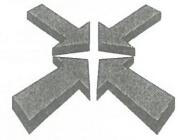


THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

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Our Say - The bishops' letter

Catalyst for Renewal welcomes the call of the Australian bishops in their recent "Letter to the Catholic People of Australia". Having referred to "the confusion, hurt and anger for many" (1), that has accompanied reports on the recent meetings in Rome, and particularly the *Statement of Conclusions*, the bishops go on to say:

We invite your prayerful collaboration in developing strategies to respond to the issues raised at all meetings in Rome and in discerning what the Spirit is asking of the Church in Australia at the beginning of the Third Millennium of Christianity (13).

Anyone who has tried to get a large and diverse group to agree on a statement about this will realise that what mean a lot to them will realise how difficult it is. They will also realise that in such a process there is often a fair amount of friction and frank exchanges.

Given the diversity in the Bishops' Conference and the nature of the times in which we find ourselves, the bishops are to be congratulated on striking the right note in

this Letter. If ever there was need for "prayerful collaboration" it is now.

In accord with this same spirit, the bishops singled out "deliberate and intrusive surveillance of clergy and liturgical celebrations" as "unacceptable" (11). As a positive alternative to this destructive behaviour the bishops "encourage a constructive dialogue that builds harmony".

In a time of immense, rapid and profound change, such as the human family is undergoing at this time - and with it the Church - there is bound to be a lot of anxiety, tension, anger and confusion. This provides fertile ground for destructive behaviour.

The very possibility of this sort of behaviour and, where relevant, the actuality of such behaviour, must be deliberately and explicitly acknowledged. It must also be gently but firmly opposed, as our bishops have done in this Letter. And the best opposition is a real commitment to "a constructive dialogue that builds harmony".

Pope Paul VI spoke eloquently of dia-

logue, which is at the very heart of our faith (cf *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964)). It springs from, expresses, fosters and maintains what he termed "colloquium salutis" ("the dialogue of salvation"). What can we say of ourselves if we are not seriously committed to such a "constructive dialogue"?

At first reading this Letter of the bishops seems to say very little. And that might just be the key to it. We can all, no doubt, think of things we would have liked the Letter to have said. In hindsight, we may well discover that the bishops have shown great wisdom in this Letter - as much by what they chose to say as by what they chose not to say.

The testing will be in the days ahead and it will lie partly with the individual diocesan bishops and how they implement the call for "prayerful collaboration" and "constructive dialogue". But it will also lie partly with us and how well we respond to that call. It is certainly the intention of Catalyst to support the bishops in this call to conversation. □

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, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Francis Gross, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Christine Hutchison, Greg Johnson, Maryellen McLeay, Dr Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Dr Tim 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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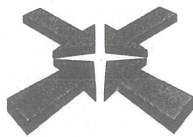
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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.

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The Human Face

My name is Mavis Davis. I was born in Kempsey at Burnt Bridge. I had a happy but very strict childhood. I was brought up to respect my elders. My parents gave me great self-worth, which I needed later on. I went to the Aboriginal school at Burnt Bridge until Grade 5. The Sisters of Mercy used to come out every week and teach us catechism.

The saddest part of my childhood was when I was sent to East Kempsey state school to start Grade 6. I was made to feel ashamed to be an Aboriginal. After one week of this, I told my parents how I was being mistreated. My parents told me to be proud of my aboriginality. They told me that people who put others down were ill at ease with their own identity. I was lucky to have a loving family.

My father experienced racial discrimination. He was selected to play for Kempsey in a cricket carnival at Tamworth. When they arrived there for the matches, my father was told he had to sleep in a shed out the back. The other players objected and said they would sleep there, too. He was then allowed to sleep in the hotel with the others.

During my adolescence I had to put up with a lot of racial discrimination. We weren't allowed in the local swimming pool and, when we went to the picture theatre, we had to enter after the lights went out and leave before they came on again. When we went to buy clothes, we couldn't try them on, but had to buy them off the rack.

After I left school I went to Sydney, but I didn't like the big city and I returned to Kempsey. I then started a nurses' aide course but didn't complete it. In 1971 I married Cyril. We have five daughters. In 1978 I started to get involved in Aboriginal self-help programs. I became an Aboriginal Education Consultant. I was involved in the establishment of Ngaku, a multi-purpose centre for children from birth to five. Other activities I participated in were the Kempsey Women's Housing Project for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, DJIJAY (Tafe) Aboriginal centre. I am also a member of the Aboriginal liaison committee for the shire. In all of this work, I have been lucky to be supported by my husband Cyril.

A lot of services provided by the government are not appropriate to Aboriginal people. We don't respond well to being treated as a number. Family relationships and extended family are important to us.

Another important activity for me is the Women's Reconciliation Group. There are twenty-eight white women in the group and two Aboriginal women. It is important for

me to be in a group with other women of the Kempsey community. I have learnt a lot about being a woman.

In 1992 my father went missing and, to this day, we don't know what happened to him. His disappearance has caused me to lose much inner peace. Every time I go to a funeral I become very teary, because I've been unable to have a funeral liturgy for my father. This disappearance of my father caused me to consider becoming involved in the Church again. The Lord works in strange ways! Had it not been for this sadness about my father, I would not have felt the need for the Church.

I had some misgivings because the Church was involved in the stolen generation experience, but Father Bernie, a Marist priest, made me feel very welcome. I then got to know Sister Yvonne (Sister of Mercy), Brother Steve (Christian Brother) and the other Marists, Father Tony and Father Lewis.

In late 1996, Paul Silva, the leader of the Koori Catholic community in Kempsey, died. It was a great blow to us all. Since his death, a number of members of the Catholic Koori community, including myself, have felt the need for something to be done. I am impressed with the way Father Bernie has confidence in us and encourages us to organise activities and make our own decisions. I enjoy that.

I think that the Church can help the reconciliation process. I think that when our priests spoke about the need for reconciliation on the steps of the Shire Office, they should have been supported. There could also be a closer relationship between the local church and the Koori ministry team. I think that an apology is an essential part of the reconciliation process. If two friends have a disagreement, unless there is an apology, there is no reconciliation or healing. I would like the Church to take as strong a stand against racial discrimination as it does against abortion.



Mavis Davis

Your Say 1 - Soul stirring

by Frances Moran

That we are pleasure-seeking is surely obvious enough. Much of our time is spent in the pursuit of what we perceive will bring us pleasure. We wait for our holiday; we save for our luxury cars, homes, clothes; we sink into the comfort of our lounges and beds; we feast; we glue our eyes and our ears to televisions, videos and recordings; we party; we play; we surf and sun ourselves. The array of goods that we are told will aid and abet us in our pursuits is overwhelming, yet for some, nonetheless, irresistible.

In short, we are avid consumers. We buy in the hope that we will find pleasure. There is no doubt that a large proportion of our society holds the view that a craving for pleasure is best assuaged by way of what we can have, be it ice-cream, alcohol, drugs, thrills or the latest and smallest mobile phone.

We place emphasis, too, on our effort to relieve or to reduce pain. Potions, lotions, pills, tests and diets. Science is on our side here. It promises much in terms of its power over the physical realm. The consumer-driven market seductively awaits those who believe that what they have will give them what they want. We even categorise people in terms of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

It seems to me that almost obliterated in the never-ending pursuit that drives us onward is a quest of a different order. It is one that pertains to a register distinct from that of the *want-to-have*. What can it be? If it is not the all-too-familiar *want-to-have*, what else is there?

Silenced in a noisy world, yet ever pregnantly present, we find a second register: the *want-to-be*. It is not easy to attune to the voice of the *want-to-be* because it lacks immediate recognition in a world that panders to the commodity-obsessed appetite of the *want-to-have*. The *want-to-be* within us, this desire for existence as a unique individual, is not satisfied with the attainment of goods and purchases. This is because it

concerns a search whose source is at the core of our potential to come to be who we are in truth. At least this is what my own practice has taught me.

We are not encouraged to give voice to this life-giving inner force today. We do not even know how. That is undoubtedly a sadness in itself. Yet the truly problematic point is that there has been a subtle and, therefore, unnoticed deflection in the current that energises our pursuits. The crucial issue is *not* that we fail to acknowledge the *want-to-be* as we engage in our search for the pleasures of this earth.

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No, in my opinion, the real tragedy is that we have been led to believe that the *want-to-have* can bring fulfilment, and that it is only a matter of time and the right acquisitions until we are sated. We imagine that at this point we will have achieved a state of ultimate happiness – when we will want no more.

In other words we have almost annulled the *want-to-be*, thinking that the *want-to-have* is all there is. This means the dimensions of the soul – understood in terms of the life and expression of a deep, profound and highly vulnerable desire, the *want-to-be* and the *want-to-exist* – have been

squashed. And the consequences?

It is as if a magician's stealthy hand has passed over this terrain to trick us into believing that it is by way of the register of the *want-to-have* that we will find access to the soul. We imagine the quest of the *want-to-have* will produce the same effect as the quest for the *want-to-be*, and we wonder why we never have enough. We chase after one more thing as if it were the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, only to discover that we have come upon a mirage.

Perhaps it is not so strange, then, that there is now a revival of the search for the spiritual. The failure of the *want-to-have* has touched the lives of many, who now feel a type of inner destitution. Is this the reawakening of the *want-to-be*? The flame that reignites the flicker of a dormant desire for a satisfying existence? Perhaps.

Many souls are out and about busily shopping for God. The spirituality marketplace offers the consumer much: crystals, tarot card readings, all sorts of mystic experiences ... Given that the channel for the energy flow of the *want-to-have* has been so securely established within us, the danger is that contemporary spirituality may amount to no more than a new market-place for the dollar-hungry entrepreneur and the needy purchaser alike. Only the careful and the cautious will not be duped.

Mind, body, spirit fests may well indulge those who hunger to have but they also may fail to sustain those who *desire to be*.

To have or to be? That is the question.

Perhaps the Church of the 21st century might help us find the answer.

Frances M Moran is a private practitioner working in the psychoanalytic tradition in Melbourne and lecturing in pastoral psychology. She is author of Listening: A Pastoral Style (E J Dwyer, 1996) and Notes on Self for the Restless Spirit, (Harper Collins, 1998).

Your Say 2 - Following in the footsteps of Jesus

By Patrick Power

(Excerpts from the presentation to the recent Synod by Bishop Patrick Power, auxiliary bishop in Canberra-Goulburn.)

If we are to walk the way of Jesus, we must walk with the poor, we must tell the truth on behalf of poor and powerless people, we must attempt to share something of their life

as Jesus did. The *Instrument Laboris* (n.3) reminds us that we bear witness to Jesus and the Gospel, not just by words but 'by charity and justice, by solidarity with the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed. ... Walking with the poor, living with their ambiguity and uncertainties, being truly catholic and inclusive are just some of the challenges we

face as Church if we are to be true to the Gospel. As well, we need to be a humbler Church, a less clerical Church, a more forgiving Church. ... We must find new ways of embracing those people closest to the heart of Jesus so that authentically we may 'walk his way, tell his truth and live his life'.

Essay - My vision for the church of the future

by Franz König

The following is an edited version of an essay, recently published as part of a commemorative volume for the 150th anniversary of the Austrian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

To cope with a rapidly changing world, the Catholic Church has to preserve its unity. But it also has to develop Catholic diversity. What style of leadership will enable it to do this? From the point of view of ecumenical endeavour, the very existence and exercise of Roman primacy are the real difficulty, but within the Catholic Church itself the question has long been: how can or should the present structure of command, which in the past century has become so centralised, be amended or improved?

A gradual decentralisation is needed, so as to strengthen the concern and responsibility of the college of bishops for the whole Church, under and with the Petrine office. That was the direction specified at the Second Vatican Council. At the same time, the competence of individual bishops both locally and regionally needs to be strengthened too, for they are the shepherds of their local Churches, the vicars of Christ in their own dioceses. That is why Vatican II described the Church as a communion of local Churches.

Within the Catholic Church itself, no one has difficulties about the existence of the Petrine office, served by the necessary bureaucracy adjusted in line with the times. What is often felt to be defective is the present style of leadership practised by the authorities in the Roman Curia in dealing with the diverse and multiple dioceses throughout the world.

According to the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the bishops are called upon "to be solicitous for the entire Church" (23). The expectation was that they would do this through the regular synods of bishops held in Rome. But it has not happened as Paul VI intended in his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* ("The care of all the Churches"). In that letter, endeavouring to meet the wishes of the council, Paul VI took pains to remodel the advisory and controlling function of the curial authorities, in order to bring them into line with the council's intentions. In the post-conciliar period, however, as bishops have not infrequently pointed out, the Vatican authorities have striven to take back autonomy and central leadership for themselves. The intentions of *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* have not been realised.

In pointing out such faults, I am concerned, precisely, with "the well-being of the whole Church". In accordance with the council's wishes, the college of bishops should strive to assist the Bishop of Rome, holder of the Petrine office, in his task of leadership. Each bishop, according to *Lumen Gentium* 23, "as a member of the episcopal college and a legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's decree and command to be solicitous for the entire Church". This solicitude, *Lumen Gentium* goes on, "though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes immensely to the welfare of the universal Church". But the style of leadership of the universal Church which is being practised today is not entirely in keeping with the council's intentions.

A gradual decentralisation is needed, so as to strengthen the concern and responsibility of the college of bishops for the whole Church, under and with the Petrine office.

The council did not go into how "the concern for the whole Church" could be put into effect. That is the task of the post-conciliar period, and the need now is to find new ways in which the synod of bishops can participate in governing the universal Church. The procedure for appointing bishops also needs to come under scrutiny, for there have been difficulties when the bishops' conference concerned was not adequately consulted, or was not consulted at all.

On the threshold of the third millennium, bearing in mind both the necessary unity and the potential diversity in the Catholic Church, it becomes apparent what difficulties have to be faced, and what opportunities must be grasped. The context is a Catholic Church which has moved out of its European phase, evolving impressively into a world Church. It is no longer Europe-centred: together with the Petrine office, it has discarded, or is in the process of discarding, its European mould. How to govern a Church of such diversity? We must decentralise.

At the same time, however, the Roman Curia remains a powerful force tending in the opposite direction, towards centralism. From a European viewpoint, and because of the difficulties in Europe, it was always a case of preserving Church unity which, almost exclusively, took precedence. Accordingly, the possibility of diversity within this unity - the necessity, indeed, for such diversity - was given little consideration.

In fact, however, *defacto* and not *dejure*, intentionally or unintentionally, the curial authorities working in conjunction with the Pope have appropriated the tasks of the episcopal college. It is they who now carry out almost all of them.

We already have some practical examples of how the episcopal college can function. The Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997, a major ecumenical event, was prepared and carried out through the co-operation of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, on the Catholic side, and the Conference of European Churches, grouping Orthodox, Anglicans, Protestants and Old Catholics. And this would seem to have come about without any official participation on the part of the Vatican authorities.

The Pope himself has raised more sharply than anyone else the question of the present style of leadership in the Roman Catholic Church in relation to the episcopal college. In his 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint* ("That they may be one"), John Paul II underlines the Catholic Church's "irrevocable" obligation to seek ecumenical unity (3). In the concluding section, the Pope considers "how much further we must travel until that blessed day when full unity in faith will be attained" (77).

In order to counter the implicit, sometimes explicit, suspicion among other Christians that popes exercise dictatorial authority over their Church, John Paul II repeatedly emphasises the link between the Petrine office and the episcopal college. His office cannot be separated from that mission "entrusted to the whole body of bishops", he says. They also are "vicars and ambassadors of Christ". And, so as not to leave any possibility of misunderstanding, he adds: "The Bishop of Rome is a member of the episcopal college, and the bishops are his brothers in the ministry" (95).

He proposes a discussion which will not fundamentally dispute or question the existence of the Petrine office, but will remove the obstacles which at present are a deter-

rent to the other Churches. The Pope himself admits that "this is an immense task, which I cannot carry out by myself" (96).

In this unusual and remarkable proposal, as I see it, he is alluding to leadership problems in his own Church. These can only be solved by sharing the concern and responsibility for the whole Church with the bishops. It is a case of always linking papal primacy to the episcopal college, and thus allaying suspicion that the Petrine office lays claim to absolute supremacy over the Church.

To set such considerations in a wider context, one must also pay particular attention to subsidiarity as a way of ordering society within the Church. The principle of subsidiarity is fundamental to Catholic social teaching. It is seen as an essential component of human society, as Pius XI described it in its classical form in his encyclical of 1931, *Quadragesimo Anno*. The relevant passage reads: "Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater or higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. For every social activity ought of its nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy or absorb them." This is the well-known text which has so often been quoted since then, as for example, in Pope John XXIII's first social encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*. This same "principle of subsidiarity" was incorporated by the European Union into the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 as a guideline in the section entitled "Common Provisions".

The 1969 Synod of Bishops voted in favour of bringing the principle of subsidiarity to bear on the new edition of the Code of Canon Law. And two years later, in 1971, the Synod of Bishops voted in favour of putting it into practice with regard to bishops' conferences. The introduction to the new code of 1983 says: "The principle of subsidiarity also belongs to the basic principle of the new canon law."

Pius XII later pointed out that the principle of subsidiarity also applied to the government of the Church itself. In an address on 20 December 1946, he repeated his predecessor's already classic definition of the principle of subsidiarity, and then continued: "Such words are indeed enlightening; they apply not only to society, but also to the life of the Church within its hierarchical structure."

With this statement, Pius XII wanted not least to focus on the freedom and dignity of the individual, which, in the midst of struc-

tures and organisations, must not be suppressed. The principle of subsidiarity was designed to assure the independence, initiative and strength of the individual versus the community, and also of small groups *vis-a-vis* larger ones.

Lumen Gentium 27 makes it quite clear that the bishops are not the Pope's emissaries, nor are they here, as some maintain, to carry out the Pope's instructions. They are not to be regarded, the conciliar document states, as vicars of the Roman pontiff (meaning the incumbent Bishop of Rome), "for they exercise a power which they possess in their own right and are most truly said to be at the head of the people whom they govern. Consequently, their authority, far from being damaged by the supreme and universal power, is in fact defended, upheld and strengthened by it."

The more the episcopal college participates in the responsibility of Church government, the more diversity becomes visible in the unity, and the more the cause of ecumenism will be served.

They are witnesses and teachers of the faith in conjunction with the Pope, in the name of Christ. According to Vatican II, the episcopal college should share the Pope's burden and responsibilities, and not merely in word but also in deed. Putting such doctrine into practice would meet with a positive response both ecumenically and within the Church itself. The attitude of the media would also be positive.

The episcopal college could share concern and responsibility for the whole Church to greater advantage if it were not only consulted in an advisory capacity, but also asked to take part in decision-making. Such collegial co-operation between the bishops and the pope would at the same time give a powerful impulse to ecumenism.

Such proposals do not spring from any philosophy or ideology. They originate in the communion of the faith, which is not prescribed from above, but is shared jointly by all.

The more the episcopal college participates in the responsibility of Church government, the more diversity becomes visible in the unity, and the more the cause of ecumenism will be served. Various examples of pluralism have long existed within the

one, united Catholic Church. For a start, the Pope himself is elected, and so are abbots of monasteries and religious foundations. Eastern and Western liturgies are allowed to differ. Religious orders and communities are given considerable autonomy so that they can decide their way of life and their inner structures themselves. For more than a thousand years, bishops were elected by the faithful and then confirmed by the Pope. The Vatican II decree concerning the Eastern Churches shows how highly the Catholic Church values their particular structures and liturgies, their traditions and way of life: they have their own canon law, and married priests.

Today, however, we have an inflated centralism. The issue is twofold, as I have demonstrated. On the one hand, we have to strengthen the bishops' collegial concern and responsibility for the whole Church in accordance with Vatican II. On the other, we have to cease restricting the competence of local and regional bishops as Church leaders. That means, amongst other things, that bishops must have a say in episcopal appointments, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity - that nothing should be done at a higher level which can be done at a lower level. It also means giving the bishops' conferences a more precise role and function.

I repeat that it is not a case of seeking to eliminate the Roman pope as the guarantee and symbol of unity, as the Roman Curia fears. Who else could have convoked a Second Vatican Council other than Pope John XXIII? Who else could have spoken out so effectively at the international level on human rights, human freedom and dignity with regard to Christ's message, other than Pope John Paul II? What we have to do, rather, is to discover a new form of government - that is to say, rediscover the old form - which is particularly favourable to ecumenical concerns. Unless the episcopal college is made responsible in conjunction with the Pope, neither the Orthodox nor the Anglicans nor the Protestants will consider any practical steps towards unity.

It was the Second Vatican Council's intention that the task of the Bishop of Rome should be seen in conjunction with the concern and responsibility of the bishops for the whole Church. Now, on the threshold of the third millennium, we have to accept the necessary results if theory is to be put into practice.

Cardinal König is the former Archbishop of Vienna. Copies of the complete essay available on request to the Editor. Please include SSA long envelope + 2 stamps.

Words for a Pilgrim People

"What about you, do you want to go away too?" (John 6:68)

□□□

The fatherly and holy conversation between God and humanity, interrupted by original sin, has been marvellously resumed in the course of history. The history of salvation narrates exactly this long and changing dialogue which begins with God and brings to humanity a many-splendored conversation. It is in this conversation of Christ among us that God allows us to understand something of Himself, the mystery of His life, unique in its essence, trinitarian in its persons; and He tells us finally how He wishes to be known: He is Love; and how He wishes to be honoured and served by us: Love is our supreme commandment. The dialogue thus takes on full meaning and offers grounds for confidence. The child is invited to it; the mystic finds a full outlet in it. (Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* n.70)

□□□

There is a profound ground of unity that is more pertinent than all the unilateral dimension of our lives. This a man discovers when he is able to keep open the door of his heart. This is one's ultimate responsibility, and it is not dependent on whether the heart of another is kept open for him. Here is a mystery: If sweeping through the door of my heart there comes a genuine love for you, it bypasses all your hate and all your indifference and gets through to you at your center. ... You may keep alive in devious ways the fires of your bitter heart, but they cannot get through to me. Underneath the surface of all the tension, something else is at work. It is utterly impossible to keep another from loving you. True, you may scorn his love, you may reject it in all ways within your power, you may try to close every opening in your own heart - it will not matter. This is no easy sentimentality, but it is the very essence of the vitality of being. The word that love is stronger than hate and goes beyond death is the great disclosure to one who has found that when he keeps open the door of his heart, it matters not how many doors are closed against him. (Howard Thurman, *A Strange Freedom*, eds Walter Earl Fluker and Catherine Tumber, Beacon Press, 1998, 301)

The Bible - God takes delight in our company

There is a deep conviction that flows through both the Old and New Testaments concerning the relationship between God, humanity and creation. The conviction is that God has an eternal love for this world and us. It begins with Genesis, as God looked on creation and "saw that it was good" (1:4 etc). Psalm 149 puts it so beautifully: "For the Lord takes pleasure in his people" (v.4). The whole of revelation may be seen as the story of God seeking the fulfilment of that eternal love for the world, particularly *God's love for us is the reason* the human family.

This is the heart of *for us to love ourselves.* the Covenant. It is also the heart of the Incarnation. "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). The First Letter of John reminds us: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us ..." (v 9-10). The bible is a record of the Eternal Lover seeking the beloved, God desiring our company and being willing to go to the extremity of Calvary to be with us. And in the action on Calvary we are enabled to be with God - beloved of the Lover.

This is a message to be savoured before we attempt to do anything in response to it. This is an awful mismatch, isn't it? God wants to be with *me*? For goodness sake, I do not even like to be with me at times! Simone Weil represents the biblical revelation well when she observes: "God's love for us is not the reason for which we should love him. God's love for us is the reason for us to love ourselves. How could we love ourselves without this motive?"

The invitation of revelation is to "taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8). God reaches out in love. No, much more than that, God, with infinite passion and desire, yearns for our company. The Christian life is our response, once we have "tasted", once we have found "the treasure" (cf Matthew 13:44). This is a life-changing encounter. The fundamental thrust of our lives must be towards facilitating that encounter, paying attention, remaining alert, so that God can catch up with us. The rest will follow. We will discover the liberating truth that Christianity is a mystical experience before it is a moral project. In fact, Christian morality can only make sense in the light of Christian mysticism, this mysticism of love. □

The Tradition - We receive before we can give

One of the early heresies that the Church had to contend with was that of Pelagianism. The heresy is named after a British monk named Pelagius, a contemporary of Augustine and Jerome, who become closely united in their opposition to Pelagius' teaching. Pelagius believed very strongly in human freedom and had little regard for any notion of original sin. He believed that we have the moral resources to take full control of our destiny, choosing the good over evil on the basis of our own efforts. Augustine and Jerome, while emphasising human freedom, also emphasised the absolute and God's action. *"God was long since looking for you before you began looking for God"* prior necessity of

The authentic tradition has come down firmly on the side of Augustine and Jerome and condemned the teaching of Pelagius. However, it could be argued that the so-called Pelagian heresy has never quite died in the Church. In recent generations, for example, the heavy emphasis on will power led to a *de facto* Pelagianism. The reality of God's initiative and God's action - grace, in other words - tended to become something of an abstraction, at best a sort of functional reality that helped us get the job done when we needed that help. The moral life of the Christian so schooled bore a greater resemblance to the Greeks than the Hebrews, it looked for its inspiration more to the likes of Socrates than Jesus, it was more Stoic than Christian.

The wilful spirituality that emerged from this approach did untold damage. It tended to force the transforming reality of the Eternal Lover, pining for our company, out of our experience. The mystical heart of our tradition was suppressed. The tragedy of this approach is that, in the spiritual life, we tend to end where we begin. When we start with ourselves and what we must do, that is precisely where we will find ourselves at the end of our lives - with ourselves and what we must do. What a travesty of the authentic tradition which starts with God and what God has done. St Bernard of Clairvaux puts it nicely: "God was long since looking for you before you began looking for God". □

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

• Spirituality in the Pub (SIP):

SIP Promoter - Sr Marie Biddle rsj is SIP Promoter and can be contacted on (02) 9745 3444(W) or 9712 2109(H).

°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 (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).

°Canberra - The Olims Hotel, Ainslie Ave, Braddon, May 26 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

°Chatswood - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).

°Clayton (VIC) - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: June 29 "Spirituality of Freedom" (Info: Ann on 9701 7076 or 9701 3740 or Joyce on 9700 1250).

°Collingwood (VIC) - First Wednesdays, 8pm-9.30pm (Info: Maree on 0412 136681).

°Kincumber - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: May 4 "The Power of My Story: Let Love Bring Us Home" (Peter McGrath cp & Monica Brown) (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Clair on 02 4344 6608).

°Newcastle - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, 7.30pm-9pm: May 18 "Walking the Edges" (Liz Mullinar & Peter Barrack) (Info: Gerard on 02 4979 1211 (W)).

°Paddington - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: May 5 "The Call of the East" (Michael Griffith & Serge Martich) (Info: Maree on 9387 3152 (H)).

°Penrith - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, June 16 "Finding Meaning Today on the Margins" (Sr Pauline Fitzwalter & Eva Mumbler) (Info: Dennis on 02 4773 8429).

°Perth - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge. Fourth Wednesday of each month, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Michael on 08 9448 2404).

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

°Ramsgate - The Intersection Hotel, cnr Rocky Pt Rd and Ramsgate Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: May 18 "Materialism & Spirituality" (Robert Fitzgerald & Rev Bill Crewes) (Info: Karen on 9570 3257 or John on 9533 4939).

°Rouse Hill - The Mean Fiddler on Old Windsor Rd, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Tim on 9634 2927 (H)).

°Waitara - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Ruth on

9416 4687)

°Wollongong - Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Tom on (02) 4228 5038).

• SIP for young adults:

°Chatswood - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Jocelyn on 0412 114038).

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated
has a web site:
<http://home.mira.net/~mdw/>

• **Catalyst Forum for the Future:** Sunday May 16, 2pm-4pm at the McKillop Campus of ACU, North Sydney. "The Future of Faith and Reason". Speaker: Prof Max Charlesworth. Prof Charlesworth will reflect on the Pope's encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*, published in November 1998. (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.

• Other news and events

• **Mary MacKillop Haven - House of Hospitality.** Do you need peace and quiet, time for yourself, the opportunity to re-focus the direction of your life? The Sisters of St Joseph run this house at 5 Page Close, Wyong NSW - about 1 km from Wyong railway station. (Info: 02 4352 2414)

• **Spirituality and Icons** with Kate Englebrecht, May 3, 10, 17, 24, 10am-12 noon; **Spirituality and Literature** with Joan Wharton, May 4, 11, 18, 25, 10am-12 noon; **Soul Play/An Approach to Christian Spirituality** with Rev Rod Pattenden, June 19, 2- 5pm; **An Afternoon of Spiritual Reflection** with Caroline Jones, June 27, 2-4pm - Centre for Christian Spirituality (Info: Kate on 9398 2211).

MADONNA

A bi-monthly magazine published by Jesuit Publications in Melbourne, with a circulation of nearly 10,000. Regular contributors include Caroline Jones, Teresa Pirola, Ed Campion, Peter Steele and Michael Whelan. Each edition also contains two months of daily prayer reflections. Subscription: 1 year (6 issues) \$25 or 2 years (12 issues) \$48. (Info: (03) 9427 7311)

• **A National Gathering entitled "Spirit Dream"** will be held Monday-Friday, January 10-14, 2000 at the University of NSW, Kensington, Sydney. Its purpose is to address who we are as Australians and what we are becoming - spiritually, culturally, socially, politically, economically, in our lifestyle, values, justice, ethics and ministry. Presenting a wealth of Australia's leading facilitators, writers, artists and speakers. (Info: Shekinah Creative Centre (02) 9484 0252)

• **The Halifax-Portal Lectures are on again this year, Tuesday Evenings at 7.30pm at Lidcombe Catholic Club, 24 John St Lidcombe.** Close to station. Free parking available. **May 4:** "Lambeth '98: Canterbury Tales" by Archbishop H Goodhew, Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney; **May 11:** "The Synod of Oceania: an exercise in collegiality" by Bishop David Walker, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay; **May 18:** "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back - an ecumenical line dance", Mrs Morna Sturrock, journalist, historian and author, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne; **May 25:** "The Gift of Authority' 1999 - The Contribution of ARCIC to the discussion among the churches" by Rev Dr Peter Cross, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and member of ARCIC. **Entry is free.** (Info: Sr Patricia on 02 9390 5168)

HOW TO MEDITATE

Sit down. Sit still and straight. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Breathe calmly and regularly. Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer phrase "MA-RA-NA-THA". Recite it as syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything - spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning to simply saying the word. Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.

(The foregoing is taken from the Newsletter of the Australian Christian Meditation Community. They may be contacted at: APMC, The Hermitage, Mt Mee Rd, Oceanview, Dayboro, Q 4521. Tel/Fax: 07 3425 3186)

• **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>.

Recommended Reading

Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*, Harper Collins, 1999, 217 pages, pb, endnotes, bibliography, \$26.95. [Available at the St Paul Book and Media Centre]

Chittister says "When I pray, I still say 'I believe,' but the truth is that I now believe both a great deal less and a great deal more than I did years ago". So say all of us! The author, a Benedictine nun, takes us through the Creed, a phrase at a time, speaking of it very personally and concretely. This valuable little book is probably more valuable for the process than the content. When did you last sit and seriously reflect on that statement of faith that is recited in Catholic churches throughout the world, Sunday after Sunday? Chittister makes us aware that the Creed offers a rich opening into the world of our relationship with God in Christ. Readers will be forced to think and ponder, they may feel variously enlightened, encouraged, challenged or annoyed. For example, on God: "God is the mystery nobody wants. What people covet in God is not mystery but certainty"; on the Father: "This reluctance to broaden, change, complete the image of God by moving beyond fatherhood - as if 'fatherhood' were the sole element of creation, as if semen were the only raw material of the human race and women merely its incubators - left the human psyche deeply scarred and theology in contradiction with itself". This book is recommended for personal reflection and for group discussion. You may not agree with Chittister, but she will make you think.

Howard Thurman, *A Strange Freedom*, eds Walter Earl Fluke and Catherine Tumber, 340 pages, hb, endnotes, index, c.\$45

Thurman was born in 1899, a black man in Florida. He was reared by his Grandmother who had been a slave. He grew up in poverty and, as was so often the case in the African-American culture, the bible was central to his life. As a boy he read it aloud to his Grandmother, who was unable to read it for herself. Thanks to his own considerable intellectual ability and scholarships, Thurman went on to gain a good education, including the study of philosophy at Columbia and theology at Rochester Theological Seminary. He met and was impressed by Gandhi. He was a regular adviser to people like Martin Luther King Jr and Jesse Jackson, before he died in 1981. This book is a gathering of Thurman's writings, sermons and addresses. It makes for inspiring reading with its emphasis on an authentic religious life as the basis of civility and ethics in society. Everything that Thurman says has added force because of his background as a black man born into a world that had not quite graduated from treating such people as slaves. This issue of *The Mix* reprints a small piece from the book in "Words for a Pilgrim People" (page 6). Thurman was a mystic in the best sense of that word. His whole life was oriented towards life-giving and creative relationships - with God, self, other people and the world. To read this book is to keep company with a very good and inspiring human being.

Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, Ballantine Books, 1993, 544 pages, pb, endnotes, index, bibliography, c.\$35.

This is an extraordinary reference book, one that is much needed. Tarnas has done a brilliant summary of the major thinkers who have helped to shape our minds, starting with the Greeks, moving through the merging of Christian and Greek thought, through the Scholastics of the medieval period, the thinkers of the Renaissance and the Reformation who facilitated the birth of the so-called modern era, through to the so-called post-modern times of our own day. The style is eminently readable. The content seems to be very faithful to those thinkers discussed - and literally no one of significance is left out. If the book has a weakness, it comes towards the end. Like so many thinkers, Tarnas is able to point to the gaps in our thinking, but his attempts to point the way ahead lack the insightfulness of the diagnosis. This is a minor point, however, in the context of the riches offered. In the conversations we must have as a matter of urgency on all fronts, such scholarly expositions are invaluable. Ours is a culture in which philosophical scholarship is not always appreciated. We must listen to the voices of the past, we must understand the road by which we arrived at this point in history. Such knowledge and understanding is an essential ingredient of any serious conversation about the future.

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