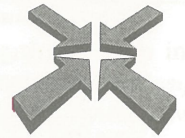


# THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

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JUNE 1999

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## Our Say - A night to remember

On the evening of Wednesday April 14, Sydney was lashed by a harsh storm. Huge hailstones smashed roofs, windows and cars. The storm moved with such relentless ferocity through the southern and eastern suburbs of the city that, weeks later, we are still counting the cost. Already we know it did more damage than Cyclone Tracy did to Darwin.

A week after the hail, on Thursday evening April 22, Sydney was being lashed again by stormy weather. There was no hail this time, only wind and torrential rain. Almost three thousand people defied that weather and turned out to be part of the Public Forum at the Town Hall, organised by Catalyst for Renewal to examine the *Statement of Conclusions* and its implications for the Catholic Church in Australia. (See pages 4 and 5 for a fuller report on the evening.)

Catalyst for Renewal took this initiative in accord with its own stated mission, to establish forums of conversation to promote renewal within the Catholic Church in Australia, and to do this in a collaborative

manner with all relevant persons.

The Public Forum was also in accord with the request from the Central Commission of the Australian Bishops' Conference, sent to the Conference Meeting of April 6-15, that meetings be encouraged to deepen understanding of the issues arising from meetings in Rome in 1998 and better discern how our common opportunities can be taken up and challenges met, while unity and communion are preserved and deepened.

What happened inside the Sydney Town Hall that night was in marked contrast to the hostile weather. There was a lively atmosphere marked by prayerfulness, respect, honesty and humour. It was a marvellous affirmation of faith, at the same time modelling good conversation. A word commonly used afterwards in describing the evening was "hope". Apart from a few hecklers, there was no anger or harshness - nothing equivalent to the hailstones that had done so much damage in the week before. This was a splendid example of the

"constructive dialogue that builds harmony", about which the bishops had spoken in their Letter of the previous week.

It remains for history to assess the full significance of that Public Forum held in the Sydney Town Hall. But it is not premature to draw two particular lessons now.

Firstly, most of those at the Forum would have been in the last half of their lives. The average age would have been fifty-something. People of that age bracket do carry some wisdom in their beings. They know the essential Catholic story implicitly, and there is not much time left to make the kind of response that will ensure the story does not die with them.

Secondly, mainstream Catholics who once would have simply accepted something like the *Statement* in silence, will not do so anymore. They want to be actively part of shaping the response our Church makes to the challenges of this age. And this is in full accord with their right as baptised disciples of the Risen Lord. □

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, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Francis Gross, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Christine Hutchison, Maryellen McLeay, Dr Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Dr Tim O'Hearn, 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)

The Patrons are:

Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM  
Mr Gerald Gleeson AC  
Prof Francis J Moloney SDB, AM  
Dr Richard J Mulhearn OAM  
Most Rev Geoffrey Robinson  
Sr Deirdre Rofe IBVM  
Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC

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

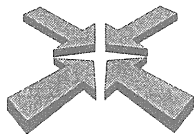
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

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

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## The Human Face

My name is Julie Kelly. I was born in a small private hospital in Strathfield just five months before the outbreak of World War II, the second child of Anglican parents. I was baptised in St Anne's Church, Strathfield, and brought up in the usual, fairly casual, way as an Anglican. The Church was there but not a particularly influential or compelling part of my life.

At the age of nineteen I announced to my parents that I was going to marry Michael Kelly, a fine Irish Catholic, and was about to be received into the Catholic Church. My mother had been brought up in a mixed Anglican/Catholic household and had made the decision herself to be an Anglican, so her reaction to this news was cool, to say the least! I had met Mike a few years earlier, and had been greatly intrigued by his deep faith and by the 'mysteriousness' of the Catholic Church, with the Latin mass, bells, incense and all the pre-Vatican II observances and rituals. I had been compelled to ask questions and was drawn deeply into my new faith.

I was received into the Catholic Church in October, 1958, in St Martha's Church, Strathfield, just a few doors up the road from St Anne's, where I had been baptised 19 years before. My dear mother, bless her generous heart, was one of the three witnesses to the event.

The loneliness of my 'welcome' into the Catholic Church was to have far-reaching consequences when, almost thirty years later, I heard about the revised Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and became very interested in introducing it to my parish of Corpus Christi, St Ives. By this time, I had raised four children and was looking for some outlet for the energy I was beginning to feel at mid-life – looking for a way to do or be something more than a full-time wife and mother. The RCIA was a community-based process which had been developed to guide adults through a period of spiritual growth and transformation leading to their entry into the Catholic Church and, ultimately, to a life of Christian service.

There were wonderful times in store for me after I became involved in this undertaking. The privilege of journeying and sharing stories with so many of the candidates over the next few years was truly immeasurable. Anyone who embarks on this journey with others is inevitably changed by the deeply intimate involvement with those they accompany.

In the early eighties I started going to some of the adult education courses organised by the Aquinas Academy, and my faith

began to mature. As I look back over my faith development, I realise that the reasons I joined the Church way back in 1958 – wanting to be like Mike and to be part of the Church that was fascinatingly different from the one I had previously known – are not the same reasons I am so happy to be a Catholic today. I love the Church, warts and all, and I see all sorts of wonderful initiatives springing up within it.

My understanding of who God is for me has changed over the years, too. For many years I laboured under the delusion that God weighed my sins and my goodness and, if I could just keep the scales tipped slightly toward the good side, I'd be OK (a not uncommon idea perhaps). Now, instead, I know that God simply loves me. I have stopped trying so hard to be better and more 'holy' and am now content to simply 'be'.

My prayer, too, is so different now, more involved in listening than talking, simply being open to the possibility that God has something to communicate to me, and that 'something' is love.

I have never been more fiercely proud of being Catholic than I was on 22<sup>nd</sup> April at the public forum which was organised by *Catalyst for Renewal* at the Sydney Town Hall. With about 3,000 other Catholics we offered a show of solidarity with our bishops and made very clear what our feelings were in regard to the overbearing and paternalistic attitudes emanating from Rome in the *Statement of Conclusions*.

There are wonderful times ahead for our Church --- I think the good guys are winning!



Julie Kelly

## Your Say 1 - The group that keeps us sane

by Sheila Gibson

If any one word describes us, it is possibly 'dynamic'. We are an Adult Education Group based in Marsfield. In 1991, Allan Connors, SM, from the Aquinas Academy, presented his Christian Growth Programme, encouraging us to be 'fully human and fully alive' – and then he 'abandoned' us.

Subsequently, we formed our group, agreeing to listen to cassette tapes of Michael Whelan, SM, presenting his Human Christian Life Formation series. So much did we doubt the success of this bodiless presentation by Michael, we used slides as a visual aid. After six months we abandoned the slides, but not the tapes or the notes – all purchased from St Paul's Book and Media. We listened with a sense of newly found life and freedom.

We also had access to a small privately-owned library, and we were encouraged to use these books, even if only to read the blurb on a cover. We did so, every week. We followed the dates of the school term for our sessions. The time came when we were visited by Michael Whelan, SM, and encouraged to keep on 'flowing with the Mystery'.

Now a new problem was emerging. We were beginning to need more discussion time; we were learning to talk! In reality,

we needed discipline because we rarely finished on time. These days we actually arrive early to share any happenings before the timer indicates that we had better start the session!

### *What goes on in the group in relation to our faith keeps us sane.*

Last year we changed format and put our cassettes on hold. We chose to study Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's book, *Travels in Sacred Places*, with its short chapters on images of God and questions to facilitate group work. Most people have found this very successful. When we finish this book, we are going to use Bishop John Heaps' book, *A Love That Dares to Question*, which most of us have already read!

This group has developed a life of its own as we stimulate each other. We share opinions on TV programmes such as "Compass", on the Papacy or on the recent Synod in Rome. Each member now subscribes to *The Mix* rather than wait to share a group copy! We have access to *The Tab-*

*let* and are about to make a group investment in another journal, maybe *Compass*. Spirituality perceived in movies, newspapers, the theatre and everyday events raises comment.

Some people outside of the group have expressed concern that we operate without a religious or priest at the helm. But our biggest concern has been a venue. We have had three up to now. Our fees have varied to meet our needs.

Everything written about this group so far does not do justice to the life within it. We missed our sessions so much over the Christmas break this year that when it was suggested we resume early, we jumped at the opportunity to do so. What goes on in the group in relation to our faith keeps us sane. We have like-minded people with whom we can share.

Our thanks to our Marist and Episcopal nurturers, who possibly shudder wondering if we misquote, misinterpret and make mistakes. Sorry, but that's all part of our growth process. □

*Sheila Gibson is a wife and mother, a former teacher and diversional therapist.*

## Your Say 2 - Loving criticism

by Bernard Häring

We see clearly from the Gospels that the love of Jesus for his apostles and disciples was often a critical love. We have to examine our own conscience as well with a view to Jesus' critical love for us. ... And we all have to learn from Jesus how to love our Church (which includes ourselves) critically. The word *criticism* comes from the Greek root *krinein*, "to judge or distinguish". ... In our pluralistic era, Catholics who blindly conform to everything that comes from Rome are certainly not playing their role as the "salt of the earth".

When I say that our love for the Church has to be critical, that by no means implies approval or recommendation of loveless or constantly negative criticism. Only those who have clear-eyed vision and praise for what is good in the Church can offer healthy criticism about what is and is not in unison with the Gospel and with the signs of the times, correctly understood.

For me and my generation, it was a long trek from the rather uncritical thinking in a closed peasant village and in a closed society to a fully developed "virtue of loving criticism". Our models are the great proph-

ets of Israel and the great prophetic figures of the Christian world. Only a critical love that strives throughout all of life for the gift of the discernment of spirits can effectively unmask the Satanic temptations to which we-and the Church as an institution in its officeholders are exposed.

### *Only those who have clear-eyed vision and praise for what is good in the Church can offer healthy criticism.*

In my view, the Second Vatican Council was one of the greatest experiences of the virtue of criticism: a grand effort in solidarity to exercise the gift of discernment, to see what holds promise for the future in the life of the Church, to foster it and to get rid of useless routine.

Let me come back just one more time to the key goal of the doctrinal hearings against me: I was told to make an oral and

written commitment to avoid not just all dissent, but every word that might be taken for dissent. This was likewise the point of introducing a special loyalty oath required for theologians, bishops, and everyone who directly serves the Church. The oath called for the uncritical acceptance and advocacy of all the pope's teachings, and it was supposed to stand right alongside the Creed. One can imagine what would happen with the whole theological enterprise if we all agreed to take such an oath. It would also do no good for unity in the faith, because faith comes from the heart, from a convinced conscience.

The result would be an immovable and often insincere conformism. ... To tell (theologians), "Be creative!" would have to be taken as some kind of sarcasm. And it would be a pure illusion to expect them to be able to serve ecumenical dialogue and the credibility of the Gospel in a critical age, or to keep an eye on the signs of the times so as to free the core of faith from all its historical excrescences. Without absolute honesty and sincerity in theological thought, there can be no credibility. □

# Essay - Report on the public forum

**Catalyst for Renewal held a Public Forum on the *Statement of Conclusions* at the Sydney Town Hall on Thursday evening, April 22 1999. The following are some representative responses.**

Thank you for a wonderful expression of faith and hope and charity which you enabled at the Town Hall.

*Sr Vianney Hatton, Kirrawee.*

Thank you for your honest approach to the matters you addressed at the Public Forum. To me, the overwhelming response of the 3,000 people who packed the Town Hall confirmed the fact that the time for pussy-footing around has passed and the people of God require straight talk. Hopefully, you and the organisation you head will influence those who have ears but do not wish to hear.

*Kate Schlink, Randwick.*

Thursday night was a triumph. Thank you indeed. I believe it was an historical event – the grown-up Bar Mitsvah manifestation, turning point for the Australian Catholic Church. Not a shred of petty destructiveness, but solid dignified loving dialogue. Congratulations! I flew from Brisbane for it and I'm so glad I did. That final 'How Great Thou Art' was like the old-time Eucharistic congress – very emotional.

*Margaret Moore*

It was a great night. We were particularly pleased that Robert Fitzgerald made those points about the Third Rite. The loss of the Third Rite has particularly affected my family. I know the Forum changes nothing immediately, but we felt grateful that he publicly said those things for us and said them so well! He is indeed a wonderful speaker. God Bless. Keep up the good work.

*Pat & John Snell, Beverly Hills*

I thought the whole evening was extremely well done: the quality of the speakers' contributions was exceptional (I look forward to reading them) and, just as importantly, the manner in which both the questions and the difficulties associated with a potentially contentious public meeting were handled was exemplary. It was an occasion that left me with great hope about the potential for the laity's contribution to the important is-

ssues which arise from the Synod, the Statement and the Cardinal's letter. During the course of the meeting one thing came unbidden, but perhaps a little ironically, to my mind: Cardinal Ratzinger's episcopal motto derived from the third letter of John – *cooperatores veritatis*. Indeed, the whole of that letter seems relevant to the current controversies. I thought the Town Hall was (with a very few exceptions) filled with willing and enthusiastic co-workers of the Truth. The difficulty was where do they find the outlet to do that work? For me, the most revealing comment of the evening was Bishop Robinson's (characteristically) candid admission that there is no recognised structure whereby the laity can take up his Eminence's invitation to prayerful collaboration and that it behoved the Bishops to provide such a structure, lest the invitation be made hollow. Bishop Robinson rightly emphasised that our primary mission is to witness in and to the world, but it seems to me that the faithful are much more fortified to do so if they experience the invigoration and solidarity which comes from participation in the Church itself. While I am hopeful that the Bishops will provide that structure, experience teaches that in the meantime something ought to be done by the laity themselves.

*François Kunc*

I do despair at times that the image and authenticity of the Church are hopelessly lost for my – and many other children. However, such events as last Thursday do much to raise my hopes. Many, thanks!

*Nancy Simons, Pennant Hills*

I thoroughly enjoyed being at such an exciting and historic event! It was fascinating for myself and so many others that we saw so many people there who we knew; some of whom we had not seen for quite some time. It was truly a great gathering of the people of our Pilgrim Church of many churches. With such a successful event I wonder if a similar one could be organised for the Synod document when it is finally published. A forum such as this – or even on a smaller scale – would be perhaps a good way of launching and making livable the reflections from occasional papers of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. If it is not already addressed in 'Spirituality in the Pub' meetings, a dialogue between our faith and popular culture (eg. music, cinema, sport, shopping, literature, commuting and tourism etc.) could be benefi-

cial: after all, these affect 'grassroots' Christians daily! Let the dialogue con-

*Simon Falk, Homebush*

Last night my husband, son and myself with three fellow parishioners attended the Forum at Sydney Town Hall. It was great to be there and we all left filled with joy and hope in our hearts for the future of our Church. All the speakers covered different aspects of the Statement of Conclusions and it was evident that each one spoke from his or her heart. They all love our Catholic Church in Australia, as do I, and I feel it is important at times like these to stand up and be counted, so it was wonderful to see so many people present. We know that God is in His Church and with His Church, so may Catalyst for Renewal be blessed in their work.

*Pat Phelan, Merrylands*

What a Night to Remember! Thank you for enabling us to receive such sound and heartfelt reactions to the Statement – came away enthused and very sure our church is anchored but in full sail – with Catalyst providing much needed energy for the journey ahead.

*Pat Robinson, East Ryde*

Superlatives fail me! Last night was brilliant. Many thanks to you all for the superb job. The Speakers – the organisation – the atmosphere – the positive tone was exactly what was needed. I felt edified and encouraged – and so proud to be with such a great group of fellow believers. The meeting was a real expression of your Mission Statement. Just great!! Many thanks to all the troops who obviously worked so hard for the success of the night (I even opened a good Red to toast you all!) Keep up the good work and God bless.

*Allan Gordon, Drummoyne*

Congratulations on a most successful forum last night. It was magnificently organised and I felt the Spirit was at work in the people of God. Best wishes.

*Br Kelvin Canavan fms, Executive Director of Schools, CEO, Leichhardt*

Congratulations on the tremendous evening. I am sure you, and the entire Committee, must have been pleased with the attendance,

the spirit of participation and the evident love for the Church which was displayed. Thank you for your inspiring address, to Geraldine for her masterly guidance of the evening and to all who contributed to the remarkable organisation. God guide your continuing efforts.

*Brian Heenan, Bishop of Rockhampton*

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to be part of the Public Forum last Thursday. In preparing for the speech I am sure it took a number of years off my life and that of the other speakers. However it was a great moment in Church. If ever there was any doubt that the Church in Australia can be a dynamic, lively and participatory faith, that doubt would have been dispelled last Thursday. The struggle that we are now engaged in, even more highlighted by the recent article in the *Bulletin* magazine, will be a long and difficult one. In doing reading around these issues, I have become starkly aware of the way in which the Vatican Curia has become even more distant from the faithful and more controlling than I have ever realised. This is a great concern and disappointment in a post-Second Vatican Council Church. Nevertheless, I am sure none of these issues is new to you. Last Thursday, however, renewed my hope and I am sure the hope of all of those present that we can work collaboratively together, Bishops, Priests, religious and laity, in seeking to forge a strong future for the Church of Australia. The work that you have personally done, and the contribution that all of those involved in Catalyst for Renewal have made is invaluable. You have the strongest support of myself and countless thousands. It was a privilege to participate in the Public Forum and to be associated with Catalyst for Renewal generally. Thank you and congratulations.

*Robert Fitzgerald AM, Commissioner, Community Services Commission*

Full marks for the Town Hall event – I've decided to stay in the church!!

*Sr Doris Nebalier rsj*

I felt very privileged to be part of this function. I believe the evening was a tremendous celebration of the Church in Sydney and was conducted with great dignity, loyalty and a sense of hope. I very much appreciated the courage and generosity of each of the speakers.

*Dr Anne Benjamin, Executive Director of Schools, Parramatta*

## TOWN HALL TAPE & TEXTS

The Public Forum on the *Statement of Conclusions* at the Sydney Town Hall on Thursday evening April 22 1999 was professionally recorded on audio tape. The 90-minute tape contains: the 5 presentations by Bishop Brian Heenan, Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC, Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM, Fr Michael Whelan SM and Bishop Geoffrey Robinson; a number of the questions and responses; the Summation by Michael Whelan; the blessing by Bishop Robinson.

The texts of each of the 5 presentations and the Summation are also available in small booklet form.

**\$10 per tape**  
**+ \$2 post & pack per tape**  
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A huge thank you. We attended the Town Hall last night. Wow! What a wonderful celebration of our Australian and Universal Catholicity. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to experience such a celebration. Congratulations to each of the speakers for their presentations. Not only were they thoroughly professional, they spoke of the unity and hope which exists in considerable numbers in many parishes throughout our country. What an energising and enriching experience for all of us! Once again congratulations and thank you.

*Debbie Gilroy & Rita Weston*

**A letter of invitation was sent to the Apostolic Nuncio, all the Archbishops, the bishops in NSW and the ACT, Parish Priests in NSW, Major Superiors, and a number of public figures. The following are some responses to that invitation:**

While having some reservations about the value of mass public meetings in dealing with serious issues, I wish you well for the initiative. I hope there is as much prayer as publicity given to it. With every best wish and personal regards.

*+Francis P Carroll, Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn*

Sadly I will not be able to get back to Sydney after the Bishops' Conference. However, I do wish you all the very best for the occasion. It should do much good.

*+John Bathersby, Archbishop of Brisbane*

I am unable to accept your invitation. On that evening we have our annual celebration at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral of the "Shoa" Memorial of the Holocaust. This celebration is important for the conversation between Catholics (and other Christians) and our Jewish brothers and sisters. I pray God's blessing on the public meeting. You may have heard that a recent "Open Meeting" in Adelaide to report on my Rome visit attracted some 500 people and was a good occasion. Yours sincerely in Christ.

*+Leonard A Faulkner, Archbishop of Adelaide*

Unfortunately, prior commitments will not allow me to attend but I do wish the Forum well. I wish to thank Catalyst for Renewal for all it is doing for the Australian Church - in these troubled times Catalyst for Renewal is a *breath of fresh air*. With gratitude.

*+Michael Malone, Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle*

Let me commend you and Catalyst for this important initiative and please know you have my personal support.

*Jim Carty SM, Provincial of the Marist Fathers*

I am in receipt of your letter of March 30<sup>th</sup>, regarding the Public Forum. Your letter causes me some concern. Who are "Catalyst for Renewal Inc"? I get the impression this is an organised group to try to pressure and oppose the Holy Father in His pastoral duty towards the Australian Catholic community. I resent any such pressure groups, as I consider them to be motivated by the desire to publicly insult the Holy Father and to change the Australian Catholic community away from being Catholics in complete communion with the Holy See. As long as my concerns remain, without any due clarification, I will not be supporting or promoting anything done by this group. Yours sincerely.

*Father Peter Kneipp, Parish Priest, Walcha*

**We sent the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Francesco Canalini, a copy of the Forum tape and a booklet describing the work of Catalyst. In reply he wrote:**

I am happy that the main aspect of the Public Forum was hope and affirmation of faith. I do wish that it will contribute to a renewal of faith lived in the Church of Jesus.

## Words for a Pilgrim People

*I am the resurrection and the life ... Do you believe this? (John 11:26)*

□□

*Father, rich in mercy, may the holy Jubilee be a time of openness, of dialogue and encounter, among all who believe in Christ and with the followers of other religions: in your immense love be bountiful in mercy to all. (Pope John Paul II, Prayer for the Third Year of Preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000)*

□□

*The capacity for 'dialogue' is rooted in the nature of the person and human dignity. .... the human person is in fact "the only creature on earth which God willed for itself"; thus we cannot "fully find ourselves except through a sincere gift of ourselves" (cf Gaudium et Spes 24). Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community. (Pope John Paul II, Ut Unum Sint (1995), 28)*

□□

*He whom the clergy and people of his own city have not elected, and whom neither the authority of the metropolitan nor the consent of the provincial bishops has chosen - he shall not be a bishop. (Council of Toledo (633))*

□□

*The consent of the clergy, the testimony of those held in honour, the approval of the orders and the laity should be required. He who is to govern all should be chosen by all. (Pope Leo I (d 461), Letter 10:6)*

□□

*What must come to pass, should come to pass. Within the limits of that must, therefore, you are invulnerable. (Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, Alfred A Knopf, 1964, 48)*

□□

*Emotional 'diseases' can be a product of human strengths, strengths that come to be misused in a life, rather than being absent or weakened. (Richard Sennett, The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life, Vintage Books, 1971, 23)*

□□

## The Bible - The beautiful and the severe

Cardinal Newman wrote: "Christianity, considered as a moral system, is made up of two elements, beauty and severity; whenever either is indulged to the loss and disparagement of the other, evil ensues. ... We shall be sure to swerve from the narrow way which leads to life, if we indulge ourselves in what is beautiful while we put aside what is severe." It is good to remember this when reading the Gospels. For example, in Ch 10 of Matthew's Gospel, we are confronted by the severity of statements like: "Anyone who prefers father or mother ... son or daughter ... is not worthy of me" (Vs 37-38). A misreading of such texts may lead towards either of two deformative tendencies: a dour, even misanthropic attitude or an ungrounded romanticism.

*We shall be sure to swerve from the narrow way which leads to life, if we indulge ourselves in what is beautiful while we put aside what is severe.*

As with all parts of the bible, *context* is crucial. Jesus was thoroughly imbued with the Covenant tradition, a tradition in which the liberating Exodus Event is absolutely central. The God of the Exodus comes second to no one! Recall the prayer - the *Shema* - which Jesus, like other faithful Jews, would have said morning, noon and night: "Listen Israel: Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart etc." (Dt 6:4-9). When Jesus speaks of the greatest commandment (Mt 22:37), he quotes the *Shema*. And the Decalogue gives the first commandment: "You shall have no gods except me" (Ex 20:3).

Another part of the context is *the social reality* within which Matthew's audience lives. This is not a quiet world (80-90AD) at peace with itself. It is a world in transition. More particularly, the audience is probably a group largely from the Jewish tradition trying to understand the difference that Jesus makes. Some scholars suggest that Matthew's Gospel is best understood as a sort of "handbook" for church leaders, "to assist them in preaching, teaching, worship, mission and polemic" (Benedict T Viviano). Ch 10 of Matthew's Gospel contains specific instructions for those who will be missionaries. For disciples in general, but for missionaries in particular, all other relationships must be pursued within the context of *primary* relationship with the God of the New Exodus. Any relationship that obstructs that primary relationship must be relinquished, at least in so far as it is an obstruction. □

## The Tradition - The genius of catholicism

Central to the genius of Catholicism is what might be called its *both/and disposition*. Catholicism, when push comes to shove, has always had the ability to embrace *both* the beautiful and the severe, the tragic and the comic, the pleasure and the pain, and so on.

Throughout the history of religions, one of the besetting sins is the tendency to be dualistic, to assume the *either/or disposition*. Clearly, when it is a question of, say, love or hate, we have an *either/or* choice - at least in theory. In practice, however, life can seldom be dealt with in *either/or* categories. To do so is to do violence to oneself and probably others. The misinterpretation of the severe sayings of the Gospels (eg Mt 10) has, at times, in the history of the Church, produced some ugly results. For example, the denial of all that is pleasurable was one of the major practical heresies of the first generations of Christianity. In its ugliest form, it condemned marriage. The great Augustine struggled for much of his adult life to outgrow a profound *either/or* approach to spirituality. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century this again appeared with great force in Jansenism, which has lingered in one form or another to the present day. *The presence of consecrated religious is a prophetic sign within the community.*

Periodically, throughout the history of the Church, women and men have arisen to reclaim an excluded or diminished dimension of the Gospel. Within the Catholic tradition, such prophetic types generally founded a religious congregation. In the Protestant tradition they generally founded another church. The presence of consecrated religious is a prophetic sign within the community of *the both/and*, a reminder of the diversity and unity of our life together in Christ. A reminder too, that the integrating and liberating reality is always the God of the Covenant, the liberating Lord of the New Exodus, revealed in Jesus Christ. □

## 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: June 24 "Prayer, What is it?" (Kevin Gallagher sss & Alison Borradaile) (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

° **Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: June 9 "Respecting Diversity" (Aziza Abdul-Halim & Fr Cyril Hally) (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).

° **Canberra** - The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra, 7.30pm-9pm: August 25 (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

° **Chatswood** - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: June 8 "Healing the Invisible" (Speakers tba) (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 Jo on 9700 1250).

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

° **Kincumber** - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: July 6 "The Power of my Story: Myself the Song that I Sing" (Keith Taylor & Clair Hayes) (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Clair on 02 4344 6608).

° **Newcastle** - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, 7.30pm-9pm: September 21 "Walking the Edges" (Christine & Warren Shepherd) (Info: Gerard on 02 4979 1211 (W)).

° **Paddington** - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: July 7 "Spirituality and Community" (Denys Goggin & Sr Anne Jordan) (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)

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

° **Ramsgate** - The Intersection Hotel, cnr Rocky Pt Rd and Ramsgate Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: June 15 "Faith and Science" (Fr Chris Toohey & Ian Johnston) (Info: Karen on 9570 3257 or John on 9533 4939).

° **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Old

Windsor Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: August 3 (Info: Tim on 9634 2927 (H)).

° **Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: June 16 "What Place Mystery?" (Sr Marie Farrell & Fr Danny Meagher) (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: July 6 "The Best Things in Life" (Tim Groves & Paul Osborne) (Info: Jocelyn on 0412 114038).

### • Other Catalyst Forums:

• **Catalyst Dinner:** Friday evening July 2, 7.30pm-10.30pm, in the parish hall, Hunters Hill, corner Mary St and Gladesville Rd. Topic: "Science, Faith and Our Children". Speakers: Dr Anne Hunter (Principal, Loreto College Toorak) and Mr Rod West (former Principal of Trinity Grammar, and author of the recent West Report on tertiary education in Australia). (Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262).

• **Catalyst Forum for the Future:** Sunday August 15, 2pm-4pm at the McKillop Campus of ACU, North Sydney. "The Future of Leadership in the Church". Speaker: Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM. (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.

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

### • Other news and events:

° **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).

° **Forgiveness, Courage & Love in the New Millennium** - An evening with Stephanie Dowrick, June 9, 7.30pm, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, Rose Bay (Info: 9958 4402)

° **Australian Christian Meditation Community** - July 2/3, Retreat with Fr Gerry Piers CSsR (Info: Colin Douglass 4862 1591). July 4, Talks & Meditation with Fr Gerry Piers CSsR (Info: Jillian Morrison 9489 7480)

° John Dominic Crossan will speak on 'Jesus and the Passion for Justice' July 3, 7.30pm, St Scholastica's College, Glebe Point (Info: Eremos Institute 9683 5096)

• **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)

• **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)

• **Quest for Life Foundation - supporting people with cancer and those in crisis or at a crossroad in their life - runs "Killarney at Bundanoon", a place of rest, reflection and rejuvenation.** Program facilitators are Petrea King and Jenny Maher. Caroline Jones and Petrea King present "Women and Spirituality", May 28-30, July 12-15. Inquire about the other programs. (Info: 02 4883 6599)

### APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting renewal in the Church by fostering good conversation. Most of our work is done by volunteers. We do incur some costs and appreciate any financial assistance that our Friends might offer. You can contribute to this work by your personal donation and/or by encouraging others to contribute in some way.

If you think you can help Catalyst in its work for the Church, please contact us:  
**02 9816 4262**

# Recommended Reading

John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes: Exploring the Hunger to Belong*, Bantam Press, 1998, 280 pages, hb, c \$45.

Some will have read O'Donohue's *Anam Cara*, an international bestseller on Celtic spirituality. *Eternal Echoes* is a contemporary expression of that ancient Celtic tradition. The style is Irish wild-man-poetic. At times it is wordy, circuitous, even a little self-indulgent. But, sooner or later, O'Donohue says something very wise and practical. For example: "When you distance yourself from the particularities of individual lives, you begin to realise that no human person is here on earth accidentally or neutrally"; "Real friendship is a powerful presence in helping you to see the prisons within which you live"; "A limit is meant to call you beyond itself to the next new field of experience". The book consists of many little pieces that can be read a few-minutes at a time. This a rich meditation book where the reader is stimulated to think about mundane things that would normally not be noted at all or not be noted as worth a second thought. The Christian dimension is mostly implicit. The likely readership is fairly broad, being all those who have felt their hearts moved by longing or yearning of any kind. Whilst those who have already made some progress in reading the Christian classics will find this book a little elementary, those in search of something that is at once rich, well grounded and written in a refreshing contemporary style will appreciate this book

Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man*, Penguin Books, 1971, 191 pages, pb, c \$10.

This is a novel, first published in 1944. Bellow's parents were Russian Jews who emigrated to Canada in the first decade of this century. He was born in Quebec in 1915 but has spent most of his life in Chicago. Bellow won the Pulitzer Prize in 1975 for *Humboldt's Gift* and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976. *Dangling Man* is written as a journal, by a man who has plenty of time on his hands - "there is nothing to do but wait, or dangle" - as the military sort out his application. He speaks of "the hardboiled-dom" of the era. "Do you have an inner life? It is nobody's business but your own. Most serious matters are closed to the hard-boiled". And again: "We are still drawn towards the same craters of the spirit - to know what we are and to know what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace". Bellow is not easy reading. In fact, at times he is very heavy, even depressing. He reminds us of the eternal search for the depth dimension, the reasons for our restlessness and those strange feelings that beset us all between midnight and 6am. If we are awake. He also reminds us of the human ground of the immensely rich spirituality passed down to us through the ages within our Catholic tradition. The *Dangling Man* - like all good literature - bears testimony to the fact that human beings will only find the fulfilment of their deepest longings in the Eternal Mystery. To be human is to be religious.

Maureen Fiedler and Linda Rabben, Eds, *Rome Has Spoken: A Guide to Forty-Six Papal Statements, and How They Have Changed through the Centuries*, A Crossroad Book, 1998, 243 pages, index, bibliography, c \$30.

This book gathers a series of statements taken from Sacred Scripture and Church teachings down through ages. The statements are chosen and assembled chronologically, according to their relevance to particular themes. Themes include: Infallibility, Primacy of Conscience, Ecumenism, Slavery, Usury, Sexual Intimacy and Pleasure, Religious Freedom and Democracy in the Church. The book provides a useful - and at times entertaining - assemblage of quotations. Like all such books, it must be consulted and used with care, because the reader is not given access to the context of the respective quotations. Quotes out of context can be used in strange and inappropriate ways. The Editors have gone some way towards minimising misuse of the references by having a good commentary attached to each theme. Fiedler and Rabben have done us all a service, especially the reader is prepared to use the assemblage, with its commentaries, as an introduction and go the extra step to seek out the context. This book should help put an end to the naïve assumption that Church teachings have never changed. We should not fear that change but embrace it as an essential part of a living tradition. This will represent a radical shift for most Catholics, however.

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