



# THE MIX



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## Our Say – Making subsidiarity work

The principle of subsidiarity, already implicit in the writings of St Thomas Aquinas and the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII, was first explicitly named and enunciated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* ("On Social Reconstruction") in May 1931:

It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity, functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. (79)

As sometimes happens with Church teachings, this principle was applied by Church authorities, initially at least, only to organisations in civil society. Popes Pius XII and Paul VI applied the principle of subsidiarity explicitly and directly to the organisation of the Church. Under Paul VI subsidiarity was accepted as a principle of canon law.

The principle of subsidiarity, like all such foundational principles, is a highly subtle and complex thing, both in its application and in itself.

In its application, it can only be understood in the context of and as interdependent with other foundational principles. For example, the principle of subsidiarity could never be applied at the expense of the common good. In other words it is not an absolute, stand-alone principle.

In itself, the principle is a complex and finely nuanced insight. For example, some have chosen to interpret it in the spirit of nineteenth-century liberalism, saying the state is a necessary evil (at best) and should stay out of people's lives unless it is absolutely essential to intervene.

This, in fact, misrepresents the principle. The interdependence of the person and the group, the local and the universal, the individual and the community, must be fostered and protected. This means that any social reality – Church or civil – will always exist in a state of tension, not without ambiguities, always with a measure of disorder.

Human communities, in the end, only thrive because the members have the goodwill and commitment to make them thrive. The best laws and organisational structures need the goodwill of the people. Without that goodwill, the laws and structures inevitably tend to become instruments for manipulating the system to the particular ends of individuals and pressure groups.

Subsidiarity can only work within the Church community when we all manifest constant goodwill and commitment. When it does work, we all tend to feel that we are part of the system. We are therefore more likely to commit ourselves in that system.

Subsidiarity requires conversation and conversation, in turn, requires subsidiarity. Mercy must be evident when we must say "This is wrong!"; patience, when we must say, yet again, "This is not good enough!"; courage, when we find ourselves asking "Why do I bother!" At the best of times this process is maintained only with good-will, generosity and patience. In this age perhaps it will be maintained only by those who are genuinely holy. □

This journal is one of the works of  
the Sydney-based group  
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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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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  
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Not all the opinions expressed in *The Mix* are those  
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## The Human Face

My name is John Robinson and earlier  
this year it was with great joy that I  
accepted the invitation to become a member  
of Catalyst for Renewal. I generally read  
the "Human Face" first when I read *The  
Mix*, so I hope my ramblings are up to the  
standard of previous contributors!

I was born in 1965 at Miranda and, at  
about five years of age, we moved to what is  
still our family home in North Ryde. I am  
the eldest of four children, and I can say  
unequivocally that I had a wonderful child-  
hood in a family that was and is still very  
close – as with all families, too close some-  
times! I am still amazed, as are most people  
who know us, at how hugely different each  
of the four kids is in our family. We owe a  
great deal to Mum and Dad's love of us, a  
love that allowed us to choose our own  
path, yet never without our knowing what  
they thought of our choices. This openness,  
support and love of my family has been and  
still is one of the great blessings of my life.

I trained as a secondary teacher and, after  
university, joined the Brothers of St Patrick  
(Patrician Brothers). I remained with the  
Pats until 1997. My years as a Patrician  
Brother were great and, reflecting now on  
the many things I did as a religious brother,  
I am thankful for the opportunities and  
challenges that came my way. I believe that  
as a Pat I had opportunities I would never  
have had living another way of life. I was  
lucky enough to spend time living and  
working in India, Papua New Guinea and  
Thursday Island, as well as with great com-  
munities of people in Sydney, particularly in  
Granville.

My decision to eventually leave the Patri-  
cian Brothers before final profession was  
difficult, and it has naturally taken me a  
little while to adjust. I now live in Manly  
and absolutely love the lifestyle on the  
Northern Beaches! I find myself very much  
at home near the surf and can see myself  
being here for a long, long time.

I am privileged to work with a hugely tal-  
ented group of people in the Catholic Edu-  
cation Office, Inner West region of Sydney.  
My days are never dull. I am enthused by  
many of the great people I work with in  
education and believe Catholic education,  
particularly in Sydney, is something our  
Catholic community can be very proud of.

Being involved with my local parish  
council, Catalyst, Confirmation 2000, the  
Jubilee and a range of other organisations,  
such as the St James Ethics Centre, has  
given me a very different view of my  
Church from the one I had earlier in my life.  
I find myself, strangely, more actively in-  
volved in the life of the Church of Sydney

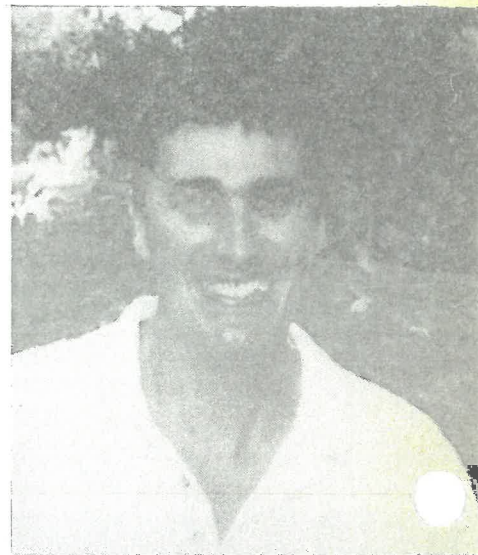
than I was as a religious brother.

I am certain, particularly given the events  
involving the "Statement of Conclusions"  
and, more recently, the Sisters of Charity,  
that our identity as Australians in a Catholic  
Church is being challenged. I view these  
events as profound moments of opportunity  
for Australian Catholics. Rather than being  
de-energised by much of the "negative"  
publicity that is coming our way, I feel  
hopeful that a truly unique experience of  
being Catholic in this great country is  
emerging.

I hope and pray that it will be marked by  
an openness to the movement of the Spirit,  
and be tempered, above all, by our great  
Australian quality of being "down to earth"  
in the face of what often seems question-  
able.

Among many of my family and friends,  
institutional religion has little or no place in  
everyday life. Quite simply, 'Church'  
leaves them flat and most would rather  
spend Sunday having a great lunch with  
those they love, particularly when time is so  
limited. For us, the institutional Church  
does often seem irrelevant and unreal. Yet  
that doesn't mean that our spirituality, rela-  
tionships that are grounded in genuine love,  
compassion, a concern for the poor and a  
love of the message of the life of Jesus are  
not real and immediate in our lives. In fact,  
those very things the Church often so beau-  
tifully captures in so many ways are the  
realities that are primary in our lives. I  
guess it's that struggle of living at a time  
when many of the old answers and practices  
no longer make sense, yet knowing that a lot  
of the new ones haven't quite delivered  
what we had hoped for.

And so I see my challenge as remaining  
faithful to myself and those I love, being a  
man of prayer (despite the pace of life) and  
looking for the elusive presence of Christ in  
the midst of all that goes on in my life and  
in the life of our Church.



John Robinson

## Your Say – Responses to “By what authority?”

The November issue of *The Mix* carried an insert entitled “By what authority?”. It was a reflection by the Editor on the recent decision by Rome to request the Sisters of Charity to withdraw from the safe injecting room trials. We received many responses, to that insert. The responses were overwhelmingly supportive. The Editor hopes the following selection will contribute to the conversation.

I have read your All Saints Day 1999 reflection: “By What Authority?” concerning the recent decision by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. In the first part you give a fair description of the state of the question. In the second, emphasizing that the actual issue enters into the sphere of decisions of prudence, you imply that on the principle of subsidiarity the decision should be the (exclusive) competence of the Religious Sisters involved in the matter. The argument has its merit. It is necessary, however, to relate to the rest of the Church, to the explicit teaching of the Holy Father on drugs, to the submissions of the Holy See to the United Nations, to the many pastoral expressions for the recuperation of drug addicts in different countries. Based on all these elements, the prudential decision was taken for the Catholic Church throughout the world, as a whole. On the question of dialogue I consider that it would have been better to have had it before the commitment of the Sisters to the New South Wales Government, knowing that the issue was a sensitive one and of general concern for the Church. The third part, in particular the last paragraph, I find the most disturbing. You go back to the opposition between centralised and local authority and call for an open protest. Dear Father Whelan, I do not think that this is the best way to co-operate for a healthy building-up of the Church. Rather it contributes to polarise the atmosphere. If we are part of a Catholic Church, we have to know that the local vision cannot be an exclusive one but should be open to other criteria that for sure are different. The higher authority for its part has to bear in mind the full spectrum and take the decision most suitable for all.

*Archbishop Francesco Canalini, Apostolic Nuncio*

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) was apparently concerned that the participation of the Sisters of Charity in the injecting room trial might cause scandal in the worldwide church. “Scandal” is derived from the Greek for “stumbling block”. My present concern is not the correctness or

otherwise of the CDF's decision, one that was plainly open to it in such uncharted waters. Rather, it is troubling that the decision-making process appears itself to present a stumbling block to acceptance of the decision by many in our local church.

It is common sense that due process is essential in matters of controversy. It both enhances how a decision is reached and increases confidence in the ultimate result. If, as appears from press reports, the Sisters were not given an adequate opportunity to put a submission to the CDF, then the value of the CDF's exercise of authority is diminished.

The late Cardinal Hume said of dealings with the curia: “In an institution such as the Church, where human beings are entrusted with varying tasks, there are bound to be misunderstandings, tensions and a certain clumsiness in dealing with things on a worldwide scale. All such difficulties can be resolved by goodwill and common sense, but always within the context of openness and a willingness ‘to dialogue’.”

I am saddened that what should have been a valuable opportunity to educate and illuminate has been lost. “Those who exercise authority in the Church will take care to ensure that there is responsible exchange of freely held and expressed opinion among the People of God ... This free dialogue within the Church does no injury to her unity and solidarity. It nurtures concord and the meeting of minds” (*Communio et Progressio*, nn 116-117).

In the circumstances, the CDF's decision has helped no one. It has given some if its supporters an opportunity to display (again) a disturbing triumphalism. Its detractors can (again) paint trite caricatures of curial intransigence and lack of pastoral sensitivity. For all of us, lack of due process impairs the connection between faith and reason acknowledged by the Holy Father to be so central in our times. The faithful have been deprived of the confidence to be able to say of this decision “I understand so that I can believe”.

*François Kunc, Sydney, NSW*

Many thanks for your article “By What Authority?” enclosed in the recent mailout of *The Mix*. I was especially grateful for your reflection on “the issue of the appropriate exercise of authority within the Church”. This has been a real concern for me in recent times and it was good to read your comments and the attempts by various bishops to pursue the Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church – a communion of disciples in dialogue with the

world, less as a society setting itself apart from the world. I was appalled and deeply angry at the decision taken by Cardinal Ratzinger preventing the Sisters of Charity from running the ‘safe injecting room trials’. I have felt a real need to voice my protest and perhaps one way for me to do this is to say that I wholeheartedly support what you shared in your reflection. Thank you, Michael, for your informed reflection on a very serious issue within our Catholic Church today.

*Sr Pat Snudden, Josephite Ministry Group, NSW Province*

**The following letter was sent to the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Cannalini. The Editor spoke with the Nuncio about reprinting this letter and he was happy to see it reprinted if it served to build unity in the Church in Australia. The Editor shares the Nuncio's concern and is confident this letter, as part of a genuine conversation, can help to build unity.**

As a group of women graduates, ex-students of Sancta Sophia College within the University of Sydney, we write to express our distress and deep concern at the action taken by the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in relation to the Sisters of Charity. For many years we have met regularly to deepen our understanding of our faith, and to relate it to our lives. We have come to know a courageous, compassionate Jesus who was not afraid of taking risks. We cannot agree with the decision forbidding the involvement of the Sisters of Charity, pioneers of health care, in the trial programme of a supervised injecting room. From what has been revealed, there was no effort made to find out the facts and no attempt to enter into a conversation with the sisters. As women we are proud of the achievements of these courageous, compassionate women, who were ready to risk in order to reach out in a positive way to those imprisoned in their drug habit. These women came to their decision after some years of prayer, research and consultation with government and experts in the field, and in our opinion they have been publicly humiliated. As members of the Church we share in their humiliation. The scandal this has caused among the wider community outweighs any scandal that may have occurred as a result of the involvement of the sisters in this work of charity. Very sincerely,

*Dr Helen Beange, Connell's Pt, NSW*

# Essay – Message to the US bishops' conference

by Basil Hume

**Shortly before he died this year, Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster sent a videotaped message to the U.S. bishops. Hume, 76, died of cancer in London June 17. His address was played in Tucson at the start of a retreat-style assembly of the US bishops, June 18-22. Hume spoke of the bishop's relationship to the universal church, his fellow bishops and the local church. He described some personal experiences as a bishop involving different people expressing diverse concerns. Hume made an interesting proposal: "I have long thought it would be good if the pope were to call together all the presidents of the [bishops'] conferences of the world every two years or so, so that he could hear directly their collective advice". Hume also discussed the Roman Curia and subsidiarity in the church. An edited version of the text of Hume's presentation follows.**

I would like to begin by referring to two texts. One, which always inspires and challenges me, comes from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*): "Bishops rule the particular churches entrusted to them as vicars and legates of Christ... They are not to be thought of as vicars of the Roman pontiffs because the power which they wield is their own property" (27). Nonetheless, this is without prejudice to the status and role of the supreme pontiff of the church. I have no problem with that.

The second text comes from the *lineamenta* for the synod on the bishop for the year 2000, which states: "The bishops receive this threefold office [of teaching, sanctifying and governing] through episcopal ordination and exercise it in the person and name of Christ, thus discharging in notable and visible form the role of Christ as teacher, pontiff and pastor. By means of the bishops' exalted ministry, Christ is made present in the midst of believers. Through the bishops Christ preaches the word of God; Christ administers the sacraments of faith; Christ guides and sets in order the people of the New Testament as it makes its way toward eternal blessedness" (50).

These two texts provide a foundation for any reflection on the role of a bishop today. They give us matter for silent prayer as we raise our hearts in gratitude for so great a gift, while also acknowledging, in my case at any rate, a tinge of shame for having been less than adequate in the dis-

charging of my duty.

These words constitute a personal challenge to every bishop. When I stop to reflect on the great dignity that is ours as bishops and think about what is expected of me, I am quite likely to have a moment of panic. I then go to look for consolation in St. Matthew's Gospel, the passage referring to that unlikely candidate, Levi, the tax collector. I also read the first chapter of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where he writes about God choosing the weak of this world to confound the strong, choosing the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are. Then I feel better.

The decree concerning the pastoral office of bishops (*Christus Dominus*) was very clear about what our priorities should be. A bishop, I read in this document, "should be with his people as one who serves, as a good shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him.... His priests, who assume a part of his duties and concerns and who are ceaselessly devoted to their work, should be the objects of his particular affection. He should regard them as sons and friends. He should always be ready to listen to them and cultivate an atmosphere of easy familiarity with them, thus facilitating the pastoral work of the entire diocese" (16). I do not think there is one of us who would question that our first priorities must be our priests and people.

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**I do not think there is one of us who would question that our first priorities must be our priests and people. But we are also part of a broader picture, the college of bishops.**

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But we are also part of a broader picture, the college of bishops. We enter that college through sacramental ordination. In the third century Hippolytus pointed out that the presence of the coconsecrators is evidence that through episcopal ordination we are joined to that body - that college - which they represent.

The church tells us that our membership of this college of bishops is in fact anterior to our taking possession of a particular church. In the apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos*, on the theological and juridical nature of episcopal conferences, issued by Pope John Paul II in May 1998, we read: "The college of bishops is not to be understood as the aggregate of the bishops who govern the particular churches nor as the result of their communion; rather, as an essential element of the universal church [the college of bish-

ops] is a reality which precedes the office of being the head of a particular church" (12). We are successors of the apostles collectively, therefore, before being appointed to govern a particular church.

This understanding of the universal character of episcopal ordination is further underlined in the same document when it describes the relationship between the universal church and particular churches. The apostolic letter states, "The universal church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular churches or as a federation of particular churches" (12). But the universal church "is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular church" (ibid.). The universal church is prior to the particular church, which is in fact its realization in a specific place.

Since we are members of the college of bishops before being head of a particular church, we have a degree of collective responsibility within and for the universal church. Each bishop, as *Lumen Gentium* (23) states, "as a member of the episcopal college and a legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's decree and command to be solicitous for the entire church". This raises the question of how this responsibility is exercised and the nature of collegiality. Let me say first that the recent apostolic letter to which I have referred, *Apostolos Suos*, has helpfully clarified one aspect of this question regarding effective collegiality. It states that it is only when assembled with the Supreme Pontiff in a general council or when exercising its ordinary magisterium that the college of bishops can be said to be an expression of effective collegiality (cf. 9).

The Second Vatican Council was a clear example of collegiality in action, and it had much to say about the relationship between the pope and the college of bishops. The council did not cast the pope and bishops in the roles of chief executive and branch managers nor did it see the pope as simply the first among equals. It stressed papal primacy and collegiality. The challenge for today is for these two to live side by side. Let me quote again from *Apostolos Suos*: "Collegially, the order of bishops is, 'together with its head, the Roman pontiff, and never without this head, the subject of supreme and full power over the universal church'. As it is well known, in teaching this doctrine the Second Vatican Council likewise noted that the successor of Peter fully retains 'his power of primacy over all, pastors as well as the general faithful. For in virtue of his office, that is, as vicar of

Christ and pastor of the whole church, the Roman pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the church. And he can always exercise this power freely." (9).

We have to place this teaching side by side with the complementary teaching of the Vatican Council that stresses the link between the Petrine office and the college of bishops. In his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* the pope emphasizes this link. He says that his office cannot be separated from that mission "entrusted to the whole body of bishops," and he makes clear that "the bishop of Rome is a member of the college of bishops, and the bishops are his brothers in the ministry" (95). What is at the heart of this relationship between the pope and the college of bishops is the unity of the church. In his diocese the bishop is the vicar of Christ for his people, but he also affirms the pope's universal jurisdiction.

This leads us to consider how papal authority is exercised not only in the universal church but also in particular churches. In 1992 Cardinal Ratzinger wrote about the universal church being "interior" to the particular church. He made it clear that papal authority is not exercised only from outside the particular churches, but also from within. He said: "We must see the ministry of the successor of Peter, not only as a 'global' service, reaching each particular church from 'outside,' as it were, but as belonging already to the essence of each particular church from 'within.' ... The ministry of the successor of Peter as something interior to each particular church is a necessary expression of that fundamental mutual interiority between universal church and particular church" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 1992 "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion," 13). This corresponds to that instinct of faith in Catholics that they have a direct relationship with the pope.

This relationship between the universal church and the particular church is expressed and mediated in various ways. One of the structures to facilitate this relationship is the Roman Curia, which I notice is the focus of one of your workshops. For my part, I would like to acknowledge the help and support I have received from the Curia in many situations. But it would be naive to presume that all relationships with the Curia are ideal.

If now I proceed to sound a note of criticism, it is out of fraternal charity and a love of the church. For instance, some of us would have been surprised by the form and tone of some letters from curial offices. There are concerns about the manner of some episcopal appointments and the length

of time taken to make them. Not all appointments have been satisfactory. There is often unease about the way in which theologians and their writings have been investigated. There can be a sense of frustration at not having been consulted on issues which are important to us as local bishops.

In an institution such as the church, where human beings are entrusted with varying tasks, there are bound to be misunderstandings, tensions and a certain clumsiness in dealing with things on a worldwide scale. All such difficulties can be resolved by good will and common sense, but always within the context of openness and a willingness to dialogue.

This leads me to wonder about another important relationship in the church, that between the Holy Father and his Curia. It is true, of course, that members of the Curia act in the pope's name. But do they always act with his acknowledgement and agreement? I expect that you have had my experience of being quoted or had my mind interpreted. They used to say, "The abbot says ... thinks ... wants." Now it is the cardinal who "says ... thinks ... wants."

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**In an institution such as the church, where human beings are entrusted with varying tasks, there are bound to be misunderstandings, tensions and a certain clumsiness in dealing with things on a worldwide scale. All such difficulties can be resolved by good will and common sense, but always within the context of openness and a willingness to dialogue.**

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When an organization is very big, officials exercise greater individual power. That is why I have long thought it would be good if the pope were to call together all the presidents of the conferences of the world every two years or so, so that he could hear directly their collective advice. I see that Cardinal König has made the same point. I write this without prejudice, of course, to what I have already mentioned in respect of the help which I have received from members of the Curia on many occasions and without prejudice to my esteem for and dedication to the Holy Father personally.

Before turning now to the question of the role of the bishops' conference, I wonder whether there is some merit in mentioning the concept of *subsidiarity*. Clearly this concept from the church's social teaching needs to be handled with care in the context of ecclesiology. But we have authority to do so. Pope Pius XII, in an address in 1946, repeated his predecessor's definition of *subsidiarity* and went on,

"Such words are indeed enlightening; they apply not only to society but also to the life of the church within its hierarchical structure".

The introduction to the 1983 Code of Canon Law states that "the principle of subsidiarity also belongs to the basic principle of the new canon law". As we reflect on the various levels of action and responsibility within the church (the Petrine office, the college of bishops, the national or regional bishops' conference, the local bishop in his diocese), each of these has its own role and competence. The principle of subsidiarity is a warning against a centralizing tendency which might obscure or even deny the proper freedom and dignity belonging to each level and to each individual.

The development during this century of the role of the bishops' conferences is surely a good example of subsidiarity within the life of the church. You may recall how the decree of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation of Feb. 25, 1922, instructed your predecessors that "such general gatherings [of bishops] are not to be held anymore". We have moved on from that. The extraordinary synod of 1985 acknowledged the pastoral usefulness, indeed the need, for episcopal conferences. The synod called for a study of their theological and juridical nature, and the fruit of that work was the apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos* issued in May 1998. ...

I am constantly being urged to suppress this group of people or that group, or drive out of the church this lot or that lot. I do not believe that this is right. I believe that as a bishop I have to try to lead people from where they are to where they never dreamt they might go. If you drive a person out of the church, you have taken a very grave responsibility on yourself.

I have often been struck by the parable of the wheat and the tares in St. Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 13). I have often been urged to uproot the tares. No, the wheat and the tares must grow together. Have you noted a remarkable passage in *Humanae Vitae*? Pope Paul VI wrote:

If, on the one hand, it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ, still, on the other hand, this must always be joined with tolerance and charity. Of this, the Lord himself has left an example, for when he came, not to judge but to save the world, was he not severe toward sin but patient and abounding in mercy toward the sinner? (29).

In short, always be strict on principles but endlessly understanding of individuals.

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*The complete text is available from the Editor. Send a SSA long envelope with three stamps included to help defray costs.*

## Words for a Pilgrim People

Zacchaeus, *come* down. Hurry, because I am to *stay* at your house today'. (Luke 19:5)

□□□

Though *human* kind is stricken with wonder at its *own* discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of humanity in the universe, about the meaning of its *individual* and collective strivings and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the *whole* People of God gathered together by Christ, this Council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems. The Council brings to *human* kind light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence, the focal point of our total presentation will be *human* beings themselves, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will. (Apostolic Constitution, *Audium et Spes*, 3)

□□□

It is as you desire, so long as you act with love. If you are silent, be silent from love. If you are correct, correct from love. If you spare, spare from love. Let love be rooted deep in you, and only good can grow from it. (St Augustine, *On John's Parthian Letter*, 7:8)

□□□

In the recent Special Synod of Bishops for Europe, the Master of the Domini, Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP, in his presentation reflected on the Gospel story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: they were in flight; Jesus comes and walks with them; he enters their house and eats their bread. Fr Radcliffe then concluded: "To have convincing authority we must share the concerns of people, enter their fears, be touched by their disappointments, their questions, their failures and doubts. ... (The Word) made us and it entered the deepest places of the human heart and reaches us all a home."

□□□

## The Bible - The enfleshing of God

A distinguishing feature of the New Testament – as distinct from the Old Testament – is its focus on *incarnation*. The great promise, "I am with you!", is fulfilled in the most unpredictable way, at once utterly mysterious and utterly mundane. The enfleshing of God represents the fulfilment of the great promise. John's Gospel says it most dramatically and clearly: "The Word became flesh, he lived among us." **The Word became flesh, he dwelt among us** (1:14). But everything in the four Gospels points, one way or another, to the incarnate God among us. Consider the intimate details of Luke's infancy narrative (chapters 1 and 2) – so stylised, so redolent with references to the history of the people and God's saving plan unfolding in their midst. Matthew's reference to Isaiah is indicative of his outlook: "Look! The virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'" (1:23; cf Isaiah 7:14).

Where do we find our liberating and loving God? The Gospel writers point unequivocally to this historical man, a Jew, with certain parents, a man who lived at a certain time, in a certain culture, thoroughly human: Jesus of Nazareth. In pointing to Him, they also point to humanity – particularly suffering humanity, in yourself, in others. That is where you will find God, in every age, in every culture, in every moment. That is also where you will find your freedom, what your heart longs for – through Him, with Him, in Him.

St Paul brought the Good News to the community of Philippi in Macedonia during his second missionary journey in AD50. When he wrote to the same community about six years later, he quoted a hymn. The hymn is sometimes called "The Christ Hymn", probably originally written in Aramaic. It represents a very early – and very beautiful – affirmation of the Incarnation: "(Christ Jesus), being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross ..." (Phil 2:6ff). And so it goes. God entering the human condition to set the pattern and possibility for us. To be Christian is to enter the human condition as He did. □

## The Tradition – Holiness is humanness

St Irenaeus was probably born in Syria, Asia Minor, about AD125. As Bishop of Lyons he was martyred in about AD202. His most significant writings were entitled *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*). There we find the first ordered statement of Catholic belief.

St Irenaeus represents the tradition well when he writes: "The Word was made the minister of the Father's grace to humanity, for humanity's benefit. For humanity he wrought his redemptive work, displaying God to humanity, and humanity to God. He safeguarded the invisibility of the Father, lest humanity should ever become contemptuous of God, and that humanity should always have some goal towards which we might advance. At the same time he displayed God in physical form to human beings through his many acts of mediation, lest humanity should be utterly remote from God and so cease to be. For the glory of God is a living human being; and the life of humanity is the vision of God. For if the manifestation of God gives life to all who live on earth, much more does the revelation of the Father through the Word bestow life on those who see God. ... Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, of his boundless love, became what we are that he might make us what he himself is" (*AH*, iv, xx, 6; v, preface).

Christian spirituality is nothing if it is not both Christ-centred and incarnational. Jesus is an exemplar of humanity, He presents us with an ideal. But He is far more than that. To leave the reality of Jesus Christ at the level of moral exemplar is to reduce the Gospel to moralism. And moralism leads to legalism and judgmentalism. Moralism imprisons and oppresses.

The presence of Jesus Christ in our lives is first and last a mystical reality. The moral dimension of the Gospel can only make sense in the context of an authentic Christian mysticism. Through Him, with Him and in Him we are able to enter our humanity and come to be what we are made to be. Herein lies true freedom. The authentic Christian mystic is someone who has been loved into freedom by God and is therefore able to go to the world as a sacrament of God's liberating love. The normal way for God's liberating love to reach people is through other people. As people baptised into Christ, we have a wonderful challenge: Enter your own humanity, especially in all its fragility and brokenness; meet Christ there, for He awaits you; then be for others, so that God's liberating love might reach them too. □

# Bulletin Board

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

### • Spirituality in the Pub (SIP):

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

### SIPS ON VACATION!

Most SIP venues will have finished for this century. Contact the relevant person to find when they recommence for the new millennium.

°**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: Second Tuesday of month (Info: Michelle on 9958 5963).

°**Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9pm: (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).

°**Glen 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: Third Monday of month (Info: Gail McBurnie on 02 4979 1141 (W))

°**Paddington** - The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: First Wednesday of month No SIP in December. Next evening 1 March 2000 (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)

°**Port Phillip** (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 Windsor 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 now available on audio tape, thanks to the generosity of several volunteers.** For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

°**Eucharistic Reflection with Bishop Geoffrey Robinson**, December 4 in the Parish hall at Our Lady of Fatima Church, 89 Shaw Street, Kingsgrove, 4-7pm.

### CONGRATULATIONS GERALDINE DOOGUE

Geraldine, one of our members and broadcaster extraordinaire, has been awarded a Churchill Scholarship. Geraldine expects to take up the scholarship in the year 2000.

### • Other news and events

°**The Centre for Christian Spirituality:** Dec 12 - Bishop David Walker - 2 - 4pm; Info: Kate 9398 2211).

°**Spirituality Courses** Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, "The Cup of Life" December 11, 10am-3.30pm & December 12, 11am-4pm (Info: Sr Claire Taylor on 8912 4898).

• **Are you interested in learning how to meditate?** You might like to contact someone in the Australian Christian Meditation Community: **ACT** - Richard on 02 6286 4670; **NT** - Ric & Mary on 08 8948 4637; **NSW** - Jillian (Sydney) on 02 9489 7480, John (Avoca Beach) on 02 4381 1002, Col (Southern Highlands) on 02 4862 1591, Carmel (Newcastle) on 02 4963 1104; **QLD** - Gabrielle (South East) on 07

3425 3186; Jan (Far North) on 07 4068 1164, Nyree (Central) on 07 4928 5624, James (Sunshine Coast) on 07 5447 4321, John (Gold Coast) on 07 5578 9359; **SA** - Jill (Adelaide) on 08 8562 8181; **TAS** - David (Hobart) on 03 6228 4736; **VIC** - Patricia (Bendigo) on 03 5443 2377, Eileen (Melbourne) on 03 9435 8943, Kate (Point Lonsdale) on 03 5258 4003; **WA** - Sam & Vesta (Perth) on 08 9444 5810.

### APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

#### UPDATE

We are very pleased that we have now received \$44,350. This brings us that much closer to our target than we were when the November *Mix* went to press! Thank you. We are well down the track with our selection process to employ someone full-time to work with us in promoting the Catalyst mission. Hopefully we will be in a position by the next edition of *The Mix* to introduce you to that person.

Thank you indeed for your ongoing generosity.

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

### CHRISTMAS GIFT

Give someone you really appreciate a gift subscription to *The Mix* this Christmas. Use the Gift Suggestion card in this issue of *The Mix* and get the special price of \$30!

Such a gift pays a compliment to the receiver and spreads the conversation.

### HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

• **REMINDER:** *The Mix* is published ten times each year, March through December. The next issue of *The Mix* will be published in March 2000.

Web site: <http://home.mira.net/~mdw/>

## Recommended Reading

Michael W Higgins, *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*, Stoddart, 1998, 308 pages, endnotes, index, bibliography, photographs, hb. (Purchased through *amazon.com* for \$20.97(US))

December 10 1998 was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Merton's tragic death, aged 53, in Bangkok. A number of works by and about him were published to coincide with this anniversary. Harper Collins, for example, published the last of the seven volumes of Merton's journals. *Heretic Blood* is one of the more interesting titles about this century's most interesting religious personality. Higgins develops his thought around Merton's obvious appreciation for – and affinity with – the romantic poet and artist Blake. Higgins reveals his perceptions of Merton when he writes of William Blake: "He attempted to reawaken our dormant senses, to challenge the rigid rule of Logic, to free the passions that institutional Christianity and the Enlightenment conspired to suppress. Blake was not in sympathy with his age. He saw its life-denying contradictions only too clearly and they called him mad for it." A writer like Merton, so widely published, inevitably becomes the victim of his own popularity. For example, Merton is a great "source of quotable quotes". Higgins reminds us that Merton does not fit orthodox stereotypes. He is a poet and mystic who challenges us to live as pilgrims, ever surrendering to the Mystery, even as we struggle with - and sometimes against - that very Mystery. Stimulating reading.

Anthony J Gittins, *Reading the Clouds: Mission Spirituality for New Times*, St Pauls Publications, 1999, 181 pages, index, bibliography, pb, \$24.95.

This book is about spirituality, "a way of being in the world with God". That world is a changed and changing one, a world that demands perception and alertness from its inhabitants. Gittins writes: "This book is about our common task: the task of interpreting our way through life. A characteristic malaise of our day is that our senses have become dulled and our interpretive skills are neglected. Often we simply do not perceive." The book's title is taken from an experience the author had with a group of people from the Pacific island of Kiribati. They guided their boats across large expanses of ocean and arrived exactly where they intended. They knew how to read "the clouds by day and the stars at night". Gittins writes in an easy-to-read way. He makes some complex issues (eg evangelisation and metaphors for the Church) seem simple without being simplistic. He also comes up with the occasional surprise. For example, in Chapter 7 – "Growing in Age and Wisdom" - he suggests that an authentic Christian spirituality demands that we name some of the lies in our culture. Like the beliefs that aging is abnormal and therefore to be resisted or that death is unnatural. Gittins very easily calls us to pay attention to some truths we might easily forget or simply overlook in our culture. *Reading the Clouds* would be a good discussion book.

Peter Malone, ed, *Developing an Australian Theology*, St Pauls Publications, 1999, 287 pages, index, endnotes, pb, \$26.95.

In 1988 St Pauls published a book entitled *Discovering an Australian Theology*. A decade later they have published this sequel, containing fourteen essays with an introduction from the Editor, Peter Malone. The essays are divided into five groups: "The Australian Experience", "Communicating Theology", "Perspectives", "Issues" and "Directions". Authors include Elizabeth Pike, Tony Kelly, Andrew Hamilton, Michael Whelan, Mary Williams, Patricia Mullins, Marie Louise Uhr, Eugene Stockton and Frank Fletcher. The publication itself as an event, as well as the content of the individual essays, are signs of the times. Such a book would never have appeared as recently as 1969, or if it did, its tone and content would have said more about other places and a bygone era. Over the last thirty or so years we have become much more confident in speaking of Australian literature, Australian culture and even Australian art – even if there is much disagreement and ambivalence about such topics. What might be the distinctively Australian element we bring to living the Gospel? It is more than a little odd – and sad – that we have never asked this question. Perhaps it was not time. It is time now. The essays in this very readable and well constructed little volume will contribute to the conversation we ought to be having. A good discussion book.

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