



# THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 8

OCTOBER 1997

## Joanna Thyer

The human face 2

## Kateri Duke and Jan Barnett

Participation of women in the Church 3

## Richard Lennan

The Church: Foundations for a new millenium 4

## The Bible

The Church as community of believers 6

## Tradition

The catholic church 6

## Our Say - The heart of our faith

**B**ishop Geoffrey Robinson recently wrote a splendid little piece to mark World Youth Day. (The full text, entitled "An Invitation to a Vision", was published in full by *The Catholic Weekly* (24/8/1997)). In this little essay, Bishop Robinson goes to the heart of the matter:

The Christian faith is first and foremost faith in a person and a story. From this flow many truths, many norms of living and a genuine worship of God, but the response to the story and the person always come first.

Renewal of the Church is nothing if it is not about recovering the heart of the faith individually and communally. The signs that this heart is beating healthily in the Church will be unmistakable - "the truths come alive, the norms of living become real and the worship becomes life-giving." The contrary signs are equally unmistakable - "the truths will become lifeless, the norms of living burdensome tasks and the worship empty."

The action of God in the world through Jesus is a source of freedom and love.

That is definitely Good News, the sort that - when embodied in a person's life - no one will find offensive, most will find attractive and many will find simply irresistible. The articulation of this Good News in terms of moral norms, dogmatic formulae, canonical regulations and institutional structures is secondary and relative to the primary reality of God inviting people into the loving relationships - with God, self, others and the world.

When the primacy of those relationships is replaced by one or more of those secondary and relative expressions, what is presented as "the faith" is in fact an obstacle to the true faith. You then have the tragic irony of religion obstructing people in their efforts to relate with God. The means becomes the end, the relative becomes the absolute, life-giving relationships centred in Christ give way to death dealing ideologies centred in trends and pressure groups.

**N**one of us is immuned against these kinds of distortions. Even a cursory reading of history will reveal that such distortions have in fact been more the norm than the exception. If it were not for the fidelity of God to the promise "I am with you!" the Church would have been torn apart and left on the scrap heap of history centuries ago.

No amount of work on those secondary and relative expressions will make any positive difference if it is not flowing out of, and expressing a living relationship with, God in Christ. In fact, if that living relationship is not significantly there, the more effective and clever we are in either defending the status quo or promoting change, the worse it will be.

We cannot know how God's Church will take shape in the coming centuries. All the indications are that it will be different from what we have known except in its heart - it will always remain a community of people united by living relationships in Christ. □

# The Human Face

sudden unexpected death of my younger sister in August 1993 (I am the eldest in my family and also have one younger brother), also meant I had grief issues of my own to deal with, as well as dealing with the grief of others.

Looking back on my own life experience and listening to other people's, I believe that God works a master plan in all our lives. Many of the choices surrounding details may be up to us, but the overall plan is there.

How has becoming a Christian/Catholic changed me? It has brought meaning and focus to my life. Yet it has also brought its share of disillusionment. I am a part of an institution that is highly dysfunctional in many areas, particularly in its sometimes belligerent and subconscious maintenance of a hierarchical power structure. The paradox is, however, that despite its problems and need for renewal in all areas, I believe it still contains the most inherent spirituality.

My vision for the Church is one where there is a conscious structural change towards collaboration and decelerisation, (and by that I don't mean that we throw out all the clergy and say Mass at home!) but a freer more gospel-based institution, one that does not take a reactive position, but that is very much a part of our society and draws on the wisdom gained through contemplation.

Faith through works and inner renewal is essentially my spiritual philosophy. My own spirituality gravitates towards monasticism and I have somehow tried to live in both the secular world and adopt a contemplative way of life. This is not always easy, but it is where the most spiritual growth has taken place.



Ms Joanna Thyer

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

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The following is its mission statement:

We are believers who are attempting to establish a forum for conversation within the Catholic Church of Australia. Our aim is to prompt open exchanges among the community of believers, mindful of the diversity of expression of faith in contemporary Australia. This springs explicitly from the spirit of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II: "Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case" (Gaudium et Spes, n.92).

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This journal is published ten times each year, March to December. It is sent to all Friends of Catalyst for Renewal.

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Registered by Australia Post  
Publication No.255003/02125

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

**MY NAME IS JOANNA THYER.** I was born in South Australia but did most of my schooling in Tasmania, where I attended a private Quaker secondary school. It was there that I learnt some basic Christian values such as pacifism, the need to combat racism, and the value of quiet prayer times. That experience was to help ground me in later life, despite the fact that at the time I probably fell into the category of recalcitrant teenager!

I grew up in a largely agnostic Anglican household and had little interest in spiritual or religious matters. My parents divorced when I was 18 and I moved to Adelaide to do a psychology degree at university. Originally I had planned to become a psychologist, but became disillusioned with the reductionist behavioural view of psychology that was fashionable at that time. My interest in psychology has resurfaced all these years later, yet I now believe in a holistic concept of mental health where spirituality plays an important part.

I completed my degree in 1980 and began what I now look back on as my 'wilderness' years, both professionally and personally. I did not know what I wanted to do with my life and I grabbed a sales job with a photocopying company simply to make a start. Later, I moved to Sydney and eventually worked in a small publishing company, where I stayed for nine years.

It was in the midst of a huge personal crisis that culminated in late 1991, that my life turned around. It was the classic death/rebirth experience following the 'long dark night of the soul'. A Salvation Army officer was one person who helped me through this period and also helped foster my interest in Christianity.

The ball started rolling for me in a spiritual sense when I attended a silent retreat at Douglas Park and experienced a full conversion to Christianity. In 1992 I began a Bachelor of Theology degree part-time at Catholic Theological Union. In 1993, after much 'church shopping' (I attended everything from the Pentecostals to the High Anglicans), I became a Catholic at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Paddington. Later I became involved in ministries such as RCIA.

I now work as a Pastoral Care Chaplain at St. Vincent's Hospital, primarily with cancer patients. This experience has changed me. It has challenged my faith; it has most definitely challenged traditional theology and also my emotional life. The

# Your Say – Participation of women in the Church

by Kateri Duke and Jan Barnett rsj

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Research Project on the Participation of Women in Church recently concluded findings in dioceses throughout Australia. The following is an extract from the presentation made by Kateri Duke and Jan Barnett rsj. Their presentation was based on John's Gospel (1:35-40) and used the questions of Jesus and the disciples as the basis for their reflection.

***They said 'Rabbi, where do you live?'***  
***He said to them "Come and see".***  
*Where do we find the dwelling place of Jesus today?*

We find Jesus in a Church which has preached the gospel of a loving, compassionate God but we acknowledge also that this Church has not always been faithful to Jesus' attitude towards women.

We find Jesus in a Church which proclaimed at the Vatican Council that "there is in the Church no inequality on the basis of sex", and yet acknowledge also that this is a Church that many women experience as a monolithic organisation which, in its government, its public image and its functioning, assigns women to a subservient position.

We find Jesus in a Church which teaches that we are all sharers in "the priestly, prophetic and sovereign functions of Christ", but acknowledge also that this is a Church where hierarchical and patriarchal structures operate at all levels, where theology is patriarchal and formulated as though maleness were the normative form of humanity.

We find Jesus in a Church where the Australian Bishops have this "Participation of Women in Church" Project and yet we acknowledge also that this Church cannot

achieve true inclusion while it reinforces the authority of a patriarchal Church and ensures that decision-making and sacramental leadership remain largely the province of men.

***And Jesus said to them: What are you seeking? What is it that we seek as women in Church today?***

We seek a Church that nurtures wholeness by disclaiming any alienation and prejudice based on gender, race or class.

We seek a Church which recognises systematic oppression in current structures.

We seek a Church where the phrase "equal but different" is not a pretext to ban women from certain roles.

We seek the promotion of all voices in the Church ... women's and men's, the voices of the oppressed, the voices of the silent, the voices of those who are excluded by hierarchical and patriarchal structures.

We seek shared decision-making, which proclaims in both word and structure the rightful place of women in the Church.

We seek in all our liturgies the unqualified promotion of inclusive language and feminine images.

We seek a Church that is truly "a discipleship of equals", which makes all Sacraments available to women, and through women.

We seek the allocation of resources to both women and men for theological, pastoral and scriptural training.

We seek a Church that reverences the right of women to fulfil significant roles, not only in family, school and parish, but also on the faculties of seminaries and theological institutions.

We seek a Church which speaks out with courage on behalf of poor and oppressed

peoples, recognising that the majority of these are women and children.

***Jesus continues to invite us to "come and see". What does this mean for us as Church today?***

We would come and see more clearly if bishops and the official Church were to give public acknowledgment, practically as well as theoretically, to the place of women in Church leadership.

We would come and see more clearly if pastoral councils could be set up with representation from both women and men.

We would come and see more clearly if inclusive language were used as the official language in all liturgies and Church documentation.

We would come and see more clearly if women were authorised as special ministers for the Anointing of the Sick and for Reconciliation.

We would come and see more clearly if ministerial positions open to women included pastoral leadership and homiletics.

We would come and see more clearly if a broad Commission were established to carry forward the findings of this research project.

We would come and see more clearly if an academy of theologians, social scientists, practitioners and academics could engage in a national colloquium or forum to discuss and debate the critical issues raised in this project.

We would come and see more clearly if our bishops were to set up within the Australian Catholic University an Institute of Women's Studies to explore further the role of women in Church and society.

**And he said them: "Come and see".**

## Letters

Congratulations to you and the editorial team on the June issue of *The Mix*. Thanks so much for bringing to *The Mix* a remarkable spirit of courage and practical wisdom. Your journal is a treat indeed!

*Alanna van Dantzig, Annandale NSW*

I write to inform you of the Ballarat experience of Spirituality in the Pub. The intention was to have two low key gatherings a month, both on the same theme, one at

midday, the other in the evening. The expectation was that the gatherings would probably be rather small, partly because it is impractical for us here to regularly get high profile draw-card speakers to introduce a topic. The two gatherings that we have had so far have proved to be quite successful, without being the rave of the town.

On both occasions the conversation flowed easily and was generally appreciated. Sixteen people were at the midday gathering and twenty two at the evening one. Fortu-

*Kevin Murphy, Ballarat, VIC*

Best wishes with the project and its spirit of challenge and openness.

*John Gibson O.H., Richmond, NSW*

Other letters to be published as space permits.

# Essay – The Church: Foundations for a new millennium

by Richard Lennan

**On October 18, 1996, Richard Lennan presented a paper to the National Curialo Conference in Newcastle. What follows is the first part of that paper. The second part will be published in the November issue of *The Mix*. In this first section Richard raises some of the major issues. In the second part he will offer some guidance on dealing with the issues.**

**A**ny essay on the future of the Church must first confront the possibility that the Church does not have a future. Such an idea may sound heretical: has God not promised to remain always with the Church? True, that is the faith of the Church, but the efficacy of that promise might seem open to question at present. How can there be a future for the Church when the Church fails to connect with either the “Baby Boomers” or “Generation Xers”? How can there be a future for the Church when its ordained ministry is shrouded with the opprobrium which has resulted from clerical sexual abuse? How can there be a future for the Church when even its ministry to the terminally ill is now perceived as a heartless prolongation of unnecessary suffering and as a denial of human freedom?

In addition to those areas where the Church’s relationship to the world offers little cause for a hopeful view of the future, there are also the issues which reveal that all is not well with the internal life of the Church. How much energy has been expended in the last thirty years in struggles over power and access to influence in the Church? How many people have walked away from the Church because they could not find in it the reflection of the God whose Spirit had drawn them to the Church? Equally, how many people have stayed in the Church at the cost of anaesthetising themselves in order to block out their sense that at the heart of the Church is a hollowness rather than the all-encompassing love of God?

A lecture on the future of the Church cannot avoid conjecture; it must, however, avoid the temptation of talking about the future in a way that implies that that future will not be shaped by the present. For us, the present of the Church involves much that is dying or, at least, is no longer life-giving. That reality cannot be masked by the proclamation of faith in God’s promise to remain with the Church. Indeed, as Karl Rahner argues, the fact that the

Church might survive appendix-like in history, the fact that the Church might be still alive because it has not yet had sufficient time to die, cannot be interpreted as evidence of the triumph of the life-giving spirit of the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

Much conjecture about the future of the Church orbits around the possibilities which might arise if there were reform of the Roman Curia, greater flexibility in the liturgy, access for women to positions of leadership, more money for new ministries, or less money for burgeoning diocesan bureaucracies. All of those proposals provide scope for endless discussions or, if your environment is more robust, for fights to the death; none of them, however, are the fundamental issues about the future. Indeed, if we focus only on what is contentious, the inevitable outcome is the *cul de sac* in which we have spent much of the last generation.

## *How many people have stayed in the Church at the cost of anaesthetising themselves in order to block out their sense that at the heart of the Church is a hollowness rather than the all-encompassing love of God?*

A recently published book on the Church bears the title, *Reconstructing Catholicism*. The title alone is rich in its resonances; it implies that something which had existed previously has been deconstructed, that there are building materials lying around, and that there is a need for something new to be built because we cannot live forever in a state of deconstruction. Any construction, even a reconstruction, must, however, begin with the foundations. If these are not in place, if, worse still, we do not even know what they are, then the building has no future. Similarly, if we take the foundations for granted, if, in our haste to choose the light fittings or the bathroom accessories, we assume that of course we know and under-

stand the foundations, then the structures we build will, at some point in the future, be imperilled.

The future of the Church, the reconstruction of the Church, depends on our relationship to its foundations. We need to rediscover those foundations, to immerse ourselves in a hermeneutics of recovery, to analyze our past and present in order to understand why the deconstruction became not only necessary but urgent, and to identify the resources of the present which offer hope for the future. It is that process which this lecture will undertake. The first task, therefore, is to identify the Church’s foundations.

**T**he emphasis on the foundations of the Church is not a coded way of advocating the importance of definitions or catechisms. It is about the need to rediscover the Jesus who is, as Walter Kasper puts it, the unfathomable and inexplicable love of God. Unless Jesus is alive for us, then doctrine, whether it applies to the Church, the sacraments, or even Jesus himself, is merely an abstraction. No abstraction can give life or evoke enthusiastic disciples.

The future of the Church begins with, and depends on, our recognition of Jesus as God-with-us, as the one who reveals God, as the one who invites us into communion with God’s own life. That communion, best expressed as the reign or the kingdom of God, not only offers human beings possibilities which they could not achieve by their own efforts, it also challenges our values. Indeed it exposes as less than fully human any values that do not reflect the God-given potential of humanity.

It is only in the light of that love which is Jesus that the Church has any meaning. The Church is, as Leonardo Boff expresses it, that part of the world which has accepted the Kingdom made explicit in Jesus Christ. The Church is the sacramental anticipation of the Kingdom, but is not to be identified with the Kingdom. This description of the Church provides us with a hermeneutic for evaluating how we live as a Church. Are we centred on the Jesus who made God’s love visible and tangible, are we inclusive, are we in solidarity with those who suffer, are we agents of creative love, are we a sign of a future which is beyond calculation in its goodness? In other words, to paraphrase *Lumen*

*Gentium*, are we a sacrament or instrumental sign of the union with God and of the unity of all humanity? If that is what we exist to be, then our future will be authentic only if that is what we always are and are always becoming.

The fact that the criterion for the authenticity of the Church is existential rather than primarily doctrinal, that is, the fact that the Church is to be lived and not simply professed or, perhaps better, that the value of the profession depends on the degree to which it is lived, means that the Church stands, as Vatican II reminded us, in constant need of reform or purification...

The Second Vatican Council sought to bridge the yawning chasm which had developed between the Church and the world of which it is a part. The key notions expressing the vehicles which the Council hoped would facilitate a new relationship between the Church and the world were: an openness in the Church to the world; ecumenism; the reform and renewal of the Church; the development of a historical consciousness within the Church; the acceptance of pluralism and diversity; affirmation of the value of collegiality; and the adoption of a renewed spirit of service. The Church which will begin the new millennium is the Church which has been shaped by the impact of the Council. Before discussing the future, it is necessary, therefore, to examine how such ideas have affected the Church in the last generation.

While the extent of Vatican II's reformist spirit remains a controversial topic, it is hard to gainsay the assertion that in challenging the *status quo*, Vatican II was also challenging the Church to change. The problem with that challenge was that it was addressed to a Church with no lived memory of how to change or even whether change was in fact compatible with faith in revelation.

The difficulty of adjusting to life after the Council was exacerbated as we came to realise that the Council itself presented us often with different, even conflicting,ologies of the Church. Thus, there is in the conciliar documents the unresolved tensions between the Church as a communion of all believers and the Church as a hierarchically-constituted body, between the collegial authority of the bishops and the universal jurisdiction of the Pope, and between the priesthood of all believers and the papalood of the ordained. On our best days, we might be able to rejoice that such seeming contradictions are in fact a reflection of the boundless mystery of the Church, a reflection of the fact that the

Church is founded in the unfathomable mystery of God; on our worst days, however, such mysteries are merely a pain.

Vatican II's promotion of the importance of a historical consciousness may have been easier to accept if the world had stayed where it was in 1965. Openness to history requires, however, an openness to questions which weren't even dreamt of when we said we were willing to be open to history. Accordingly, the Church in the last generation has had to struggle with or, perhaps better, be battered by issues such as the changes in the understanding of human sexuality, the change in the role of women in society, the crisis of authority, the ecological movement, the technological revolution, and the desire to see all religions as aspects of the one idea, a development which has challenged the claim that Jesus is the unique mediator of God to humanity.

In addition, the openness of the Church to the world became more difficult to maintain as the Church experienced strains in its internal life, strains which would not have been conceivable in the century before the Council. Such strains expressed themselves in the declining numbers at the eucharist, the shrinking number of candidates for the ordained ministry and religious life, and the fact that many of the Church's organs struggle for financial survival. To this list of woes must be added the devastation which clerical sexual abuse has inflicted on the claim that the members of the Church reflect the love of Jesus. The most significant consequence of the Church's internal traumas has been, as Brian Hehir expresses it, that a whole generation has lost the notion of Catholicism as an "idea". By this he means that people have continued to be prayerful and socially generous without possessing a structured vision of life and work that is rooted in the Catholic moral and social tradition.

Not surprisingly, such a diverse range of forces has evoked a diverse range of responses. For many people, the perceived priority has been the need to draw "a line in the sand", to nominate a point beyond which change or decay must not be allowed to advance. Allied with this spirit has been the attempt to restore what is perceived as the source of the Church's security before the Council, especially a clear statement of doctrine and loyalty to the Pope. For others, the trauma of the last generation elicits the desire to retreat into individual spirituality and the quest for personal salvation, a necessary concomitant of which is the abandonment of any sense of the relation-

ship between the Kingdom and the world. Still others have disassociated themselves from the Church in a formal way, but have continued to seek community and even to experience a eucharistic gathering outside of the structures of the Church. To the world at large, especially the young, this traumatized Church looks, when it is noticed at all, to be on its last legs, to be trying desperately, but with what futility, to stave off its inexorable slide into the black hole of irrelevance. Those who speak for the institution seem able only to repeat the rhetoric they have always used, to insist that the Church is necessary for the wellbeing of a humanity — which has long since ceased to find the Church important or even interesting.

The foregoing description of the present may not be entirely devoid of hyperbole, but neither is it unacquainted with truth. It is the truthfulness of such a portrayal that confronts us with the haunting possibility that the Church may not have a future. In the next issue, the final section of this paper will attempt to describe what must be done if discussion of the Church in the third millennium is not to be an exercise in fantasy. □

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*Fr Richard Lennan lectures in Systematic Theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. He is the author of The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner - reviewed in this issue of The Mix, p.8.*

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#### For Further Reflection

In 1961, and certainly all through the 1950's there was, to be sure, a certain malaise in American Protestantism. It was limited to relatively small circles within the churches. ... The situation could not be more different today. Mainline Protestantism is marked by a widespread demoralization that has been called a general failure of nerve. Its expressions range from masochistic self-laceration to hysterical defensiveness. ... The Catholics who, back in 1961, still seemed to be sitting pretty on the rock of Peter, are now looking for plausible lifeboats like the rest of us. ... Christians, like other men, are creatures of habit. ... I think that many in our churches today can be described as looking for a culture with which to identify (Peter Berger, *Facing Up To Modernity*, Penguin, 1979, pp.227-228).

□□□□

In probably no region of personality do we find so many residues of childhood as in the religious attitudes of adults (Gordon Allport, *The Individual and His Religion*, Macmillan, 1950, p.52).

□□□□

I am with you always (Mt 28:20)

## Words for a Pilgrim People

*He resolutely took the road for Jerusalem. (Mt 9:51)*

*All the Christian faithful must make an effort, in accord with their own condition, to live a holy life and promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification (Canon 210).*

*I cannot fail to emphasize now one of the most constant concerns of the Synod Fathers, a concern imposed with vigour and urgency by present experiences throughout the world ... the central problem of the catechesis of adults. This is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form. The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or promoters of catechetical activity. The world in which the young are called to live and give witness to the faith which catechesis seeks to deepen and strengthen is governed by adults: the faith of these adults too should continually be enlightened, stimulated and renewed, so that it might pervade the temporal realities. Thus, for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent, and it would be quite useless if it stopped short just at the threshold of maturity, since catechesis, admittedly under another form, proves no less necessary for adults. (Catechesi Tradendae (Catechesis in Our Time), John Paul II, 1979, n.43)*

*Don't aim at success - the more you aim at it ... the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen by not caring about it. I want you to listen to what your conscience commands you to do and go on to carry it out to the best of your knowledge. Then you will live to see that in the long-run - in the long-run, I say! - success will follow you precisely because you had forgotten to think about it. (Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) cited in In Memoriam on internet, Sept 1997)*

## The Bible - The Church as community of believers

In ancient Greece the official term for the citizen's assembly was *ekklesia*. That noun is derived from the verb *ekkaleo* meaning "to summon" or "to call out". We find the word *ekklesia* used in Acts 19:32, 39 and 41 in the same sense in which the Greeks used it.

However, the NT use of this word is almost exclusively controlled by its employment in the Septuagint (see Vol. 1, No. 5, p.6) to translate the Hebrew word *qahal*. The Hebrew word has much the same basic meaning - "a convoked assembly" - but in the context of the OT it has a particular connotation. In its strongest sense, *qahal* means the assembly of Israel convoked by God (eg Dt 5:19 and 23:2-9; 1Chr 28:8; Num 16:3 and 20:4; Mic 2:5). It is this particular Hebrew usage, rather than the Greek usage, that sheds most light on the meaning of *ekklesia* as used in the early Church.

The fundamental meaning of *ekklesia* in the NT is the actual assembly of people meeting together for worship. Thus St Paul rebukes the Corinthians "when (they) assemble as a church (*ekklesia*)" (1Cor 11:18 - RSV). The Jerusalem Bible here translates *ekklesia* as "community". *Ekklesia* came to refer more generally to the community of faithful in any given place (eg Mt 18:17; Acts 5:11, 8:1 and 3, 15;22 - all references to the community in Jerusalem; Acts 13:1; Rom 16:1; 1Cor 4:17; Col 4:16; 1Thes 1:1 and so on).

In the NT the use of the Greek word *ekklesia* is generally translated simply as "church". This reminds us of the nature of the Church. It is the assembly or community called together by God. It is a people constantly being summoned, called together into relationship with God in Christ, into relationship with ourselves, others and the created world in which we find ourselves. This is first and last God's doing. Our part is to be vigilant and cooperative so that we can become the community in Christ we are called to be.

A number of images are used to express this understanding of the Church and highlight the centrality of Christ. Thus Jesus is the temple (Jn 2:21) and so is the baptised Christian (1Cor 6:19) and together we form God's temple (1Cor 3:16; 2Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). The baptised in community are also the body of Christ (2Cor 11:2 and Eph 5:22-32). It is worth noting that the imagery - these and others - are unapologetically mystical. The NT view of the Church is essentially mystical, going far beyond anything merely functional.

## Tradition - The catholic church

It is interesting to hear St Ignatius of Antioch (martyred in Rome c. 110) writing about the year 109, giving instructions to the Christian community in Smyrna: "Abjure all factions, for they are the beginning of evils. Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too, as you would the Apostles; give your deacons the same reverence you would to a command from God. Make sure that no one affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorised by him. Where the bishop is to be seen there let all his people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the catholic church. Nor is it permissible to conduct baptisms or love-feasts without the bishop. On the other hand, whatever does have his sanction can be sure of God's approval too. This is the way to make certain of the soundness and validity of anything you do."

This is the first instance we know in which the term "catholic" (meaning "world-wide" or "universal") is applied to *ekklesia* ("church"). Clearly there has been a significant development from those earlier days - fifty to sixty years previously - when it made more sense to speak of *ekklesia* in terms of this or that little community of believers.

Ignatius was a personal friend of Polycarp who had, in turn, been a disciple of John the Beloved Disciple. There was roughly the same time span from Ignatius to Jesus as there is from us to World War I. We are still discovering things about World War I and are very conscious of the need to interpret documents carefully. The Letters of Ignatius require careful reading too. On the one hand they must be taken seriously as in some way revealing the reality of that time and the faith. On the other hand they must be allowed to reveal that reality rather than our reality. For example, the words "church" - especially "catholic church" - and "bishop" and "clergy" would have had a substantially different connotation at the beginning of the second century than they have at the end of the twentieth century.

God's *ekklesia*, in any historical moment or cultural context, is first and foremost the community of the baptised, those human beings called together by the Spirit of Christ. The *ekklesia* is people assembled through Him, with Him and in Him. As a means to express, foster and defend this end, organisational structures are developed, adapted or relinquished.

## News in Brief

- **Bishop Geoffrey Robinson was grossly misrepresented in a report in *The Australian* on Tuesday August 26.** He was quoted as saying "100 priests forced out" and "the right to have sex" before they take a vow of celibacy at about 40. Despite several attempts by Bishop Robinson to have *The Australian* newspaper correct these errors of fact, they refused. (A statement on this matter may be found in *The Catholic Weekly* of September 7, 1997, p.3.)
- **A Web Invitation.** Dissatisfied and inactive Catholics are invited to contact a sympathetic Internet ear in the person of Fr William F McKee, C. SsR. At Fr McKee's Web site (<http://@cml.co@lliam>) you will be able to discuss their problems and receive spiritual help. The priest has been ministering to inactive Catholics for fourteen years and promises to give all who contact his site "greater reassurance of the love of God".
- **Viktor Frankl recently died in Vienna at the age of 92.** Frankl is best known for his book entitled *Man's Search for Meaning*. First published in German in 1946 and in English in 1959, it has sold over 9 million copies and been translated into 23 languages. This book describes his experiences in the holocaust and the lessons he drew from that experience. Frankl spent 20 years lecturing in the US. He spent his last years mostly at his own institute in Vienna, continuing to develop the theory of Logotherapy.
- **A public confession.** The human rights violation committee of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has received a public confession by the Anglican Church that it should have reacted more strongly to human rights abuses practised under apartheid. It further called on those of its members who were "involved in the perpetuation of the heresy of apartheid and of the violation of human rights: to present themselves to the Commission".
- **Extending our Family.** When we think of door knock campaigns, we think of charities or perhaps the Jehovah's Witnesses, but in one Chicago Catholic parish, the parishioners went door to door to take the Good News to their neighbours. The project, called "Extending Our Family", recently took place in St James parish. During a two-week period, 42 parishioners visited some 1,000 households. This is just one recent example of parish evangelisation.
- **Policy prevails.** When the Portuguese president, Jorge Sampaio, had a private audience with the Pope a few months ago, his wife was not permitted to accompany him. Report had it that the Pope had refused to admit her to his presence because she is the second wife of the divorced and remarried president. Responding to queries, a Vatican spokesman has confirmed that this is official policy -- not a mistake, as some Portuguese bishops had thought. The spokesman pointed out it is well known that divorced and remarried Catholics cannot appear with their spouses in private before the Pope.
- **The Orthodox accept help from the Jesuits.** When the Serbian Orthodox, a minority in Catholic Croatia, failed in their 1995 attempt to separate themselves geographically from the Catholic majority, their Church was exiled, and its leader, Metropolitan Jovan, was constrained to lead his people from an apartment in Trieste. Orthodox churches in Croatia were ransacked and pillaged, and most of the people and priests forced to flee. Recently, people began to return to their former villages -- to find only damaged churches and no priests. Fr Stjepan Kusan, SJ, of the Jesuit Refugee Service, offered to sponsor the return of several Orthodox priests and the Metropolitan accepted his offer. Fr Kusan has also organised young Catholics to work with Orthodox volunteers to repair the Orthodox churches and to protect the Orthodox seminary from further vandalism. Help in setting up parish councils was another aspect of the practical support the Jesuit body has provided.

## Bulletin Board

- **Catalyst Calendar**  
(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)
- October 1:** Paddington SIP - "Discipline" with John Jago SM and Deirdre Grusovin.
- October 15:** Pymble SIP - "Peacemaking" with Frank Brennan SJ and Terry Colling.
- October 17:** Catalyst Dinner - "Priests in the Church" with Bishop David Walker and Fr Vince Redden as speakers; Hunters Hill, 7.30pm.
- October 20:** Reflection Morning at St Bernadett's Dundas with Michael Whelan; repeated in the evening (Info: Mary on 9872 2941).
- October 28:** Rouse Hill SIP - "The Good Life - Honesty in the Market Place" with Werren McCarthy and Tony Barry (Info: Fr Gross on 02 9228 7806 (W), 9460 0225 or 0411 419 332).
- October 29:** Canberra SIP - "Empowerment" with Geraldine Doogue and another speaker tba (Info: Rita O'Connor on 026 288 4715 (H) or Therese Vassarotti on 026 249 1273),  
November 25: Rouse Hill SIP - "The Good Life - Here's Hoping!" with Patrick Duignan and Ken Nunn.  
Note: October is the last SIP for Paddington and Pymble in 1997.
- **SIP has begun in Rouse Hill at The Mean Fiddler** on the last Tuesday of the month (Info: Francis Gross on 02 9228 7806 (W)), 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 on 02 9228 7806 (W), 9460 0225 or 0411 419 332.**
- **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.
- **Mens Evening, Thursday October 30, 7.30pm at St Mary's North Sydney** with Steve Biddulph, Tom Hughes QC and Dr Ian Edwards. (Info: 9955 1183).
- **Home Hospice Cancer care Programme.** Medical Coordinator Dr Helen Anne Mannon and Cancer Counsellor and Volunteer Coordinator Gerard Mannon. Caring for those patients nearing the end of a terminal illness. Bundeena NSW (Info: Gerard on 02 9527 1592).
- **Bethany Group.** Women gathering for networking, friendship and prayer. Regular monthly meetings usually at Mulgrave, Victoria. (Info: Lyn Bate on 03 9574 9530)

