



THE MIX



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Kerrie Biddle

The human face 2

Paul Corkeron

The universe story 3

Chris Saunders

Have we abandoned the rural people? 3

Ron Mulock

Do people matter any more? 4

Paul Maloney

Thirteen for dinner 5

Our Say - The seduction of melodrama

When the awful bushfires ringed Sydney a few years ago, residents whose houses were burned told of the people who came by to look, some of them bringing their children, as if to a show. A car accident, a person in obvious pain, someone being attended by paramedics on the side of the road, a surfer swept out in a dangerous rip. Why do we stop and look? Is it because we are genuinely and dispassionately interested in helping? More likely, we find in these moments of tragedy a sense of excitement, a brush with mortality that takes us out of ourselves and raises us, no matter how fleetingly, above the sheer ordinariness and tedium of daily living.

We may find a similar excitement in brushes with *immortality*. Power, and association with those who exercise it, can give us a sense of identity, a feeling that life in general, and our lives in particular, really do matter. Probably we stare at power brokers and the rich and the famous for precisely the same reasons we stare at the threatened, the hurt and the smitten in our midst.

Perhaps we can cope much better with the extraordinary than we can with the ordinary. Maybe we feel more alive in an atmosphere of excitement, even crisis, than we do in an atmosphere to which we have grown accustomed. The adrenalin rush lifts us out of the tedium and boredom and any lurking sense we might have had - no matter how unconsciously - that our lives do not matter.

And these facts say something of human beings that is neither good nor bad. And some of us are more prone to this than others. How we choose to respond, as always, is the key. In particular it is a reminder of how things might get out of perspective in our work for renewal.

From time to time these days we hear talk of heresies and heretics. Some may take a delight in naming the heretics, others may take a delight in being so named. We may find solace in the excitement of the latest gossip or anger at the latest indecency perpetrated by "the enemy". "To the barricades!", "Nail the so and so's!".

The seduction of the melodramatic can keep us superficial and lead us into the kinds of polemics that simply indulge our failure to deal maturely with what is happening. When all is said and done, renewal does not offer too many adrenalin rushes. It is, rather, sustained by generous amounts of constancy and fidelity, ordinary commitment and endurance, common sense and intelligence, and the imagination to recognise that God's plans for the Church and world must be infinitely beyond anything we can comprehend or control.

People who take up extreme positions - right or left, progressive or conservative, radical or reactionary - may be especially vulnerable to the seduction of melodrama. The excitement of it all may become much more important to them than genuine renewal. It may become more a game of denial and evasion than a journey of honest and serious intent.

Good conversation, generously and honestly sought, is an excellent antidote to the melodrama that pretends to be real drama. □

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

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Marie Biddle RSJ, Kevin Burges, Dr Ann Bye, Aidan Carvill SM, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Kate Englebrecht, Francis Gross, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Christine Hutchison, Michael Kelly SJ, Maryellen McLeay, John Menadue, Dr Chris Needs, Carmel Sharples, John Sharples, 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 necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case".
(*Gaudium et Spes*, n.92)

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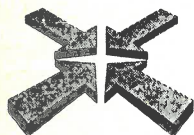
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor reserves the right not to publish a submitted text. Not all the opinions expressed in *The Mix* are those of Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated.

All items submitted for publication in *The Mix* should reach the Editor no later than the 12th of the month previous to publication.

The Human Face

My name is Kerrie Biddle. I was born in the Spring of 1955 in the northern New South Wales town of Armidale, the eldest of four children - one sister and two brothers. I was educated at St Mary's Primary School and St Ursula's College, Armidale, by the Ursuline nuns. Dad owned a butchery and worked very hard to provide a comfortable life for us all. Mum was one of those mothers who was always there for us, sewed all our clothes, kept the cake tins full, helped us with homework and could defuse any argument in a matter of seconds. Mum was diagnosed with cancer when I was eighteen and died five years later. This event deeply affected us all in different ways and, for me, was the beginning of a period of questioning my faith in God.

I grew up in a very secure and loving family where practice of the faith was a constant in our lives - Mass each Sunday, confession, family prayer each night, Catholic schools, Holy Name Society, Holy Angels etc. The practice of the faith was never questioned. It was taken for granted. I thank my parents for the seeds of faith which they planted in me and for the sense of constancy this tradition has given me. But my actual faith journey towards a deep sense of spirituality did not really begin until many years later.

The year after my mother died, I married Joe and completed my degree in Financial Management at the University of New England. Our first child, Brendan, was born the following year, after which we moved to Glen Innes. The next seven years were a blur of nappies and breastfeeding as Stephen, Fiona, and Damien arrived.

Eleven years ago a spiritual renewal programme called *Renew* began in our Diocese. Our parish held an information evening and we decided to "give it a go". *Renew* became the catalyst for my faith journey - to move on from the "religion in a box" phase. I began to realise that for my faith to be a living, growing thing, I had to start the inward journey of building a relationship with God. I also found that this is not a solo trip, but is achieved through my relationship with my "fellow travellers". This realisation was like a light being switched on in my soul and I have been slowly drawn to that light ever since.

Since *Renew*, I have been involved with Lenten discussion groups and have become a Special Religious Education teacher (Catechist) at the local state Primary School. I have found the adult education and formation I derive from my SRE very rewarding. I have learnt so much but still have so much more to learn. I am con-

stantly amazed at the challenging questions of the children - eg: "How do you know God exists?", "Do you believe in the Big Bang theory?", "Is there a hell - how do you know?". However, the hardest challenge is helping these children build a relationship with God, in only 30 minutes a week!

Another area where I have become involved in the broader church is through my position as Diocesan representative to the Council of Catholic School Parents. In addition to providing a forum for the parent point of view in education, the Council is also about promoting partnership and collaboration between school, church and home.

One of the big issues which I believe faces the Church today is the disintegration of the relationship between school, church and home. For many families, their only connection with Church is through the school. It is important that the Church never underestimates the tremendous work of the Catholic school in the nurturing of the faith in our children. It is equally important that we provide some means of continuing the Church's ministry to our youth beyond school.

I strongly believe that the adult lay members of our Church need to be encouraged and empowered to participate more meaningfully in Church life. It is sad to see that after 33 years since Vatican II we still have parishes where priests feel too threatened or too ill-equipped to encourage and empower the laity to use their gifts and talents to help build a truly vibrant, faith-filled Church community.

It would be great to see more opportunities available for adult education in the faith and spiritual formation in the rural parishes. I am, however, uplifted and heartened by the fact that something like *Catalyst for Renewal* exists.



Kerrie Biddle

Your Say - The universe story - living in communion

by Paul Corkeron

A study of the universe story challenges us to relook at our relationship to all God created and provides new models of leadership for the future. We are moving from an industrial/technological age to an ecological age as witnessed by the development of *Green Olympics*, *Green Policies*, *Green Politics*, as well as campaigns to clean up the world, and the emergence of influential groups such as Greenpeace.

We are aware that without the human, the earth would never know and feel its beauty. We recognise that it would be a tragedy for a child not to be loved - no one to celebrate its splendour. It is the same with the universe; its grandeur needs to be felt and valued. It is our special gift to be enlivened and excited by God's gifts and to express our thanks, praise, compassion and appreciation for all that has been provided. However, unlike any other creature that ever existed, we have become a geophysical force, swiftly changing the atmosphere and climate as well as the composition of the world's fauna and flora. No other single species in evolutionary history has even remotely approached the devastation generated by humanity.

With our economic, social and political demands for higher standards of living, we have lost a sense of compassion and sensitivity to the earth. We have increased our devastation of rainforests, polluted our water and air, poisoned our soil and destroyed millions of species. In society this is reflected in violence, boredom, the rise in

youth suicide and unemployment, and the maintenance of male-dominated hierarchical structures in our institutions.

We need to rediscover the religious dimension of the earth and recognise that we are a derivative of the earth, bonded together in a single community of life. We need to recognise, too, that every creature is sacramental. The diversity of the plants, flowers, insects, birds, animals and natural landscapes - with their oceans, rivers, waterfalls and mountains - speak of the grandeur and abundance of an all-loving God. St. Francis saw every creature in the world as a mirror of God's presence, as a way to God. In a recent interview by Paul Collins on *Compass*, Thomas Berry stated, "We have no inner spiritual life if we don't have an experience of a beautiful world. Without this we have less religion and little possibility of a sense of God".

It seems to me that patriarchy with its dominating style of leadership is in its death throes and we are entering a new era of evolution in which feminist (and Christ-like) principles of co-operation, mutual empowerment, sharing and justice are coming to the fore. The basic symbol of the new age will be one of nurturing and being nurtured in a communion of subjects, which we associate with the feminine. This challenges us to rebirth the feminine in the human and in our institutions - in its ontological sense rather than simply the gender sense.

Any institution which is not inclusive will not survive. The development of

new models will need to be grounded in relationships where the grassroots have a say and feel valued. The leaders will be the ones who have the skills to listen and encourage the members to take responsibility and use their skills.

What the future will look like we are not sure, but I believe that returning to the universe story and gaining a new understanding of our roles will lead to a paradigm shift in how we think and how we relate. This will have a significant influence on our models of leadership for the future and the structures of our institutions, which will be influenced by the feminine and be inclusive of women.

I believe that a sense of living in communion with all of creation has the potential to bring healing and peace. It crosses over religious and racial differences, it is inclusive rather than exclusive, it is open to surprises, playful, painful and creative like the universe story itself.

The ecological spirituality which is emerging will, according to Thomas Berry, ensure we attain our religious well-being, our human well-being and our planetary well-being. For me it reawakens hope and meaning as it provides a new context for recreating the Church at the heart of the world, a Church where people find and experience real communion as they commune more deeply with the God who enlivens all that exists. □

Paul Corkeron cfc is a Christian Brother living at St Marys, NSW.

Letters

In November 1997 Bishop Chris Saunders of Broome issued a statement concerning the debate over Native Title. Bishop Saunders is the Secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Aborigines. His words - made particularly in response to allegations that the Church had abandoned rural people over the Wik-Native Title issue - are still topical as the debate has not finished yet.

"Neither the Catholic Church, nor any Christian denomination, would wish their stand for justice on Native Title misrepresented as an abandonment of rural Australia.

"On the contrary, the only abandonment of rural people, indigenous and non-indigenous, that has occurred in recent years, has been committed by the uncaring hand of governments. People who live in

the bush know the real meaning of poverty, as it affects them individually, and collectively.

"The Kimberley, for instance, has been regarded as a quarry for southern industries for far too long. Small towns up here have had hospitals downgraded, services closed, including banks, and government departments moved, all in the name of an efficiency which smacks of a deliberate policy of abandonment of the country people" he said.

Commenting on the Premier of WA's remarks on Radio National that the Church had it wrong in its support for Native Title, the Bishop said: "The Church is only too aware of the concerns of rural people about a host of critical issues - including Native Title. As long as the debate is a 'them or us' affair, there will be no way out of the entanglements that have beset us. Unfortu-

nately, too many political opportunists have been scaremongering about the details of Native Title. In fact, co-existence has been a reality in WA since pastoral leases came into being. Co-existence is already a working reality and if honest, just opinions prevail, its existence will be upheld, and the Native Title amendments defeated in the Senate.

"It is a sorry state of affairs when Aboriginal people and their newly found (in the High Court) rights are made the scapegoats for the ineptitude of governments, for the poverty and hardship wreaked upon the rural community by careless governments and city-centred bureaucracies.

"Rural communities are hurting in modern-day Australia. That is a fact. Cessation of Native Title, as proposed by the Federal Government in its amendments, will not alter this one iota." □

Essay - The good life - do people matter any more?

by Ron Mulock

This is the text of a talk given by Ron Mulock at Spirituality in the Pub, The Mean Fiddler, Rouse Hill, NSW, on September 30, 1997.

For me, the "Good Life" means living a life in a way that is acceptable to my Maker, who will review it as a God of justice and mercy. If I get the "thumbs up" I will be through the Pearly Gates in a flash and I will see and enjoy my God for all eternity. This is my aim.

It is in the context of my being a Christian in the Catholic Tradition that I approach the question, "Do people matter any more?" I will tease it out by touching upon and touching into my own personal spirituality. This means touching into the inner core of my being - the spiritual part of me.

Spirituality is the way I go about connecting the inner core of my being to my Maker, creating and retaining relationship with my Maker and integrating my spiritual life into my human, day-to-day existence. Not quite an Oxford or Macquarie Dictionary definition of spirituality, but one which I hope will provide the setting for where I'm coming from.

I was baptised a Catholic and raised in a working-class home - first in the depression era, then in the Second World War period. It was a home where I was taught values and standards: honesty, integrity, courtesy and respect for people.

It was not a traditional Catholic home, although from age 11 through my teens, I had a very close association with a traditional Catholic family of that period. This family took me very much "under its wing" when I worked for them as a paper boy during these years.

Religious teaching came through the Sisters of St. Joseph, at Penshurst Primary, and the De La Salle Brothers, Marrickville, in secondary school. This religious formation was pre-Vatican with the most important thing being to make sure you remained in the state of grace. Apart from learning my faith from the Green Catechism, I developed a real love of the Mass and Eucharist through attending weekday Mass.

At Sydney University, where I studied law, I received more faith formation through the Newman Society. Don't ask me what was happening with my spirituality but my social conscience was stirring very gently....

While I might not have been conscious of it at the time, the Spirit was at work in my life, as later reflection on my part clearly showed me.

I commenced my own practice in law at Penrith in 1955 and married my wife, Desley, in 1957.

As well as our love for each other, Des and I shared a special love for the Mass and the Eucharist. She too had nurtured that love through weekday Mass. Mass and the Eucharist were the manifestation of our individual and joint spirituality at that time and beyond.

Our shared love resulted in 5 children: 4 boys and 1 girl within 7 years. (We were proving that we were indeed Christians in the Catholic tradition!)

By 1965 I had decided to serve the community through local government, at first on the Penrith City Council. A few months later, we received medical advice that our youngest child, Peter, was severely disabled with cerebral palsy. It was a big blow and placed tremendous demands on Des.

From 1968 to 1971 I served as Mayor of Penrith, and was then elected Labor Member for Nepean in the NSW Parliament. After five years in Opposition, and serving as Shadow Attorney General and Shadow Minister of Justice, I spent twelve years in government as a Cabinet Minister.

***"Act justly,
love tenderly
and
walk humbly
with your God"***

In 1977, I made a retreat on the theme, "He Has Touched Me," and it was the first opportunity for a major reflection on my life. I began then to make retreats regularly, twice a year. These retreats became my spiritual lifeline, a means of balancing the "hurly-burly" of personal, family and public life. For me, a retreat is a reflection time, a sharing time, a prayerful time and a spiritual and personal stocktaking time.

In 1981, our son Peter died, after 14 agonising weeks. Through our great grief and sense of loss, this was a time for drawing on spiritual strengths, and this we did.

Several years later, Des was invited to join a Christian Life Community (CLC) Group. CLC is a worldwide lay organisation sponsoring a way of life based on Ignatian spirituality, which can be summarised in Ignatius' statement: "I desire to find God in all things, that I may the better love and serve God." CLC has the practice of praying frequently with Scripture and integrating

constantly one's faith with all aspects of daily living. Faith-sharing in confidence within a regularly meeting group is a feature of Christian Life Communities.

When I voluntarily retired from politics after 23 years in public office, I was invited by the CLC group to join Des as a member. It was an invitation I readily accepted. That group had more than a 2 year start on me in spiritual formation. I felt as though I had been thrown in at the deep end and was playing "catch up football". Nine years later, I'm still in the group.

Spirituality is the way we go about nourishing that inner core of our being - our spiritual depth. I need continually to remind myself that everything I have is a gift and comes to me through the grace and love of God. Some passages of Scripture have a special depth of meaning for me and I'm sure each of us has favourite passages. Two of my favourites are from Isaiah:

"Do not be afraid, I will save you. I have called you by name, you are mine. (42)

"I will never forget you, Jerusalem. I can never forget you. I have written your name on the palm of my hand." (49)

These words continually reinforce for me God's unconditional love for me and God's desire for an ongoing and growing personal relationship with me. I am the one who causes any breakdown in that relationship.

There is a third passage from Scripture that is special to me. Let me tell you why. In 1977, as Minister of Justice, I attended the Red Mass at St Mary's Cathedral for the opening of the law term. Up until that day, if asked, I would have experienced some difficulty in explaining to anyone who might have been remotely interested, what being a Christian was all about. The theme for that Mass was in large print on a banner which stretched from one pillar to another across the aisle of the Cathedral:

"Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)

From that very day this passage has become my guiding influence to help me, from day to day, to live out my Christian Faith. It's always a struggle but for me it's an ideal worth striving for.

I want to leave you with a real life story recently told to me by a very close friend. It shows that my struggles, or those of any of us, are struggles in which God takes a personal and vital interest.

The story is about a man whom we'll call Tom. Tom has long had an alcohol problem. His first marriage ended in divorce. He has remarried and has a little girl, 3 years of age. Mum, Dad and the 3-year-old are walking past St Mary's Cathedral. The little girl says, "Daddy, I want to go in there." Tom is more than a little taken aback. His father was a Catholic of sorts, but Tom hasn't darkened a church door in many a year. His little girl wins out and they enter the Cathedral.

As he related to my friend, Tom takes a seat and moves into some deep reflection. After a while, he senses a close presence. He opens his eyes, turns to his left, and looks straight into the eyes of a dishevelled derelict who has joined him on the seat. The man touches Tom for some money. Tom responds generously and shortly after, moves out of the seat. He joins his daughter and wife, who have observed all of this from a little further back in the Cathedral. Tom's wife tells him that she saw the derelict come in the side door, and although there were many people in that general area, the man did not veer from moving immediately and directly towards Tom.

In relating the story to my friend, who is a dedicated and active member of Alcoholics Anonymous, Tom said, "For the first time in my life I had a real experience of God being present in my life."

Tom had been doubly touched - by the derelict and by God. How many people did God use in this real life experience?...

God is always about people. His Son, Jesus, in his three years of public life, was always about people. To aspire to be like them, we need to be about people.

To the question: "Do people matter any more?" the Christian response can only be a resounding, "Yes!" □

THIRTEEN FOR DINNER

by Paul Maloney OSA
Holy Spirit Parish
St Clair/Erskine Park NSW

Every Friday night we three Augustinian priests who minister to Holy Spirit Parish at St Clair-Erskine Park prepare our small presbytery dining room for a three-course dinner for thirteen guests. We set out the drinks and nibbles, and lay the table with our best crockery, cloth serviettes, candles and flowers. Believe it or not, all this has to do with our vision of Church.

When we came to this suburb in 1995, there seemed to be little social fabric or sense of community. It was a relatively new area, where everyone commuted daily and where the churches were the only visible social bond. We saw our role as one of building community, starting with hospital-

ity and opportunities for people to mix, to socialise.

Our Friday night dinners helped build those bonds of friendship and support.

Over 800 people have come so far, and the ripple effect has been significant. Each group of diners provides the food for and serves the next week's guests. Some enterprising parishioners even print up menus! As they plan together and take over our kitchen, they come to feel at home in the parish and with each other.

Augustine spoke of "honouring God in one another"; we set ourselves to form our own close community in the presbytery first and then together serve the parish.

We came not to impose or provide answers, but to fit in and be a catalyst for union among our many ethnic groups: Filipino, Maltese, Anglo-Indian, Sri Lankan, Samoan, Polish..... At some parish dinners, only a couple guests are Australian born.

As the "good news" spread of what the parish was offering, many returned to the practice of the faith, and at the same time, found a safe place to gather.

For many here our Soup and Video nights (I do the pumpkin soup!) and our Parish Ball are on-going social events.

My previous experience had been in running live-in retreats in the Brisbane and Newcastle areas. Our base in both places was a mixed community where old and young, religious, priests, parents, single men and women all shared the life of the prayer/meditation centre. Kevin O'Shea, when he visited, called it "a sociologist's delight"! Our model of priesthood, which we tried to live out, was a fraternal one, not a presiding model.

Having experienced this shared living on the small community level, I am happy to be able to say now after three years at St Clair/Erskine Park, "It works on the level of parish, too!"

To my way of thinking, a fraternal priesthood which in turn helps create a real community of Christ's disciples is a hope-filled path for future Church. Too many of our present structures are top-heavy. We need parishes without walls, places where people will be listened to, where they can find acceptance, comfort in bereavement, a welcoming centre of worship and community. □

"Basically, sin's purpose is to remove God from the world. When the Jews cried out in Pilate's court, 'Take him away from us', it was the voice of sin, its real result, the removal of God and of his influence over the world." (Yves Congar, "Religious Belief and the Life of the World" in *Faith and the Spiritual Life*, 178). □

A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN

by Oscar Romero

Oscar Romero was born in Salvador in 1917. He was ordained a priest in 1942, bishop in 1970 and archbishop in 1977. Initially a conservative man, he became an outspoken critic of the government and was gunned down while celebrating mass in 1980, a year after he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. What follows is a reflection he wrote shortly before he was martyred.

It helps now and then to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We produce yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results. But that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers not Messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own. □

Prayer found in a concentration camp after the War

"O Lord, remember not only the men of goodwill, but also the men of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us, remember the fruits we have gathered thanks to this suffering - our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of this - and when they come to judgement, let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness." □

Words for a Pilgrim People

(Christ Jesus) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col 1:18ff.)

□□□

The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord, who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labours to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires, in which this People has a part along with other people of our time. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for the human person's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human. (Gaudium et Spes, 11)

□□□

*You, then, are my workers. You have come from me, the supreme eternal gardener, and I have engrafted you onto the vine by making myself one with you. Keep in mind that each of you has your own vineyard. But you are all joined to your neighbours' vineyards without any dividing lines. They are so joined together, in fact, that you cannot do good or evil for yourself without doing the same for your neighbours. All of you together make up one common vineyard, the whole Christian assembly, and you are all united in the vineyard of the mystic body of holy Church from which you draw your life. In this vineyard is planted the vine, which is my only-begotten Son, into whom you must be engrafted. (Suzanne Noffke, trans, **The Dialogue of Catherine of Siena**, Paulist Press, 1980, 62)*

□□□

*That I may receive the gift of perseverance, and die, as I desire to live, in Thy faith, in Thy Church, in Thy service, and in Thy love. (John Henry Newman, **Meditations and Devotions**, Christian Classics Inc, 1975, 289-290)*

The Bible - The rich man and Lazarus

In Luke's Gospel we find a parable that occurs in none of the other Gospels - the so-called parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). A first reading of this parable could leave us very angry - and seemingly with justification. The parable, on the face of it, might be interpreted as simply lauding poverty and condemning wealth - for the former you will be rewarded and for the latter you will be punished. This does not seem congruent with the rest of Jesus' teaching. We must be willing to sit with the text and wrestle with the difficulties of interpretation. We must always endeavour to *hear the Word as revelation* before we presume to *heed the Word as injunction*.

Luke is writing his Gospel about fifty years after the death of Jesus and a generation after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (70AD). He is addressing "a primarily Gentile audience with well-to-do members who are painfully rethinking their missionary thrusts in a hostile environment. Internal and external controversies contribute to the hostile environment" (Robert Karris). For Luke, wealth is clearly problematic. The poor must be attended - that is, assisted, but also seen and heard because in and through them God is present and at work. Luke is also keen to make clear that the Jews cannot presume to be the elect of God simply because they are Jews. Jesus has radically redefined the human landscape.

The parable is not entirely original. There are parallels in Egyptian folklore and the Talmud. The parable shares with these stories a focus on the reversal of fortunes. But the parable is also about faith, and revelation given through Moses and the prophets. The poor man is named, the rich man is anonymous when normally it is the reverse. The poor man is morally passive. He does not do anything right or wrong. The text gives no indication that the rich man has done anything wrong either. He is simply a rich man, although we could draw the implication that he failed morally by not seeing the poor man and assisting him.

Here is one possible way to think of the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus: *I am Lazarus, I am the rich man, I am the five brothers. Part of me is utterly poor and open to grace. Another part of me is so full of myself, oblivious to the gracious God at work in and around me. Yet another part just cannot hear the revelation of God's gracious love in Scripture and Tradition because ... I don't listen? ... I haven't the time? ... What's happening in my life?* □

The Tradition - Gregory and Luke 16:19-31

Gregory the Great was born to an aristocratic family in Rome in about 540. He was Pope from 590 until his death in 604. As a young man he abandoned a very promising political career to live the monastic life. He sold his vast property and distributed the proceeds to the poor. It is perhaps not surprising that the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus drew special attention from Gregory. We have the text of a sermon he preached on this parable.

Gregory notes that the moral demands of the Gospel are higher and more subtle than those of the OT: "The rich man here is not blamed for stealing the goods of others, he is blamed for not parting with his own. Nor are we told that he cast down any one by violence, only that in his wealth he exalted himself too high". In this Gregory echoes one of the enduring social themes in the writings of the Fathers: all possessions come from God, are ultimately for the common good, and should never be treated as strictly and absolutely private by any individual. In other words, according to this teaching, a brother or sister in serious need has a *right* to the necessities of life which others may hold in abundance. Sharing with that destitute brother or sister, therefore, is not an option but a moral necessity according to this teaching.

For Gregory, the whole story is a sort of moral allegory with clear and contrasting images of right and wrong behaviour, all played out within the ambit of God's providence. From the end of the twentieth century we might find that some of Gregory's interpretation grates on us. For example: "In permitting one thing - the lying of Lazarus at the rich man's gate - Almighty God accomplished a twofold judgment - increased damnation for the rich man in his iniquity, increased reward for the beggar in his trial".

Gregory, however, goes on to draw a particular lesson for his hearers that may still ring true: "You have learned of Lazarus' repose, you have learned of the rich man's torment. Act heedfully on this; seek out those who will plead for your sins and defend you on the day of judgment; these are the poor. You have many a Lazarus among you; many like him lie at your gates, in need of what falls from your tables when you have had your fill. ... And these are those who will one day be our intercessors. ... It is we who should do the asking and yet they ask of us. ... Do not waste the occasions for mercy, do not flout the means to salvation granted to you ... since you do not know which poor person may be Christ." □

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

• Spirituality in the Pub (SIP):

SIP Promoter - Ms Kate Englebrecht is SIP Promoter and can be contacted on (02) 960 4061 or 0412 400 519.

°**Ballarat** - (Info: Kevin on 03 5332 1697).

°**Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, 7.30pm-9pm: October 22 "Here's Hoping" (Marie Byrne & Julian Miller) (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

°**Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: September 9 "Who on Earth?" (Fr Michael Gormley & Prof David Russell) (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).

°**Canberra** - The Olims Hotel, Ainslie Ave, Braddon, 7.30pm-9pm: [Please note this is a change of venue]. September 30 "Can you be Catholic and Happy?" (Fr Paul Collins & Sr Roberta Hakendorf) (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

°**Chatswood** - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: September 8 "Daring to be different - Happiness your Choice" (Brian Stoney sj & Debra Adelaide) (Info: Helen on 9956 8232).

°**Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: (Info: Ann on 9701 7076 or 9701 740 or Joyce on 9700 1250).

°**Kincumber** - The Kincumber Hotel, October 6 "Many Pathways to Happiness" (Lance Smith & Les Murray) (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Toni on 02 4341 6986 (H)).

°**Newcastle** - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, September 15 (tba) 7.30pm-9pm: (Info: Gail on 02 49791141 (W) or Gerard on 02 4945 5343 a.h.)

°**Paddington** - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm, October 7 "Dying to be happy" (Margaret Spencer oln & John Dwyer) (Info: Marea on 9387 3152 (H))

°**Penrith** - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, September 9 "Suffering & Happiness - two sides of the one coin" (Caroline Jones & Fr Paul Coleman) (Info: Dennis on 02 4773 8429).

°**Perth** - The inaugural SIP was held August 26, 7.30pm, at the Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge. The theme for 1998 is "Spirituality in Australia: A Contemporary Conversation". (Info: Angela on 08 9337 9224)

°**Geelong** (Info: Denis on 03 5275 4120).

°**amsgate** - The Intersection Hotel, cnr Rocky Pt Rd and Ramsgate Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: September 15 "Youth - Finding Meaning" (Claire Barbeau & Geoff George) (Info: Claudette on 02 9587 3039 (H)).

°**Richmond (VIC)** - The Prince Alfred Hotel, first Wednesdays, 8pm-9.30pm.

(Info: Simon on 03 9497 1631).

°**Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Old Windsor Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: September 29 "Australia - the happy country?" (Dr Anne Benjamin & tba) (Info: Tim on 9736 2324 (H)).

°**Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30p-9pm: September 16 "Can we be happy if you're not happy?" (Prof Tony Vinson & Margaret Hinchey rsm) (Info: Marie on 9869 8101 or Robyn on 9876 6139)

• SIP for young adults:

°**Dee Why** - Dee Why Hotel, Pittwater Rd, Dee Why, 7.30pm-9pm: September 16 "Our Past and Our Present: A Path to the Future" (Peter McNamara & Sr Sue Miller) (Info: Fr John on 9905 3022).

°**Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: October 6 "Can We Live Together?" (Murray Bell & Greg Johnson) (Info: Greg on 9418 2397).

• **Conversation at Chameleon Café**, 48 Lackey St, Summer Hill. (Info: Gerard and Lindy on 02 9799 2907)

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

The two papers presented at our first Forum for the Future by Richard Lennan and Teresa Pirola, are now available. They have been bound in a small booklet and may be purchased for **\$5 each + \$2 for postage and packaging.**

• **Catalyst Dinner** will be on Friday October 16 at 7.30pm in the parish hall on the corner of Mary Street and Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill. The topic is "Tradition: Reading the Signs of the Times" and the speakers are Paul Brazier and Tony Kelly CSsR (Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

• **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.

• **Marian Conference** at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, Saturday September 26-Tuesday 29, 1998: Keynote speakers will be Sr Kathleen Coyle SSC and Fr Tony Kelly CSsR. Lectures, workshops, discussions. Cost: Residential - \$260. Non-residential - \$200. (Info: Br Eric on 02 9649 7212)

• **Australians Networking for Reform:** Meeting at Blackfriars Conference centre, Watson, ACT, September 25-27, 1998. Keynote speakers Fr Paul Collins and Prof Hilary Charlesworth. Full Conference fee \$80. (Info: Roberta on 08 8357 9766)

UNREADABLE FAX!

We received a fax from "P G Quinlan". It is illegible - a black sheet! If you know this person could you please ask him/her to contact us asap. Thank you.

• **A Program of Spiritual Exploration at St James' Church, King St, Sydney (in the crypt):** Christian Meditation Groups, Wednesdays 7.45am-8.30am and Fridays 12.15pm-1.15pm; "Introduction to the Spiritual Classics" with Kate Englebrecht, Tuesday evenings, August 18-September 22, 6pm-8pm, \$15, on Level 1, St James Hall, 169 Phillip Street (Info: Kate 9960 4061). There are other programs (Info: 9232 3022).

• **Laurence Freeman:** St James' Church King St, Sydney, Monday September 7, 1pm, \$10 (Info: Jill on 02 9967 3678) and St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, Monday September 7, 7pm, \$20 (Info: Janet on 02 9314 6386);

FRANCIS J MOLONEY SDB AM

Professor Moloney, who has been Founding Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University, has accepted the position of Professor of New Testament at Catholic University of America in Washington DC. Professor Moloney is also a Patron of Catalyst for Renewal. We wish him every blessing.

• **Michael Morwood** has a web site to deal with reactions and issues arising from his recently published, *Tomorrow's Catholic*: <http://www.eisa.net.au/~morwood>.

• **Women in Dialogue:** "The Challenge of Recognising Women's Influence in the Church", with Fr Richard Lennan on September 4, Anderledy Lodge, 11 Mount St North Sydney. (Info: Ruth on 9439 2425)

• **Eremos Gathering with Paul Collins as Guest Speaker**, Sunday October 18, Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Dr, North Paramatta. The lecture (open to all) begins at 4pm and is followed by the Eremos AGM. Bookings required, \$15. Inquire about the dinner too. (Info: 02 9683 5096)

Recommended Reading

Teresa Pirola, *Stories from the Prophet Next Door: A Story Source Collection*, Aurora Books, 1998, 115 pages, pb, \$16.95.

In the spirit of the Gospel parables, Teresa Pirola presents a series of ordinary stories. She says: "Not so much stories from books and magazines; rather, I wrote down the 'quiet' variety, the anecdotes and insights observed and spoken in the events and conversations that filled my life and the lives of those around me." Each story is followed by a few questions to help the readers tell their own stories. Pertinent references are then made to "the Jesus story" in each case. The stories are arranged under headings such as "hope", "grieving and healing", "simplicity", "justice", "witness" and "joy". The stories conclude with "a love story" - the story of a young married couple who must face the mystery of death together. Pirola notes: "At great cost they learned what many of us have yet to learn: in the end *love* is all we have - and all that matters." Pirola's insight that "story" is an essential tool to helping us in our personal and communal faith journeys, is an insight the Church needs to re-discover. The rationalism and functionalism of the modern Western mind-set is bad for our health - physical as well as spiritual. This book could be very fruitfully used in a number of ways. Many will find it helpful as a source of personal reflection and meditation. Parents might well find it a very rich point of sharing their faith with their children. It could also be used in a group context.

Phyllis Zagano and Terrence Tilley, eds, *The Exercise of the Primacy: Continuing the Dialogue*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998, footnotes, 126 pages, pb, \$32.95.

In the 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II invited "Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another". Part of this dialogue, the Holy Father said, was to focus on the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. This book is a response to that invitation and contains six papers, including the lecture of Archbishop Quin at Oxford in June 1996 (published in part in *The Mix*, September 1996). The editors note: "Papal primacy evolved from an informal recognition of the See of Peter and Paul as the faithful center of communion to the current affirmation of papal power; that is, from the perception of Rome as the center of collegiality to the perception of Rome as the center of all authority and power in the Church. This seeming evolution to imbalance is at the heart of much of the controversy concerning the primacy." These papers are part of an ongoing scholarly conversation. This should not dissuade those who do not regard themselves as scholars. At least thumb through this book. Put yourself in touch with the complexities of the issues, associate even for a few brief moments with those who have a critical role to play in bringing good scholarship to the table of renewal.

Nuala O'Faolain, *Are You Somebody?*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1998, 434 pages, pb, \$16.95

Nuala O'Faolain was born in 1940, the second of nine children. Her father travelled the country in style and privilege, a well-known journalist. Her mother stayed at home, a tragic figure, a woman of substantial intellectual ability, an avid reader but an equally avid drinker. O'Faolain is brutally honest. A very clever student, winner of scholarships, peer and friend to many international literary and artistic figures of the 60's and 70's, she follows a tortured path towards some kind of stability in her life. Many readers will be shocked and even saddened by the promiscuity of her life. She herself comments of one relationship: "Maybe he, like me, knew on some level that we were lessened by each encounter." Even so, this is not the story of the lost sheep who returns. It is quite simply a profoundly human voice, one that is not uncommon in our times. The voice is that of a woman struggling to understand herself and her world, especially a Catholic culture. People like O'Faolain force us to examine the respectability of our lives. They frighten us with descriptions of the human misery they have lived through, even as they inspire us with their prodigal embrace of life and relentless honesty. It is essential that we listen to the voice of O'Faolain. Maybe we will discover that Jesus not only gave much to the tax collectors and sinners, he also received much from them.

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