



# THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

Circulation of 2000 in Australia and overseas

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 7

SEPTEMBER 1999

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## Our Say - Conversation or empty talk?

Pope Paul VI sounded a warning in 1975. In his outstanding encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, even as he stressed the power of the word, he reminded us that today people "are sated by talk" and fatigued by "empty talk" (42).

This phenomenon of being "sated by talk" and fatigued by "empty talk", might help us understand why there is probably no one more effective in undermining the Gospel than those who say they believe, speak much about their belief, but do not really believe what they are saying. And the more articulate they are, the worse it is.

There is a clear and sobering message for would-be preachers in this. The thought that the clever and articulate preachers might in fact be contributing to the very opposite of what they are saying is daunting indeed. The message is no less clear and sobering for those of us in the business of promoting conversation for renewal. It would hardly be renewing if we simply contributed to the general fatigue provoked by "empty talk".

Both the process and the content, whereby words become conversation, are highly significant. If, for example, I am chronically angry or have a functionalistic view of the world, my conversation will tend to be shaped by that - whether I intend it or not, whether I or others realise it or not. The outcome of the conversation will be sabotaged - more or less - by unacknowledged and otherwise irrelevant agendas.

The conversation I have with others must be underpinned by an ongoing and effective conversation I have with both God and myself. If these two conversations are not happening - and happening consistently and effectively - my conversation with others is likely to be loaded - at least implicitly - with all sorts of distracting agendas.

Thus the underlying *process* of a conversation can override the *content*. The reverse is also true. Good conversation is aided by good content and hamstrung by bad content.

In our very worthy efforts to give everybody a voice, take everybody seriously and listen respectfully to everybody, we need to

acknowledge that not every contribution to the conversation will be of equal value. In particular, the conversations which the Church must have today require some input from serious and good quality scholars. Facts of history and principles of theology need to be carefully researched and debated. Very few are capable of contributing this sort of content to the conversation.

Ultimately, the point of all conversation is to encounter the True and the Good. Genuine conversation is a self-transcending and transforming experience, one of walking together with others, listening to them with them to a Reality that transcends any individual or group.

Genuine conversation is very rare in our culture, both in the Church and in the wider world. This should not be accepted as a measure of the value of good conversation. It should rather be taken as a sign of the poverty of our culture, inside the Church and beyond, the lack of something that could profoundly enrich our lives. □

This journal is one of the works of  
the Sydney-based group  
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We are believers who are attempting  
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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  
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"Let there be unity in what is necessary,  
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This journal is published ten times each year,  
March to December. It is sent to all Friends of  
Catalyst for Renewal.  
(See coupon on back page for Friend's Application)

The Editorial Committee is:  
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Registered by Australia Post  
Publication No: 255003/02125

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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.

All original work in *The Mix*, unless otherwise  
indicated, is the work of the Editor.

Printed by Serge Martich-Osterman  
Printing and Publishing Pty Ltd, Annandale

## The Human Face

**M**y name is Mike Bailey. Introductions  
aren't easy when you're what's called a  
"media personality". Some say you don't  
need an intro; others know the name or the  
face, but can't place it; and others again  
remain blank beyond the explanation of  
work – because not everyone watches or  
listens to the same station.

I hope that some may know me for week-  
night weather presentation on ABC-TV in  
NSW and the ACT, and various stints on  
radio, including that currently controversial  
format of talk-back, current affairs and  
opinion. No bank cheques – please.

If this is failing to make sense, perhaps my  
excuse can be that it comes on the eve of  
my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday this October. I was the  
product of a marriage that escaped the fam-  
iliar "Orange and Green" mix of my par-  
ents' generation only by my mother's con-  
version to dad's Catholic faith just in time  
to avoid being married somewhere in the  
dark recesses of the church on their chosen  
day in 1935.

Their marriage, again like so many of  
their generation, was an interrupted melody,  
thanks to World War II. My father spent  
three-and-a-half years with his 2/30<sup>th</sup> Bat-  
talion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division as a prisoner of the  
Japanese in Changi, after the fall of Singa-  
pore in February 1942.

Despite his front-row seat at this gross ex-  
ample of inhumanity, dad returned with his  
faith strengthened, and remains the greatest  
influence on my own, despite his passing in  
1979, nearly nine years ahead of mum.

While I was the only child of Edna and  
Mick, I entered the world with a crowd as  
part of a post-war baby boom in 1949.

My education began with the Josephite  
nuns at the Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
Sefton. Somehow, despite the 120 other  
"boomers" in my class, a love of religion  
and the message of faith seemed to hit  
home.

It was all rather simple at first: that  
"weekend-starts-here feeling" I came to  
associate with the scent of incense and the  
end of the kneeling during the third Bened-  
iction hymn just before lunch on Fridays.  
And there was my concern for a possibly  
"pickled" Pope. You see, my mother had  
one of those old bottling kits and was for-  
ever "preserving" fruit. My young mind  
feared the same fate for the Holy Father  
each time the Prayer for the Pope called on  
the Lord to "Preserve him....!"

A new school for me, De La Salle, Bank-  
stown, was my window on so many changes  
to the church introduced by Vatican II.

One was the increased involvement of the  
laity at Mass, but it did not come without

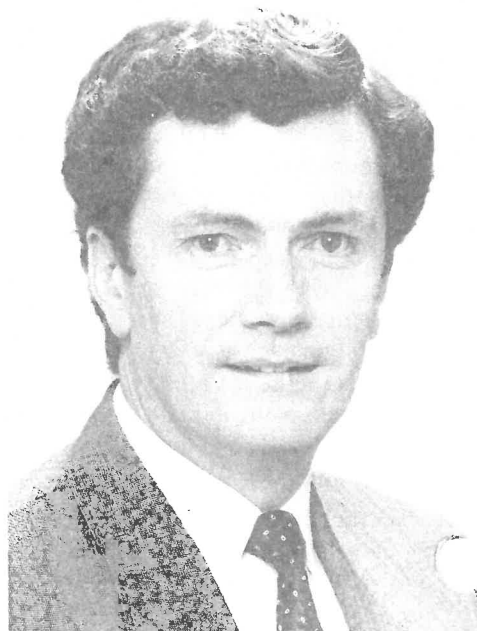
struggle. I was at the centre of one such  
struggle as "commentator" in later school  
years at DLS Ashfield, where the local  
church was arguing about whether or not I  
should be allowed in the pulpit. The school  
chaplain of those years, my long-time friend  
Fr Les Troy CM, often recalls the now  
quaint "row".

Fr Les was with Frs Tony Doherty  
Lex Johnson to marry my wife Helena and  
me at St Mary's Cathedral in 1986, and Fr  
Lex baptised our son, Michael, at the same  
stirring location in 1988.

Media was a passion I developed in late  
primary school, and it seldom wavered. I  
was a television stagehand within 6 months  
of completing the HSC in 1967, and a cadet  
journalist with the ABC after barely a hand-  
ful of weeks in that job.

The years since have given me experience  
in all aspects of my craft, from production  
to presentation, reporting both here and  
overseas – and my "profile" has allowed me  
to contribute to church activities. These  
have included hosting the recent Serra Jog  
for Vocations in Sydney, numerous Card-  
inal's Dinners and similar functions, sitting  
on the Board of the San Miguel Family  
Centre for the DLS Brothers, setting up and  
editing a parish magazine, etc.

At Bankstown, and later DLS Ashfield,  
we were given a strong sense of what they  
called "school spirit". That meant loyalty  
and involvement in working as a team, and  
it applied to Church and to commu-  
nity through a strong sense of social justice.  
... may explain why I've seldom said "no" to  
an opportunity or an invitation – and also  
explains both my presence on this page, and  
my career path, which has deviated from the  
facts of journalism to the hope involved  
with handling the weather, but with faith as  
a constant.



Mike Bailey

## Your Say 1 - The third rite?

by John Satterthwaite

Christ gave the ministry of forgiveness to His Church. This is exercised in many ways. Sins are forgiven by acts of contrition, works of charity and almsgiving. The most common way to obtain God's pardon is through the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass.

When we come to Mass we begin by confessing our sinfulness. The priest then calls on God to forgive us. Only serious (mortal) sins require individual confession in the Sacrament of Penance.

After the Protestant Reformation the Church placed great stress on the grace of the sacraments in response to the Reformers' rejection of the idea of sacramental grace. The catechism that the older ones of us memorised at school tended to give the impression that the Sacrament of Penance was the only way to have our sins forgiven and that this called for individual confession.

Confession was also seen as a necessary preparation for the reception of Holy Communion. "Going to the Sacraments" meant going to Confession on Saturday and to Communion at Mass on Sunday morning.

There was also a tendency to exaggerate

the seriousness of many sins, and hence the need to confess them.

Many Catholics, with no mortal sins to confess, find confession difficult. Yet they still want to receive the grace of the sacrament.

This has led to the popularity of the Third Rite of Reconciliation, when people gather, make a general confession of their sins and receive the Sacrament of Penance in the General Absolution given by the priest.

### *The most common way to obtain God's pardon is through the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass.*

Many cannot understand why the Pope was so adamant in his address to the Australian bishops that this practice is permitted only in rare and exceptional circumstances.

The Church still encourages confessions

of devotion as a worthy practice. However, it needs to be stressed that the reception of the Sacrament is only necessary for those who are guilty of serious sin.

If communal penitential services prove to be pastorally valuable as a preparation for the major Feasts of Christmas and Easter, they are to be encouraged. They should not conclude with the priest saying the words of sacramental Absolution: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". The formula should be that used in the Penitential Rite at Mass: "May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life".

This change may seem trivial, but it will help to break down the over-dependence on the Sacrament as the sole means of forgiveness that has for so long existed in the Church. □

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*John Satterthwaite is the Bishop of Lismore in northern NSW. He addressed this letter to all the people of the diocese.*

## Your Say 2 - Where are the prophets?

Stephanie Kent

After the Second Vatican Council, I questioned many things, especially as my children were still at school age, and, as we did not have a Catholic school near us, I was the primary one responsible for their Catholic education. I found it hard to adjust my 'old' thinking to the 'new' ways. I was horrified that young people were no longer being taught the 'ten' commandments!

However, I feel that the Church has never really accepted that we are mature people in a position to discern right from wrong, without the hierarchy treating us as little children, incapable of making such decisions. How sad that, in recent times, the situation has become worse.

I was very disappointed in the statement issued by the Australian Bishops after their last meeting, regarding the *Statement of Conclusions*. Paragraph 8 of the Bishops' statement mentions being challenged by 'Peter's successor'. Who is 'Peter's successor' at the moment? Given Pope John Paul II's indifferent health, I wonder whether he is making the decisions.

Paragraph 9 talks about the 'crisis in faith'. Is it a crisis when different people have 'different understandings of the person

of Jesus, the nature of the church' etc? I think the 'challenge' situation should be a two-way thing. If the Pope can challenge us, should we not, by virtue of our Baptism, be able to challenge unjust or unworkable decisions made on our behalf?

### *'Constructive dialogue' is something that is very rarely used in the decision-making of the Church ...*

I smiled to myself when I read that errors should not be corrected by 'blunt use of authority but through dialogue and persuasion'. Also, the comments about 'constructive dialogue building harmony'. 'Constructive dialogue' is something that is very rarely used in the decision-making of the Church, from parish level upwards.

Of course, the most talked-about issue of the lot is the Third Rite of Reconciliation. It is ludicrous to think that, by issuing an edict about the First Rite, people will

automatically return to that practice.

People today have a much deeper understanding of reconciliation generally. We are encouraged to see that, whatever faults we have, whatever sins we commit, they affect the whole community. Gone are the days of the 'Jesus and me' situation, and saving my soul ... bother anyone else's!

Therefore, why should we not come together as a community and, in so doing, admit that we are sinners seeking reconciliation with each other and with God? Also, why should those who do not have the disposition to go to the First Rite, be deprived of any form of reconciliation?

A recent comment was made, suggesting that the old form was a way of perpetuating the clerical power and control of the clergy. From a purely practical point of view, I ask: Given that the reformed ritual for the First Rite could, and should, take up to twenty minutes for each person, how much time are our already overworked priests going to be expected to spend doing what they are being asked to do?

In conclusion, I ask, where are our present-day Helder Camaras and prophets? □

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*Stephanie lives in Hamilton, VIC.*

# Essay - Sound advice for tomorrow's catholics?

by John Thornhill

Written at a time when Catholics in general are being urged to find a renewed appreciation of their faith, when many Catholic teachers want to add to the theological resources they bring to their task, Michael Morwood's *Tomorrow's Catholic: Understanding God and Jesus in a New Millennium* promises a great deal.

Our expectations are increased when we find that the author tackles issues which are fundamental if the church is to find an effective interface with contemporary awareness - how the faith can be meaningful, for instance, in the awareness we now have of the immensity of the universe, the importance of a reaffirmation of the Saviour's solidarity with us in our humanness, and a critical acknowledgement of the unfortunate consequences of the "atonement" theory of redemption, tending to distort the image of God for many generations of Christians.

Unfortunately, our hopes are not fulfilled. On the contrary, *Tomorrow's Catholic* is a book which will prove very misleading to many of its readers.

Work which attempts a critical assessment of the way in which Christian faith has been presented for most of the church's history can only make its case if it demonstrates a well-developed historical competence. If it proposes a revolutionary change in the assumptions of Christian theology, it must have a deep appreciation of the resources and methodologies which have shaped the theological discussions of Christian history. This book is seriously deficient in both of these areas.

Its basic argument is that "for the past 2000 years" Christian awareness has been dominated by a "world view" associated with a primitive cosmology derived from the "fall" story of the Book of Genesis, dominated by the image of a "distant God" who "withdrew from us" and "closed the gate" so that he is now "in heaven looking down on us". This unfortunate situation, it has been assumed, can only be put right by "the life and death of Jesus ... understood as effecting a change of attitude within God" (pp. 12-13). This world view "played a central role" in the development of such basic doctrines as that of the Trinity: "The reasoning was that we human beings are not able to make up to God for the sin of our first parents; only someone from God's side, as it were, could do this. Jesus has saved us, so Jesus must be far more than merely human" (p.65). Morwood associates with this world view a "literalism" which had "lost the capacity to understand the role of...

myth, story, imagination, and mystery" (p.118).

A scenario which Morwood outlines is familiar enough. It was certainly featured prominently in Catholic catechesis in recent times. It is not 2000 years old, however; it emerged in the relatively recent past. Situating it within the development of Christian thought calls for a far more nuanced historical interpretation than that offered by this text.

## *The publicity this book has received and the misleading picture it paints for those who do not have the theological background to assess its claims has made a commentary imperative*

Medieval culture was so immersed in the world of legend and symbol, in fact, that one could say it was in danger of drowning in it: the stories and images of the Scriptures, those of hagiography, those associated with shrines and relics etc. ran together in an ambiguous cultural amalgam. As the bearer of our Christian tradition, this cultural reality nurtured great theologies and remarkable schools of spirituality; but at the same time its ambiguity made it difficult - as Jungmann observes in his study of the history of catechesis - to respond to Luther's radical challenge: "Tell us, then, what you really believe about the God of Christian faith!"

The Reformation's reaction, removing the Scriptures from the living matrix of the church's life in the Spirit, meant that the Protestant movement faced the recurring danger of a "fundamentalism" in its appeal to the authority of the Scriptures. The rationale which Morwood criticises is really Catholicism's response, in the climate of the Enlightenment's demand for clear and distinct ideas. It too, it must be acknowledged, often assumed the form of a "fundamentalism" with unfortunate implications, distorting appreciation of the ways of God revealed in the plan of salvation.

A sound historical sense is essential, of course, for any theology which is to make a helpful contribution to the life of the

church in this moment of unprecedented transition and change. If Morwood had shown how this outlook, which emerged in the Counter-Reformation period and tended to shape the popular mind of Catholicism, was not an adequate expression of our tradition as it has been upheld by the church's liturgical expression, by its great thinkers and schools of spirituality, and then gone on to suggest how insights into the concerns and sensibilities of our contemporaries can help form the renewed popular vision which Catholicism needs, he had the makings of a very valuable book.

Without a mature grasp of history, it is impossible to tackle the issue of doctrinal development satisfactorily - one of the essential elements of Morwood's argument. The great theologians of our Christian tradition have all seen their task as one of interpreting "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3) within the culture of their own time. Today's historical awareness has greatly enhanced our understanding of the implications of the principle enunciated by John XXIII at the opening of the Vatican Council: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another". The church of all ages shares, through the gift of the Spirit, the "one faith" of its beginnings (Eph 4:5); the theological interpretations of different eras bring to light the meaning and promise of that faith in its boundless implications in ever-changing contexts of human experience.

Our author's discussion of the development of doctrine leaves one with the impression that he understands this development as a transformation, in which later formulations are more a reflection of new thought patterns than the expression of a "once for all" truth through new intellectual categories. This criticism is so fundamental that we should consider the author's own words: first in reference to Jesus of Nazareth, and then to the divine Trinity:

How and why ... did Christianity move from an emphasis on Jesus, human like us, the incarnation of God's Wisdom, raised to God's side, mediator, image of our own destiny ... to Jesus 'one in being with', really and truly God, and fundamentally different from us? ... The Adam and Eve story played a central role in this development ... The reasoning was that we human beings are not able to make up to God for the sin of our first parents; only someone from God's side, as it were, could do this. Jesus has saved

us, so Jesus must be far more than merely human (pp.64-65). Our present understanding of human development on this planet has no need for a Godperson to come down from heaven and save us by winning back God's friendship ... Jesus' role as Saviour can be understood in ways that are not dependent on an outmoded religious world view. What happened, though, is that *being* interpreted Jesus' role in human affairs in way it did, the Christian church developed its understanding of God as a Trinity. What we have here is a *model* which tried to answer the religious questions of the time (pp.89-90). Is God *actually* a Trinity of Persons, or is this a model to help us understand the mystery of God within specifically Christian experience? (p.129).

Leaving aside the historical inaccuracy of projecting an Anselmian interpretation of redemption and atonement back into the early centuries of Christian thought - something to which we must return presently - one must point out that this interpretation of doctrinal development would be categorically rejected by John Henry Newman, the pioneer in our own era of reflection upon the nature of doctrinal development. More recently, the scholarship of theologians like Bernard Lonergan has given a very different and detailed account of the process which gave us the credal formularies of the early church councils.

There are many aspects of this work with which one could take issue. Let us look at the details of Morwood's work by considering the way in which he has dealt with important issues, mentioned as we began these comments.

He joins other contemporary theologians in suggesting that the recovery of an appreciation of the New Testament's identification of the Saviour with the divine Wisdom permeating all creation will provide a perspective which is helpful to contemporary Christians as they come to terms with the immensity of the cosmos brought to light by modern science. This identification is in no way incompatible with Christian faith's affirmation from New Testament times that Jesus is the eternal Word of the Father; in fact, it complements this theme in a remarkable way.

Morwood finds these themes incompatible, however, not by reason of the findings of biblical scholarship, but by reason of the Christological *a priori* contained in his general argument's interpretation of the development of doctrine. His Christology sees the affirmation of the Saviour's divinity as incompatible with the affirmation that he is as human as we are: "the statement that Jesus is divine is linked with him being the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus is divine; we are not. Jesus is God; we are not" (p.63).

But this is to misrepresent what was made clear in the debates of the early councils. Against interpretations which, in their concern to uphold the Saviour's divinity, seriously compromised his authentic humanity ("Docetism" at the end of the first century, and "Monophysitism" in the fifth century) the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (ad451) had as one of its concerns a *safeguarding* of the truth that Jesus is as truly human as we are:

one and the same Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in divinity, perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man ... one and the same ... in two natures, which are not confused ... each maintaining its own authenticity, in one person ...

While affirming that Jesus is more than we are, the council is also underlining the truth that this "more" in no way compromises his solidarity with us in his humanity.

All of this is made so patently clear by the work of scholars such as Bernard Lonergan that it is irresponsible to mislead the general reader concerning a dogma so fundamental to Christian faith.

*He shared in our  
humanity, so that we may  
share in his divinity,  
is the constant refrain of  
this patristic soteriology.*

If later Christian consciousness was dazzled by the truth of the Saviour's divine identity, and often failed to appreciate the full implications of the truth that he is as fully human as we are, this unfortunate development was not due to the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon, but to a failure to uphold the full implications of the Council's teaching.

Morwood is right when he judges that the atonement theory of salvation has led to a distorted understanding of the ways of God for many Christians. His lack of historical awareness once again betrays him, however, when he sets out to put things right. As we have seen, he links this inadequate view of the mystery of salvation with the interpretation of the story of "the fall", and sees it as having influenced the doctrinal development of the early church councils.

It is a clear fact of history that this inadequate soteriology derives from Anselm of Canterbury's treatise, "Why did God become man?", written at the end of the 11th century. At the time of the early Councils, the rich teaching of the church Fathers interpreted the world's salvation as a work of the mercy and compassion of God: the eter-

nal Word, through whom the world was made and humanity was created in God's image, returned to a disintegrating world to restore in it the divine image; in the humanity he shares with us, he has opened the way to our sharing in his victory over evil in all its forms. He shared in our humanity, so that we may share in his divinity, is the constant refrain of this patristic soteriology.

The Vatican Council's emphasis upon the patristic theme of the "Paschal Mystery" points the way to a recovery of this more adequate understanding of the mystery of salvation.

One is reluctant to make such a forthright criticism of the work of another Australian theologian, particularly when the author has recently resigned from the ordained ministry in what must be a very painful decision. The publicity this book has received, however, and the misleading picture it paints for those who do not have the theological background to assess its claims have made such a commentary imperative.

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*John Thornhill SM has taught theology for more than forty years and has been a member of both the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine and Faith and the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Committee (ARCIC). He is the author of numerous articles and several books on theology.*

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## CHRIST IN THE TRADITION

*In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin; begotten from the Father before the ages as regards His Godhead, and in the last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos ("God-bearer"), as regards His manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon ("person") and one hypostasis (another word for "person") - not parted or divided into two prosopa, but one and the same Son, only-begotten divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ Himself have taught us about Him and the creed of our fathers has handed down.*

**The Council of Chalcedon 451.**

## Words for a Pilgrim People

Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you'. (Matthew 21:31)

□□□

By the love of Christ for us ... the Superessential gave up his mystery, and manifested himself by assuming humanity. However, in spite of this manifestation - or rather, to use a more divine language, at the very heart of it - he loses nothing of his mysteriousness. For the mystery of Jesus has remained hidden. No reason and no intelligence have fathomed his essential nature. In whatever way he is understood, he remains utterly mysterious. (Dionisius the Areopagite (early 5<sup>th</sup> century), **Letter 3, To Gaius**)

□□□

I had not realised that in most neuroses, and in many other disturbances as well, the inner signals become weak or disappear entirely (as in the severely obsessive person) and/or are not 'heard' or cannot be heard. At the extreme we have the experientially empty person, the zombie, one with empty insides. Recovering the self must, as a *sine qua non*, entail the recovery of the ability to have and to cognize these inner signals, to know what and whom one likes and dislikes, what is enjoyable and what is not, when to eat and when not to, when to sleep, when to urinate, when to rest. The experientially empty person, lacking these directives from within, these voices of the real self, must turn to outer cues for guidance, for instance eating when the clock tells him to, rather than obeying his appetite (he has none). He guides himself by clocks, rules, calendars, schedules, agenda, and by hints and cues from other people. (Abraham Maslow, **The Farther Reaches of Human Nature**, Viking, 1971, 33)

□□□

Whether I am a child or an adult, a simple person or a hero, a prisoner or a free citizen, I am always a potentiality for transcendence in many ways. If I were to freeze myself into one mold by repression of the aspiration to transcend what I currently am, I would die to authentic living. The most sordid crime against our humanity is to destroy what we basically are: transcendent selves. (Adrian van Kaam, **The Transcendent Self**, Dimension Books, 1979, 167-168)

## The Bible - The shocking paradox

In the Gospel of Matthew there is a passage that is unique to Matthew. It is striking for both its common sense and, more particularly, for the sheer enormity of what it proposes. The passage - 21:28-32 - is set in Jerusalem, the shadows of the passion are on the horizon. "The chief priests and the elders of the people" had just challenged Jesus on his right to teach in the temple. Jesus bounced the ball back into their court, asking them by what authority John was baptised. While they were still trying to wriggle out of that, Matthew has Jesus put the case of the two sons who are asked by their father to work in the vineyard. The one says "No" but goes, the other says "Yes" but does not go. There is a fairly common sense answer to Jesus' question: "Which of the two did the Father's will?"

**Religion is always in danger of being tamed.**

The full impact of the encounter, however, comes with the next statement: "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you'". One scholar sums it up: "The shocking paradox that they will enter the kingdom ahead of the others is the heart of the Gospel" (Benedict T Viviano OP).

We seem to have a need to bring the world under control. While this need reflects the fact that it is necessary to impose some order on the world, to carve out an area of meaning, as it were, from the indefinite, incomprehensible and uncontrollable mystery of it all, it is always in tension with the fact that, ultimately, life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. Our lives must be lived in abandonment and surrender, not in mastery and control. No system - not even the Church - can replace God.

Religion is always in danger of being tamed through systematisation, dying under the weight of human beings anxiously imposing some kind of human order on what is, in fact, ultimately a divine enterprise, a work of grace. Jesus finds in "the prostitutes and tax collectors" a disposition that recognises the rightful owner of the religious enterprise. Maybe such people, like little children, are not subject to the same illusions of mastery and control that adults seem to find irresistible for the most part. □

## The Tradition - Renewal never ends

The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* from the Second Vatican Council, reflects a recovery of some principles, central to the Tradition, when it states: "While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled (Heb 7:26) knew nothing of sin (2 Cor 5:21), but came to expiate only the sins of the people (cf. Heb 2:17), the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. The Church, 'like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God' (cf. St Augustine), announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). By the power of the risen Lord it is given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light."

The Church has not consistently, down the ages, thought of herself as "always in need of being purified". To the extent that the Church is a human organisation, like all human organisations, it is subject to tendencies that are more in favour of death than life. Human organisations can move, often imperceptibly, towards a subversion of the very ends for which they were established. Thus, rules, structures and procedures may become so complex that they become ends in themselves. The means become the ends, the relative becomes absolute. This, in essence, is the process of idolisation. Or, to put it in a more straightforward way, the Church may become an idol.

**The Church is always in need of being purified.**

The Second Vatican Council calls us back to the person and teaching of Jesus. We are challenged to ask: Who is He? Why is He? What has He done? What example did He give us? How should we respond? These questions underpin an ongoing conversation that the community of the baptised must have in every age and every culture. An essential part of the Church's self-perception, to be manifest in each individual as well as the Church universal - that life is a process of daily conversion, of being liberated through Him, with Him and Him. We are pilgrims, strangers in a foreign land. We must never succumb to the illusion that we have arrived, that we have no more work to do. That assembly of the baptised we call "the Church" is also a human system, one that operates according to human dynamics. But its whole *raison d'être* is found in the Father's loving action in and through Jesus Christ. □

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

### • Spirituality in the Pub (SIP):

**SIP Promoter** – Sr Marie Biddle rsj is SIP noter and can be contacted on (02) 945 3444(W) or 9712 2109(H).

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

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, 7.30pm-9pm: October 28 "Spiritual Discernment" (Lucy Palmer & tba) (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

° **Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: September 8 "Expressing the Spiritual" (Noel Davis & Kevin Bates sm) (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).

° **Canberra** - The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra, 7.30pm-9pm: September 29 "What is Spirituality for Australian Youth?" (Speakers tba) (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

° **Chatswood** - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: September 14 "Going Solo" (Cathy Byrne & Alex Nelson) (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).

° **Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: October 26 "Spirituality of the Jubilee – Jewish & Christian perspectives" Margaret Coloe & Rev Erich Cahn) (Info: Ann on 9701 7076 or 9701 3740 or Joyce on 9700 1250).

° **Collingwood (VIC)** – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm. October 6 (Topic & Speakers tba) Info: Maree on 0412 136681).

° **Kincumber** - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: October 5 "The Power of My Story: The 'Hearth' of the Matter" (Alain Cornish & Margaret Paton) (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: October 6 "How do we live: Is a gentler society possible?" (Tom Uren & Myree Harris rsj) (Info: Maree on 9387 3152 (H))

° **Penrith** - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, October 20 "Finding Meaning Today in the Church" (Teresa Pirola & Fr Vince Casey) (Info: Dennis on 02 4773 8429).

° **Penrith** - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, September 29 "Into the Millennium: Spirituality and our new Cosmic Story" (Marjan

Zadnick & Michael Fox), 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: September 21 "Spirituality Alone and Together" (Elsie Heiss & Rosemary Hamerton) (Info: Karen on 9570 3257 or John on 9533 4939).

° **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: October 5 "Where do I find Spirituality in Australia Today?" (Major Frank Wilson & Fr Frank Brennan sj) (Info: Tim or Margaret on 9634 2927 (H)).

° **Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: September 15 "Spirituality and Mysticism" (Terence McBride & tba) (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: October 5 "Option Paralysis – Too many choices!" (David Riollo & Nathan Tasker) (Info: Jocelyn on 0412 114038).

° **Catalyst Dinner** on Friday October 15 at the Hunters Hill parish hall, cnr Mary Street and Gladesville Rd, 7.30pm - 10pm. The topic: "Australian Community and Personal Responsibility". Speakers: Tom Uren AO and Mary Leahy RSJ.

° **Forum for the Future** tape and text of Robert Fitzgerald's presentation "The Future of Leadership" now available - \$5 each + \$2 p&p. (Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

### • Other news and events

° **Our prayers and sympathy are extended to the family of Clare Bleakley** (Catalyst Friend) who was killed tragically in an air disaster in Fiji.

° **Eremos Institute**, "Religion for Sale" presented by Rachel Kohn, October 31, 4pm, Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta (Info: 02 9683 5096).

° **Evening of Spirituality**, October 14, 7.30pm, Mary Immaculate & St Athanasius Church, Cnr Raglan & Whistler Sts, Manly. Speakers: Claire Barbeau, David Leary & Carol Murphy. Entry free, supper provided. (Info: Mary-Anne Addington on 9938 5082).

° **Australian Christian Meditation Com-**

**munity** – September 18 & 19, Talks and Meditation, Fr George Maloney sj, St Aloysius College Hall, Milsons Point; St James' Church, King St, Sydney, September 20; (Info: Jillian on 9489 7480; Mary on 9637 5732; Joan on 9417 6385 after 6pm).

° **The Centre for Christian Spirituality:** September 14, 21, 28, Oct 5, 10am – 12 noon. Reading 'The Cloud of Unknowing' with Kate Englebrecht. Other courses to follow. (Info: Kate 9398 2211).

° **Peter Wister** of 10 Wildflower Dr, Pomonal, Vic, 3381, is keen to form a discussion group. Contact Peter if you live near Pomonal and are interested.

° **Enneagram and Spirituality** weekend at Blackfriars Retreat Centre, Canberra, commencing September 17; Workshops at The Chevalier Centre (formerly St Paul's Seminary), Kensington & St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill in October. (Info: 02 9349 7333 or 0417 691 904)

° **Spirituality Courses**, Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, "Finding our Spiritual Home" September 15, 1.30pm & September 19, 11am. (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887). "Tears we need to shed", Sept 4, 10am-3.30pm & Sept 5, 11am-4pm (Info: Sr Claire Taylor on 8912 4898).

° **Embracing the World: Women, Spirituality and Church**, October 1-3, Burgmann College, ANU, Canberra (Info: Marie Louise Uhr on 02 6251 4513).

° **"Walking the Margins"**, The Federal Hotel, Alstonville, October 12, 7.30-9.00pm (Info: Darcy on 6628 1846 or Anne on 6628 6428).

### APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We have written to our *Friends* seeking additional financial help to enable us to employ someone to assist us in our mission of raising the level of good conversation in the Australian Catholic Church.

A quick calculation shows that if 2,000 gave \$25 each, we would reach the target of \$50,000, or 1,000: \$50 each, or 250: \$200, or 62½(!): \$800, or 50 people: \$1000 ...

**CAN YOU HELP?**

# Recommended Reading

Peter Kaldor, Robert Dixon, Ruth Powell and the NCLS Team, *Taking Stock: A Profile of Australian Church Attenders*, Open Book Publishers, 1999, 167 pages, \$19.95.

In 1996 a survey was done of beliefs and practices of people associated with twenty recognised church groupings and a number of smaller independent congregations, house churches and the like within Australia. Many Catholics participated in this survey through their parishes. "Taking Stock presents a detailed picture of involvement in church life, across Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations, as perceived by a wide range of church attenders whose voices are heard here in a way not previously possible." A similar survey had been carried out in 1991. The Catholics only joined the survey of 1996. The survey revealed that Lutherans (32%), Anglicans (38%) and Catholics (48%) value sharing the eucharist, while few in the Salvation Army (1%), Baptists (4%) and Seventh Day Adventists (3%) shared that view; of those Catholics who attend mass, roughly three quarters are forty or older; Catholic priests rated the top four sources of stress as: "hard to separate work and home", "dealing with difficult attenders", "difficulty of finding suitable people for roles" and "time wasted on tasks not central to role"; 63% of Catholic attenders said they practice private devotion "at least a few times each week" and this was similar in other groups. *Taking Stock* is a useful resource book, especially for those who are involved in ministry.

N T Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Fortress Press, 1996, 741 pages, index, pb, c. \$60.

Some readers may be aware of Wright's *Who was Jesus?* - where he presents a compelling critique of several contemporary portraits of Jesus. Both his meticulous scholarship and his lucid style are present there. That book was but a hint of the riches to be found in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, volume two of a series he is writing entitled *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. The first volume, *The New Testament and the People of God*, was published in 1992 and presents the research "on whose shoulders the present work rests all its weight" says Wright. The very depth and breadth of the scholarship evident in Wright's works on Jesus ought to preserve us from easy conclusions in our own thinking about Jesus. "The underlying argument of this book", says Wright, "is that rigorous history (ie open-ended investigation of actual events in first-century Palestine) and rigorous theology (ie open-ended investigation of what the word 'god', and hence the adjective 'divine', might actually refer to) belong together, and never more so than in the discussion of Jesus." This is a monumental work. Beware, reading it is also a monumental work! Few will find it attractive to simply "read". It is best regarded as a reference to which one ought return again and again. We can only hope that many do that, for it addresses so well the ultimate question: Who is Jesus?

Race Mathews, *Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stakeholder Society*, Pluto Press Australia (Locked Bag 199, Annandale, NSW 2038), 308 pages, index, pb, \$24.95.

Sir Edward Heath once spoke contemptuously of Malcolm Muggeridge when he suggested that, at bottom, economic problems were also moral issues. Mathews - and the Church - would disagree with Sir Edward. Questions and issues of economics and politics, social structures and cultural developments, far from being tangential to the ongoing life and renewal of the Church, are in fact central. Race Mathews - not a Catholic himself - finds much in the Church's social teaching that is wise and able to make a long-lasting and profoundly positive contribution to Australian society. *Jobs* is a book of political philosophy. It is about "distributism", the basis of which is "the belief that a just social order can only be achieved through a much more widespread distribution of property. Distributism favours a 'society of owners' where property belongs to the many rather than the few, and correspondingly opposes the concentration of property in the hands either of the rich, as under capitalism, or of the state, as advocated by some socialists". It could be argued that, both inside the Church and beyond, the principles in support of "common good" as proposed in Catholic social teaching, have not been given their due. Mathews' very readable book tries to redress this. It makes for very stimulating and challenging reading!

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