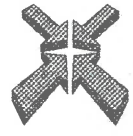


THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1

MARCH 1997

Margaret Spencer

The human face 2

"Peter"

Learning from life 3

Geraldine Doogue

Women in the Church (Part One) 3

The Bible

Lectio divina 6

Tradition

The Schools of Antioch and Caesarea 6

Our Say - Be faithful to the Gospel

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel! So the Christian community enters the liturgical season of Lent, in preparation for the second of the two great Christian feasts: Easter/Pentecost. It is a stirring and sobering injunction. We should not let familiarity blunt its edge.

The liturgy reminds us of Jesus' own preaching (cf Mk 1:15). The ability to receive the great gift on offer depends on our responsiveness. 'Stay awake!' (Mt. 24:42 and 25:13), 'see that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit!' (Lk. 12:35). This is a personal and communal call to move away from dispositions, behaviours, rituals, institutions etc. that obstruct or at least do not facilitate the Gospel, and move towards those that do facilitate the Gospel.

This movement is what the tradition has referred to as *conversion of life*. It involves the grace of God and our free cooperation. And it is a daily challenge. There will never be a time in our lives when we are so free and available for the Kingdom,

such faithful disciples, that we can put aside the call to conversion. This side of the grave, to be human is to be in need of conversion. We will always be pilgrims.

It took the Second Vatican Council to re-awaken this foundational Gospel vision within the Church's self-perception. Coming into the second half of the twentieth century, the Church shared a sense of confidence and permanence of structure with the secular world. Indeed, the Church thought of herself as a 'perfect society'. There was a sense of having arrived. And this was complemented by a sense of the Church being the bastion of all that is good and true, pitted against an increasingly irreligious and hostile world.

The first public sign that the Church had begun to recover the authentic tradition came with John XXIII's Opening Speech to the Council on October 11th, 1962. He spoke of his 'sorrow' at those to whom 'the modern world is nothing but betrayal and ruination'. He then went on to

speaking about the purpose of the Council:

Our task is not merely to hoard this precious treasure, as though obsessed with the past, but to give ourselves eagerly and without fear to the task that the present age demands of us.

The Council itself then went on to reflect in *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* (n.8):

The Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal.

John XXIII and the Council have called the Church - as Church - to conversion.

Such a conversion will involve taking all the steps necessary to enable the Church to be an effective instrument of the Gospel in each particular cultural context at this time. In particular, the Pope and Council acknowledged the need for a huge institutional project: re-defining and re-shaping the Church for the coming ages. Lent reminds us all of this sacred responsibility. □

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

These are the current Members:
Marie Biddle R.S.J., Kevin Burges,
Dr Ann Bye, Marie Byrne,
Aidan Carvill SM, Marea Donovan,
Geraldine Doogue, Kate Englebrecht,
Catherine Hammond, Michael Kelly S.J.,
Robyn Lawson, Stephanie Long,
Chris McGillion, Maryellen McLeay,
John Menadue, Dr Chris Needs,
Josephine Scarf, 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).

This journal is published ten times each year, March to December. It is sent to all Friends of Catalyst for Renewal. (See coupon on back page for Friends' Application.)

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:
PO Box 139
Gladesville NSW 2111
Australia
Tel/Fax: 61 2 9816 4262



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

MY NAME IS MARGARET SPENCER. I'm the sixth of nine children – five girls and four boys. We lived in Brisbane. By the time I arrived my parents were in their early forties. Compared with the parents of other kids they were older. Dad had been away at the war, so they were part of that generation that knew the Depression and war. They would say: "We don't have much but what we'll give you is a good education". I attended Catholic schools and got a good education.

As kids we were encouraged to be independent. Part of surviving in a large family is being able to find your own space and stand on your own two feet.

We used to go to 10.30 mass each Sunday at St Stephen's Cathedral – by 10.30 they could get everyone organised – and mum and dad would place us strategically around the Cathedral so we wouldn't fight!

My parents weren't pious people. Their faith was very much a lived thing. I don't have a strong sense of old time Church. Born in 1961, I missed most of that. I grew up in the Catholic culture – Sunday mass and convent schools – but I was of the era that accompanied the change.

We moved into an old rambling house when I was very small. It was, at the time, in an area where most of the people were older. When I was about twelve younger couples with money started to move into the area, buying the big old houses and doing them up. I began to get a sense that there was class distinction, that these parents were different from my parents.

When I moved into high school I became conscious of people who did not belong. I puzzled over why some were rejected and began to get a sense of injustice. So by the time I was fifteen I'd become involved in the homeless scene in Brisbane. And I did not do this out of a sense of feeling sorry for the homeless so much as out of a desire for people to belong. I also valued these people and realised there was something really interesting in them and I found this quite attractive.

It was then I got involved in the St Vincent de Paul Hostel when it was in Margaret St and everything was pretty makeshift – we had people sleeping in the chapel, we dispensed medicines there and we also broke the bread of the Eucharist there. The Chaplain, Brian Moynihan, introduced me to feeling nourished by the Word and Eucharist in that environment. There seemed to be something really genuine in what was being said and done.

I continued going to the Hostel while I was studying nursing. During that time I met Kate Flannery, who was a Brown Nurse. She was a big woman in her late forties, an alcoholic, a larger than life type of person. She was also dying of cancer. Katie had a great ability to call people beyond what they thought their capacities were. She confronted people with the messiness of life in a very loving way. Something she said haunts me to this day: "Ninety nine out of a hundred will give up on the likes of these people, but there's always got to be the hundredth who'll walk the mile with them".

Katie helped me with the struggle of who I am as a person and how I cope with the knocks in life. She taught me that being human is about how you embrace what life brings. It's about ownership of messiness as much as anything else.

Around this time I entered into a more personal relationship with God, especially as I accompanied Katie to her death. Prayer as a deepening and exploration of that relationship came about this time also. It was about seeing God as the Person who could listen, the Person who could meet the deepest needs in me. It was important to be able to share this with the members of the Brown Nurses' community.

However, I went to Melbourne and did post-graduate nursing in the field of neurology. That was fantastic. I then spent six months in Calcutta with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity before coming home to join the Brown Nurses in 1983. I now spend part of my time working with the poor around Kings Cross, and part as consultant to Family Support Services Association, which is a peak body representing 148 family support services.



Sr Margaret Spencer

Your Say – Learning from life

by "Peter"

A friend kindly arranged to have copies of "The Mix" sent me and now I am happy to subscribe to a magazine grappling with real issues. Thank you.

I've been a priest for 31 years but am currently on leave from active ministry for personal reasons. This liberating but painful experience has brought a number of facts of life to my attention.

The first (though not necessarily most important) is the difficulty of finding work. After registering with Jobsearch, I've applied for 32 jobs, resulting in one interview and one job (part time). I also clean a large 5 bedroom house and do the gardening etc. for a friend. I keep "sane" by spending a lot of time preparing for my one job (facilitating groups dealing with self-understanding and "rehabilitation" for offenders directed by the Courts to attend these groups for up to 75 hours) and writing reports. I also do voluntary work.

But I've learned the terrible empty feeling of not having a programmed day. I also know the emptiness of not feeling productive. Speaking to my "colleagues" (fellow or sister unemployed) I know they all want jobs. I don't know any "bludgers" who rejoice on waking up that they have another whole 12-15 hours to fill in with nothing to do except "enjoy" themselves!

The little money I do earn for my 13½ hours work is so heavily taxed that my last pay slip tells me my tax amounted to a whole week's rent. I'm currently paying \$75 not counting gas etc.)

Since mixing with the offenders, I've met people who, like myself, are trying to survive. I know my heart has been softened by their pain and struggle in their relationships, jobs, real life traumas.

Previously, I could speak easily of applying the Gospel to life. I gave answers to problems I never experienced. I told people how to live, forgive, reconcile, have courage, strive for ideals. I know now many of my exhortations I cannot live myself.

I am also often too tired to pray from long hours travelling or waiting for buses and trains, cramming in a meal at MacDonald's, trying to meet deadlines.

I've struggled with a relationship and know the pain of loneliness and the struggle to be reconciled when prayer and forgiveness don't seem to work. My heart goes out to many of my "colleagues" who are alone and struggling with sickness, unwanted pregnancies, divorce, alienation, unemployment. I know the "Church" can seem huge and impersonal and a lot

of rules, but not a human, loving touch.

While working in a Home for Homeless men and at the same time looking for accommodation myself, I thought of so many convents and presbyteries with empty rooms. When this was brought up to me before, I was able to give reasons why these rooms couldn't be "let out". Now I can't. I wonder how many of them would open their rooms to me after 31 years of service for the Church?

Many other strains and stresses come to mind. But I know that if ever I return to ministry, I will be a changed man.

My homilies would be less pious and more to do with encouraging and empathy with people in the real world. And definitely shorter. I would seek to attract people with no work or poor accommodation, those struggling to survive and to arouse the attention of "the flock" to the poverty and struggle around us.

What is the point of the Church if, in their midst, there are people who feel alone, alienated and unwanted with no one in the Church reaching out to them.

The Gospel doesn't work until those who hear the "Good News" are moved with compassion for their neighbour. □

The author's name is withheld on request.

Essay – Women in the Church (Part One)

by Geraldine Doogue

On October 31st, 1997, we held the second Catalyst Dinner with the theme "Women in the Church". The two speakers were Geraldine Doogue and Justice Margaret Beazley. In the next issue we will give the text of Margaret's presentation. What follows is the text of Geraldine's presentation. Geraldine focused on three themes: *who nurtures the nurturers? taking ourselves seriously, and praying to Mary.*

I am indebted to St Teresa of Avila for one of her reflections on her own talent. At the outset of her classic work *The Way Of Perfection*, she confessed: "Since I don't know what I am to say I cannot say it in an orderly way." I feel a little like that tonight, or more to the point, I have felt like it for the last couple of weeks as I prepared for tonight. I hope I have been able to assemble my thoughts about women in the Catholic Church of the 1990s in a way that is honest and useful.

I would very much like to be useful to the Catholic Church because I believe in it most profoundly as an institution. I have believed in it all my life. I inherited an Irish perspective on the Church. God has been a personal friend. My spirituality has been the broker for much of my personality and intellectual development.

I used to feel, indeed, that my intimacy with my god, whatever I perceived Him (capital H!) to be, clothed me in a sort of spiritual teflon-coating. That if I obeyed the rules and tried hard not to stand still in faith but to grow, then I would experience paradise on earth, as promised.

We'd been briefed, as Mercy students, about crises of belief and the dark night of the soul ... suffered even by saints. But the theory didn't quite match the reality, when my time came. In other words, if I had to sum up what's changed about my spirituality, it's that I have learned about perseverance within a sense of a much-reduced

tangible presence of God.

Cardinal Newman, I think it was, said he went on saying Mass, celebrating the Eucharist, for several years either unsure of what he believed any more, or worse... but, essentially, he went through the motions. Which sounds somewhat tawdry. Except that maybe it isn't. Maybe it's the secret of perseverance, the triumph of the ordinary and the mundane, not a glorious quality but one that eventually leaves you sensing that you've prevailed. A good feeling. One that opens you up to more, but not with that Utopian edge. Maybe it's more sane ... less dramatic but more sane.

When I have to find the words to express what a modern spirituality means to me, as I live day-by-day, I find I gag somewhat, especially if I attempt any eloquence. So please don't live in hope of soaring, sublime language tonight - you know, a moment of spiritual epiphany ri-

valling the best sermon. Because I find I don't have those sorts of words these days. But I feel strangely settled, though that doesn't mean I don't yearn for change.

What I can say is that I still believe in the mystery, even though that's been sorely tested ... still believe that all around me in the world is not explicable by using the world's tools ... still find solace and companionship with my personal God...just! Most assuredly find ecstasy in the physical beauty of the world ... see touches of the Divine in my children... and in the love that evolves between me and my husband.

I still most definitely believe in the institution of the Church. It matters to me very much and in a purely self-interested way, it is the venue for some of my most interesting experiences, intellectually and emotionally. It is still my spiritual home, though I am selective in the way I use the institution ... merely being here tonight is proof of that, I suppose.

But the Church is still, broadly speaking, the route through which I seek to grow my faith. "Faith seeks to understand itself,"...another of St. Augustine's little gems. I think this is code for faith being a pretty reliable route to an interior life. It's not the only one, of course, but from my observation of those around me, clearly searchers but often with no established pattern of doing so and no established language, an experience of Church means a definite capacity to access the interior. It's no guarantee but with all its warts, it's a better insurance policy than many other fashions and obsessions of the late 20th century.

In fact, as I've grown older, I'd have to say that I discovered a whole new way of looking at faith ... not as a series of strict guidelines about behaviour but as a faith of POSSIBILITIES, based on a new relationship with God. Not my old somewhat innocent, child's relationship... that had altered irretrievably and wasn't to be recovered...and was the source of some considerable grief, I might add.

What seemed to be required was a more mature, more pragmatic, dare I say, kind of faith...a stripped-down version, which made less personal claims on God, but somehow kept on keeping on. Not grand. But workable.

Having had to think about this for a Women's Mission that Fr.Peter Quin conducted last year at North Sydney, I realised one outstanding disappointment for me was my lack of involvement with any female spiritual figures in my prayer. I'd always felt, till this Women's Mission, that

my faith was gender-neutral ... that the actual messages of Jesus Christ and the form they take within the Bible and how they're interpreted, did not consciously impinge on my femininity at all.

However, maybe the lack of women as authority-figures within my spiritual mythology has made it harder for me to effortlessly believe in the whole concept of female authority sitting alongside male authority in the Church and elsewhere.

I am left with one clear challenge, on which I'm working: why was Mary so uninviting as a person to whom I could talk, the way I did to Christ in prayer? What was it that made her a figure who mattered more to Irish men than to a committed girl? Her gutsiness, her motherliness, her pragmatism and above all, her nurturing--that quality I so admire--should have beckoned seductively to me.

*If I had to sum up
what's changed
about my spirituality,
it's that I have learned
about perseverance
within a sense of
a much-reduced tangible
presence of God.*

I should have been available for it all. But like many, many other women for whom Mary is an irrelevant, somewhat embarrassing figure, I thought she had nothing to do with me!

It's incredible really that this should be. For here am I, a mother of two of my own children and two step-children, all of whom need me to do the job well, on a range of levels. And here am I, a woman who partakes of the privileges on offer to modern women by participating in various arenas of life... public and private, but who grapples with the sheer weight of the demands, with fear of failure, with a wish to simply have more talents to wring the best out of the many opportunities on offer. Here am I, a woman seeking wisdom to discern the best way forward in order to secure tranquillity plus the satisfaction of having contributed...not necessarily an easy fit.

Yet, here I am, without the help of this woman who exists so vividly if you care to look within our tradition. Up till now, this woman has seemed peripheral to my struggles even though it was she who answered the call of the angel and took the risk of accepting the adventure...the very thing I

so applaud.

What a waste it now seems! I am starting to consult her more. I realised that if I sought a relationship in prayer with Mary, I'd have to develop it, just as I'd developed one with God. I'd have to do some searching for more information...though I confess there's not much time for that. And my own life of the interior would have to include her...by conversing with her in prayer. And so I am. It's a little stiff so far, but it's early days.

I hope it leads me more and more towards my own solutions. I want women to take themselves more seriously...and it's one of the main themes I'd like to stress tonight. I want us to propose our own solutions and believe in them, whether or not we're necessarily hearing the words of encouragement we're seeking so desperately. They may never come...we may wait forever to hear it exactly as we'd like.

The irony is they may follow our own self-recognition ... that is the cruel trick, as I've experienced in life. Self-respect seems to produce more from others ... a win-win situation I suppose you could say, but exhausting all the same!

Adrienne Rich put it arrestingly like this in "Transcendental Etude": "There come times--perhaps this is one of them--when we have to take ourselves more seriously or die; when we have to pull back from the incantations, rhythms we've moved to thoughtlessly, and disenthral ourselves, bestow ourselves to silence, or a severer listening...."

These are hard words and they apply equally to all human beings. But I do agree with the authors of the book that highlighted that quote - Janet Nelson and Linda Waiter, *Women Of Spirit* - that women in particular seem to find it an especially daunting task. Often, they suggest, a woman does not realise just how many things work against her taking herself seriously until she decides to do just that. "We who are nurturers of others," they say, "have rarely learned to nurture ourselves."

I wish I'd written that. Who nurtures the nurturers?...the other open question I'd like to leave you with tonight.

I am increasingly conscious of this gap in our society and as a microcosm of the community, our Church. Two small, recent examples, drawn from the popular culture around us:

One, a documentary I introduced on ABC-TV last week called "No Place Like Home", which featured two families in considerable crisis over their sons. It emerged, through intensive social work,

that in one family, the parents' relationship was the source of much of the child's instability ... and among a range of issues it became clear that there was incredible yearning on the part of the gritty, young Mum, for some verbal feedback from her partner, Keith, a somewhat "inert" character, to say the least!

The social worker called it a "compliment"...it sounded so simple. Keith admitted, to this other man, that Yvonne did a "top job" with the kids and cooking and running around ... and all by herself...he even said the words. He knew he was recalcitrant. He didn't know how to break through, except that he was keeping his side of the bargain by working 7 days a week, we later discovered. He didn't throw the food away. He ate it, didn't he? The inference was obvious...she oughta know. But no, it wasn't, we all yelled at the set. Why couldn't he simply say "it was nice", the social worker asked. "Because it would rob me of my self-esteem," came the devastating answer.

Now I actually think this was a peculiarly dysfunctional response and I don't want to dwell on it. But much of public life, which has been dominated by men, is conducted without much gesture towards nurturing at all. I know there are risks here, suggesting that women are the only nurturers...or that we're all good at it, when we're plainly not.

Then there was the other observation from a Channel Ten programme the other night called Sex Life...it showed a quite funny examination of the different approaches taken by men and women to your common illness like cold and flu.

Overall, the men's needs were seen by the women to be over-stated and somewhat overtly pathetic ... while the men, admirably I suppose, acknowledged that they did want a lot of cossetting. The point is the concluding voiceover was something like this: "Well, let's face it: women are the traditional nurturers in our society so we can't escape that. So give the sympathy that's required...the rub is, expect the same when you get sick" or words to that effect.

Now I would take issue with that and say that I'd like men to learn this skill far more than they currently do. My whole commitment to women's liberation is based on the notion that it delivers to both women and men, not that it merely recalibrates the levers of power; that it promises real changes to the world of relationships by breaking down some of those artificial barriers between the public and private worlds.

As Germaine Greer said so succinctly years ago (don't know whether she believes it now, you can never tell with Germs): "The whole intellectual system of the Western world has been based on differences between women and men and those differences have been exaggerated."

*I would very much like
to be useful
to the Catholic Church
because I believe in it
most profoundly
as an institution.
I have believed in it
all my life*

So that women get exposed far more to the need for nurturing when dealing with children. It means

- finding soothing words and actions, when you least want to or can access the energy;
- it means, in my opinion anyway, having a repertoire of responses to indicate real belief in a person, such that they're encouraged to act;
- for me too, it means scanning the other person in order to see what support they're seeking, rather than simply offering your own idea of kindness;
- it means genuinely listening, not appearing to listen;
- it means stepping into the other person's shoes;
- it means routinely acknowledging effort, if not success, and finding forms and languages that are quite overt.

It sounds like the sort of how-tos that I should be in modern management manuals, but somehow don't often make it, when the call is made for a more feminine style of management. Great in theory...but putting it into practise is not so easy. Maybe it is our role to take what we do seriously enough to spell it out. This is how Nelson and Walter saw it: "We are used to responding to the plea from men 'be our souls, our mothers, our muses; comfort us, nurture us, inspire us, teach us how to feel, to relate, to listen to our intuitions'. We can become so good at doing this for others that we can begin to find our whole identity in living for others. Church and society will give us many accolades for this kind of 'selflessness'. But it is not always as healthy as it may seem. Jesus commands me to love my neighbour as myself. This is not possible unless I first

learn to take myself seriously. "And it is a sacred task. For this reason, we need to learn as women to 'fear God more than man', because this call to take oneself more seriously is a call from one's deepest self. It is a call from the heart of one's own heart. It is a call from the God within and we ignore it at our peril."

Of course, calls from God aren't invitations to tranquillity, sad to say, well not via a direct route anyway. One woman wrote to the authors like this: "I am so aware that this locating of myself is crucial and vital and to deny the authenticity of this search is to deny myself life. The tension that remains is that I live on the brink of fear and trepidation that all that I have valued will be jeopardised by following that path."

But Jesus also said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"...free to grow into a more mature faith, free to ask the right questions, first and foremost. The answers will follow gradually. And of course sometimes the Church doesn't appear to help because it offers the answers to questions we're not asking.

So, you have to take yourself seriously enough to ask your own questions and believe they're valid. Far from being a loss of faith, I again agree with Nelson and Walter that this kind of honest searching is a real journey of faith.

One of the sublime moments from Scripture is Christ's promise to his disciples: I have come to bring you life and bring it in abundance. I think we have an idea of how that will be delivered as a "faith product", that we'll feel a predictable set of responses when it's safely received and paid for, as it were.

Well, I've sort of stopped waiting for that particular delivery. In fact my prayer these days is for the deities to make me strong and supple, and of course when I step back from my preconceptions, I realise that my life is full indeed, of much that I always sought. It's just that it's too busy and often bewilderingand it's my secular life, not my overtly spiritual existence.

But maybe that is the point I've reached and maybe that is God's way: a fusion of the spiritual and the secular in a way that is life-giving to me. Maybe my prayers are being answered. □

Geraldine Doogue is a journalist well known throughout Australia for her work in radio and TV. Currently she is probably best known for her work on ABC Radio as one of the presenters of Life Matters. Geraldine lives with her family in Sydney.

Words for a Pilgrim People

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and those who fear are not perfected in love. (1Jn 18f)

From this it is manifest that the eternal law of God is the sole standard and rule of human liberty, not only in each individual man, but also in the community and civil society which men constitute when united. Therefore, the true liberty of human society does not consist in every man doing what he pleases, for this would simply end in turmoil and confusion, and bring on the overthrow of the State; but rather in this, that through the injunctions of the civil law all may more easily conform to the prescriptions of the eternal law. Likewise, the liberty of those who are in authority does not consist in the power to lay unreasonable and capricious commands upon their subjects, which would equally be criminal and would lead to the ruin of the commonwealth; but the binding force of human laws is in this, that they are to be regarded as applications of the eternal law, and incapable of sanctioning anything which is not contained in the eternal law, as in the principle of all law. (Leo XIII, On The Nature of Human Liberty (1888), n.10.

Behind all these labors was another question, one of great personal importance for him: What did it mean to be a monk, a contemplative in the twentieth century? In a way his whole twenty seven years at Gethsemani had been an attempt to find the answer to this problem, and as the years stripped away the obvious answers and comforting illusions he felt he was left with little but his humanity. Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his Nazi prison, he began to see that the highest spiritual development was to be "ordinary", to be fully a man, in a way few human beings succeed in becoming simply and naturally themselves. He began to see the monk, not as he had believed in youth, as someone special, undertaking feats of incredible ascetic heroism for the love of God, but as one who was not afraid to be simply "man", who, as he lived near to nature and his appetites, was the "measure" of what others might be if society did not distort them with greed or ambition or lust or desperate want. (Monica Furlong, Merton: A Biography, Collins, 1980, xviii)

The Bible

The prophet Ezekiel is commanded to eat the word of God (cf 2:8). Luke says: "As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19). And again: "My mother and my brother are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice" (8:21; also 4:20).

Throughout Sacred Scripture, the encounter with God in the Word is crucial. The Christian tradition has recognised this in the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. Literally – and inadequately – translated it means *divine* or *holy reading*. It presumes a meeting of persons is taking place. *Lectio* is evocative, ushering us into a contemplative place where we listen to what is happening between us and the Other. In an hour of *lectio* we might "read" only one sentence, or even one word.

In the tradition, *lectio* – which is applied primarily to our reading of Sacred Scripture – is compared with eating and savouring food. It is even compared to chewing the cud! This kind of reading is about receiving the Word into the depths of one's being. *Lectio* is not about information so much as it is about formation, even transformation. In *lectio* we meet the Author of the Word and that meeting is its purpose. "Holy Scripture becomes our saving word only when heard in prayer that leads to the submission of faith" (David Stanley).

To this day the Church regards *lectio* as one of the pre-eminent ways of reading the Sacred Text. This meditative reading, where we pause often and chew on a word, letting it seep into our unconscious and transform us interiorly, can yield the truth of the Word in its own simple, deeply personal way. *Lectio* intends intimacy with God.

Lectio complements the scientific study of Sacred Scripture. The person who engages in this practice of *lectio* should also listen to good scholarship and not presume to know the meaning of Scripture by private revelation as it were. By the same token, any scholar who presumes to interpret Scripture without accompanying the scholarship with *lectio divina* is treading a dangerous path. For the great scholar Origen (185-254) "the foundation of all knowledge is in the reading of and meditation on Scripture, the understanding of which is given by grace, sometimes quite suddenly" (Gerard MacGinty).

Suggested Reading: Adrian van Kaam, "Epilogue" to *The Woman at the Well*; Gerard MacGinty, "Lectio Divina: " in *Cistercian Studies* (+ numerous other articles in this journal), 21, 1 (1986) 64-71; Michael Casey, "Pondering the Word" in *Towards God*, pp. 66-75; David Stanley, "A Suggested Approach to *Lectio Divina*" in *American Benedictine Review*, 23 (1971) 439-455.

Tradition

The School of Alexandria (cf Vol.1, n.9, p.6) indirectly gave birth to two other Schools of note – *The School of Antioch* (in Syria) and *The School of Caesarea* (in Palestine). Origen, having been driven out of Alexandria – the victim of local Church politics – fled to Caesarea. There, with the encouragement of the local Bishop, he established his own School in 232 and remained its head for twenty years. Apart from theology, he taught his students astronomy, geometry, natural science and logic. *The School of Caesarea* was the inheritor of the teaching of *The School of Alexandria*. It was also to be a highly significant intellectual and spiritual link to three of the most influential thinkers of the Christian tradition: St Basil, his brother St Gregory Nazianzen and St Gregory of Nyssa. It is also where we find the great historian Eusebius (265-340), Bishop of Caesarea, one of the last of the *Apologists* (cf Vol.1, n.6, p.6) and the first chronicler and archivist of the Church. He is most famous for his *Church History* – in its present form, 10 books covering the period from the foundation of the Church to the defeat of Licinius in 324. An invaluable reference work.

In Antioch the School was established by a certain Lucian in 312 in direct opposition to the perceived excesses and fantasies that had developed supposedly out of Origen's particular approach to interpreting the Sacred Scriptures. Antioch looked more to the literal sense of Scripture and the humanity of Christ. Alexandria looked more to the allegorical sense of Scripture and the divinity of Christ. In the Alexandrian tradition, the danger was of becoming fanciful in one's interpretation of Scripture or Platonic in Christology and spirituality. In the Antiochean tradition the danger was of not allowing for the allegorical in Scripture or the mystical in Christology and spirituality. Antioch became the seat of the Arian heresy which denied the divinity of Jesus. Perhaps its greatest graduate was St John – surnamed "Chrysostom" (i.e. "golden mouthed") because of his gifts as a preacher.

Suggested Reading: Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* – look in Index for names of people and places; Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian Spirituality* – check "allegory" and relevant names of people and places in the Index to Vols. 1 and 2.

News in Brief

• Two weeks before he died in Chicago on November 14th, 1996, Cardinal Bernardin addressed the inaugural event of the Catholic Common Ground Project (*The Mix*, V.1, N.7, p.4). Noting that "a dying man does not have time for the peripheral or the accidental" Cardinal Bernardin said bluntly that "it is wrong to waste the precious gift of the time given to us, as God's chosen servants, on acrimony and division". He said he hands on, instead, a gift given to him: "A vision of the Church that trusts in the power of the Spirit so much that it can risk authentic dialogue. ... I ask you, without waiting and on your own, to strengthen the common ground, to examine our situation with fresh eyes, open minds, and changed hearts, and to confront our challenges with honesty and imagination. Guided by the Holy Spirit, together, we can more effectively respond to the challenges of our times as we carry forward the mission that the Lord Jesus gave to us, his disciples. It is to promote that mission that the constructive dialogue we seek is so important. ... Common ground...is not a new set of conclusions. It is a way of exploring our differences. It is a common spirit and ethic of dialogue. It is a space of trust set within boundaries. It is a place of respect where we can explore our differences, assured in the understanding that neither is everything 'cut-and-dried' nor is everything 'up for grabs.'"

• Cardinal Hume has written (30/1/97) to Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, to express concern that the Police

Bill could allow the absolute confidentiality of confession to be violated. In the letter he seeks an amendment of the bill or the draft code of practice governing intrusive surveillance to safeguard the sacrament of confession and thereby to reassure the Catholic community. In part the letter reads: "As presently drafted, the Bill provides wide powers for the police to conduct intrusive surveillance on any property. As no exemptions are made, the absolute confidentiality of the sacrament of confession could be violated if the police were to be authorised to conduct surveillance of a sacramental confession. You will appreciate that the Catholic Church attaches extreme importance to the integrity of all the sacraments - they are fundamental to the Church's life. An individual penitent who goes to confession to a priest has to be certain that, whatever the crime, not only will the priest never reveal what is said, but that the state will not conspire to undermine the Church's guarantee of absolute secrecy. If a sacramental confession can be bugged, worse still used in evidence, a fundamental right to the practice of religion is put in jeopardy.

This is not just a theoretical possibility. A recent case in the United States where, unknown to the priest, a sacramental confession was covertly taped for possible use in evidence has caused widespread alarm and dismay. This must not be allowed to happen here".

• A book on Pentecostal Churches in Australia was published in 1996. The book is called *Pentecostals in Australia* and is written by Philip Hughes. Hughes is

from the Christian Research Association and this book is the result of his research on religions in Australia commissioned by the former Bureau of Immigration and Multicultural and Population Research. Hughes says that Pentecostals - made up of 45 different groups - grew by 41% between 1986 and 1991. The growth was particularly marked in some newly affluent areas and country regions. He says his research shows that most traditional Christian congregations have an average age over forty but less than 28% of Pentecostals are over forty. They are the only major group to increase their numbers significantly without the influx of immigrants. Hughes said many had joined Pentecostal churches from mainstream churches, particularly after the breakup of a marriage.

• The Catholic Education Service - the education agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales - has published *Religious Education: Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*. The new directory describes the content of religious education and outlines what teachers should aim to cover in the formal religious education curriculum in Catholic schools, from nursery to sixth form. It has been written in the light of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1994. In the preface to the Directory, Cardinal Hume says: "The work of classroom teaching of the Catholic faith has never been more important or demanding. So many influences in our society tend to undermine the practice of the faith. Teachers of religious education, together with parents, need to lead young people towards an ever increasing understanding of the faith." Part one: general principles - the directory describes the distinctive characters of RE, evangelisation and catechesis.

Bulletin Board

• Spirituality in the Pub begins again in March, 1997. The theme of this year's program is "The Good Life". The first evening will focus on "Spirituality" and each subsequent night will focus on one of the virtues. The Paddington sessions begin back at the Bellevue Hotel in Hargrave St on the first Wednesday of March (2nd) and continue on every first Wednesday through until October (*Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262*). The Pymble sessions begin on the third Wednesday of March (19th), then the second Wednesday of April (9th) - to accommodate overseas speaker Diarmuid O'Murchu - then every third Wednesday through until October (*Info: Marie on 02 9869 8101 or Robyn on 9876 6139*). Fliers on the year's program will be available at

each session. Also, watch this space! The March 19th session at Pymble is on "Spirituality" and the speakers are Ruth Cracknell and Michael Whelan.

• The first Catalyst Dinner for 1997 will be held on Friday May 2nd and the topic is "Men in the Church". The speakers will be John Menadue AO and Peter Capelin QC. The venue is the parish hall in Hunters. See en-closed flier. If you've never been to one of these events go to this one - they are most stimulating and enjoyable. (*Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262*).

• Politics in the Pub continues at the Harold Park Hotel, 115 Wigram Rd, Glebe every Friday night, 6-7.30. On March 14th the topic is "East Timor - What can we do?" and the speakers are

Tom Uren (Chair), Sr Josephine Mitchell and Agio Pereira. (*Info: Win on 9552 3599*).

• Fr. Kevin Murphy of Nazareth House Ballarat offers some help for adults seeking informal education. He publishes an *Occasional Letter*, runs a Guided Reading Course and is seeking local input, help and suggestions re plans to have something like a *Spirituality in the Pub* for Ballarat. You can contact him at: RMB H 710, Ballarat, 3352. All the best Kevin!

• Fair Go In The Pub begins in the Ashfield Hotel, March 6th, 7.30pm with Bishop Geoffrey Robinson and Rev Bill Crews. Social justice, spirituality and concern for the environment. It will continue on the first Thursdays of April and May (*Info: Bernard on 9797 0998*)

Recommended Reading

• Francis J Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12*, Fortress Press, 1996, index, bibliography, 231 pages, pb, \$42.95

Francis Moloney is a Salesian priest and the Founding Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University. He is the author of more than twenty books and one of the world's foremost Johannine scholars. This book is the second of a three volume work on the Gospel of John. And it is brilliant! Writing primarily for the serious student, Moloney is still able to put enough on the page to attract the more casual reader. He approaches the text as a dramatic narrative, one in which the reader is invited to experience anew the Christ Event. The reader actually feels the drama as Moloney's text unveils the hidden players, the finer nuances of words and phrases, the signposts as it were that point towards the heart of the action being portrayed – God at work in the world through the beloved son, Jesus who is the Christ. Sadly, much biblical scholarship never finds its way into a form or style that would allow the lay reader even modest access. Moloney avoids this in some mysterious way. Perhaps he is so imbued with the drama that the reader picks that up even if he or she does not quite understand the full implications of the text. You might find this book a bit pricey but do try to find it anyway. At least dip into it.

• Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*, Crossing Press, 1996, endnotes, bibliography, index, 440 pages, pb.

Few would deny the massive contribution religious women and men have made to the Church and wider community in Australia this century. Few would know as much about the history and details of the contribution of women religious as Sr Rosa MacGinley pbvm, at least during the years 1838-1940, the primary focus of this book. This book is dense with historical details and thoughtful commentary. For example, MacGinley notes that from 1951 to 1966, the numbers of women religious in Australia grew from 11,245 to 14,622 – an increase of 30%. Yet the Catholic population over that same time increased by 50%. As with any good historical study, MacGinley's work here reminds us of the relativity of a given time with its institutional structures and styles of life. Religious life as we have known it in the Australian context since the Second World War is not prevalent in the history of the Church. Its continuity with the past, dating back to the Gospels, is unmistakable. It seems likely that heroic women – and men – will eventually emerge, as they did in the past, to give new institutional structure and style to the vowed life in the contemporary Australian context. Time will tell.

• Edmund Campion (Editor), *Catholic Voices: Best Australian Catholic Writing*, Aurora Books, 1996, 200 pages, pb..

This is a collection of small pieces gathered by the Editor from the Veech Library at Strathfield and the State Library. They cover a variety of people and events of the post-war Australian Church. Campion's opening essay uses a lively description of writers and publications to remind us of the changes of those years. We can forget that, for example, *The Catholic Weekly* had a circulation of more than 60,000 in 1961. It is also strange to hear again of Bishop Muldoon's *contre temps* with Mother Gorman. The book includes Peter Rushton's delightful "A convert looks at the post-conciliar church" (1969), Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann's poignant "Autobiographical reflections" (1986) and Kevin Hart's insightful little essay "God and philosophy" (1985) amongst its 41 pieces. The quality varies – the subtitle is perhaps pretentious – and different pieces will appeal to different people. It is however a book that should have particular appeal to those who are old enough to remember what it was like to be alive in the fifties or earlier. This book reminds us of some of the turning points as well as some of the major players. It has nostalgia and sentiment but enough substance and bite to stimulate good conversation.

✂ ----- Detach and post today -----

YES! I WOULD LIKE TO BE A FRIEND OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL AND RECEIVE THE MIX

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

MY FRIEND'S DONATION OF \$30 FOR ONE YEAR IS ENCLOSED

(This donation is not tax deductible)

(NB: IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD \$30 ANY DONATION IS ACCEPTABLE)

I am paying by Cheque MasterCard Visa Bankcard

I am also including a further donation to support the work of Catalyst for Renewal

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 Other

Name on card:..... Expiry date:...../..... Signature:.....

PLEASE TELL ME HOW I CAN VOLUNTEER TO HELP CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

Post to: Catalyst for Renewal, PO Box 139, Gladesville, NSW 2111 (Tel/Fax: 02 98 16 42 62)