



THE MIX



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Our Say - The Vatican Council's charter for the church

Futurology is an inexact science. Very inexact, in fact. Who, for example, as recently as 1980, foresaw the revolution the internet would bring? We are only just beginning to understand the political, economic, cultural, social, educational, moral and religious ramifications of this stunning revolution.

One thing does seem certain, however. On the basis of this technological revolution and the many other significant changes and movements occurring in our world, human beings must inevitably think of themselves and their needs, limits and possibilities, in vastly different ways now.

What is negotiable and what is not negotiable in all this? How should we act so as to ensure that the common good is best served by the new technologies? What are the dangers and the opportunities before us? With a sense of urgency, imagination and intelligence, we must have many different ongoing conversations about what is happening at this time. The ground is moving under our feet. We must move too.

The entire human family is inevitably involved in this movement, one way or another, for better or worse. And the key issue is not one of using or not using the new technologies. These technologies are but a sign of our times. The key issue is that of reading the signs of these times and responding with faith. In that way we will become sacraments of God's liberating love in the world, heralds of a good future.

The Church cannot regard itself as outside or above this shifting within the human family. Nor can it afford to sit on the sidelines and articulate principles and enact rules which say more about another age's challenges and its efforts to live the Gospel.

A new world is in the making. Will the Church be a significant and creative part of shaping that new world? Or will the Church become a relic of another world, one passing out of existence? That is the question.

The Second Vatican Council was enunciating both a sociological fact as well as a

theological vision when it said:

The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of human beings. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father, and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with humankind and its history (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

These words are almost a charter or mission statement for the Church at this time. They are also words that too often sound more like a wish, perhaps even a pretense, than an authentic expression of the Church in the modern world.

The simplicity and power of Jesus' presence is almost tangible in these words. We would do well to let them impress themselves on our hearts and minds. □

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)

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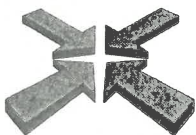
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The Editorial Committee is:
Michael Whelan SM, Geraldine Doogue, Catherine Hammond and consultants

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Address all correspondence to:
PO Box 139, Gladesville, NSW 1675, Australia
Tel/Fax: +61 2 9816 4262



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 Chris Needs. I am the father of three children, and married to Kerry. I work as a physician treating people with rheumatic diseases. I was born in Kempsey, the eldest of five children, into a childhood characterised by open space, copious amounts of sport and long summers in the surf at South West Rocks. The outside world rarely penetrated this easy childhood. Radio's influence was conveyed with the daily serials of *Dad and Dave* and *Blue Hills*, while the *Argonauts* served to link us to the rest of Australia.

My father worked as a Stock and Station agent; my mother worked at home. Their backgrounds were a combination of German, Jewish and Irish Catholic traditions that were moulded, over several generations, by the need to be self-sufficient in the Macleay Valley.

As a child, I was educated by the Sisters of Mercy who, in hindsight, showed remarkable tolerance, patience and endurance in dealing with classes often numbering up to sixty students, with a four-year range in ages. Despite the class sizes, our learning and desire to learn were fostered. At the primary school level, in those days of free flavoured milk, there was no appreciation of distinctions between the pupils' racial or economic backgrounds. Yet such differences existed outside the school grounds.

The absence of a local Catholic high school meant many of my fellow primary pupils, like me, had to leave the district to attend high school. Most parents struggled to give us such opportunities. The six years I spent boarding were formative years. I remember a statue in the grounds of St. Joseph's College depicting a strong Athenian figure attempting to break a bundle of sticks, with the notation, "Unity is Strength". This understanding was borne out in many aspects of college life, particularly on the sporting field. Yet in the senior years there were abundant opportunities for the individual to foster his academic potential.

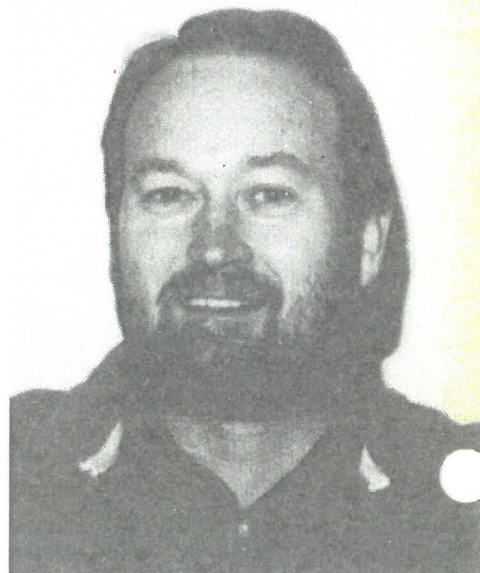
It was the Marist Brothers who opened my eyes to a wider Catholicism, a Catholicism broader than the contents of catechism, and scripture, incorporating the glimpses of revelation contained in human experience, in poetry and even in science. Unfortunately, I let such understandings remain in their infancy.

My tertiary education was science-based, to the exclusion of other areas of understanding. By the time I completed my medical studies, I had developed the notion that knowledge that could be tested and proven was "real" knowledge. Other less tangible forms of knowledge were given

less credence. Over the past twenty years, in treating people with chronic illness, I have been privileged to learn from their forbearance and good humour, allowing me to realise that "the less tangible knowledge" has a much greater importance. Likewise, the learning I obtain from my children and from my relationship with Kerry is something I would not have anticipated twenty years ago.

Throughout this period of my life I experienced a disharmony. On one hand, I worked in an environment based upon years of scientific education; on the other hand, my understanding and my appreciation of my relationship with God were stagnant. Through my readings and discussions as a student at the Catholic Theological Union, I experienced an understanding of myself and of God that was previously unknown and inaccessible to me. A renewed energy emerged with an appreciation of the depth and richness contained in the traditions of Catholic teaching, along with a realisation of the need to interpret such teaching within our own communities. It has only just started to hit home to me - something many faithful people have always known - that if one were to write a book *Life: A User's Guide*, one would find that such a guide already exists in the collective teachings of the Church, sustained by the sacraments.

My understanding of my relationship with God continues to slowly evolve. It has been bolstered by my association with the other members of *Catalyst for Renewal*. It is my hope that we, as members of the Church, may honestly and respectfully listen to the people around us and respond openly to their demands and that other new interpretations of the tradition will develop and continue to sustain and nurture our relationship with all of creation.



Chris Needs

Your Say - Finding meaning in suffering

by Rosanna Martinello

The following is an excerpt from Rosanna Martinello's presentation at Spirituality in the Pub, Ramsgate NSW, July 21 1998. The full text is available on request - what follows is only about one third of that full text.

In October 1994 I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 33. My world shattered. The year before, my father had died of cancer, and now I had it! Two operations, six months of chemotherapy, 2 months of radiotherapy, together with the associated side effects, including hair loss, nausea, psychological trauma followed. Mid-way through my eight months of cancer treatment, my partner of several years left.

What meaning did I find in this sudden suffering? None whatsoever, initially. My focus was not on meaning but on the suffering and on survival. My world, as I knew it, had been turned upside down. Not only for me, but those around me.

I had always been an achiever, academically and in my professional life. A perfectionist. I held a senior position in one of Australia's leading multinationals, where I had responsibility for the company's \$2bn worldwide debt portfolio. I always managed to find time to fight some noble cause while working extremely long hours. Quite ironically, in the years preceding my diagnosis, I was heavily involved with CanTeen - a charity which assists teenagers with cancer.

Then I discovered a lump! As I was due to go to Japan on a two-week business trip, tests were quickly done and within two days it was confirmed that it was breast cancer. I didn't go to Japan but rather to Prince of Wales Hospital. Then began what I see now as an incredible journey of self-discovery and transformation.

Suffering made me stop. I found myself engulfed in and overwhelmed by the suffering ... fear of the unknown ... shock. The realisation that everything was not within my control was very difficult for me. My expectations of how my life would be were completely shattered: good health, long life, successful career, children, a loving partner. I associated breast cancer with a death sentence - it was an illness which afflicted women of my mother's age and in recent years had resulted in the death of two of my friends.

What did I do? I placed my trust in God BUT I knew that I would also have to do everything within my power to help God help me. Within a matter of days of my

diagnosis, I viewed my cancer as a "challenge" - a challenge to be met and overcome. The focus at this point certainly was not on spiritual growth but on my prime instinct for survival. Life was indeed a roller-coaster ride. Many a time there appeared to be no light at the end of my tunnel. My cancer diagnosis was my darkest hour; I had indeed landed in the belly of the whale. My fear of dying was overwhelming. I often didn't think I could be happy and healthy again. However, during the eight months of treatment, there were always two constants: God and the love and support of loved ones, which meant even in my darkest hour there was always HOPE.

*There is nothing like
a life-threatening illness
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priorities and return you
to basics.*

As a child I grew up in a very Italian Catholic home. Throughout my early years, I recall mum's answer to suffering being "un fiorino alla madonna": Accept the suffering and offer it as a flower to Our Lady. As a young woman becoming increasingly aware of the injustices of this world and becoming more uncomfortable with the formal structure of the Church, I found mum's meaning no longer satisfactory. I have always believed in God, the all-powerful creator, the all-loving father. But that just made my deliberations on suffering worse. Could I blame God? - either He doesn't care, and then He is not all good; or He doesn't know, and then He is not all wise; or He isn't able to stop the suffering, and then He is not all powerful.

Dad's death from cancer in 1993 was my next milestone in finding meaning in suffering. It is always extremely painful to see one you love dearly slowly die before you. Dad died 6 months after a brain tumour diagnosis. There was no quality of life towards the end and I prayed to God to take him and thus end his suffering. Why? Why this suffering? I didn't know the answer, but I knew God was there beside us feeling the pain. In a way, dad's death seemed to prepare me for dealing with my cancer.

Then came 1994 and breast cancer. I do believe in God - my God is a loving, compassionate and caring God. I believe She has a significant role in guiding my life.

My God is not a testing God. To me suffering is a mystery. And mystery remains mystery. When God finally gives Job his answer to why the righteous suffer, God tells Job he cannot know. Job is satisfied even though God doesn't give him an answer because God gave him the most important thing - himself.

Whilst I could not comprehend why I got cancer, I knew God was constantly by my side, feeling my pain. Every day during my 8 months of treatment, I would commence my day saying "Lord, remind me that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I can't handle together" - this was a great source of strength to me. During my darkest hours, I gained strength from Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done", and from Jesus' words on the Cross: "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" Jesus did know how I felt and it was OK for me to not want to have cancer.

But there was always HOPE. The Cross reaffirmed my HOPE. I would spend many an hour sitting in my local church alone with God, just staring at the Crucifix above which is a mosaic of the Holy Spirit; it always seemed that light would bounce off the Holy Spirit. The Cross offered not only death but new life. He transformed death from an end into a beginning - the resurrection. God therefore suffers with me and there is HOPE for me of a new life.

There is nothing like a life-threatening illness to force you to reassess priorities and return you to basics. I discovered my faith rather than the faith I was born in. God is now a close friend with whom I share my life on a daily basis; my suffering has made me value this relationship and has given me an ongoing hunger to deepen it.

I realised that life on all fronts had to be different. Cancer in many ways was a liberating experience. It somehow seemed to legitimise the radical changes I knew I had to make in my life. At the same time it was a daunting experience - it felt as if I had a clean slate on which I could map out a new life with a changed set of priorities. Meditation and prayer gave me the strength to make those changes - the beauty of resting in God. Meditation since has become a significant part of my daily life.

Today life is very different. Each day is indeed a blessing for which I am very grateful. As soon as I awake I thank God for yet another beautiful day. □

Essay - The relevance of the church for today

by Michael Costigan

This is the text of a presentation given by Dr Michael Costigan at Spirituality in the Pub, Bowral, April 22 1999.

My remarks will be confined to the Catholic Church, to which I belong and which I can claim to know fairly well. No doubt, some of the things I have to say are applicable to other Churches.

I went into a seminary fifty years ago after leaving school in Melbourne, did most of my ecclesiastical studies in Rome in the 1950s and early 1960s, and served as a priest for fourteen years before leaving the active ministry, having been dispensed by Pope Paul VI from priestly obligations. Seven of my years in the priesthood predated the Second Vatican Council, while the remaining seven were passed very much in the shadow (or should I say the dazzling light?) of that momentous event, which I had the thrill of reporting in my role as the associate editor of Melbourne's Catholic weekly paper, the *Advocate*.

Working as a journalist both before and after leaving the ministry, I covered other significant Church events, including the post-conciliar upheaval in the Dutch Church, the 1972 International Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne and three papal visits to Australia. While not attending the recent special assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, I followed the event with the keen interest and insatiable curiosity of an unreformed Church-watching newshound.

I also worked for over fourteen years as a senior public servant, in the areas of the arts (mainly Australian Literature) and ethnic affairs. During that time, I continued writing about Church affairs.

For the past twelve years, I have been employed by the Bishops of Australia in the areas of social justice, human rights and overseas aid and development. My position is Executive Secretary to the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

I mention this personal background in an attempt to establish what credentials I have to speak on the subject of the Church's relevance. If I didn't think the Church was relevant, my life would hardly have followed the course that I have described.

Nevertheless, we have to recognise that there are any number of possible approaches and answers to the question: what is the relevance of the Church today?

Let us look at two clearly opposite an-

swers to the question. The first is that the Church is no longer relevant at all. The other is that the Church has never been more relevant than it is today.

Among those who consider that the Church has lost its relevance, there are some who rejoice in their perception that this is the case. They sometimes speak of medieval superstition or they emphasise or exaggerate the undoubted faults and blemishes of the contemporary Church. Among them are those who have an irrational hatred of the Church and everything it stands for.

Among believers, there are some who consider - and they bemoan the fact - that today's Church has indeed lost much, if not all, of its relevance for many of its members. And among these lamenting believers one can identify another two distinct and opposite groups: those who think that the true and traditional faith has been infected and damaged by developments during the past thirty or more years, since the Second Vatican Council; and those who conclude, on the contrary, that the crisis is caused or aggravated by a refusal on the part of many to accept the Council's message and spirit.

I identify with the people who hold that the Church is still relevant, for its own members and indeed for the whole of society. I consider that people in this group are not lacking evidence for their claim. I offer three examples of such evidence.

The first piece of evidence is statistical. Figures don't prove everything, of course, but it is still worth noting that the Catholic Church has more members, over one billion, around the world than ever before in its history. In Australia itself the number and percentage of Catholics in the population is at an all-time high, according to recent Census figures.

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Moreover, if the Pope were to call another General Council now, it would be attended by over 4000 Bishops, compared with the 2,400 (approximately) who attended Vatican II in the 1960s.

Secondly, the Catholic Church has been led for over twenty years by a Pope whose words and deeds have helped significantly to shape the history of the world during last decades of the millennium. Whatever critics may think of this astonishing pontificate, they certainly cannot call Pope John Paul II irrelevant.

Thirdly, in many countries, including our own, governments and other decision-makers still do listen carefully to what Church leaders and spokespeople have to say on all kinds of public issues. And the media do not ignore the Church, even if some appear to be more interested in scandal and conflict than other features of the Church's life and activity.

Of course, my fellow optimists and I must not overlook the more disturbing side of the picture: the very scandals which the media seem to delight in reporting, the unsatisfactory handling of some of those scandals, the decline in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the weakening of family life, the very considerable fall in Mass attendance, and what amounts to the exodus from the Church of the greater part of two generations of younger people. These phenomena quite properly worry Church's leaders - and not only the leader.

If, however, we take a global view, the picture begins to brighten somewhat. The Catholic Church appears to be thriving in parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and to a less extent Eastern Europe. This century has also been a kind of New Age of saints and martyrs, canonised and uncanonised, dead and alive -- and their deeds have helped to inspire millions and to nourish their faith. To take only a few examples, think of Oscar Romero and Helder Camara in Latin America, Dorothy Day and Joseph Bernardin in the United States of America, Mother Teresa in India, Padre Pio in Italy, Maximilian Kolbe in Poland, Edith Stein in Germany and, in our own country, Mary MacKillop and Mum Shirl. And many others.

While the shortage of priests and religious in places like Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand creates pastoral problems (or challenges, as I would prefer to call them), it is counter-balanced by the emergence of a theologically better informed laity, by a deep study of ministry and its forms and by the growth of a number of new and energetic movements in the Church. (Two of my favourites are the Community of St Egidio,

based in Rome, and Catalyst for Renewal here in Australia.)

Those of us who believe in the continuing relevance of the Church also point to the heightened priority given - and here the Pope himself again sets the example - to the defence of human rights, to work for social justice and peace, and to the promotion of overseas aid and development. One of the Church's good news stories is surely the work done at many levels to eradicate poverty. Recently, the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace issued a kind of progress report, titled *Responding to the Challenge*, about the anti-poverty action being taken by many groups and organisations in the Church in Australia. Often the people involved in this work are so busy doing it that they don't have the time to tell the community at large what they are up to.

So there surely is reason for hope and optimism about the Church, in my opinion, even if some fuel is being added to the flames of despondency experienced by those whom Pope John XXIII would have called "the prophets of doom".

I am heartened, for example - to cite a few recent or current events - by the clarifying letter issued by the Australian Bishops about recent happenings in Rome, by such occasions as the gathering taking place in the Sydney Town Hall even as I speak, to consider the much publicised "Statement of Conclusions" about the state of the Church in this country, and by the reception given by the Bishops on 12 April to a presentation of the findings contained in the research report on women's participation in the Catholic Church.

Perhaps I should have opened these random reflections by noting that the word "Church" has different meanings for different people, or that its meaning varies in different contexts.

In a hierarchical Church, it is sometimes used to refer only to the leadership, the Pope and the Bishops. But in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, "the Church" means the whole "people of God". Ours is also in some ways a paradoxical Church: both richly diverse and at times excessively uniform or monolithic; monocultural and multicultural; in some ways ecumenically inclined and in others seemingly insensitive to other Christians; encouraging external dialogue while not always tolerating internal dissent; socially radical and theologically conservative; proclaiming the principle of gender equality while having difficulty coming to terms with women's aspirations; forward-looking while also often drawn into gazing backwards; both introspective and outward-looking; sinful and repentant; judgmental and forgiving.

But for me it is home. I do not plan to leave. Like Peter, answering one of Jesus's questions, I have nowhere else to go.

INTERCHURCH FAMILIES

by Bev Hincks

I am passionately interested in the topic of the eucharist, since my husband Kevin and I are an interchurch couple of thirty-nine years standing. As the years have gone by, I have become more and more at home in his Anglican tradition, a fact which would have seemed incomprehensible when we were married. He has always felt at home in my denomination, but has no more desire to join it than I have to join his.

In the October 1998 issue of *The Mix* there was a list of the people who are hurting within the Church, which I warmly applaud. It would be wonderful to have the pain of interchurch families mentioned here.

(Eucharist) is an essential ingredient for our spirituality, both as individuals, and as the 'one body' which marriage calls us to.

Kevin and I, like many, but not all, such couples have a profound love of the eucharist. It is an essential ingredient for our spirituality, both as individuals, and as the 'one body' which marriage calls us to. The guidelines from Brisbane Archdiocese, *Blessed and Broken*, were introduced by Archbishop Bathersby in 1995. In keeping with the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* from the Vatican, *Blessed and Broken* provides details of times when eucharistic sharing is possible.

We would wish that many more couples, and the vast majority of Catholics, knew that it IS possible for non-Catholics to at times receive the eucharist, with permission.

Our regret is that these documents speak of a 'deep and pressing need' being essential for admission to the sacrament of the eucharist. Couples like Kevin and myself experience a 'deep and pressing need' EVERY time we worship together. Experience in Brisbane reflects that the more that families are seen at the altar together within a parish, the more open the congregation becomes to the question.

The problem for me is that my Church recognises my husband's baptism, my

Church recognises the validity of our marriage and through that accepts my husband, since we are 'one body' in marriage, as a church member. But when it comes to reception of the eucharist, he is not welcome unless it is an exceptional circumstance. This used to be 'never', but now it can occur when he has no access to a minister of his own denomination or is in danger of death.

For couples marrying today, permission for both to receive the eucharist can be given in some dioceses for weddings, baptism of children, first communion and confirmation of children. How I would have loved these occasions to have been possible during our married life!

So, there is progress which we applaud. But how we wish it might accelerate! We see the arguments presented by Francis Moloney in *A Body Broken for a Broken People* as applying to reception of the eucharist for so many of the hurting groups which are within the Church. The eucharist is the healing sacrament for which all of us who are broken have the deepest need. Jesus did not eat with those who were whole as much as he ate with those who were broken.

With the approval of our Bishop Michael Malone, we formed a branch of the international Interchurch Families Association in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, following the lead from Brisbane. We are small in number, but I find that a group can do much that individuals are unable to do.

Bev Hincks lives with her husband Kevin in Swansea, NSW. She has just completed her Masters in Theology. In 1998 Bev and Kevin were the sole Australian representatives at an international meeting in Geneva of the Association of Interchurch Families. Bev has written a lengthy report on that experience. You can contact Bev and Kevin at PO Box 66, Swansea NSW 228 or telephone 02 4945 0200 or fax 02 4947 7382.

LOVE CANNOT BE IDLE

Love cannot be idle. What is it that moves absolutely any person, even to do evil, if it is not love? Show me a love that is idle and doing nothing. Scandals, adulteries, crimes, murders, every kind of excess, are they not the work of love? Cleanse your love, then. Divert into the garden the water that was running down the drain. Am I to tell you not to love anything? Far from it! If you do not love anything you will be dolts, dead people, despicable creatures. Love, by all means, but take care what it is you love.

St Augustine,
Sermon II on the Psalms, 31:5.

Words for a Pilgrim People

'But you' he said, 'who do you say I am?' (Matthew 16:15)

□□

The glory of God is a living person and the life of the person is the vision of God. (St Ireneus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4:20,7)

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Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community. (John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), 28)

□□

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with your spirit and light. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may be only a radiance of Yours. Shine through me and be so in me, that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as to be a light to others. The light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be mine. (Prayer of John Henry Newman.)

□□

(Tim Costello) used ('the politics of grace') to describe the relationship with his brother, whereby the two men disagree on many issues but maintain a dialogue. He used it to describe his conversion to the merits of at least some aspects of a goods and services tax. Costello asks: 'Can the politics of tribe yield to the politics of grace - politics in which people are free to speak their convictions, and at times to be strongly disagreed with, but without fear of intimidation. Tribal politics demand that you are either for us or against us. If you're not one of us then we'll cut you off. It's epitomised in the way Hansonism demarks the white tribe off from Aborigines, newly-arrived immigrants and single mothers. The politics of grace includes the belief that we can be a diverse but inclusive family, that while we may often disagree, we will always keep the conversation going'. (Tony Stephens, "Reconciliation Revisited", *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 16, 1999, 34)

The Bible - The struggle with God

Nowhere in the bible will you find serious questioning about the *existence* of God as a philosophical problem, such as you find in our Western tradition, especially in recent centuries. That is not to say that relations with God are simple and straightforward in the bible. Far from it! The difference is found in the fact that in the bible the *relationship* is the focus of struggle, and the struggle is experiential, not abstract. Is God really with us, for us, on our side? Does God care about me? ***Sometimes we must accept the pain of faith so as not to lose it.*** Is God willing to make a difference?

These are the questions for the biblical person. (Perhaps they are also the questions, ultimately, for the modern "atheist".) The Hungarian Jewish author of the little classic, *Night*, Elie Wiesel, writes well of this in his *Memoirs: All Rivers Run to the Sea* (Alfred A Knopf, 1995, 84-5). Wiesel writes: "Sometimes we must accept the pain of faith so as not to lose it."

The prophet Jeremiah offers one outstanding example of the biblical person struggling with God. Jeremiah was born near Jerusalem around 646BC - one hundred years after Isaiah. He lived through those tragic times immediately preceding and during the so-called Babylonian Captivity. The Jewish People were deported, *en masse*. The prophet bore witness to the God of the Covenant, the ever-faithful and ever-loving God, during this dark time.

We read in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: "You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; ... For me, Yahweh's word has been the cause of insult and derision all day long. I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name anymore,' but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones" (20:7-9).

Beginning and end, our lives are grounded in and expressions of God's initiative, God's desires. This is God's world, God's Church. We are here to do God's will. There are, however, times in the journey when God seems absent or at best indifferent. Pious clichés and pat religious "answers" are hollow. Struggle, question, doubt, frustration and even anger with God may be more appropriate responses, signs perhaps of a maturing and deepening faith. □

The Tradition - The silence of God

The great guides of the Christian tradition are pioneers of reality. They are like explorers who have gone to the farther reaches of human nature and human experience, and their writings tell of that. The difference between us and them is that, for whatever reason, we have not been there. Our lived worlds are tiny, theirs are expansive.

Often the stories those pioneers tell frighten and confuse us. If we read their accounts carefully and honestly, however, sooner or later bells will ring. Consider this personal reflection from a simple French woman who lived earlier this century: "Lord, I do not love You, I do not even want to. I am weary of You. I am not even sure that I believe in You. But look on me in passing by. Take shelter for a moment in my soul, set it in order with your breath, discreetly, silently. If You want me to believe in You, bring me faith. If You want me to love You, bring me love. I have none, and there is no help for it. I give You what I have: my weakness, my pain. And the need for affection which torments me and which You know. ... And despair. ... And wild shame ... My hurt, only my hurt. ... Nothing more! And hope!" (Marie Noel, *Notes For Myself*, trans. H. Sutton, Cornell University Press, 1968). The struggle to know and love God is also a struggle to know and love ourselves. The silence of God is also, at the same time, an experience of the farther - and darker - reaches of our own beings. ***Our lived worlds are tiny, theirs are expansive.*** That is the essence of the human journey.

The great human pioneers - people like Jeremiah, Augustine, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Merton, testify to this human journey that we mostly resist or simply ignore. The relationship with God that emerges from such honest, gutsy struggle is more likely to be nearer the truth than one that is dependent on the expectation that God is simply there to comfort and protect us and meet our felt needs. Aelred Squire puts it well: "The living Truth, the great breaker of idols and destroyer of false gods, is ultimately easier to live with than the most comforting of lies. It is better to lose the God we found it easy to envisage and the faith that was only a protection from our fears, and stand naked and unknowing in the presence of the One who can only really be known when he is lived with. At least with that God, we can and, indeed, must begin from where we are. There can be no becoming that does not start from something that already is." (Aelred Squire, *Asking the Fathers*, SPCK, 1973, p.10f.).

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

• Spirituality in the Pub (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: August 26 "Transitions" (Geraldine Doogue & Mary d'Apice rscj) (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

°**Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: August 11 "Being Young" (John Barrington & Clare Barbeau) (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 "Spirituality: the Male/Female experience" (Sr Loraine Gatehouse & Neil Harrigan) (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

°**Chatswood** - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: August 10 "Our Road Together" (Barbara Asplett & Br Graham Mundine) (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).

°**Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: August 31 "Spirituality of Fallowrens" (Pauline Clayton & tba) (Info: Ann on 02 941 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: September 7 "The Power of my Story: The Rhythm of life is a powerful beat" (Fr Kevin Bates sm & Maisie Cavanagh) (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Clair on 02 4344 6608).

°**Newcastle** - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, 7.30pm-9pm: September 20 "Walking the Edges" (Christine & Warren Shepherd) (Info: Gail McBurnie on 02 4979 1141 (W)).

°**Paddington** - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: September 1 "Contemplation in a Noisy World" (Betsy Conti, Herb Elliott & Thomas Knowles) (Info: Maree on 9387 3152 (H)).

°**Penrith** - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm: August 18 "Finding Meaning Today in the Church" (Speakers Rob O'Brien & tba) (Info: Denis on 02 4773 5521).

°**Perth** - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, August 25 "Into the Millennium: Challenges for Church" (Dr Peter Carnley & Janette Gray rsm), 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: August 17 "Personal Crisis and Spirituality" (Garry Lynch & Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon) (Info: Karen on 9570 3257 or John on 9533 4939).

°**Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Old Windsor Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: October 5 "Where do I find Spirituality in Australia Today?" (Ken Jarvis & Nicole Breeze) (Info: Tim on 9634 2927 (H)).

°**Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: August 18 "Spirituality from Go to Woe" (Marie Therese Daly & Peter Harrington) (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: September 7 "Our Limited Language" (Damian Janssen & Teresa Pirola) (Info: Jocelyn on 0412 114038).

• **Catalyst Forum for the Future:** Sunday August 15, 2pm-4pm at the MacKillop 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.

• Other news and events:

• **Eremos Institute**, Retreats, Weekend Workshop, Transforming Images (Info: 02 9683 5096).

• **Australian Christian Meditation Community** - August 15 Day of Meditation, Benedictine Monastery, Arcadia (Info: Fr Edward Doran 0296531159).

• **The Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace** invite you to hear Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles at St Mary's Cathedral on Thursday, August 26, 8pm and at Lidcombe Catholic Club on Friday, August 27, 10am. (Info: Br Mark O'Connor 0417 689 095).

• **The Centre for Christian Spirituality:** September 14, 21, 28, Oct 5, 10am - 12 noon "The Cloud of Unknowing" with Kate Englebrecht; "Why I Am Still a Catholic", Oct 3 - Fr Tim Quinlan sj; Oct 17 - Fr

Frank Brennan sj; Nov 14 - Ms Geraldine Doogue; Dec 12 - Bishop David Walker - 2 - 4pm; 'The Creed' with Dr Neil Ormerod, Oct 13, 20, 27, 10am - 12 noon (Info: Kate 9398 2211).

• **Contact Rudi Peperkamp 4284 7735** in North Wollongong area if you are interested in getting together for a monthly meeting.

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

• **Spirituality Courses, Mary MacKillop Place, 7-11 Mount St, North Sydney**, Parables of Life, August 18, 1.30-3pm & August 22, 11am-1pm. (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887).

• **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)

• **Enneagram & Spirituality Workshop**, Blackfriars Retreat Centre, Canberra commencing September 17. (Info: Br Don Newton on 9349 7333 or 0417 691 904).

• **A National Gathering entitled "Spirit Dream"** will be held Monday-Friday, January 10-14, 2000 at the University of NSW, Kensington, Sydney. Presenting a wealth of Australia's leading facilitators, writers, artists and speakers. (Info: Shekinah Creative Centre (02) 9484 0252)

• **OCW 'Women and the Scriptures'**, August 19, 7.30pm at St Francis Parish, Paddington. *OCW National Conference October 1-3 in Canberra.* (Info: Joelle on 9361 6546 or Jim on 9449 2923)

Recommended Reading

Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*, Vintage Books, 1996, 312 pages, index, endnotes, c.\$25.

Himmelfarb is a noted historian with a number of books to her credit. The area in which she has a special expertise is that of the intellectual and cultural history of Victorian society. She is also a conservative thinker. The reader, however, cannot accuse her of rigid or mindless conservatism. She brings a keen intelligence and a vast knowledge of history to her writings. In *The De-Moralization of Society*, she makes a very worthwhile contribution to the moral conversation we must have concerning those characteristics by which we might judge a person or society to be "good". Himmelfarb argues that we no longer speak of "virtues" ("which) had a firm, resolute character ... a sense of gravity and authority") but "values". This shift came with Nietzsche, she argues, and is characterised by a move towards relativism and subjectivism: "One cannot say of virtues, as one can say of values, that anyone's virtues are as good as anyone else's." (It is interesting to note that the word "values" does not appear at all in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1928.) Himmelfarb is aware of the complexities and dangers in speaking positively of "Victorian virtues". But she is also aware that the post-modern world has some most serious moral challenges ahead of it. This is a book for the serious reader, who will find it very stimulating.

Sr Anne Maree Jensen with Jeanne Ryckmans, *The Flying Nun and the Women of the West*, Random House, 1998, 248 pages, pb, \$24.95.

In south-western Queensland there is a spread of land almost as big as the United Kingdom. It is bounded by places with names most people in the UK would find strange, however - names like Birdsville and Bedourie, Longreach, Old Naryilco and Innamincka. And it's the parish of Sr Anne Maree Jensen, Presentation Sister. Only about 1500 people actually live in Anne Maree's parish, which she has traversed in a Cessna plane since 1989, averaging forty dirt strip landings each month. Apart from Anne Maree's story, this delightful book tells the stories of some of the women she visits - "the women of the west" - from her base in Longreach. "For most of these women I am the only female they may have seen in the past few months," says Anne Maree. Her first visit each month is to Cheryl in Windorah ("I don't know if I would call myself religious but I have a strong personal faith"), where she also spends some time with the children at the small State school. And there is Leah at the Noccundra Hotel. She went west as a governess and married a local: "When our son, Andrew, was born, a nurse telephoned 'Splinter' and he drove the 200 kms in record time to inspect his son. He was pretty pleased with himself." This book is easy and inspiring to read, a beautiful window on the Church in Australia.

Joseph A Camilleri and Chandra Muzaffar, Editors, *Globalisation: The Perspectives and Experiences of the Religious Traditions of Asia Pacific*, Movement for a Just World, 1998, 214 pages. (Available from Christi, PO Box 31, Carlton Sth, VIC 3051, at \$10 + postage.)

One of the ironies of the Church's history is that when it sets itself apart from and over against the world, it tends to become worldly; when it embraces the world and knows itself to be in and of the world, it becomes transcendent, a sort of sacrament or sign of something more. Renewal of the Church, of necessity, demands a constant and intimate dialogue with the world in which we find ourselves. Like the Church herself, this world is both beautiful and ugly - like the Gospel parable of the dandelion and the wheat. The human family is facing a huge and multifaceted challenge at this time in the form of "globalisation". If the Church is true to its vocation, it will share 'the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties' this brings to peoples around the world (cf *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). The Church will also seek to understand what is happening and endeavour to bring the light of the Gospel to bear. The fifteen brief essays in this book are very readable and informative. The authors represent a variety of cultural religious backgrounds. Globalisation, as the authors note, is neither simply good nor simply bad. It is highly significant, though, and might be the source of great good or great evil. Highly recommended.

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