:19)

*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of human beings. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), n.1)

*Let nothing trouble you, let nothing frighten you, all things pass away. God never changes. Patience gains everything. Those who have God lack nothing. God alone suffices.* (Prayer of St Teresa of Avila)

*The essential purpose of knowledge, said Rabbi Schneur Zalman, is not that people should know the greatness of God from authors and from books. The essence is to deepen one's awareness of God's greatness, and fix one's thoughts on God with the strength and power of the heart and mind. Thus one's thought will be bound up with God, with a strong and powerful bond, as it is bound up with the physical things that one sees with one's own eyes.* (A. Unterman, ed., **The Wisdom of the Jewish Mystics**, New Directions, 1976, 57f.)

*Prayer unites us with God as his companions. ... Prayer is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but a gift of God's grace. ... Once you have tasted this food, you are set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up your soul.* (St. John Chrysostom, **Homily 6** (On Prayer))

## The Bible

It is always a fair question to ask of any passage from the Bible, even one that has an apparently obvious message: What does it mean? The science of *hermeneutics* offers an important set of tools for responding to this question. *Hermeneutics* is the science of interpreting texts, whether they be written or oral. It is not an exact science. However, its contributions should not be ignored.

There are layers of meaning in all human communication. One of the most obvious layers of meaning is found in what might be called *the literal sense*. This is the sense which the author directly intended and which the words convey. Such a sense can include metaphors. For example, if Christ is referred to as "the lion of Judah" we do not have to believe the author intends us to understand that Christ is a lion. The *literal sense* in such instances is found by asking such questions as: What did the author intend? Where else is this metaphor used? What kind of significance did it carry for the listener of the time? This does of course raise the difficult question of how one can possibly know the intention of an author who lived so long ago. Clearly it is possible to offer some well informed theories about, say, the intention of the author of Matthew's Gospel, on the basis of all that is known of the times, the culture, the language and contemporaneous texts and the Jewish tradition.

We must also allow for a *more-than-literal sense*. This is especially applicable to any text that is a classic. Classic texts are those which release truth, wisdom, beauty and other transcendent qualities in an extraordinary way. In the field of *hermeneutics* they speak of "an excess of meaning". It is entirely reasonable that a reader of another culture and another historical moment might read the classic texts and discover a depth of wisdom unforeseen by the author. This new reality emerges not only because of the inherent value of the text, but also because of the reader who brings a whole world of meaning to the conversation with the text. This is especially relevant to the Bible. No interpretation will ever exhaust the ability of that text to speak anew to readers of different times and cultures. The *literal sense* offers insight into one layer of meaning - and even that must continually subject itself to further scrutiny for increased understanding. The *more-than-literal sense* opens up vast horizons of meaning. In the Christian tradition we regard this as one of the critical points at which the authority of the community must be respected - the community must decide what is an acceptable reading of the Scriptures. No individual can assume this authority.

(*Corrigenda: Volume 1, n.8, p.6 - Divino Afflante Spiritu was published in 1943 - not 1963.*)

**Suggested Reading:** See *hermeneutics* in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; C H Dodd, *The Bible Today*, Cambridge University Press, 1965 - see Ch. VII "History and the Individual"

## The Tradition

"Towards 200 AD, ecclesiastical literature not only shows signs of tremendous growth, it takes an entirely new turn. The writing of the second century had been conditioned by the struggle of the Church against her persecutors. The works of that period were characterised by defense and attack; they were apologetic and anti-heretical" (Johannes Quaesten). To this point no thinker had attempted to consider the entire body of belief as a whole or make a systematic presentation of it. Ireneus (125-202) shows signs of this kind of project, and is thus sometimes regarded as the first theologian. However, *defense* of the faith was a dominant influence on him. The more Christianity spread, the more pressure there was to develop a coherent presentation of the tenets of the faith and their precise meaning, and to train teachers to instruct converts. This pressure was particularly present where the converts came from the educated circles.

Thus there grew up *theological schools* which became the cradles of theology within the tradition. These *schools* first arose in the Orient, and the one about which we know most was based in the northern Egyptian town of Alexandria. Founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, this city was a centre of brilliant intellectual life long before Christianity came on the scene. It was there that the mingling of Oriental, Egyptian and Greek cultures had given birth to a whole new civilization - Hellenism. Alexandria was also one of the great centres of Jewish culture. It was here that the Septuagint was created (cf Vol.1, n.5, p.6). This was also the home of Philo (cf Vol.1, n.8, p.6).

When Christianity came to Alexandria about the end of the first century, it obviously interacted with the culture and intellectual vigour of the city. The *School of Alexandria* is the oldest centre of theological study in the Christian tradition. The prevailing intellectual climate gave it its specific focus and style - predominant interest in the metaphysical understanding of the content of the faith, a leaning towards Platonism and the allegorical interpretation of Sacred Scripture. It counted amongst its students and teachers Clement (150-215), Origen (185-254), Athanasius (300-373) and Cyril (376-444). The *School* was these people rather than any building or faculty or curriculum.

**Suggested Reading:** Louis Bouyer, *History of Spirituality, Volume 1 3 B*, pp.356-2; Johann Quaesten, *Patrology, Volume II*, pp.1-4 Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* - see index.

## News in Brief

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• **Four Spanish Marist Brothers were shot dead in Zaire, probably on the evening on October 31<sup>st</sup>.** The Marist Brothers' General Administration released the following statement: "Two Zairean seminarians, who were stationed some 10 kms from the house of the Marist Brothers, have stated that on the 31<sup>st</sup> a group of militia who had fled Rwanda two years ago and who have since been living in and trying to control the refugee camps, attacked the Brothers' residence, looted it, violently murdered the four Spanish religious and threw their corpses into a septic tank. ... The murderers, now clearly identified as members of the Hutu militia of the former Rwandan government, remained in the house for several days, thereby preventing anyone else from approaching it. The few witnesses remaining in the area claim that the soldiers were seen those days wearing clothing belonging to the Brothers". The bodies of the four Brothers were later retrieved and given a Christian burial in Zaire. (Note: Brother Michael Hill FMS, Provincial of the Sydney Province of the Marist Brothers, spent two weeks with the Brothers in nearby Rwanda in February this year. Whilst there he got to know personally two of the four Brothers who were murdered - Servando and Miguel.)

• **Bishops from Zaire met in Rome with Pope John Paul II on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.** Among other comments, the Pope said: "Once again, I appeal forcefully for a rapid return to peace. Nothing is resolved through violence ... It is urgent to end this tragedy, these 'manhunts', which in the capital and elsewhere dishonour the instigators". The Pope called for "courage to dialogue" and concluded: "I exhort the international community to redouble its efforts to put into place a real solidarity so as to bring aid to the populations of this region, who, deprived of food and health assistance, are in tragic conditions. This is still urgent and necessary".

• **Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, died on November 14<sup>th</sup>.** He was 68 and had suffered from cancer for some time. He had Christmas cards ready to send to his friends. His Christmas message included the words: "When I begin my final journey home, know that I will carry you in my heart." Bernardin was widely loved and respected across all religious, social and political boundaries. At a memorial service in Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, Rabbi Herman Schaalman said: "His way of death confirms that this man did not have two faces, one private, one public. He was inside with his outside, outside with his inside, which is rare". All the flags in Chicago were at half mast when his body lay in state in the Cathedral and an estimated 100,000 paid their last respects.

• **There was a preparatory seminar for the year of Charity 1999 in Bogota, Colombia, November 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>.** Representatives from the Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum', presented the document *Hunger in the World, a Challenge for All: Development in Solidarity*. The document states in the Introduction: "Today the Church again takes up the provocative appeal that God made to Cain, asking him to account for the life of his brother Abel: 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground' (Gen. 4:10). It is certainly not an unfair or aggressive exaggeration to apply these forbidding, almost unbearable words to the plight of our contemporaries who today are starving to death. These words spell out a priority and are intended to touch our consciences." After noting some of the economic causes of poverty and starvation, the document goes on to note: "There is a conclusion to be drawn from this: Human advancement depends on the human being's capacity to practice altru-

ism, love in other words, which has extremely important practical implications. In succinct and realistic terms, love is not a luxury. It is a condition for the survival of a very large number of human beings".

• **The President of the Canadian Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis Spence, wrote to the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, on November 8<sup>th</sup> stating the Conference's opposition to "any legislative changes that would open the door to assisted suicide or euthanasia".** Archbishop Spence goes on to note that "even the most conservative interpretation of The Netherlands experience has shown that abuses cannot be prevented by regulation". The protest from the CCBC was prompted by the recent news that the Liberal Party - the Prime Minister's Party - has adopted "as official policy doctor-assisted suicide for the terminally ill".

• **Catalyst for Renewal is now incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984.** This step will assist CFR to move forward on the basis of a solid administrative and legal structure. Already, in less than one year, the response to CFR and its mission has been overwhelming. At the end of November there were 1020 Friends on the mailing list. That number grows by the week. The CFR Executive and Members are very mindful of the privilege and responsibility this places before them. Central to their planning therefore, is a series of Spiritual Formation Days for themselves - including one overnight - where the focus will be on deepening the Gospel and ongoing discernment of their mission within the Church. They are pleased that so many people are joining them in this mission. New developments will be mentioned in *The Mix*.

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## Bulletin Board

• **Have you heard about Alpha?** On Wednesday November 13<sup>th</sup> 130 young adults caught the enthusiasm of their friends who had just completed the low-key course on Christianity. The next program will commence on Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup> 1997, 7pm-9.30pm sharp in Lavender Bay Parish Hall Mackenzie Street (immediately behind North Sydney Railway Station). The course consists of 10 weekly sessions comprising a meal (\$5 donation), 20 minutes talk by well-known speakers, followed by group discussions. Of course

there is also music, laughter, conversation etc. A residential weekend away offered mid-way through the course is considered by many a high point both personally and socially. (Info: Tony 02 9894 0844).

• **Catalyst Volunteers held a reflection morning on November 9<sup>th</sup>.** We agreed to pray for the mission of CFR. Carl Henry - one of the Volunteers - suggests the following prayer: "May each one of us, dear Father, daily be that little bit of yeast, to help others to rise to the occasion; or that pinch of salt which will bring the taste for

change in others to the fore. In Jesus' name grant us our prayer". Len Blahut - another Volunteer - has done a trial audio tape of *The Mix*. Watch this space! There will be more Reflection Mornings for Volunteers and Friends in 1997.

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE MIX  
WILL BE IN MARCH 1997**

**WE WISH ALL OUR FRIENDS  
A HAPPY AND PEACE-FILLED  
CHRISTMAS**

