



THE MIX



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Our Say – Unity in the church

In the *Life of Pachomius* we find a story that carries some good lessons. Pachomius, who had become a solitary c.314AD, attracted others to him. He responded by setting up a simple structure of community life for them, believing that their shared faith in Jesus would be enough to unify them. Pachomius was naïve. Some individuals took advantage of him and threatened to destroy the whole project.

He might have been naïve, but Pachomius was not stupid, nor did he lack courage. He developed a much more explicit rule of life with a clear line of authority to himself. Some of the brothers resisted and had to be expelled for the sake of the community.

Like life itself, human community is teeming with paradoxes. The monastic tradition, so influenced by Pachomius and his experience, bears witness to this. Community is made up of individuals in their individuality, and the resulting entity – the community – is greater than the sum of the individual parts. Unity is constituted by diversity. Freedom can only thrive within structure and discipline and the expectation of authentic obedience.

A group of human beings will only act as one if there is some effective source of unity. Without such an effective principle of unity the group will fragment.

Where does the Catholic Church find an effective source of unity today? This question is one that we must address with urgency and great care. It goes to the very heart of our existence as Church, for we are in grave danger of fragmenting at this time.

An essential source of unity within the Church is the one faith in Jesus who is the Christ. This implies a body of truths to which all individuals must submit if they are to sincerely regard themselves as members of the community of believers.

But in a time when the Church is searching for new and more effective ways of articulating the one faith, uncertainties and confusions have inevitably emerged. These uncertainties and confusions are further accentuated by the fact that the lines between good objective scholarship, ideologically driven research, personal opinion and mere rhetoric, have become blurred in the popular mind.

At the heart of that one faith is the Bishop

of Rome, who is a "perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 23). However, the primacy of Peter is not as straightforward as it once seemed. Pope John Paul II himself implied as much when he noted in his 1995 encyclical on ecumenism:

I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility ... in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation. (*Ut Unum Sint*, 95)

The issue of unity is not dealt with by a simplistic resort to rules and dogmatic formulae and/or authoritarian proclamations and demands. Nor is the issue of unity dealt with by ignoring it, as if it is of little or no account. It is in fact a highly complex, subtle and critical issue. It calls for an ongoing and intelligent conversation. The participants in that conversation must be dominated by a very real relationship with Jesus Christ. A unity that does not spring from the Spirit is not worth having. □

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, Susanna Davis, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Regis Hickey CFC, Christine Hutchison, Maryellen McLeay, Dr Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Dr Tim O'Hearn, John Robinson, Carmel Sharples, John Sharples, Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan SM

The following is its Mission Statement: We are believers who are attempting to establish a forum for conversation within the Catholic Church of Australia. Our aim is to prompt open exchanges among the community of believers, mindful of the diversity of expression of faith in contemporary Australia. This springs explicitly from the spirit of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II: "Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case". (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.92)

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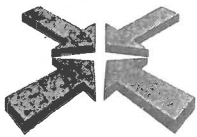
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

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The Human Face

My name is Gabrielle Carey. I was born in Sydney 40 years ago. Both my parents were atheists and, in primary school, instead of scripture, I was sent to the library. Although my father was very strong on morality and ethics, he saw these issues as part of a larger political structure, rather than spiritual or personal. He liked to debate leaders of the church and teased my friends from school with the idea that God could well be a cockroach. He was a firm believer in the power of rationality rather than imagination, although his faith in human rationality waned considerably towards the end of his life.

I became a Catholic for many reasons. In some ways it was more an intuitive decision than a rational one. I just felt at home with Catholicism. I felt like it was where I belonged. Considering my background, however, it was a difficult decision to make. One of the people who helped me make that decision was Abbot Celestine Cullen of the Benedictine abbey in Limerick, Ireland. He wasn't frightened or put off by my somewhat 'colourful' background and spoke to me about God in ways that were inspiring and full of light and possibilities, rather than dogma and doctrine. I went to the abbey on a few occasions for retreats and received excellent spiritual direction, always coming away feeling renewed.

One of my preoccupations has always been how to put philosophy into practice. A religious faith is much more convincing and real if it is demonstrated rather than just talked about. In fact, in some ways perhaps a truly religious person would never talk religion at all, only enact it. In my case, when I became a Catholic I was keen to find exactly the kind of Catholicism I felt comfortable with – a Catholicism that was liberating rather than suffocating.

It was liberation theology, in part, that attracted me to Central America. In 1985 I travelled to Mexico. After a short time in Mexico City I settled in a village in Veracruz called Xicochimalco. At that stage in my life I felt there was something almost irredeemably corrupt about our modern, first-world lifestyle. I wanted the simplicity of village life. Although there was no sign of liberation theology in Xico, there was an incredibly strong religious community, rooted in both the indigenous tradition and the Spanish colonial style Catholicism.

The people in that village taught me a great deal, much of which I later wrote about in a novel *The Borrowed Girl*. While I was there I married a man in the village and we had a daughter, Brigida Xilonen, who is now 11. When I left Mexico at the

end of 1989 my husband stayed in his village. Apart from one brief visit back to Mexico in 1992, I have lived in Australia ever since.

Maintaining a sense of religion and faith in Australia has been difficult. My family and friends, on the whole, are either agnostics or atheists who treat my faith as a little eccentricity. I am not interested in converting them to Catholicism. What matters to me is the doing of religion rather than the pontificating. The doing involves constant openness and enough imagination to create ever more catalysts for renewal. In essence it is about love. Although I can't bear the evangelical carping about Jesus and love, at the heart of religion there must be an unforced, natural longing and love, such as that talked of in *The Cloud of Unknowing*. God cannot be known, said one author, He can only be loved. This mysterious nature of love – encompassing everything from carnal to romantic to aesthetic to mystic – is what is driving my current novel, tentatively titled *Late Have I Loved You*. (Yes, I would have preferred 'Late Have I Loved Thee' but the publishers didn't think that was a very catchy title).

Father Michael Whelan has been especially helpful in maintaining my sense of faith and vocation (my vocation being writing). Like Abbot Celestine, Michael is broad-minded, very intelligent, generous, inspiring and literally, for me, a Godser. Another source of connection and inspiration is Australian Catholic University where I am finishing a Masters in English. It has been wonderful to study literature in the context of spirituality and religion and to have such good lecturers as John Murray and Michael Griffith. Literature and spirituality, for me, have always been related.

My relationship with the church continues to be fairly quirky and idiosyncratic. I feel deeply committed to the institution and yet my life and work is outside it, among the non-believers.



Gabrielle Carey

The doctrine that Morwood questions concerns the true humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. This doctrine has its heart in Scripture and Tradition. It is the essential Christological affirmation and is normative for all Christian Churches. There has never been a more important time to realise that the Church is not just individuals gathered together but a community of people who relate to one another and who are committed to certain common beliefs, meanings and values. The doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus are the common possession of the whole Christian Tradition.

It is the essential Christological affirmation and is normative for all Christian Churches.

To put these truths aside, or to fail to recognise their importance, is to part company, not only with Catholic Tradition, but with the whole breadth of Christianity, east and west, Catholic and Protestant. The doctrine establishes the framework of our faith. It is not only the starting point, it is the basis of our faith. It is clear and crucial. The precise manner in which this is explored is not of fundamental importance, but the doctrine is. Credal statements really do matter.

ate Englebrecht, Mosman, NSW

In my lifetime I have witnessed the scientific view of the world move from favouring a 'steady state' theory to favouring a 'big bang' theory. This change has made little perceptible difference to my life. I still can't find the butter in the fridge and my socks still go missing. As far as I am concerned, cosmologies or world views have little relevance to my daily problems of living and none at all as to whether I accept Jesus as God or not. All my life I have belonged to a community that has taken God for granted. I suspect that we all, in some way or other, may have different ideas associated with the word 'God'. These ideas may lurk in the background of our consciousness but I believe that they are always shaping our values, our aspirations, and our responses to the setbacks in our lives. In this sense, people's ideas about God are revealed in the way they live. They are all, in their own way, responding to an inescapable question: 'What is the meaning and purpose of life?' At the beginning of the first millennium, as I understand the matter, the Jewish people and their religious leaders thought that they had all the answers to that question. But then something rather shattering happened at the feast of Pentecost. It is recorded that a retired fish-merchant got

up on the equivalent of a soapbox in Jerusalem and started to harangue anybody who would listen. I gather that this merchant was inflamed with a sense of burning outrage at the monumental injustice that had been perpetrated on a person whom he much admired, a person of ineffable goodness and innocence. Those who listened to that merchant were being called upon to accept Jesus as their true Messiah. 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.' They were monotheistic Jews and this, for them, was a momentous decision. Whatever motivated those early Jewish listeners to believe the fish-merchant must have been pretty powerful. Was it a tremendous sense of liberation from oppressive religious laws and taboos? Was it a hunger for immortality? Was it trepidation that the end of their world was near? Was it the story of innocence crucified? I don't know. What I do know, however, is that one of those who later responded to the message, and was given the name of Paul, described the character of the fish-merchant's Messiah in an absolutely spine-tingling way. Writing to the Philippians he said that if they adopted the charter they would demonstrate their belief in Jesus as God. 'In your minds,' he wrote, 'you must be the same as Christ Jesus. There must be no competition among you, no conceit, but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself so that nobody thinks of one's own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead.'

I suspect that we all, in some way or other, may have different ideas associated with the word 'God'.

Paul is here turning the traditional Jewish idea of God on its head. It is hard to grasp the revolution of thought that must have taken place in his mind in order to turn the image of Yahweh the mighty warrior into Jesus the suffering Messiah. There is no power and might here, unless it be moral power, no authority unless it be moral authority. As I understand Paul, he was a Pharisee with a mind steeped in traditional Hebrew pharisaic thinking. He is not, however, using such a framework in his letter to the Philippians. He is appealing to an obviously pre-existing Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus. The theology of this belief hadn't been worked out. Theology follows belief. The big problem that was to confront early Church thinkers was not 'why' Jesus was God but 'how' Jesus was

God. The words of Paul to the Philippians challenge us to examine our concept of God and its reflection in the way we fashion and maintain our relationships with one another. If politicians, media magnates, church dignitaries, professional and business people, families and nobodies like myself, all attempted to live up to the standards Paul set for the Philippians, the world would be on its way to becoming a better place in the third millennium. For my money, if that is the mind of God, then Jesus is my God and Jesus is our saviour.

Peter Coleman, Wollstonecraft, NSW

The words and writings of Michael Morwood, have given new and clearer understanding to the faith of hundreds of searching people. He has helped them understand that our God is near and accompanies us as we travel through life. Are we not to believe that Revelation is on-going and that God still speaks to his people? Why should we be so certain that the Spirit of Truth was directing those (at) the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but does not speak in the clear and contemporary searchings of Michael Morwood?

Jane Oldman, PBVM, Oakleigh, VIC.

I congratulate *The Mix* for publishing Fr John Thornhill's critique of Michael Morwood's *Tomorrow's Catholic*. For healthy dialogue to take place, we must be exposed to 'all reasonable expressions of opinion'. It would be dangerous, indeed, if the Editor were to exercise control over people's rights to respond in a reasonable way to someone else's opinion. I find it helpful to read differing opinions on the same subject. I hope *The Mix* continues to make this possible.

Bernadette Wood, Burleigh Waters, Qld

For healthy dialogue to take place, we must be exposed to 'all reasonable expressions of opinion'.

CORRECTION

In The Mix of September this year it was stated that John Thornhill had been a member of the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith. This is incorrect. John Thornhill had been a member of the International Theological Commission. The Editor apologises for this mistake and any embarrassment it might have caused John Thornhill.

Essay - Contemplation in a noisy world

by Betsy Conti

Spirituality in the Pub at the Bellevue Hotel in Paddington on September 1, 1999, was on "Contemplation in a noisy world". The speakers were Betsy Conti and Herb Elliott. What follows is most of the text from Betsy Conti's talk.

The overall theme for Spirituality in the Pub this year is "Where do I find spirituality in Australia today?" I asked myself: What is my spirituality? I think my spirituality is my life in relation to God, the relationship between my deepest values and the way I live, my journey toward becoming the person I shall be when I die. Paul Collins speaks of spirituality as a lifelong process of people examining and questioning the foundations of their lives and their cultures, examining themselves and their relation to the transcendent.

All the major spiritual traditions emphasise this is a lifelong process, a radical and profound examination of the meaning of all that I am and all that I experience. This process shapes a person or, as the Catholic tradition says: the person grows in the image and likeness of God, in which he or she is created.

Recently I went to Nick Enright's play, *Daylight Saving*. The opening scene is one of technological chaos - a high-powered, professional couple rush in from work to a noisy scene of phones blaring, fax machine spitting out messages and an answer machine they can't turn off. As the play proceeds we find both are highly successful in their careers, but neither ever has time to listen to the other nor, for many years, has either of them taken time to step back and reflect on their lives. In the program for this play Richard Neville writes:

People worry about heroin, but the most popular drug of addiction today is adrenaline, the enemy of leisure, the thief of time. As the information age gathers momentum, so do we.

Closely associated with this momentum is a world that is becoming noisier and noisier.

If adrenaline is today's drug of addiction, I think contemplation provides an antidote. Firstly, contemplation stills us and allows us to reflect more broadly and critically on our lives, to engage in the questioning and reflecting of spirituality, to move our focus from the narrower concerns of the ego to the larger concerns of the self, the self-made-in-the-image-of-God and grounded in the mystery of God. Secondly, contemplation, I believe, helps develop discernment - very necessary if we are to decide which

voices of this noisy world we will choose to listen to and act upon.

I will describe a little of my history and the place of contemplation in my life and then what I see as the relationship between contemplation and this noisy world. There are many paths to contemplation. I describe mine.

Spiritually I have travelled an erratic path and up quite a few blind alleys. What has remained constant, but is hard to put into words, is an inner restlessness, an intuition of a call from deep within myself and yet also beyond myself.

My spiritual awareness began as a child, with my grandmother telling stories from the bible and other traditions, including dreamtime stories. At the age of six I was enrolled in a Sydney Convent as their youngest boarder. There, until well into high school, I accepted the teachings of the Catholic Church quite happily. But as I grew older I began to question and, at the age of fifteen, had an experience that led me to reject the Catholicism of my childhood.

I was spending a weekend in the country and had not made much effort to find a local church. Sitting on a rock in a paddock, feeling guilty about missing Mass on Sunday, it suddenly hit me that I no longer believed I would go to hell if I missed Mass on Sunday - a mortal sin - or, for that matter, if I ate meat on Friday, another mortal sin. I reflected on this and decided my only option was to leave the Church. I think at that time, pre-Vatican II, in the 50's, I was probably right.

What has remained constant is an inner restlessness, an intuition of a call from deep within myself and yet also beyond myself.

This was quite a step to take while still at school. Our religion class had more than once been told a salutary story about an expupil who had married outside the Church - and been killed in a car accident in Tasmania on her honeymoon. She would go to hell, we were told!

So I left Catholicism. But I had no desire to abandon God as well. For one thing I still had a lively appreciation of the everlasting fires of hell!

When I married, my husband was active in a Christian tradition that in-

terpreted the bible pretty literally. I joined this church and found much that was positive, but gradually came to realise that a literal interpretation of the bible can be very damaging, especially to women, and that I had jumped from the frying pan of the dogmatic fundamentalism of pre-Vatican II Catholicism into the fires of a biblical fundamentalism.

I began searching, entering, I guess, the spiritual supermarket of the early 80's. This was very stimulating: Jungian psychology, Transcendental Meditation, Dream analysis, Journal writing, Enneagram! About this time I discovered a booklet explaining the teaching of Vatican II in relation to making a moral decision. I was astonished to read that the onus for making a moral decision rested on *me* - I needed to inform my conscience, but I, not the church, should make the decision. This was not what I had been taught at school!

I read some of the Vatican II documents and soon realised the reasons I had rejected Catholicism were no longer valid, if indeed they ever had been. Soon after I read *The Call to Be* by Michael Whelan and decided that I wanted to hear more of what he was saying. I enrolled in Michael's Formative Spirituality course and began to explore the riches of the spiritual tradition I had abandoned so long ago.

Later, in Marie Biddle's classes, I explored the spiritual literature of this tradition: the Desert Fathers, spiritual guides like Meister Eckhardt, Hildegard of Bingen, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and, more recently, Thomas Merton and Evelyn Underhill. It was refreshing to discover different types of spirituality and to realise different personality types are likely to be attracted to different types of spirituality.

I also discovered that all the great religious traditions have practices to foster contemplation and that, through such practices, a person tends to develop a contemplative consciousness, a contemplative way of relating to reality that carries into all aspects of life.

Evelyn Underhill, writing on practical mysticism, says a contemplative consciousness is "a faculty proper to all humans, though few take trouble to develop it". It allows one to see the world in truer proportion and to slow down "the dreadful energy of our image-making power wearing up and transmuting the messages sense".

Thomas Merton thought "contemplation cannot be taught, it cannot even be clearly explained. It can only be hinted at, sug-

gested, pointed to, symbolised". Contemplation is a response to a deep resonance within our spirit to a call from beyond ourselves, says Merton, a realisation that life and being proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant source, a mystery in which God is revealed as the very centre of our innermost self.

Merton believed every person is called to a life of contemplation, as contemplation is not simply *one aspect* of life but *the fundamental reality that allows the realisation of our true nature*, makes our lives real and alive and makes us fully human. According to Merton, to enter the realm of contemplation one must, in a certain sense, die. That is, the *I* of the false or idealised self, must die. He says: "Let no-one hope to find in contemplation an escape from anguish, or from doubt". Contemplation is no pain-killer. Rather it is likely to cause a holocaust - burning to ashes our prejudices, our neurotic tendencies, even our apparently holy conceptions. In the end, contemplatives suffer the anguish of no longer knowing what God is, of losing their conceptions of God. Of this Aelred Squire says:

It is better to lose the God we found so easy to envisage and the faith that was only a protection from our fears, and stand naked and unknowing in the presence of the mystery of God, who can only be known when lived with.

Over the years I have lost my concepts and ages for God especially after studying reinvented theology. It was very unnerving. Contemplation is not easy!

Look at some of the ideas underlying the mystical theology of one of the early Fathers, Dionysius the Areopagite, might clarify some of these thoughts on contemplation. His theology is premised on the idea that the process of creation advances from the simple to the complex - humans enter the world and move ever outwards into the complexities and multiplicity of daily living. In contemplation a person gathers him or herself together, away from the outward things, towards the centre of being. And thus, gradually, the person becomes unified and simplified, moving more and more from external things into the hidden depths of the soul. In various ways this is the sort of idea behind most contemplation. I think of the Russian mystic who said that prayer is descending into the heart and standing there in the presence of God.

Like Merton I find contemplation hard to describe. It is not something I do. It is rather a grace that is able to happen when I make time and develop a habit of meditation. I find twenty minutes or more a day is best, but ten or five minutes is better

than nothing. Making the time and maintaining the habit takes willpower, but I know that when I maintain a habit of daily meditation - the process that disposes me to contemplation - it has a powerful influence in my life.

One of my earliest experiences of this power goes back to a very happy but extremely busy time of my life when I had four small children. Often I was tired enough to fall asleep in the time it took for the traffic light to turn red. Occasionally I rolled into the car in front!

During these years I often had a deep yearning for time away alone, for solitude. I began spending one hour a week in silent meditation with a friend and, after a few months, realised that this yearning for solitude had gone. The need that had caused this yearning for solitude had been satisfied.

Contemplation is a response to a deep resonance within our spirit to a call from beyond ourselves.

During different times in my life I have found that different approaches to meditation or contemplation suit me better. But the way I choose is not nearly as important as the will-power I need to keep making the time for it. Some of these ways are:

One: *Using a mantra in rhythm with my breathing.* In this I find the techniques of transcendental meditation work well. This is part of a tradition going back to the Desert Fathers: the *via negativa* - the *negative way*. This recognises that any conception or image of God is inadequate and limits God. So one seeks God beyond any image or concept. This is similar to the tradition of the *Jesus Prayer*, which uses the name of Jesus as a mantra.

Two: *Often I focus on an icon.* I am always surprised at the effect certain icons have on me. I find it hard to describe. It is a pull on something deep within, pulling me to move outside of myself; it gives me a sense of wonder, and always surprises me.

Three: *Another way is Ignatian prayer:* taking a scene or image from scripture or a classic reading and allowing my imagination full play to enter the scene or image and interact with it, then examining my *consciousness* (not my conscience) and reflecting on what resonates and what feels dissonant. I find it amazing what comes out of this. Possibilities open up, I become conscious of ways I act and react towards others, my fears, my hopes, all sorts of things.

Four: I would also include *Yoga and walking as contemplative practices*. I know when I am maintaining a meditative practice, whether or not my life is going smoothly, I am able to maintain inner calm, I am more focused, more reflective, and much better at living fully in the present moment, at recognising the *eternal* in the now. These are the times I feel most at one with myself and most aware of my life in relation to my deepest values.

So, you might think, I do this all the time. But no, I have to say it varies. During some periods of my life I have found it a joy to maintain these habits and at other times it has been really difficult. At times I have lost the habit altogether and not realised how much I missed it until it had gone. When I think of the world as noisy I think of many voices, and ask myself the following questions:

- What voices do I hear?
- Which of these voices will I choose to listen to, focus upon and act upon?
- How do I develop discernment to choose wisely amongst these noisy voices?
- How, amidst the noise, can I distinguish the quiet whisperings of the transcendent?

I am sure the way I respond to this noisy world is directly related to what is going on in my inner world. I do not deal well with the noisy external world when my internal world is noisy. I am also sure that contemplation, and developing a contemplative consciousness, help me to hear the much quieter voices of the transcendent amongst the noisy voices of our world today. □

Betsy Conti is a mother and grandmother, has an MTh and is very involved in developing wholistic farming methods.

"To get to the core of God at his greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least, for no one can know God who has not first known himself." (Meister Eckhart, "Blessed are the Poor" in Raymond Blakney, ed, *Meister Eckhart*, Harper Colophon, 1941, 246).

"Everyone of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self." (Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Anthony Clarke, 1961, 27)

"Like Jesus, you have to listen and listen. It will take you all your life to hear the Father's word of love for you; indeed it will take you all your eternity." (Maria Boulding, *The Coming of God*, 83)

Words for a Pilgrim People

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help those who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God. (2Corinthians 1:3-4)

□□□

All conservatism is based upon the idea that, if you leave things alone, you leave them as they are. But you do not. If you leave a thing alone, you leave it to a torrent of change. If you leave a white post alone, it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white, you must be always painting it again; that is, you must be always having a revolution. Briefly, if you want the old white post, you must have a new white post. But this which is true even of inanimate things is, in a quite special and terrible sense, true of all human things. An almost unnatural vigilance is really required of the citizen because of the horrible rapidity with which human institutions grow old. (G K Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Sheed & Ward, 1939, 194.)

□□□

God has left us abandoned in time. God and humanity are like two lovers who have missed their rendezvous. Each is there before the time, but each at a different place, and they wait and wait. He stands motionless, nailed to the spot for the whole of time. She is distraught and impatient. But alas for her if she gets tired and goes away. The crucifixion of Christ is the image of the fixity of God. God is attention without distraction. One must imitate the patience and humility of God. (Simone Weil, "The Father's Silence" in *The Simone Weil Reader*, edited by George A Panichas, David McKay Company, 1977, 424-25)

□□□

The fundamental polarity of human life between what is and what ought to be, between lack and fulfillment, between determination and freedom, is not abnormal; it is the norm. Every person is exposed to it because of the inescapable structure of human formation. (Adrian van Kaam, *The Transcendent Self*, Dimension Books, 1979, 172.)

□□□

The Bible – Stay awake!

In the Gospel of Mark we find one of the most stark and forceful passages in all of the Gospels. It comes at the end of Chapter 13, which is presented as a sort of extended speech by Jesus about the end of time. Mark has Jesus move out of the Temple, where he has been teaching. This powerful speech demands a mountain – the Mount of Olives. Jesus speaks of "the beginning of the birth pangs" (v8) - the destruction of the Temple, false prophets, wars, earthquakes, famines, "the appalling abomination set up where it ought not be", "great distress, unparalleled since God created the world". All of this is a prelude to "the coming of the Son of Man". The speech finds a fitting conclusion in the stark and forceful words: "Stay awake!" That warning is sounded four times. "You do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow or dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I am saying to you, I am saying to all: Stay awake!"

What I am saying to you, I am saying to all: Stay awake!

The exegetes tell us that Mark's Gospel probably went through two previous versions before the final version was left to us. This final version probably found its way into print some time after the destruction of the Temple (70AD), during an era of great conflict, tension and turmoil. The hearers of this Gospel were citizens of this tortured world. No doubt the fledgling community of Christians experienced their own share of conflict and tensions internally - between Jews and Gentiles, between different social classes and between differing understandings of Jesus and the nature and demands of His teachings. This is the context that helps shed some light on Mark's words. But it is hardly a full explanation or interpretation.

"Stay awake!" might be heard as a call to everyday vigilance. "Don't sleepwalk though life! Pay attention! Listen! Jesus is breaking into your world all the time! Life is sacrament!" And we may assume that Mark's reference to "the master" coming in *the night*, is no accident. Could it be that the moments when we should be most alert are "the dark moments"? Is it possible that Jesus comes most particularly in the pain and loneliness, the sadness and confusion of our days, that God is most present when He seems most absent? And the "Stay awake!" - might it not be as much an invitation or plea as a command or warning? □

The Tradition – Come Lord Jesus!

At the end of St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (16:22) we find an expression th almost certainly taken from the liturgy of the Church of that time (57AD): "Maran atha". These are Aramaic words – amidst the Greek text - meaning "the Lord is coming". (An alternative rendering is "Marana tha", which would be translated "Lord, come!".) According to the tradition, history, community and the whole of life find their identity, purpose and structure in reference to Jesus Christ. In particular, at "the end time" (*Eschaton*) Jesus will come again in glory (*Parousia*). From the very beginning the Christian community, therefore, saw itself as a waiting community, marked with a sense of urgency and hope.

The community repeatedly returns to this theme of the end time and the coming of Jesus in glory. For example, in the Eucharist we proclaim the mystery of our faith: "Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!". The beginning of the Liturgical Year – the time we call Advent (from the Latin, "venire" meaning "to come") - offers us an extended meditation on this theme, which is so important in defining the Christian community.

St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153AD) represents the tradition well when he distinguishes three facets to the above theme. Bernard says there is the first coming in the enfleshing of God in the Incarnation, the second coming in our daily lives and a third coming at the end of time: "In brief, his first coming was in the flesh and in weakness, this intermediary coming is in the spirit and in power, the last coming will be in glory and majesty".

The tradition celebrates the coming of the Lord throughout history.

In other words, the tradition celebrates the coming of the Lord throughout history – past, present and future. To ignore or exaggerate one of those three is to distort the authentic tradition. Christians will be thoroughly immersed in history, grounded in the historical facts of Jesus' birth, life and death; they will be thoroughly immersed in the here and now, grounded in the stuff of daily living where Jesus always awaits us, coming ever deeper into our beings; they will also be thoroughly immersed in the end time, people liberated by an eschatological view of life – ie with confidence that Jesus will come in glory, that good and truth and love and life will ultimately triumph over evil and deceit and hatred and death. □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

• Spirituality in the Pub (SIP):

Promoter – Susanna Davis is SIP Promoter and can be contacted on (02) 9798 8071.

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

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, 7.30pm-9pm: Fourth Thursday every second month (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

° **Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: second Wednesday of month (Info: Sr Julianne on 02 9603 3000 (W) or 02 9603 2749).

° **Canberra** - The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra, 7.30pm-9pm: last Wednesday of month (Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

° **Chatswood** - Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: November 9 "See how they love one another" (Bernice Moore & Dr Tom Plaizier) (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).

° **Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: (Info: Ann on 9701 7076 or 9701 3740 or Joyce on 9700 1250).

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

° **Len Innes** - The Club Hotel, Grey St, 7.30pm (Info: Kerrie on 6732 2023).

° **Kincumber** - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: First Tuesday of month (Info: Sue on 02 4334 3174 (H) or Clair on 02 4344 6608).

° **Newcastle** - The Hotel Delany, Darby St, 7.30pm-9pm: November 15 "Walking the Edges" (Speakers tba) (Info: Gail McBurnie on 02 4979 1141 (W))

° **Paddington** - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: First Wednesday of month (Info: Maree on 9387 3152 (H))

° **Penrith** - Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, Third Wednesday every second month (Info: Dennis on 02 4773 8429)

° **Perth** - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, 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: Third Tuesday of month (Info: Karen on 9570 3257 or John on 9533 4939)

° **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Wind Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: December 7 "Spiritual Experience in Music" (Local musicians & writers) (Info: Tim or Margaret on 9634 2927 (H))

° **Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel on the

Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: Third Wednesday of month (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: December 7 "Community: What's in it for us?" (Sarah & David Massa) (Info: Jocelyn on 0412 114038).

° **AudioMIX? The Mix is available on audio tape, thanks to the generosity of several volunteers.** For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

CONGRATULATIONS TIM O'HEARN

Associate Professor Tim O'Hearn recently received a certificate of recognition from the Vice Chancellor of ACU for 25 years of service. Tim is a Member of Catalyst for Renewal.

° At the last Catalyst Dinner in Hunters Hill, the proceeds of \$800 from the raffle were donated to **The Mary MacKillop Foundation for East Timor.**

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

• Other news and events

° **Women, ordination and the search for truth (cf *The Mix*, July 1999).** Noeline Kelly has drawn to our attention the National Catholic Reporter web site with an article "Tradition and the Ordination of Women". Copies of this article are available from the Editor - please enclose a SSA long envelope, plus three stamps. The web site address is: <http://www.natcath.com/>.

° **Archbishop Desmond Tutu** will be in Sydney this month to receive the "Sydney Peace Prize". The Archbishop will give a public lecture on Friday November 26 at 2pm at the Seymour Centre, Sydney.

° **Michael Morwood** has a web site to deal with reactions and issues arising from his recently published, *Tomorrow's Catholic*: <http://www.eisa.net.au/~morwood>.

° **Australian Christian Meditation Community** - November 21, Day of Meditation,

Benedictine Monastery, Arcadia, (Info: Fr Edward Doran on 02 9653 1159).

° **The Centre for Christian Spirituality**; "Why I Am Still a Catholic", Nov 14 - Ms Geraldine Doogue; Dec 12 - Bishop David Walker; 2pm - 4pm; Info: Kate 9398 2211).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, November 13, 10am-4pm "Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John", Donation \$20; November 28, 3pm "The Carlson Chorale", Donation \$10 (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Spirituality Courses** Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, "On the Lookout", Nov 17, 1.30-3pm; Nov 21, 11am-1pm (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887). "Beatitudes of Our Lives" November 6, 10am-3.30pm & November 7, 11am-4pm (Info: Sr Claire Taylor on 8912 4898)

° **Community Aid Abroad** has a way for you to help the poor and enjoy it: "Wine Into Water". They have their own wine label. (Info on: 1800 088 455)

COMPUTER NEEDED

Catalyst for Renewal is looking for a computer for the new full-time person. The computer may be second-hand but should be able to handle up-to-date Microsoft word processing and data file management software.

If you or someone you know can donate such a computer, please contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262. Thank you.

ANNUAL APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

UPDATE

Thanks to all our friends who have contributed so generously to our first Annual Appeal. To this point we have received \$37,000 - edging closer to our target of \$50,000 which will enable us to employ someone full-time to work with us in promoting the Catalyst mission. We have had a good response to our advertisements for that position and expect to begin interviewing applicants in mid-November. The ongoing generous support of our Friends will be greatly appreciated.

Recommended Reading

Thomas P Rausch, editor, *The College Student's Introduction to Theology*, The Liturgical Press, 1993, pb, index, c.\$35.

Whether we like it or not, conversation about theological matters can no longer be confined to a specialist group within the Church. This implies both a danger and an opportunity. The opportunity is that the Church will be more collegial, that many more of the baptised will be actively and fruitfully involved in shaping the Church of the future. The danger is that our lack of theological understanding will make us vulnerable to decisions at odds with the authentic tradition. If we are to participate responsibly in the conversation for renewal, we must educate ourselves. At the very least, we must know enough to know the limits of our theological knowledge. Rausch's book of essays, covering a range of key subjects, makes an excellent contribution. The reader should be prepared for a struggle – none of the essays in this book is easy to read. But that is more the nature of the subject than a peculiarity of the writing. All the essays are, however, practical and informative, aimed at the beginning student rather than the expert. Helpful study questions are found at the end of each essay. Ideally one would read these essays in conjunction with lectures from a good theologian. The next best thing is informal group or individual study of the essays. Unless we are willing to engage in this kind of study, we seriously limit our ability to be part of the conversation for renewal in the Church.

Michael Whelan, *Without God All Things Are Lawful*, Society of St Paul, 1995, 217 pages, footnotes, pb, \$6. (Available from Catalyst for Renewal, PO Box 139, Gladesville 1675 – include \$4 for pack and post.)

In a recent address to the Canadian Parliament, Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, returned to one of his favourite themes: "Many times in the past I have pondered the question of why humanity has the prerogative to any rights at all. Inevitably, I have always come to the conclusion that any human rights, human liberties and human dignity have their deepest roots outside of this earthly world." Havel reminds us of a truth that writers like Sartre, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky saw clearly: When God fades from a culture's consciousness, there is no longer a firm basis for morality. The title, *Without God All Things Are Lawful*, is taken from Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* and forms the subject for one of the essays in this book. The book's twenty essays address a range of contemporary issues as indicated by titles such as: "Reading the Signs of the Times", "Peace, Love and Justice", "Expectations", "Good Humour is a Sign of Good Faith", "Apropos *Veritatis Splendor*", "The Paschal Rhythm of Life" and "The Noonday Devil". The essays are brief and written for a wide audience. Suggested readings are given at the end of each essay. *Without God* is specifically designed to promote the deepening of personal spirituality. It is also suitable for group study and discussion.

John Menadue, *Things You Learn Along The Way*, David Lovell Publishing, 1999, 298 pages, index, pb, \$26.95.

This is an Australian story that, in the telling, gathers many other stories in its wake. John Menadue was born in Cowell, South Australia in 1935, the son of a Methodist Minister, and currently lives in Balmain, New South Wales, as a Catholic layman. The intervening 64 years has seen Menadue privy to – and at times very actively involved in shaping – some of the most formative events of recent Australian history. He was, for example, Head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Gough Whitlam's time as Prime Minister, was present for the November 11, 1975 sacking and served as Head of Department for Malcolm Fraser for a short time. He was Ambassador to Japan (1981-83) and Head of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on his return to Australia in 1983. In that position, Menadue aggressively pursued the demise of the remnants of the White Australia policy. Woven into this story – mostly told with a detached factuality that one might expect from a thoroughly professional public servant – Menadue also gives us some more personal glimpses into his journey. There the reader will discover a humble man, one searching for what matters in the end, after the gold leaf has worn off. *Things You Learn* will make a good Xmas gift for those interested in the insider's view of public affairs as well as those interested in what does matter in the end.

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