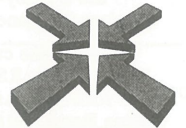


THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

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MARCH 1999

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Our Say - The Australian bishops and the synod

Just on forty years have passed since Pope John XXIII announced, on January 25 1959, that there would be a Council. It did not seem to be a momentous announcement. Pope John himself remarked at the time that "there was a devout and impressive silence." On October 11, 1962, in his speech at the opening of that Council, the Holy Father noted:

At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident, as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of people follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity.

It would be hard to find a statement that better reflected the spirit of Pope John than this one. It is simple, honest, earthy, full of common sense and compassion. The recent Synod seems to reflect this spirit.

On November 22 1998, some thirty-six years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council, four bare-chested and bare-footed tufale chiefs from Samoa escorted the book of the Gospels as it was borne along on a Samoan throne in St Peter's for the opening mass of the Synod of Oceania. The Holy Father was later given a Samoan canoe, symbol of the Church.

There was something profoundly simple, honest and real about this expression of culture within the walls of the great basilica. It was a harbinger for things to come as the bishops of Oceania, over the following three weeks, directed their thoughts to the theme: "Jesus Christ and the peoples of Oceania: walking his way, telling his truth and living his life."

Reports of what our bishops said during the Synod were most encouraging. It seems that they spoke with honesty, common sense and compassion. Many of us felt greatly encouraged, even surprised, by what we read. We are grateful to the bishops for their courage in bringing to the table of conversation such topics as the role of

women and their need and right to have a greater part in decision-making within the Church, the distressing divisions within the Church as we struggle to engage the modern world in an intelligent dialogue whilst remaining faithful to the Gospel, troubling social issues such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness, the tragedy of clerical sexual abuse, the dilemma of divorced and remarried Catholics, priests who have left the active ministry, homosexuals who feel excluded and the need to move beyond legalism and the force of law within the Church to thinking of ourselves as a community of disciples.

The Master General of the Dominicans, Timothy Radcliffe, who has attended the last three Synods in Rome, said he had never seen bishops speak with such directness and honesty.

The document expressing the conversations of the Synod will be presented by the Holy Father in a year or two. We look forward to its publication. However, what we already know gives us heart to continue the conversation for renewal in Australia. □

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

These are the current Members: Marie Biddle RSJ, Kevin Burges, Dr Ann Bye, Aidan Carvill SM, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Kate Englebrecht, Dennys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Francis Gross, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Greg Johnson, Maryellen McLeay, Dr Chris Needs, Dr Tim O'Hearn, Margaret O'Hearn, Amelia O'Sullivan, Carmel Sharples, John Sharples, Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan SM

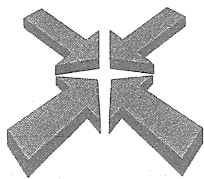
The following is its mission statement: We are believers who are attempting to establish a forum for conversation within the Catholic Church of Australia. Our aim is to prompt open exchanges among the community of believers, mindful of the diversity of expression of faith in contemporary Australia. This 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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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ, find lifegiving unity.

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.

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The Human Face

My name is Michelle Kamper. Some sixty years (plus) ago, I had the good fortune to be born into a good Catholic family here in Sydney – the second of five children. Schooldays began at nearby Queenwood and were completed at Loreto Kirribilli for first communion preparation. The daily school-special tram trips provided an excellent training in discriminating between us all-knowing Catholics, the 'Prodos' and the poor state school kids!

Training at Sydney Kindergarten Teachers Union, then working during the 1950s in inner-city kindergartens brought not only some skills in caring for children but the culture shock of trying to assist, console and cater for many parents with major problems. There were parents struggling to care for and protect their children in a society offering very little government welfare or even tolerance of those who were not members of the middle and upper classes of society. Believe it or not, we have improved!

My personal faith was on hold, though I continued to fulfill my religious obligations simply because it wasn't worth rocking the boat at home – and I couldn't afford to move out.

During the next couple of decades, I vacillated between weekend retreats, books in which I looked for a response to prayer and to God or Jesus or Mary (or someone!), trying to get my mind around such mysteries as 'Transubstantiation' and 'Indulgences' (whereby one earned a pass on Purgatory by saying enough prayers whilst standing in an uncomfortable position) – and deciding that I really couldn't accept any of this stuff. Just in case it was true, of course, I had better not do anything *too* bad!

During this time I met and married my very Christian husband, Tom, who insisted on becoming a Catholic before we married and who didn't *do* charity but actually *lived* with a charitable attitude towards others. How remarkable!

Eight years after marriage, several accommodation moves – including the complete refurbishing of what is still our family home – and four children in the fold, I progressed from preschool parent committees to voluntary help in our children's school.

It was 1972 and schools were struggling to formulate appropriate R.E. programmes. Series of discussions were undertaken where staff and selected parents reviewed, amended and built on a range of imported programmes for children.

But those big questions remained: "What are the essentials of our faith?" and "How do we teach it to our children?" In those years staff, religious and lay, were as "be-

muddled" as were most of the clergy. Our training had all been on the practice of the faith in prescribed ways.

About 1980 I was invited to join a Schoenstat Mothers' group by a South African immigrant who had experienced their work in her country. In a prayerful context a small group of us with a wonder from Mulgoa and the inspiration of her founder, Fr Joseph Kentenich, sought to understand our faith journey and the people we are. Some pieces of the jigsaw began to fit together. Two years on, one of my friends there said, "You are coming with me to the Aquinas Academy on Tuesday – no excuses". Fr Michael Whelan sm, fresh from the U.S.A., was presenting his course on 'Spiritual Formation'. Eureka! At last, here was a living-my-faith approach just as my husband had been demonstrating for years (rather than a doing-what-you-are-told one). The Spirit works with his own sense of humour.

I was fortunate to be able to undertake numerous courses and lectures at a variety of institutions, to provide some background for my journey and to share with other adults, which I have come to see as a most vital need in the Church today.

While I talked to people, organised and attended assorted faith-sharing gatherings, my wonderful Tom stood patiently by, helping to see that our now five sportive sons enjoyed their selected interests in

With the advent of *Catalyst for Renewal* and its various activities, I am delighted to play my part in spreading the opportunities for people to seek their connection with their Maker-Redeemer through the inspiration of the Spirit, who awaits but the invitation.



Michelle Kamper

Your Say 1 – Wrestling with scripture

by Angela Finnigan

The theology of the Rabbis emerged from Pharisaic origins (Pharisees are known to have existed from 165BCE to 100CE) but Rabbinical Judaism did not take shape until the 4th century in response to Christianity, which had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. Both groups, however, were addressing the same questions, questions critical to the self-understanding of Israel, the Jewish people. They both appealed to the same scriptures, and the social situation of Christianity entering into the world of politics and government was confronting for both groups.

Jesus was a lay Jew who worshipped in the Temple and synagogue and had more continuity with the Pharisees than with the other Jewish sects. Jesus did not step out of Judaism to be who he was, or do what He did. It is possible that as a Jew Jesus sat at the feet of Rabbi Hillel and Shammai, where he would have learned to develop his

own way of interpreting and applying Torah to life (*halachot*). To do so was good Rabbinical practice. Jesus' teaching and style are clearly Pharisaic, e.g., his reliance on parables, his belief in resurrection of the body. When asked what the greatest commandment was, he responded with the Schema. His teaching that the Sabbath is made for human beings, and not the reverse, is good Pharisaic doctrine.

Pharisaic Judaism was the form of Judaism that most positively impacted on the teachings and spirituality of Jesus and Judaism. Unfortunately, the Christian interpretation of the Pharisees has been very hostile – so much so that the Macquarie Dictionary defines a Pharisee as “a self-righteous or hypocritical person”.

The contribution of the Rabbis helped shape the Jewish religion as well as early Christianity (the early Christians also employed the interpretative method developed

in Judaism-Midrash). For several decades Christians prayed with Jews, they worshipped in the Temple until its destruction. Both systems were codified by 500CE. Judaism and Christianity, it could be said, are like twins, born of the same parents.

It is through contact with Rabbinical literature that I feel affirmed in my need to continually reinterpret and wrestle meaning from scripture, to develop my own way of applying Torah to life, as Jesus did – which was then and is now good Rabbinical practice.

Our Christian identity is Jewish at its source. The Christian Church's relationship to Israel is part of its core existence, and we need to reincorporate this dimension into our contemporary faith expression.

Angela Finnigan is a solicitor who is completing a Bachelor's degree in Theology.

□□□

Your Say 2 - Why we meet

by Alan Hickey

About fifteen years ago that a group of parishioners in our Sydney Northern Beaches parish came together for a Lenten program.

There were other groups in the parish doing the same thing but, when Lent was over and Easter had come and gone, my wife Amanda met a Loreto nun, Sister Doreen, who was offering what she called Home Retreats. After consultation, the members of our group decided to invite Sister Doreen to preside over a retreat for us.

Sister based her retreat on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, and she attended at one of our homes each week, for a number of weeks, to provide us with input and direction. Sister was very knowledgeable of the Scriptures and a very fine person too. We all felt that we got a lot out of her guidance.

When the retreat came to an end, Sister Doreen encouraged us to continue to meet regularly and to follow some program which would keep our interest and deepen our faith.

Over the years we have tried various programs, but the simple formula which we have settled on in recent years is to go through the readings and psalms for the following Sunday's Mass. First we read these passages of Scripture, and then we

discuss them.

We meet each second week in each other's homes, roughly by rotation, and our group numbers would fluctuate between ten and sixteen. Usually the host or hostess for the evening conducts the meeting and includes some special prayer or input from their own reading to help set the tone.

The readings are taken one at a time and are discussed until nobody has anything further to add. Then we move on to the next reading. We have no fixed agenda, and our discussion goes where it may. As tools to assist us, we sometimes read from various commentaries on the particular passage under discussion.

Of course the various members of our group have different levels of interest in the Scriptures. Some are looking particularly for their meaning in present-day terms, some are also interested in the circumstances in which they originated (especially the Old Testament), but the views of all willing to put them forward are listened to and often found useful. Our meeting concludes with a group prayer and intercessions. A light supper and a social get-together follow each meeting.

You may think that our meetings must become repetitious because of the cyclical nature of the readings (repeated every third

year), but as our meetings are held only each second week, we are not following the same readings each third year – and most of us can't remember what was said three years ago, anyway.

Of particular interest and assistance in recent times is a reflection on the Gospel reading which we receive from Sister Hildegard of the Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo. Our group has developed a special relationship with this Abbey, which we visit for weekends once or twice a year. From this connection, many of our members have become Oblates of the Benedictine community at Jamberoo, which we hold as a special privilege and blessing.

It goes without saying that our group meets because we enjoy what we are doing together, because we support one another in the practice of our Catholic faith and enhance our interest in the Mass and Scripture readings, and also because we have become great friends, with interest in the ups and downs of each other's lives.

Alan is a practising and he lives with his wife Amanda in Narrabeen, NSW.

*“The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power”
(Acts 4:33)*

Essay – Statement of Conclusions: A personal reflection

by Michael Whelan

Towards the end of 1998, the Catholic Bishops of Australia went to Rome on their *ad limina* visit. They also participated in the Special Assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops. Some of the Australian Bishops were also involved in a series of meetings with some of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. It will probably be a year or two before the Holy Father publishes the document representing the conversations of the Special Assembly. However, on Monday December 14, 1998, a document entitled *Statement of Conclusions* was issued from the meeting between fifteen Australian Bishops and twelve Prefects and Secretaries of Congregations in the Roman Curia. This document was accompanied by a supportive statement from the Holy Father. The following is a personal reflection on the *Statement of Conclusions*.

In July 1968 *Humanae Vitae* was published. As it transpired, this document was in fact more about the issue of *authority* than sexuality or reproduction. It was a moment the Church had to have, sooner or later. It raised critical questions such as: Who is ultimately responsible for my moral decisions? How ought I make those decisions? What is the particular role of the Magisterium in individual moral accountability and responsibility? Under what circumstances might it be permissible or even necessary for the faithful Catholic to dissent from the Magisterium? What part should all/any of the baptised play in developing the teachings of the Magisterium? And so on.

Such questions raise highly complex and subtle issues, ones which many faithful Catholics continue to wrestle with. They demand a deliberate, thoughtful and ongoing conversation. Documents from Rome like the *Statement*, far from supporting that conversation, tend to stifle it.

Most of the *Statement* is given over to repeating standard and positive teachings of the Church (eg Paragraphs 10-24) with several affirmative and complimentary statements being made about the Church in Australia (eg Paragraphs 2-3). However, it is a time-worn strategy to use statements of orthodoxy to hide or carry personal condemnations. I fear that strategy has been employed here.

The orthodox, positive and affirmative remarks were lost amidst the general negativity and defensiveness. More concretely and obviously, the thinking reflected in

some of the statements is alarmingly simplistic. Was it done in a rush? Were the framers of the document more focused on the targets of their criticism than on the reasoning behind their criticism? Was the Gospel and the Spirit of Jesus foremost in their minds? Let us consider three examples.

In Paragraph 4 the *Statement* speaks of "a crisis in faith". Without defining or describing what is meant by this, the *Statement* goes on to claim that the "basis (of this crisis is) a crisis concerning the ability to know the truth". Is it? On what evidence is this claim made? What about acknowledgment of, sensitivity to and support for those who are in the midst of a deep and very healthy "crisis" concerning their faith or their children's faith?

Nowhere in this Statement is there any recognition that the Roman Curia itself might be part of a (healthy) crisis, experiencing their own doubts and confusions, identifying with the rest of the Church as she struggles bravely to live the paschal rhythm at this most difficult time.

The Greek root of the word "crisis" is enlightening. It means "a parting of the ways". It implies dying to this or that, making some definite choices and facilitating the movement of life to a new depth. Our Christian faith enables us to look on this, as Thomas Merton notes, as a "paschal rhythm". It permeates every moment of every day. It is like a genetic code in the cosmos. When it is writ large in life it can be daunting, even terrifying. The formation of our lives in Christ, in and through the Paschal Mystery, is a lifelong process which passes through many crises in which we die to old ways and rise to new ones. The community of the baptised (ie the Church) along with the whole human family, is today experiencing such a crisis. This is necessary and to be welcomed as part of our share in the Paschal Mystery.

If many in Australia today feel themselves caught up in "a crisis of faith" - and I suspect any one who is serious about the truth almost certainly will be - would it not be more in tune with the Gospel to affirm them and encourage them not to lose heart, offer them some light in their struggles? Pastorally, what is the effect of taking such a negative view of crisis, the human experience in which we may be liberated in and through the greatest crisis of all time, the Paschal Mystery?

In paragraphs 4 and 5 a very strange argument is used. We could call it "The Can-Lead-To Argument". Once again it is simplistic and betrays fear and defensiveness. The *Statement* lauds the "tolerance" of Australian society but warns that this "naturally affects the Church also. ... tolerance of and openness to all opinions and perspectives on the truth can lead to indifference ..."

The affirmation is lost in the fear. What is wrong with "openness to all opinions and perspectives on the truth"? And yes, it possibly can "lead to" indifference. The pursuit of religious orthodoxy has often led to acts of incredible violence and hatred. Is there any reason to warn against religion? Or should we examine the situation more closely and ask what is going on? Is tolerance the problem or should we seek a closer analysis, ask what is actually happening, and pinpoint the issues more clearly?

Would it not have been more helpful to spend more time developing the value of tolerance, encouraging it and affirming it? If something needs to be said about indifference, could it not be said without implying that tolerance is the cause and therefore something to be frightened of? Australians need to be encouraged to be tolerant, not discouraged from it.

Perhaps there are other more serious reasons for the indifference, among them statements from the Roman Curia that betray a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Australian Church - which contributes to many thinking the Church is irrelevant to their lives. Given the essential role of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome, this consequence is indeed both tragic and sad, a matter that the Roman authorities ought to address urgently. It will not do to show the messengers who bring this unwelcome truth to their attention.

Paragraphs 25-36 border on the insulting at times in their lack of understanding of, and sensitivity to, the many religious

who have dedicated their whole lives sincerely and generously to serving people in and for the Church. This insensitivity and lack of understanding is exemplified in simplistic statements like the following:

The Church in Australia is undergoing a difficult period due to the decline of vocations to the consecrated life. In light of this challenge, the Church must pray for vocations.

It is not enough that individual members of Institutes engage in employment in the secular sphere and find living accommodation singly. It is not enough that religious engage in any work whatsoever, even if they do this 'in the spirit of the Founder'. Such general dispersal of members and of energies prejudices the corporate witness of an Institute which was founded with a specific charism for a specific purpose.

What exactly is happening in "the decline in vocations"? In what way is it the cause (effect?) of "the difficult period"? I pray every day for many people to respond to God's call in serving the Church and world. When the *Statement* instructs us "to pray for vocations" it has a "business-as-usual" ring about it. I believe it is essential to recognise that religious life, like any vital human structure, is always subject to the 'paschal rhythm', that the Holy Spirit is part of this picture, that the form of religious life which served the Church and world so well for many generations is passing away - like so many Church forms - in favour of another form that is not yet clear to us. It would not be the first time that there have been radical shifts in the form of the consecrated life.

And yes, we religious face serious issues relating to community and apostolate. And yes, some of us are not responding well. But many are responding with deep faith, intelligence and courage.

I would have liked to see in the *Statement* some recognition of the changes that have made community living today a radically different proposition to the challenge of even twenty years ago. Are those religious who live privately, *ipso facto*, failing in their commitment? Why should they be singled out in such a negative way? Are they necessarily a cause - the major cause? - of the "fragmentation" about which the *Statement* speaks? What evidence might there be for this? Might there be other more significant causes? Is it possible, to the contrary, that they could in fact form the basis of a new style of community life and give more powerful witness to the Gospel than a group living together under the one roof, in a kind of boarding-house arrangement, perhaps in a middle-class suburb? The issues and questions arising around contemporary community living are extremely difficult. Simplistic condemna-

tions, such as the *Statement* gives, are destructive rather than constructive.

In regard to the apostolate, religious are daily facing considerable and complex challenges. Gone are the days when religious superiors could appoint whomever they liked wherever they liked. Issues of professional training, aptitude, personal choice, general suitability and the needs, desires and preferences of those in the prospective place of work, to say nothing of the implications of the law and the pressure to bring in a stipend, all make for a most difficult mix when finding suitable apostolic appointments for religious today. Further more, the shape of the major apostolic fields of education and health care, fields in which Australian religious have done monumental work, has changed dramatically and irrevocably over the past thirty or so years.

I have been a religious for thirty-two years and I cherish that calling. But hardly a day goes by that I do not have to struggle in some practical way with the identity or form of religious life in today's world. The boundaries were much clearer thirty-two years ago, we took on the identity and form with great confidence. The situation could not be more different now. Would it not be possible to hear a voice from such a document as the *Statement* that showed some understanding of the struggle, the confusion, and the generous commitment against the odds?

Nowhere in this *Statement* is there any recognition that the Roman Curia itself might be part of a (healthy) crisis, experiencing their own doubts and confusions, identifying with the rest of the Church as she struggles bravely to live the paschal rhythm at this most difficult time. Nowhere is there any evidence that the authors of the *Statement* have thoroughly researched the situation in Australia.

The *Statement* sadly seems more intent on defending a system than engaging with the Gospel and world in an honest and intelligent conversation. It betrays a culture that knows not Pope Paul's vision of dialogue - despite Pope John Paul's references to that very concept in his accompanying statement. This culture eschews conversation in favour of telling. As a result it produces a document sadly lacking in vision, imagination and hope. □

The full text of the *Statement of Conclusions* may be found on pages 20-21 in the following recent issues of *The Catholic Weekly*: January 17; 24, 31 and February 7. The Editor of *The Mix* is happy to supply a copy of the *Statement* on request - send SSA long envelope plus two stamps.

STATEMENT FROM NEW ZEALAND BISHOPS

The following is an excerpt from the statement by the New Zealand Bishops to the Holy Father on their recent *ad limina* visit, presented by Bishop James Cullinane of Palmerston North.

We thank you for your example of service and leadership, and especially for your remarkable writings. In the manner of God's appointed prophets, you have never hesitated to name those things which distort human life and dignity, and, also in prophetic manner, you never fail to give an account of the unsurpassable hope which is in us.

We, in turn, would not wish to be like those false prophets of ancient times who sought their own advantage by telling the people that everything was well. Nor would it be in the spirit of the Apostles Peter and Paul for us, on the occasion of this *ad limina* visit, to speak less than honestly about some of our own concerns for the Church. It properly concerns all bishops when the credibility of the Church's claims is compromised by perceptions of inconsistency. Sometimes we bishops are unable to explain actions which seem inconsistent with the Church's most fundamental commitments.

In your encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, you courageously invited other Christian leaders to make suggestions about how the Petrine ministry might be exercised. Yet, within the household of the Catholic Church itself, dicasteries of the Holy See occasionally make norms which impinge on the ministry of the bishops with little or no consultation of the episcopate as such. This seems inconsistent.

In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, you yourself have reaffirmed the Church's intention to "preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline in variety of liturgical rites and even the theological elaboration of revealed truth". But that is hardly the experience of Eastern Rite Christians when their priests are evicted from, or not allowed to be ordained within, dioceses of the Latin Rite. Nor do such mechanisms of "control" and "dominance" encourage those who are crying out for great progress in the urgent matter of inculturation □

Words for a Pilgrim People

Jesus turned around and saw (the two disciples) following and said, 'What do you want?' (John 1:38)

□□□

We shall be in a position to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd only when we have stopped using the Christian religion to shield us from the realities of our lostness and our night. Jesus will become alive to us only as we are denied access to a Christ who functions as sanctuary from the world. The Lord who lives and speaks can only be met in the real world, in the 'swamp' of the fallen creation. This is where he came. This is where he is still to be found. (Douglas J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ: Theological Reflections on Shusaku Endo's Silence" in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, XXXIII (1979), 267)

□□□

I love that Church which plunges into the thickets of human history and is not afraid of compromising itself by getting mixed up with men's affairs, with their political conflicts and their cultural disputes. I love that Church because it loves men and therefore goes out to look for them wherever they are. And I love best of all that Church which is mud-splashed from history because it has played its part in history. (Jean Danielou, *Prayer as a Political Problem*, Burns & Oates, 1967, p. 55)

□□□

One sign that the world has ended, the world we knew, the world by which we understood ourselves, an age which began some three hundred years ago with the scientific revolution, is the dawn of the discovery that its world view no longer works, and we find ourselves without the means of understanding ourselves. There is a lag time between the end of an age and the discovery of the end. The denizens of such a time are like the cartoon cat that runs off a cliff and for a time is suspended, still running, in mid-air, but sooner or later looks down and sees there is nothing under him. (Walker Percy, "The Delta Factor" in Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981, 19)

The Bible - The power of the cross

The Gospels find their climax in the story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. This fact is so stark, we need to be quite deliberate about naming it. Given our propensity to deny death and engage in all manner of evasions to avoid engaging death's inevitable presence as part of life, all of us may be in danger of sanitising the horrible truth of the Cross.

The pivot of the NT is the New Exodus Event, the Passover of Jesus. In the NT nothing is written before this Event, everything is written after it and in the light of it. Jesus is the New Moses, who leads the people through the wilderness of Calvary to the Promised Land of Easter Day. Everything in the NT - indeed everything in human history - must be read implicitly or explicitly in relation to the New Exodus. It is the ultimate historical event.

Apart from the actual Passion Narratives themselves - narratives which are strikingly similar, even in their details - perhaps the most powerful example of the centrality of the Cross is found in Matthew 16:21. Matthew has just told us of Peter's pre-eminence among the disciples, he is "the rock" on which Jesus will build the church. Significantly Matthew also notes that "the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (16:18). How is death to be conquered, rendered powerless? Immediately Matthew describes an exchange between Peter, "the rock," and Jesus that is both blunt and revealing: "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God but of men.'" (Mark's record is almost identical to Matthew. Luke tells a similar story but omits reference to Jesus' rebuke of Peter. John makes no reference to it.)

It is to be in and through the Cross that death will be conquered. For the Gospel writers, the Cross is no accident, not just a consequence of Jesus being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Jesus, identifying with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, sets his face towards Jerusalem. He *must* go up, he *must* suffer and die. This is the final liberating act of God in the world of salvation. The empty tomb is the proof that that Friday was a *good* Friday.

Tradition - The cross in christian tradition

Constantine was hailed as Emperor by his troops in 306 when his father died. However, he faced a rival, Maxentius. According to the early historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (256-340), the afternoon before the decisive battle with Maxentius, Constantine and his whole army saw a luminous cross appear with the message: "In hoc signo vinces" ("In this sign you will conquer"). Another version from the historian Lactantius (d 320) says Constantine had a vision of Christ at this moment and Christ told him to ornament the shields of the soldiers with the Saviour's monogram: *chi* (X) and *rho* (P), the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ. When superimposed on each other, *chi* and *rho* also form a cross. The very existence of these legends implies something essential about the Tradition: the centrality of the Cross in the Gospels was maintained in the successive generations of disciples.

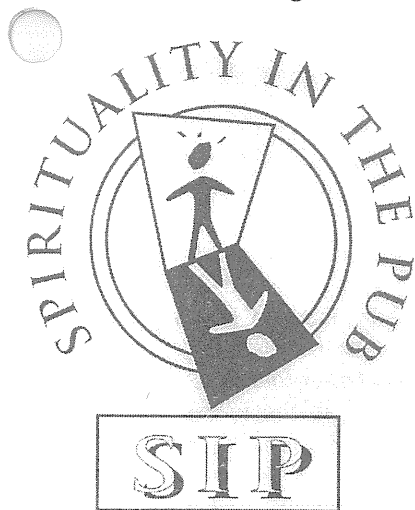
St Irenaeus (140-202) writes: "He who through his obedience on the cross wiped out the former disobedience concerning the tree, is himself the Logos of Almighty God, whose unseen presence permeates us all. Since that is so, he has the whole world in his grasp, in its length and breadth, its height and its depth. For by the Logos all things are guided in orderly fashion, and God's Son is crucified in them, in so far as he stamps upon them the form of the cross. It was right and fitting that, by becoming visible himself, he should impress on all visible things, this community in the cross with them, for thus by means of these visible things he was to show forth his power and to do so in visible form, making it plain that it is he who illuminates the high places - heaven, that is to say - that it is he whose grasp extends to the depths, even to the last foundations of the world, that it is he who spreads out the flatland from East to West and stretches forth the wide spaces from North to South, that it is he who gathers together all that is scattered, that all may know the Father."

Hans Kung notes: "The cross ... is the element which radically distinguishes Christ and the Lord who is the object of this faith from other religions and their gods." Jurgen Moltmann says: "The death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology ... All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ. All Christian statements about history, about the church, about faith and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ." And this is why we sign the baptised with the sign of the Cross.

CATALYST CALENDAR

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP has a logo!



SIP now has its own logo and stated simply, it represents "Searching and Insight". The fuller meaning of the logo design - original in red, black and yellow - involves far more than this and is explained as the door to enlightenment through conversation and discussion, the open pub door welcoming everyone. The figure (in Black) entering the doorway (in Yellow), is seen representing the concept of SIP and this is shown by the exclamation marks around the head, while the shadow figure has accepted the concept and is seen in yellow representing the soul of acceptance. Collectively the imagery represents searching and insight and is further emphasised by the use of colour.

Yellow is the colour of enlightenment, the centre, the sun, the creator and unity. It is also the colour of heavenly light revealed to humanity, the colour of intuition symbolising the capacity for renewal, the colour of happiness. Red (the circle) is the colour of divine love, the colour of life and death, a symbol of divinity and religion. Psychologically red represents the joy of living, optimism and vigour - it is also the colour of warning, fire and danger. In an Australian context Red and Yellow represent 'Life Saving' or in this context 'Life Saviours'. The circle (in Red) around the image represents a never-ending cycle - a symbol of eternity and solar power together symbolising the unity of Heaven and Earth.

Joe Bollen - Bollen Design - 02 9144 7161

Our special thanks to Joe, who has donated his time, energy and talent in creating this logo. The logo is copyright.

SIP Promoter - Sr Marie Biddle rsj is SIP Promoter and can be contacted on (02) 9745 3444.

SIP venues include:

- °Ballarat - (Info: Kevin on 03 5332 1697).
- °Bowral - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, 7.30pm-9pm: (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).
- °Campbelltown - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: March 10 "Moving to the Future" (Kay Hooper & Andrew Granc ofm) (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).
- °Canberra - The Olims Hotel, Ainslie Ave, Braddon, 7.30pm-9pm: (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).
- °Chatswood - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: March 9 "Not Past the Use-by Date" (Bill Neville & Sr Betty pbvm) (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).
- °Clayton (VIC) - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: (Info: Ann on 9701 7076 or 9701 3740 or Joyce on 9700 1250).
- °Kincumber - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: March 2 "The Power of my Story: Any Port in a Storm" (Fr Tony Doherty & Mary Leahy rsj); April 6 "The Power of my Story: I'm Dancing as Fast as I can" (Letitia Barrett & Bede Heather) (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Clair on 02 4344 6608).
- °Newcastle - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, 7.30pm-9pm: (Info: Gerard on 02 4979 1211 (W))
- °Paddington - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: March 3 "Spirituality in Australia today - An overview" (Fr Michael Whelan sm & Ms Kate Englebrecht; April 7 "Spirituality & the Arts" (Joshua Yeldham & Dr Colette Rayment) (Info: Marea on 9387 3152 (H))
- °Penrith - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, April 21 "Finding Meaning Today in Relationships" (Info: Dennis on 02 4773 8429).
- °Perth - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge. 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Angela on 08 9337 9224)
- °Geelong (Info: Denis on 03 5275 4120).
- °Ramsgate - The Intersection Hotel, cnr Rockey Pt Rd and Ramsgate Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: (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: April 13 (Info: Tim on 9634 2927 (H)).

°Waitara - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: March 17 "What is Spirituality?" (Rev Timothy Quinlan sj & Ms Kate Englebrecht (Info: Ruth on 9416 4687)

°Wollongong - Mt Kemble Hotel, Mt Kembla, 7.30pm-9pm: March 22 "Where Do I Find Spirituality?" (Ms Geraldine Doogue & Fr Michael Whelan) (Info: Tom on (02) 4228 5038).

• SIP for young adults:

°Waitara - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: (Info: Greg on 9418 2397).

• **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.

• **Catalyst Dinner** on Friday April 30, 7.30pm in the parish hall, cnr Gladesville Rd and Mary St, Hunters Hill. Topic: "Rome and Australia - Reflections on the Statement of Conclusions". Speakers: Bishop David Walker and Michael Whelan SM. (Info: Pauline on 9816 4262).

CATALYST WEB SITE

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated now has a web site. The site is updated monthly and contents include sections from *The Mix*, information about SIP plus other events. Visit the site at:
<http://home.mira.net/~mdw/>

• **Catalyst Forum for the Future** on Sunday May 16, 2pm-4pm, at the McKillop Campus of ACU. Topic: "The Future of Faith and Reason". Speaker: Prof Max Charlesworth. (Info: Pauline on 9816 4262)

OTHER EVENTS

• **Spirituality at St James**, cnr of King and Phillip Sts Sydney. Check the many programs. (Info: Susanne 02 9232 3022)

• **Michael Morwood** has a web site: <http://www.eisa.net.au/~morwood>.

• **Australian Christian Meditation Community** - April 17, Reflection Day in Bush Surrounds (Info: Joan (02) 9417 6385)

Jesuit Lenten Seminar Series - Sydney, March 4, 11, 18 & 25; Melbourne, March 3, 10, 17 & 24. Admission free. (Info: UNIYA (02) 9356 3888).

Recommended Reading

• Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful: My Life in the Catholic Church*, Ligouri Publications, 1998, index, 194 pages, hb.

In this autobiography, the eminent moral theologian offers "an interpretation of the story of (his) life as a story of faith". He recalls the last time he visited his father. His father emphasised to him "your life is entirely woven around by the faith of your dear departed mother and around my own faith. You and your eleven brothers and sisters were not born by accident. You were each a blessing from God, a gift from God that we prayed for and received with thanks." Born in 1910, Bernard Häring recalls the First World War, in which his oldest brother was killed; his entry into the Redemptorist novitiate in May 1933, a few months after Hitler came to power; his ordination in May 1939 a few months before he was drafted; his remarkable experiences as a medic during the war; his teaching of moral theology in Rome after gaining his doctorate in 1947; his ongoing work in the renewal of moral theology and his significant participation at the Council, particularly his contributions to *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. The style is very personal, more like a fireside chat than a formal biography. It is in fact a lovely story, informative and liberating. Bernard Häring's life gives the reader great hope, so charged is it with goodness and love.

• Francis Kelly Nemeck and Marie Theresa Coombs, *The Spiritual Journey*, The Liturgical Press, 1990, 231 pages, pb, \$37.95.

The authors are actively involved in a contemplative-eremitical house of prayer in the desert of south Texas. They draw particularly on the Carmelite tradition to offer some guidance to those who hear the call of the depths. They also draw on contemporary human sciences to shed more light on the inner journey for the contemporary pilgrim. This is a fairly dense book and not always easy to read. But it is helpful, offering a useful rendering of the wisdom of those two giants of the human journey - John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. If ever the Church and world needed to hear such voices, it is today. The Church is undergoing its own pilgrim journey, experiencing something akin to a "dark night" at this time. If we do not understand what is happening we will certainly miss our opportunity for renewal, for making the Church an authentic sign of God's love in the world. And many individuals will be going through this same "dark night". This is as it should be, for we are the Church. This is an essential part of growth. Nemeck and Coombs, in the tradition of the great pioneers of the spirit, give us something of a road map. Like the journey itself, this book should only be attempted by those who are seriously interested.

• Donald Nicholl, *The Testing of Hearts: A Pilgrim's Journey*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998, 270 pages, pb, \$26.95. **book is available from Pauline Books and Media]**

Donald Nicholl died in May 1997. Many of us got to know him through various essays and letters, especially those published in *The Tablet*. A scholar of medieval history, Nicholl was appointed Rector of the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research at Tantur, near Jerusalem, in 1981. He held that position for four years. This book consists largely of the journal he kept during those years. Originally published in 1989, it has been revised with a new section added containing Nicholl's journal of 1996 and 1997 - the last two years of his life. In referring to this last period, the Editor, Adrian Hastings, sums up the tone of the book well: "... an ascent across pain, the sense at times of being 'utterly abandoned', the ultimate loneliness intrinsic to dying. Such climbing must bring with it a final purification of heart, the ultimate surrender of acceptance to being no more and no less than 'God's business'. The purest heart will only one thing. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." The journal entries deal with contemporary issues and abiding themes. The reader is invited into the stimulating company of a man who is a good thinker and a deeply honest one.

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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)