

THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 7

SEPTEMBER 1997

Pat Timbs

The human face 2

Mary Maguire

Thank God Blackheath found me 3

Gabrielle Carey

Spirituality 4

The Bible

To pray as Jesus did 6

Tradition

Prayer and the Christian life 6

Our Say - Staying in there

For those of us who can remember Pope John XXIII arriving at St Peter's in October 1962 for the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, or where we were in November 1963 when President John Kennedy was assassinated, or the hysterical crowds greeting the Beatles on their arrival in Melbourne in June 1964, no argument is needed to convince us that times have changed and continue to change. In fact, we do not need to be convinced that the change is rapid, profound, and immense, reaching beyond the surface realities to the very roots of our lives. And this change is felt in both the Church and wider society.

It is a matter of fact that such rapid, profound and immense change brings with it unpredictability, uncertainty, confusion and turmoil. That in turn generates anxiety and fear, frustration and anger. Some of the responses to this situation will be more or less creative or destructive, tragic or comic, brave or cowardly, generous or negatively, visionary or shortsighted.

Many existing institutions will be found wanting in the face of this change. They may either be seen to be more or less inadequate to the perceived human needs or quite simply obstructive to those needs. Rituals and symbols, previously taken for granted, may, suddenly, seem irrelevant. Our institutions, rituals and symbols must be adapted to the times.

However, this makes the public social reality a place of tension. That public social reality, once reflecting - more or less - order, predictability and co-operation, now reflects - more or less - many competing expectations, unresolved angers, conflicting ideologies and uneasy compromises.

It is a seductive temptation, under these circumstances, to withdraw to a private social reality, to seek out a comfort zone that avoids the stresses of the public social reality. Thus, for example, we may seek out a private religious realm that avoids the tensions generated by inadequate institutions, rituals and symbols within the

Church, and people who cannot or will not deal well with these inadequacies.

Under such circumstances, it takes a particular kind of person to stay in the Church's public social reality, to continue to work within the system for renewal. Sometimes, in fact, it may be harder to find reasons to stay rather than to go.

We, in Catalyst for Renewal, make a deliberate decision to stay and work for renewal from within. We believe our best possibilities for renewal will come if we remain faithful to the Gospel within the Church, such as it is, with all its limitations and its possibilities, its intransigence and its radicality, its sinfulness and its saintliness, its wilfulness and its graciousness, its tragedy and its comedy.

Staying in there does not mean uncritical or easy conformity. Quite the contrary. It will involve us in the Second Vatican Council's call for renewal. It will also lead us more deeply into the Paschal Mystery. □

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

These are the current Members:
Marie Biddle RSI, Kevin Burges,
Dr Ann Bye, Marie Byrne,
Aidan Carvill SM, Maree Donovan,
Geraldine Doogue, Kate Englebrecht,
Francis Gross, Catherine Hammond,
Sam Hammond, Michael Kelly SJ,
Robyn Lawson, Stephanie Long,
Chris McGillion, Maryellen McLeay,
John Menadue, Dr Chris Needs,
Carmel Sharples, John Sharples,
Martin Teulian, Joanna Thyer,
Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan, SM

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 essential, freedom in what is unessential, and charity in any case" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.92).

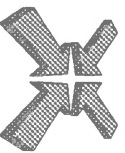
The Patrons are:
Mr Robert Fitzgerald
Mr Gerald Gleeson
Prof Francis J Moloney SDB, AM
Dr Richard J Mulhearn OAM
Most Rev Geoffrey Robinson
Sr Deirdre Roife BVM
Sr Ann-Marie Webb SM

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:
Michael Whelan SM, Ms Joanna Thyer
Ms Geraldine Doogue, 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 life-giving unity.

The Human Face

MY NAME IS PAT TIMBS. My father was one of 13 children and they lived at Bald Knob just outside of Glen Innes. My older sister Marie - who is one of the OLSH Sisters - was born in Glen Innes. Times were tough then so Dad moved to Sydney where he got a job with the Health Department in Penrith where I was born in 1927. Dad then got the job as manager of the butter factory at Morpeth and we moved there when I was about five. I have two younger sisters - Helen and Peggy - and a younger brother Jim.

Mum and Dad were a great influence on my life. Mum died in 1950. I didn't know she was so sick. She was a beautiful and gentle person, in contrast to Dad who was a hard man. However, I never realised what a remarkable man he was until I saw him in his weakness as an old man.

After attending the convent school in Morpeth I went to the Marist Brothers in Maitland for my secondary schooling where I did my Leaving Certificate in 1945. I turned 18 the day the War finished in Europe. So I missed the call up for the army.

I loved chemistry, physics and maths. Most of my class intended to go to BHP but I did not apply to go there. I did not know what I was going to do. I told my father I just wanted to do chemistry somewhere. Dad said: "Chemistry like the bloke down the road (who was a pharmacist) or the BHP or what?" To take the easy way I said: "Like the bloke down the road". So I was apprenticed to a pharmacist in WallSEND - after 12 months a "shop boy" when I looked after his kids, washed his car and did odd jobs. After 2 years there I moved to an apprenticeship in Sydney so I could also attend university for the last couple of years. I finished what they called *Materia medica* in 1949. However, due to the fact that there were hundreds of ex servicemen coming into the university, there was never any recognition of the graduation, apart from a note in the newspaper. So in February this year we went back to Sydney University for a recognition ceremony!

After practising for a short time in Kyogle - where I met my wife Rita - I moved to Glen Innes in 1960 where I have been ever since. I have very fond memories of Mr Grover, a pharmacist in Glen Innes when I came here in 1960. He was a World War I digger and a most generous, good person. He gave away everything he ever made. I worked as his assistant for a couple of years, then he sold me the business for

"half the good will", saying half the good will was mine anyway.

I was baptised a Catholic and grew up in a Catholic family and a tight knit Catholic community. I would say I was, for the most part, on the "browny points" team. But when I left school I drifted a from the Church. I just forgot about God. I didn't have enough "browny points" for God to love me - or so I thought. When Rita and I were married - she was a convert - we went to Mass but it meant nothing to me. About 30 years ago I developed a tumor on my neck. I asked my sister Marie to pray for me that I would get some faith. Some years later I attended a talk on the Charismatic Renewal. The presenters prayed with us, prayed through our lives individually, asking for healing of memories. That's when my life changed.

God always seemed remote, too immense. Now I feel as though I have a relationship with Jesus, it all fell into place. Jesus is human just like us. My way of looking at myself, other people and life has changed significantly.

Rita and I are involved in the parish. We also have a Prayer Meeting every Thursday evening. About 5 years ago I joined Prison Fellowship and now I go out to the local prison farm every Friday night and pray with the prisoners. We try to share something of the love and forgiveness of Jesus with them.

I'd like to see more and better communication in the Church - between the priests and the people and among the people themselves. The sense of community has diminished. Maybe the Church is reflecting something of what is happening in the wider society. We need to connect better, tap that compassion that all people have in their hearts. In the end, our hope is in Jesus - it all begins and ends in that relationship, knowing that He loves me. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life!"



Pat Timbs

Your Say – Thank God Blackheath found me

by Mary Maguire

In 1992 when Bishop Bede Heather commenced his consultation regarding parishes in the upper Blue Mountains, in the middle of a painful transition from twelve years administration in my religious congregation. I lived in our community at Leura, and was attempting to re-enter the ministry in primary school as Parent Liaison person. The pain of trying to "fit in" again felt like living in a deep black hole. My one companion there seemed to be the question "Who am I?"

When I heard of the bishop's meetings in the churches at Leura, Katoomba and Blackheath, I decided I would go to each one, partly I think because I didn't have enough to do and partly because I sensed a breath of future church.

The meeting at Blackheath was a very angry one. The priest was angry, the people were angry and eventually the bishop became angry! It was all a bit of a shock to a spectator!

As I walked back to the car after the meeting a voice inside me said, "Mary don't just stand there, do something for these people". Blackheath had put its finger on my heart for the first time!

The last step in the consultation process, for the parishes was to vote on whether to amalgamate the parishes, or for the parish to remain separate. Blackheath voted to remain a separate parish, even though Bishop Bede had told them he would not replace their priest when his term of office expired.

By now, I was very interested in Blackheath and so I approached Bishop Bede and asked if I could move in to the parish when the priest moved out. I yearned to be with and be there for the hurting angry people. (You don't need a magnifying glass to detect just a hint of a messiah complex, do you?)

On June 30 1993, Sister Marion Cor-

less and I took up residence in the presbytery, now called The Parish House. Marion stayed with us for twelve months before she had to undergo major heart surgery. Her contribution was invaluable.

From the beginning we set out to help build community. Our parish takes in the churches of Mount Victoria and Megalong Valley. As one of our older parishioners explained to us, "there were some fences in need of mending" between the communities.

Very early on we had a parish meeting where, after expressing and recording our hurts, anger and fears, we then moved to expressing and recording our hopes for the parish. At a second meeting we worked out what the parish would need to look like for our hopes to be fulfilled. Liturgy, Social, Fundraising & Maintenance groups were seen as necessary. (A Finance Committee already existed.)

At the end of that meeting we were asked to go home and in prayer to reflect on the gifts God had given to each one of us and where we could use those gifts for the community. The third meeting saw the parish groups take shape and life.

Under the guidance of the Spirit, Blackheath is working towards becoming a vital, evangelizing parish. It is only a small parish as far as numbers go. We have one Mass on Sunday and about 180 people attend, some of whom are visitors. This is the only Mass celebrated in our parish. During the week we meet together for Celebration of the Word with Communion on Wednesday and Morning Prayer of the Church on Friday. Once a month we have a liturgy at the little church in Megalong Valley and Mass is celebrated on the first Friday of the month at Mount Victoria.

Over the last four years we have had

the opportunity for some adult education courses, and at present a Bible Study group meet each fortnight.

You might wonder where the anger has gone? Well, one answer is, we're too busy to be angry these days. There is another answer too, and yes, some people have left our parish church to attend Mass in other places. Certainly Blackheath has sustained a loss in not having a resident priest. It has also made many gains by accepting responsibility for those areas which before were "left to Father".

In Blackheath we are supported by many people outside our parish - by our Bishop Bede Heather, the priests in the neighbouring parishes, the priests who come to celebrate the Eucharist with us, the diocesan personnel who are always ready to encourage the smallest parish in the diocese and by our many visitors who compliment us on our warm and welcoming community.

However, the greatest support Blackheath has is its own faith-filled parishioners. Slowly and surely our eyes are being opened, our hearts are being touched and our minds and bodies are reaching out as we journey together as disciples of Jesus.

As our parish Mission Statement launched in April this year puts it "As a community bonded together through faith, we are called to share our experience of God with those we meet each day, in particular, those in our local community".

For me to be involved in this community is not only a life-giving experience, but is also a gift from God. So now you know why I keep saying, "Thank God Blackheath found me". □

Mary Maguire is a Sister of Charity and the Parish of Blackheath is in the Parramatta Diocese. Contact Mary on 047 8785 40.

Letters

I was quite surprised and delighted to read in the June issue of *The Mix* the article "The Other Side of the Gender Debate" by Teresa Pirola. I, as a woman on the threshold of my eighth decade, am in full agreement with a thirty-something woman, Ms. Pirola applauds "much of the consciousness-raising and practical gains of feminism". However, while we have been busy working on this, she points out (and I am still in agreement with her) that we

have not been listening to men. When we do, we discover that men (yes even the clerical-collared variety) are not power-hungry misogynists ... but sincere and good human beings with their equal share of suffering and sinfulness, health and ho-ness, insight and blindness'. It was refreshing to read this, and I hope we will hear more from this young woman.

Marie Carey, Epping NSW

I enjoy and value *The Mix*: Thank you for the energy that you and the Editorial Committee give to it and for the vision that fires that energy.

Sr Denise Desmarchelier, Blackburn VIC

[Due to limits of space we have not been able to publish all the letters received. It is our intention to publish them in coming issues. *The Editor*]

Essay – Spirituality

by Gabrielle Carey

The following is the text of a presentation given by Australian author, Gabrielle Carey, at the Bellevue Hotel, Paddington on March 5 1997, as part of the Spirituality in the Pub program.

Spirituality is one of the hardest, if not the hardest topic I've ever been asked to speak on. The very word makes people suspicious - they suspect that you'll start trying to convert them or talk to them about ghosts and auras and cosmic realignments, they suspect that you'll suddenly go soppy and speak in hushed tones or they suspect that you're on the verge of trying to sell them something. The word spirituality makes Australian people particularly suspicious because we are naturally skeptical, doubting, ironic, comical - our first impulse - about anyone or anything trying to be serious and earnest - is to send it up. And if anything is send-upable, it's spirituality - particularly new age style. So although it's a subject that fascinates me and has done all my life - it's one I rarely discuss with anyone, even my closest friends.

Spirituality and religion was opened up to me in Ireland when I was living there some 13 years ago. I say opened up because until then such words were not welcome in my household or, as far as I could see, my immediate community. The concepts were not even open to discussion. They were old-fashioned, repressive, superstitious, self-deluding - worst of all, often the people who most spoke about spirituality, were the ones who least practised it. They were not good examples of the kind of person you might become if you got involved with this spirituality business. So I stayed out of it.

I was only when I got to Ireland that I realised that one could in fact contemplate spirituality at the same time as having a brain, at the same time as being a woman, at the same time as having a political view, at the same time as having a conscience - that these things weren't mutually exclusive. I also realised that you could be spiritual without being a nutter, a fanatical evangeliser or a missionary. And I can tell you, it was a massive relief. Feeling free, for the first time, to explore spirituality gave me a sense of liberation and excitement I'd never experienced before. I felt I'd been waiting all my life for

that moment, to be set free to do what I was meant to do. For an entire year, almost full time, I ensconced myself in books about mysticism, music, monasteries and discussions with Jesuits as well as ex-Jesuits. It was quite a magical time and the epiphanies, along with the relentless Irish rain, seemed to descend daily.

I stayed overseas for a number of years and then decided to return. But when I came back to Australia I feared - not for any rational reason - I just felt intuitively - that I would stop being a practising Catholic and that my spiritual life would retreat back into darkness, anonymity, afraid to own up.

I also suspected that back in Australia I would stop believing in God. I've never made that statement before because it sounds so ridiculous but it was actually one of the things that frightened me most about coming back. And my predictions came true. The joy, the rejoicing, the transcendental prayer, all seemed to seep away slowly until, like everyone else, I found myself going to bed and, instead of saying my prayers, I was planning my next home improvement, plotting my next career move. Not that careers and prayers are absolutely exclusive. Not at all. I'm a great believer in vocations and seeking guidance and even, that ridiculously old fashioned notion, *doing God's will*.

Feeling free, for the first time, to explore spirituality gave me a sense of liberation and excitement I'd never experienced before.

But after a year or two in Australia, I no longer thought, or felt in that way. I had been drawn into that crush, that mill, that lemming sweep. Like a passenger sucked out the plane door, I suddenly found myself uncontrollably swept up into the Australian way of life - material improvement, wine, kitchen renovations

Yes I went to church a couple of times but it meant nothing. Occasionally I tried to pray but there seemed there was no-one there to talk to anymore. And none of my

friends were believers so how could I go it alone? I felt like such a fraud when I was a Catholic - in what way? When I believed in God - I clutched at the memories of my old passions grimly, greedily - because if I let even them go, then what? Then I had nothing. I went through quite a dark night of the soul, as the mystics say, before emerging the other side, my faith still intact, but adapted quite dramatically. But I'm ahead of myself. Let me just re-trace my steps and reflect.

I strongly believe in the power of place. For example, the power of the interior of a church - a special place that has been designated for prayer will obviously have a different atmosphere than a place, for example, which has been designated for, say, the buying and selling of shares. The interior of a church will be conducive to prayer - a stockmarket floor won't be. The tone of a particular place, I feel, is set by a general consciousness or psyche and what I feared, (and found) on returning to Australia, was that the Australian psyche was not all that imbued with spirituality. (I am talking white Australia here, obviously, which has always been my culture). For that reason - and because I suppose, most of my friends are not religious in the traditional sense - I've had to keep my spiritual life like a secret life, like an affair, a secret affair with God. I walk past a church and think, 'Will I sneak in there now? I hope nobody sees me.' That can sound quite exciting I suppose, but I have to admit that I get a bit tired of all the sneaking around and secret rendezvous.

I'm a naturally frank person and I'd like to be able to say, 'Look, I'm just nipping in here for a quick prayer, back in ten minutes.' I mean, if we can so easily say that about drinking - 'just nipping down to the pub love for a quick jar with the lads' - why is it so unacceptable to say - 'well, now I've attended to my social and physical thirst, I think I'll go and attend to my spiritual thirst?' I don't know why but it is - and it is more so in Australia than in many other places.

I think one of the reasons Australians are so skeptical about the notion of spirituality is because we are a very earthy, practical people and practicality and spirituality are seen as virtually incompatible. But I don't think that's true. Indeed, if we are going to practise spirituality, then we need

some practical way to do it. It's no good saying to ourselves, after we come out of church, 'oh yes, I should be more spiritual - I've just been listening to the sermon or reading the Bible and realised I must be more spiritual'. We can say that to ourselves and infirmum without ever doing anything about it. The question is how.

I think one of the places that the church has really fallen down is in the teaching of methods of how to develop spirituality. We can go to church and hear about how spiritual Jesus was, how we all should be more spiritual, how the world would be a better place, how we would all behave better if we put some time into our souls, but we aren't taught how to do this.

I suppose at this point I should define a little bit more about what I think spirituality is. I don't believe that being spiritual is the equivalent of 'trying to be a good Christian' in the outward sense of being charitable and kind and good tempered - although, needless to say, a spiritual person would, I hope, tend to develop these virtues. I think spirituality has something to do with getting in touch with what might be termed 'the soul' - nurturing it, developing it.

The soul is that part of a person which is God or reflects God. The soul is that part of us which is universal at the same time as being highly individual. I don't want to waste time trying to define or, God forbid, rationalise the concept of the soul. As a writer I know how useful words are, but I also recognise the occasions when they are of almost no use at all and talking about the soul is one of them. I think that the best way to use language - which is so inadequate when trying to talk about things spiritual - is to use metaphors.

So let's imagine for a moment that the soul is the tiny light, a candle perhaps, separate and yet originating from a huge flame that we call God. If that is a serviceable sort of metaphor, then I suppose what spirituality is is keeping alight our inner flame, fanning it, appreciating its colours and warmth and allowing air around it so it can stay alight.

I think this part about allowing air and space is very important. The soul is amazing in its ability to stay alight without much attention. We can practically ignore it and it will still flicker away faithfully - only as a vague flicker - not as the burning light it might be. What spirituality tries to do is allow the tiny flame to brighten and spread light throughout your entire being. That can only be done by

tending to it, providing it with space, allowing it to grow.

But, I hear you thinking, that's all very nice - the images and metaphors - let's get back to practicality - how is it done? Again, I can only talk to you from a personal point of view. For me three things are essential. First, I must have people I can talk to who are also concerned about their souls or spiritual matters. These need not be religious people in the conventional sense - in fact, the friends I speak to most often about matters of this kind are in fact, not religious - but they believe keenly in the need to nurture something in themselves and others which is beyond the physical, beyond the intellectual, beyond the emotional, which is, in essence, the spiritual. We have to be brave enough to talk about these needs - to admit we are depressed or empty - that we have a craving for something - something that goes beyond ourselves and our egos. Once we can admit that, and have friends who admit it too, we have set the tone I was talking about before and opened the possibility of another dimension in our lives.

***We have to be brave
enough to talk about these
needs - to admit we are
depressed or empty - that
we have a craving for
something - something
that goes beyond
ourselves and our egos***

Secondly, and again this is a personal need and very much a product of my culture, I depend on reading. One of my favourites, one of the people who opened the door into spirituality for me, was Saint Teresa of Avila. She was an earthy, practical woman herself - despite all the levitating - and she wrote some invaluable books, one in particular called *The Interior Castle*. There she describes her concept of prayer, the different stages a person can go through, including her own personal accounts of the Prayer of Quiet.

Which brings me to my third necessity in a spiritual life - prayer. The Catholic tradition of mysticism, of which Saint Teresa was a great part, emphasises direct and personal relationship with or experience of God. My feeling is that this can only be achieved through prayer. 'What is prayer?', you may wonder. 'Isn't it just

more words?' Well, it often starts off as words, said internally or out loud, but it certainly doesn't have to stay on that level. If we daily practise prayer, I think it can become quite transcendental. But to be able to do that, we actually need to set aside time - not once a week but at least once a day.

Many of us go through our lives thinking how much more attention we'd like to give to our souls - *if only we had time*. But we're so busy. We've got kids, shopping, cooking, work, sport, phone calls to make, faxes to answer, lists of jobs to do, diaries full of events. Prayer is so easy to put on the bottom of the priority list. My suggestion is that we should try to put it back up the top. Buggar the housework, prayer comes first. And it shouldn't be a chore. It should be a joy, a reverie, a sweet solitude. Once you get into the habit, it should be one of the most enjoyable parts of your day.

We can describe prayer in many ways. In ancient Mexico, long before the Aztecs, there was a civilization called the Toltecs. They were famed for being great artists and a profoundly civilized culture. Their phrase for prayer was 'dialogue with your heart'.

I learnt a great deal about God, prayer and art from reading about ancient Mexican philosophy - it enhanced and complemented what I had read from the Catholic tradition. There is no precise definition of prayer I believe, except that it opens the way to grace - a state in which we can receive something of God - and, therefore, allow our spirituality to thrive. From my experience, it is the key to developing a spiritual life. But in saying that, I don't want to be prescriptive in how this prayer should be undertaken.

Consider the Catholic tradition, read the Bhagavad Gita, read Mexican philosophy if you like - anything that inspires you to spend that time tending to your soul. At different times of our lives, I've found, we need different kinds of stimulus and different kinds of approaches to be able to open up what Saint Teresa called The Interior Castle. But whatever reading or discussing a person may do, nothing can replace prayer or contemplation or meditation - call it what you like. That is essential for spiritual evolution.

Gabrielle Carey was born in 1959, has no formal qualifications and lives in Sydney. She is the author of Puberty Blues (1979) which was produced as a feature film, Just Us (1984) - produced as a telemovie - and the autobiography In My Father's House (1992).

Words for a Pilgrim People

And we, with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit. (2Cor 3:18)

In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all co-operate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function. (Canon 208).

The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; ... the heart is the place 'to which I withdraw.' The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of other; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation; it is the place of covenant. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.2563)

The Word of God can demand something from me today which only yesterday it did not demand, and that is why in order to understand this demand, I must be absolutely and completely open and attentive. ... Man is the being who was created as hearer of the Word and who rises to his proper dignity by a response to that Word. He was conceived of as becoming in his inmost depths a partner to a dialogue. (Hans urs von Balthasar, trans S V Littledale, Prayer, Sheed and Ward, 1961, p.18f)

A nation ... isn't born of self-congratulation and accumulation of often ill-gotten and unequally distributed wealth. ... it is born of suffering. ... I believe most people hunger for spirituality, even if that hunger remains in many cases unconscious. If those who dragoon us ignore that longing of the human psyche, they are running a great risk. The sense of real purpose, the life force, could be expelled from a society whose leaders are obsessed by money, muscle and machinery. That society could, quite simply, die. (Patrick White, Latrobe University Address, 1987)

The Bible - To pray as Jesus did

To be one of the Chosen People is to be a person of prayer. The *Shema* (cf *The Mix*, 2:4, p.6 and 2:5 p.6) to this day is said at sunrise, noon and sunset by Orthodox Jews. Prayers of thanksgiving dot the day. Religious ritual defines life and constantly reminds the people of their origins and their call to intimacy with the gracious God.

Jesus, like every other Jewish boy of his time, drinks in this atmosphere with His mother's milk. His consciousness is formed at every turn by the call of the Covenant God. As a Jew He knows life to be a journey in faith with this loving God, faithful from generation to generation. It is quite natural for Him, therefore, to quote the *Shema* and the Book of Leviticus when He is asked which is the greatest commandment: "Listen Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ..." (cf Mk 12:28-34; also Mt 22:34-40 and Lk 10:25-28).

The essence of prayer as Jesus knew it and practised it, is, quite simply, loving intimacy with the God of the Covenant. Jesus introduces a significant new dimension to this intimacy. He knows this God as "Abba!" (cf Lk 11:1-4 and Mt 6:9-13). This represents a level of intimacy previously unknown to the Jewish tradition. The God of the Exodus - the One revealed as "I am who I am" (cf Ex 3:14) - may be called "Dear Father!". The personal intimacy implied in this was a scandal to the Jews. Matthew's Gospel, with a Jewish audience in mind, in fact adds the phrase "... in heaven" to reassure the audience this is the transcendent God of the Exodus Event.

Jesus' loving intimacy with the Covenant God as expressed in the term of endearment "Abba!" shows us some practical things about prayer. Firstly, the word "Abba!" is one the *child* uses of the father. Perhaps our word "Dad!" or even "Daddy!" carries much the same meaning. Secondly, this implies vulnerability, the kind we find in trusting children. This is the sort of man Jesus is. Thirdly, praying is as simple as a trusting child talking spontaneously with a loving parent. Fourthly, this praying is woven into the day, mostly by way of silent presence, sometimes by watching and waiting, occasionally by deliberate conversation - much as a *child* communicates with the loving parent. Fifthly, there is no great concern for technique or skill. Anyone can do this anytime. It comes naturally. Sixthly, it begins and ends with the loving God. We gathered in, caught up by, the Trinitarian love.

Prayer, as Jesus experienced, is best thought of as a *right* rather than a *duty*. As people baptised into Christ, the praying of Jesus with the Father is a given. Our task is to awaken to it, enjoy it, grow in it, be transformed by it. □

Tradition - Prayer and the Christian life

We find in the writings of one of the fourth century Fathers, a simple but immensely useful insight into prayer. The author is Evagrius and he speaks of advice the great Desert Father, Abbot Macarius, gave him: "I said to him: 'My father, give me a word that I may live by it'. Then Macarius said to me: 'Attach the rope of the anchor to the rock, and by God's grace, the ship will cross the diabolic waves of the deceptive sea and the tempest of the darkness of this vain world.' I said to him: 'What is the ship, what is the rope, what is the rock?' The Abbot Macarius said to me: 'The boat is your heart - guard it. The rope is your spirit - attach it to our Lord Jesus Christ who is the rock that has power over all the diabolic waves and surges that the saints are contending with. For is it not easy to say with each breath: Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, have mercy on me, I bless you, my Lord Jesus, help me?'"

Abbot Macarius is not so much interested in a particular technique or method of prayer, as he is interested in promoting the relationship with God in Christ. Calling on Jesus reminds us of who He is as well as who we are. We wake up and become available to a life force beyond ourselves. We do this so that we might live through Him, with Him and in Him. He in turn lives through us, with us and in us.

In the words of Abbot Macarius is a form of what has become known in the tradition as *The Jesus Prayer*. A typical form of that prayer would be: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner". Constant repetition of these or similar words leads to an easy consciousness of God, lovingly present to us in every moment and every circumstance. We become aware that our spirit bears united witness with the Holy Spirit that God is our Father and we call God "Abba!" (cf Rom 8:16).

The person wishing to develop a deep prayer life, only has to genuinely want it. If you deeply love someone, how do you foster that love? Follow Macarius' advice in the stult of daily living. Pursue it with all the energy and commitment you would give to the most precious friendship of your life. It is about opening yourself to the deepest yearnings of your heart and having them caught up by the deepest yearnings of God's heart. □

• **A first for Australia: a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic school.** It is St Columba College at Andrews Farm, north of Adelaide. Named for the famed Irish saint, it was opened and blessed jointly by Anglican Archbishop Ian George and Catholic Archbishop Leonard Faulkner. Andrews Farm is a new suburb and the school itself represents a joint effort by the estate developer and the churches. Principal Madeleine Brennan says that St Columba's "shows it is possible, even with differences, to work together. It shows there can be unity in faith."

• **A unique ecumenical gathering** is being planned in Germany for the year 2003 - unique because it is hoped that this ecumenical *kirkentag* (church convention) will include a joint eucharist for both the Protestant and Catholic participants. The current practice is for each Church to hold its gathering on alternate years. Professor Hans Joachim Meyer, the organiser for the Catholic *Katholikentag*, says that both Protestants and Roman Catholics had a "common experience that the separation at the Lord's Table is especially painful".

• **"Unisex" Bible?** That was the phrase used by critics of the International Bible Society's planned inclusive language edition of the New International Version (NIV). When the IBS board voted to abandon all plans "for gender-related changes", on the basis of "our internal conviction that to move ahead would cause division within the Body of Christ", a member of the Board, Ms Lucy Shaw, said that critics of revision (which only affected references to human beings,

not to God) had accused the IBS of giving into feminist pressure, but that in cancelling the inclusive language revision, the IBS had actually "bowed to the attacks of the religious right". She added, "It is a cruel waste of time and talent to just scrap all those years of work".

• **They asked pardon for errors of the past.** A recent meeting of Eastern Catholic Church leaders was their first in Europe since the fall of Communism in the Eastern bloc. The leading Churchmen emphasised unity and promotion of their ancient Eastern traditions and liturgies. In stressing ecumenism, they asked pardon for past errors in relations with Orthodox Churches and made the practical exhortation for Eastern rite communities to find new ways to work with the Orthodox.

• **Believing in Europe?** An unusual conference is being organised on the subject of Europe; it is to be held in London on September 23. The conference will look at the main issues facing secular Europe, including monetary union and the Inter-Governmental Conference, and it will study what it means to be a believing European. This gathering is significant in view of the tensions highlighted by the recent Second European Ecumenical Assembly, sponsored by the Conference of European Churches and the Conference of European Bishops. The assembly's formal message stated that "our divisions and enemies still provoke conflict and are a serious obstacle to making visible the gift of reconciliation." The issue it called "more difficult and painful than virtually any other area" is proselytism. Women's participation in the churches also emerged as a difficult issue, with some contending that their voice was being muffled at the assembly.

• **Lingering anti-Semitism.** Australia's Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations, has said the Vatican is looking into complaints registered by Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. Zevi's complaints centred on a book, *The Jews and the Church* by Msgr V. Mattioli, a professor at Rome's Urban University, which purportedly tries to construct a case for a supposed Jewish-Bolshevik-Masonic plot for control of the world. Cardinal Cassidy affirmed that his commission completely agreed with Zevi's judgement of the book and that the Vatican was taking action. Regarding the book and two other incidents, Zevi said she thought there were two currents alive in the church: one trying to promote dialogue and the other unwilling or unable to break free from "ancient prejudices".

• **Catalyst held its first Symposium on August 7.** The topic was "Collegiality and Subsidiarity - Implications for the Selection of Bishops". About sixty guests heard fine presentations by the speakers, Geoff King SJ and Deirdre Rofe IBVM. The deliberately academic focus of the Symposium adds another dimension to the conversation Catalyst is trying to promote. It is expected that this will be the first of many Symposiums. Our thanks to Geoff and Deirdre for their scholarly contributions. Perhaps this event might stimulate similar conversations in other places.

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar
(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

September 3: Paddington SIP - "Chastity" with Marie Byrne and Michael Whelan.
September 13-14: The Members of Catalyst for Renewal will gather at the Ave Maria Retreat Centre, Point Piper, for a live-in retreat and meeting.

September 17: Pymble SIP - "Honesty" v Rev Dr Dorothy McRae-McMahon and Ann Granger.

September 20: A Reflection Morning led by Michael Whelan SM at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, Gladesville, corner of Victoria Rd and Westminister St, 10am-1pm (Info: Parish Sec on 9817 3098).

October 1: Paddington SIP - "Discipline" with John Iago SM and Deirdre Grusovin.
October 15: Pymble SIP - "Peacemaking" with Frank Brennan SJ and Terry Colling.

Note: October is the last SIP for Paddington and Pymble in 1997. It is our intention to continue in 1998. Watch this space for details.

• **SIP has begun in Camberra.** (Info: Rita O'Connor on 06 288 4715 (H) or Therese Vassartti on 06 249 1273), Rouse Hill at The Mean Fiddler on the last Tuesday of the month (Info: Francis Gross on 02 9228 7806 (W), 9460 0225 or 0411 419 332), Bowral (Info: Kevin on 048 6118 37),

Geelong (Info: Denis on 03 5275 4120) and **Melbourne** (Info: Simon on 03 9497 1417).

• **New Sip Venues?** If you would like to discuss the possibility of a SIP venue in your locality contact Francis Gross as above.

• **AudioMIX?** The Mix is now available on audio tape, thanks to the generosity of several volunteers. For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

• **Spirituality and Education Centre,** Kincumber (NSW) run by the Sisters of St Joseph. (Info: Lyn on 043 682 805)

Recommended Reading

• Ety Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life (The Diaries, 1941-1943) and Letters from Westerbork*, Henry Holt and Company, 1996, endnotes, 376 pages, pb, \$30.

Ety Hillesum was 27 years old when she began her diary in Amsterdam, Sunday March 9, 1941. She was living just a few miles from a much younger woman also writing a diary - Anne Frank. This book is made up of Ety's diaries - except the last diary which went with her to Auschwitz - and letters from the concentration camp at Westerbork including her last one, a postcard, thrown from the train as she went with her family to Auschwitz. These writings - all previously published separately - may shock the reader accustomed to thinking in traditional moral and religious categories. That very shock may be the first educational moment in this reading. For those who persevere it certainly will not be the last. Ety Hillesum is a genuine mystic, though one who pursued the journey in an unorthodox way. The irony of religion is that it can cut us off from God and the Jacob-like struggle that lies ahead of anyone serious about the Incarnation. Jesus says "Come follow me!" That is: "Follow me on the incarnational journey - become human!" Ety is a Christ figure who speaks to us from the Holocaust and echoes the words of Jesus: "Come, follow me!" A book for our times - brilliant!

• Geoffrey Robinson, *Travels in Sacred Places*, Harper Collins Religious, 1997, 229 pages, pb, \$24.95.

On Christmas Eve 1992 Bishop Geoffrey Robinson underwent emergency heart surgery. The experience prompted him to go back and look more closely at the foundations of his faith and consider life in the light of this near encounter with death. This book is one of the outcomes of that personal search. It begins in the deserts of Palestine - place of death and serenity, confusion and heightened awareness. Various teachings and experiences of God - true and false - are discussed. The book is presented in bite-sized chunks, each accompanied by a couple of useful questions. This makes it a good text for occasional personal reflection or for group reflection and study. It is pleasing to read someone who is able to name mistakes of the past with as much compassion as honesty, then humbly search out the next steps along the pilgrim way. The mood of this book is honest and searching. It is not so much an effort to teach the reader as it is an invitation for the reader to join in what has been - and clearly continues to be - a life-giving pilgrimage for the author. Geoff Robinson is undoubtedly a leader in the Church and wider community of Australia today. This book, in its intelligence, honesty and compassion, shows us why.

• "What Makes a Parish Work?", *Priests & People*, June 1997.

This issue of the journal publishes essays on parish life. Topics include: "Beyond the numbers game", "Liturgy and the parish", "Working together for the glory of God", "On managing to be a successful parish", "In the Catholic tradition: St Thomas More" and "Preaching and teaching the Word". Authors include women and men, priests and laity. There are no magical solutions in this journal - it would not be recommended if there were - but there are plenty of simple and practical examples of healthy parish life. The authors speak of "liturgical literacy", "unity", "collaboration", "relaisic goals", "loving support", "limits of the possible", "forgiveness", "mission" and "evangelisation". The style is experimental and very readable. I am sure any of the authors would respond well to further correspondence. In the work for renewal it helps us to hear how others are doing so that we can discover new insights, be affirmed, or simply know that they too share the same struggles. [*Priest & People* is a monthly journal from the UK, published by The Tablet Publishing Company. Inquiries about subscriptions should be made to: International Subscription Service, PO Box 14, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 8EQ, England.]

✂ _____ 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 9816 4262)