



THE MIX



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Our Say – A question of consistency?

After the Synod at the end of 1998, in an audience with all the Australian bishops, the Holy Father asked that the practice of offering the third rite of reconciliation – a practice that had become widespread throughout Australia – be discontinued.

The Australian Bishops' Conference, at its meeting in April 1999, formally accepted the Holy Father's request and made this situation clear to all Catholics in a subsequent letter from the Conference.

Some Australian bishops and many reputable and faithful Catholic theologians – here and abroad – found the Holy Father's decision in this instance difficult to reconcile with the Gospel, the authentic tradition and the needs of the faithful. Yet this plea from the Holy Father was promptly heeded. Indeed, in some instances at least, it was firmly applied throughout Australia.

In July of 1995 the Holy Father had made a much more serious request of bishops throughout the world. In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, he made a plea for the bishops

of the world to join him in seeking to reform the papacy in the light of the call to Christian unity:

For a great variety of reasons, and against the will of all concerned, what should have been a service sometimes manifested itself in a very different light. But...it is out of a desire to obey the will of Christ truly that I recognize that as Bishop of Rome I am called to exercise that ministry.... I insistently pray the Holy Spirit to shine his light upon us, enlightening all the Pastors and theologians of our Churches, that we may seek - together, of course - the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned (95).

This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade *Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea that they may all be one...so that the world may*

believe that you have sent me' (Jn 17:21)? (96). (Emphasis added)

It would be difficult to overestimate the theological, historical, social and political significance of this plea by the Holy Father: He is saying that the current form of the papacy is not the ministry of unity and love that it might be. He wants the bishops of the world – and all those who have competence in the matter, Catholics and others – to join with him in “fraternal dialogue” to promote reform of the papacy.

It is sad that this plea from the Holy Father seems to have passed as if it were of little or no significance. Was the plea to discontinue the third rite more important?

We cannot evade the issue by saying it is part of ecumenism, the structures of which are in place, and that dialogue continues. This is a specific and “immense task” to which the Pope has called the Church. It requires a specific and commensurate response. Perhaps the 5th anniversary of the plea might be a time for that response. □

The Human Face

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

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 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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My name is Terry O'Loughlin. A recollection of mine is being carried on my father's shoulders near the steps of Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral during a function in the early fifties. There was a crowd, and I could see little, and I was sleepy. In retrospect, I have guessed this was the Eucharistic Congress. I never did ask my parents and it is now too late.

That I was the fourth and last child of committed and involved Catholic parents at such a time in Sydney, and that we were struggling financially, but never hungry or ill-dressed, set the tone for a childhood where church and school loomed large.

St Francis Paddington was my parish, and my school, as it had been for two sisters and my brother before me. They were bright and successful students and high expectations of the youngest were reasonably met, I think – as much by self-fulfilling prophecy as by any talent. The Franciscans, the Sisters of Charity – these were my first contacts with the institution, and few could have asked for a more benign introduction in those comfortable days of Catholic certainty, especially as the youngest of my aunts on my father's side was herself a Sister of Charity. Not even the occasional "hellfire and damnation" mission caused discomfort. I was a rather pious child.

Puberty changed that, but only after the move to the bigger world of St Mary's Cathedral as pupil of the Christian Brothers and chorister under Fr Ron Harden.

Meanwhile, it was thought at St Francis that I would make a fine candidate for altar boy, to follow in my brother's footsteps. On the contrary, I thought being a chorister was quite enough, and made that clear. I was reluctantly excused.

Eight years at the Cathedral, choir and school, broadened my horizons. I was becoming a "city kid" as the streets became familiar, the buses, the parks, the buildings. Away from school, I roamed Centennial Park, Rushcutters Bay, and Kings Cross, in the company of my brother and friends.

My horizons had been sufficiently broadened by my Leaving Certificate year of high school that I took little interest in my studies, and though well read and able to write (Honours in English) I failed most of the exams including Physics and Maths. Life was too interesting to study!

It was the timing of this failure that led to a long phase of my life as a member of the ill-fated Brothers of St Gerard Majella, a Sydney-founded "religious order" which closed down amid much acrimony in the early 1990's. When I failed in '65, it was a changeover year from the old system to the

new HSC, and the Sydney Church decided to provide a special venue – St Benedict's, Broadway – for a one-year-only school for repeaters! What a bunch of hopeless cases we must have been. But we did well, under these "new" brothers. And I was impressed enough to join them.

I won't dwell on those years. They seemed good for me, but were not for many of my confreres. I made some good friends, and hold them in my heart. There were wonderful opportunities – in teaching, in RE consultancy, in adult faith education, in catechetics and catechist training, in diocesan organization and lay ministry education – and in pursuit of educational goals at Macquarie, New England, and best fun of all, Fordham in the Bronx in 1991-2.

But the collapse of that life, the dislocation, bewilderment, and loss of faith in my own judgement of people and processes, left me very uncertain. Were it not for my family, very close friends, and co-workers, the time following that dislocation could have been much harder. Recognizing that makes the words from the article on St Ireneus in the last MIX very relevant: "The normal way for God's liberating love to reach people is through other people."

As a much younger man, and pretty callow at that, I once quoted from Henri Nouwen's "The Wounded Healer." On reflection, I didn't know a thing about it then. At least now....

So I come to Catalyst, after five years at the Catholic Enquiry Centre, to do what I can in the new promotion/development position. I'm grateful for the chance, and I'm looking forward to this new chapter in my life!



Terry O'Loughlin

Your Say – Holding God’s opinion?

by Alan Gijsbers

Controversies can occur within the Christian community, especially where Christians honestly hold differences of opinion. Controversies will always occur when people are passionately committed to truth and especially when they have a passionate commitment to moving an organisation like their Christian group forward. The trouble is, of course, that in these controversies, I hold God’s opinion, whereas you just hold your own.

It is easy to project impure motives on those who disagree with us. It is easy to be suspicious. It is true, however, that there are some (myself, of course, excepted) who are moved by base motives. Once suspicions arise, they easily grow. Some decisions are baffling and some decisions feed a conspiracy theory.

However, if our fellow Christians appear strange, it’s important to remember that they are holding themselves open to God and are asking for his guidance and blessing. Recognising the other’s commitment will go a long way towards building bridges.

We also need to stop kidding ourselves that we have all the truth. There may be others with a different perspective on truth who will complement our understanding.

Christians have been touched by the unmerited favour of God in Christ. Because he loved us, we are called to love

with that same costly love. This is love not just of the deserving but also of those who do not love us, and especially of our enemies.

Such active concern must always colour our debates, which should be conducted with respect for those whose ideas we are opposing. It also calls on us to provide the most charitable interpretation on the seemingly incredible statements made by opponents, and an attempt to see where they are coming from and why they have said what they have said.

The trouble is, of course, that in these controversies, I hold God’s opinion, whereas you just hold your own.

Cheap point-scoring at the expense of the unity of the body is tawdry. It is possible to have a vision of the body that may not be shared by others. In that event, it is important to listen and, if necessary, let go. There are numerous examples of people holding congregations to ransom by threatening resignation or withdrawal of support or by bullying others into their ways. Powerful members using their powers

of veto are particularly abhorrent. On the other hand, there may be times when there are substantial disagreements about styles of practice, which may mean that, like Paul and Barnabas, it is time for fellow Christians to go their separate ways and do their work with new partners in new vineyards.

Christians should shun ungodly methods of persuasion. Paul talks of denouncing shameful and underhanded ways and commending ourselves by the open statement of public truth. This is a call to open transparency. So often we use rhetorical devices like shame and sarcasm. The Christian church is riddled with God-dishonouring politics. The strong become bombastic and the weaker take things so personally that no one can say anything for fear of offence.

We pray that truth is tempered by God’s grace.

Dr Alan Gijsbers is editor of ISCAST Bulletin, Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology. This is an edited version of his article in ISCAST BULLETIN 25.

We have received an unusually large number of responses to the Thornhill-Morwood conversation begun in the September Mix. We will devote extra space to continuing this conversation in the next issue.

Letters

Cardinal Basil Hume’s fine ‘Message to the US Bishops Conference’ (*The Mix*, Dec. 1999) includes an assertion and assumption of such pivotal importance that I draw attention to it so as to invite and request discussion and clarification:

‘The universal church “is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular church” (*Apostolicos suos*, 12).

- How does this fit with the view of the church as a whole being a communion of local churches, presided over by the church of Rome, itself a local church?
- In the beginning, the whole church was, in fact, only a local church, the church of Jerusalem, its place of origin. If so, was not this local church ontologically and temporally prior to the church as a whole which in time would emerge from it?
- Does not the whole era of ‘the domestic church’ (c.100 to c.313) suggest that for at least the first three centuries of the existence of the church as a whole, it was more a collection of small and

largely self-governing communities rather than an international organisation with central government and claims to universal jurisdiction?

- Is any local church merely the universal church localised (as is, e.g., any branch of a major bank)?

Trained historians, to the rescue, please! Just what are the true facts? Ecclesiologists, to the rescue likewise! What are the implications for today of the true facts of history?

Brian Gleeson, CP, Glen Osmond, SA

I want to thank you for the wonderful way in which you are helping us all to discover what being ‘church’ is through contact with the Spirit. I am sure our bishops are grateful for the much needed support at this time.

Aubrey Tonkin, Sandgate

Of the many positive and life-giving aspects of Catalyst for Renewal, I think that it is the hope that underpins its whole structure

which is the most important for me and also the fact that it empowers people for conversation.

Marie Crowley, Bathurst.

The last Suggestion Sheet, on Christian Spirituality, is particularly good, and I am not only using it for group study, but am sending copies to a variety of lay folk searching for spirituality yet ‘disillusioned’ with ‘religion’.

Sr Marie Therese, Oberon, NSW

I read *The Mix* from cover to cover. Excellent! Good for the long evenings.

*Henk Kronenberg, SM
Bishop of Bougainville*

Our study group has a great sense of being connected to other pilgrims as we read the thoughts of those affiliated with CFR.

Anne McLeod-Nibbs, Lavington

Essay – Reform of the papacy

by Michael Whelan

Readers of *The Mix* are already familiar with the work of Archbishop John Quinn. They will remember his wonderful Campion Hall Lecture of 1996, an edited version of which appeared in this publication. His recent book - *Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call To Christian Unity* (A Herder and Herder Book, 1999) – expresses, both in spirit and content, so much of what *Catalyst for Renewal* seeks to promote. An extended review by the Editor of *The Mix* is published here with the hope that many will read this book and take to heart its spirit and content.

The essential tradition of the papacy depends on the Gospels. The belief is that Jesus not only gave Peter a unique authority in the community, He actually established an ecclesial office of authority in doing this. The tradition thus holds that the office of the papacy is divinely willed, that the holder of that office has the authority and role in the community given to Peter by Jesus. The texts on which the tradition bases this belief are Mt 16:17-19 (“You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church ...”); Jn 21:15-17 (“Feed my lambs ... Look after my sheep”); Lk 22:32 (“Strengthen your brothers”).

Other factors have also helped to confirm this interpretation of the Gospel. The immediate successors of Peter in Rome continued many of the functions exercised by him among the apostles. Rome acquired special significance for Christians since both Peter and Paul were buried there and it was the only Apostolic See in the West. Furthermore, as capital of the empire, it was the political and commercial centre of the Western world of that time.

St Ignatius of Antioch (taken as a prisoner to Rome where he was martyred c. 110) said Rome was the church “presiding in love”. Later St Irenaeus of Lyons (martyred c. 180) spoke of the “more imposing foundation” of the church in Rome. Typically, churches throughout the empire in those years looked to Rome for doctrinal guidance and for the settlement of disputes.

This central position of the See of Rome became even more marked in 380 when Christianity became the religion of the Empire under Emperor Theodosius. By this time the Bishop of Rome had begun to assert explicitly his primatial claims and the office of the papacy began to function openly as a universal authority.

Arnold Toynbee described the papacy as “the greatest of all Western institutions”.

Not surprisingly it has been the subject of intense theological speculation and debate since the early centuries. That speculation and debate have grown even more intense since the plea of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council for Christian unity.

In May 1995 Pope John Paul II issued what history may judge to be his most significant document: *Ut Unum Sint* (“That they may be one” – henceforward *UUS*). The principal focus in that encyclical is ecumenism. The Holy Father speaks of the “impassioned commitment” of the Second Vatican Council to ecumenism and the urgent need for us now to “listen to and put into practice (the Council’s) exhortation” (*UUS*, 1).

He refers to the experience of the first millennium which “in a certain sense now serves as a model” (*UUS*, 55). The Holy Father goes on to point out that the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is central to the question of ecumenism. He says:

(We must) 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. For a whole millennium Christians were united in ‘a brotherly fraternal communion of faith and sacramental life ... if disagreements in belief and discipline arose among them, the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator.’ (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 14) (*UUS*, 95).

Now the question is: When will the Catholic bishops of the world and their conferences take up the dialogue about the exercise of the primacy raised in *Ut unum sint* with the honesty and seriousness it deserves?

In order to find this way of “exercising the primacy ... (in) a new situation” the Holy Father makes a special plea to all Christians, especially “leaders and theologians”:

to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea ‘that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:21) (*UUS*, 96).

It is worth reiterating what the Holy Father is and is not saying here. The issue is to “find a way of exercising the primacy”. There is no question here of rejecting the

primacy as such. The Holy Father recognises what serious scholars – from both inside the Catholic tradition and outside that tradition – have recognised for a long time, namely that the Gospel and earliest tradition both gave to Peter a certain primacy among the disciples of Jesus. This in turn established a certain Petrine role or office within the ongoing Christian community.

How to faithfully and effectively exercise that servant role within the world community of the baptised at the beginning of the third millennium – that is the question. It is a momentous and complex question with far-reaching implications.

It hardly needs to be said that the Holy Father’s question here implies that he recognises that the current way of exercising the primacy of Peter is, at least, unsatisfactory. Why else would he seek the reform?

Archbishop Quinn has good reason to say of the Holy Father’s document:

The encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* is without question a revolutionary document. No other Pope has said to Catholics and all other Christians what I might paraphrase in this way: I realize that the papal primacy is a serious obstacle to our union. Let’s talk about it and see what can be done. There are certain basic elements that the papal primacy will always have to have. But beyond that things can change. There can be a new way of papal primacy. I cannot say what that would be. I need your help in trying to discover it. (page 34).

Quinn is the former Archbishop of San Francisco and past President of the United States Catholic Bishops’ Conference. He has the credentials – administrative, academic and pastoral – to take up the Holy Father’s invitation to dialogue on this critical matter. He does that in a most helpful way, at once wise and courageous.

Reform of the Papacy is a very readable book. It manifests all the benefits of solid research without the limitations of academic jargon and esoteric references. Throughout the book Quinn maintains a respectful tone, avoiding tendentious language or confrontational statements. However, he says what must be said and he says it without ambiguity or confusing euphemisms.

This is a deeply Catholic book, one that shows an appreciation for and good grasp of the authentic tradition. Perhaps most significantly, it is effectively underpinned by and thoroughly imbued with a sound spirituality. This is nowhere more evident than in the following passage:

(Central to the challenge confronting us) is a contemplative vision of the cross of Christ. The cross is the Tree of Life. But there is a certain, perhaps unconscious, level of unbelief even among Christians. Many of us want the Gospel more eagerly than the cross. Yet the mature disciple has learned that Christ crucified is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1Cor 1:24). Christian unity will not be accomplished by human power or human cleverness alone. It will be accomplished only by the poverty and humility of the cross. The Christian who truly seeks unity must embrace the cross. In this context the whole Church could fittingly recall Augustine's teaching about the magisterium of the cross (*Sermon 315:1-2 & 8*), the great school of Christian unity and reconciliation. (pages 17-18)

Quinn reminds us that "reform" is part of the very nature of the Church. It was, for example, high on the agenda of both the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council. Occasionally one hears voices in opposition to renewal and reform that fail to recognise this historical and theological fact.

Those voices – sometimes accompanied by aggressive and strategic action – can present serious obstacles to the kind of conversation that is necessary for the renewal and reform called for by the Council. Some of the views variously expressed, defended and promoted by such voices, in fact say more about a bygone historical period than they do about the person and teaching of Jesus and His love for us and our world.

Nor should we underestimate the power of conformity sometimes operative in those who oppose change. The rhetoric of orthodoxy and defence of the Church against heresy, may in fact be more a matter of psychology than theology. A religion of black and white "truths", clear and distinct ideas, unambiguous rules and structures, can be seductive for some. When such people also have authority and power within the Church, and they mistake their own anxiety and unresolved conflicts for love of the tradition and "the cross" that must be borne by those who remain "faithful", this can be particularly destructive.

Archbishop Quinn calls us all back to the foot of the Cross. Perhaps we should spend more time seeking to grow in intimacy with God, in Christ, and promoting the Gospel, less in defending the Church. Perhaps then we will be able to let go of our precious ideologies and anxieties and open ourselves to one another and to the Spirit.

Archbishop Quinn offers a telling critique of the way the Roman Curia operates, with its tendency to involve itself too frequently in matters that more properly pertain to the local churches. In this way it can subvert the crucial principles of subsidiarity and collegiality.

Quinn has some thoughtful ideas for the reform of the Curia. He offers four particular suggestions: Fewer bishops and more laity in the Curia; limited terms for members of the Curia; a more open and judicious selection process for appointing people to the Curia; a commission for the reform of the Curia, to be set up by the Pope, headed by three presidents – a president of an episcopal conference, a lay person and a representative of the Curia. Quinn observes that "the importance of a major reform of the Curia cannot be overestimated" (page 176).

Quinn eschews slick comments or any suggestions that he – or anyone else – might have the answers. He stands right behind the Holy Father in asking for dialogue so that we might together promote a reform of the papacy and Church government. The reader is thus invited into a Catholic conversation that is wonderfully liberating. It will do as much for your own spiritual life as it will for your ability to think with the best of the tradition on the nature of renewal and reform within the Church. *If you read no other religious book in the coming twelve months, read this one.*

There is a certain, perhaps unconscious, level of unbelief even among Christians. Many of us want the Gospel more eagerly than the cross. Yet the mature disciple has learned that Christ crucified is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1Cor 1:24).

At the end of the book, Quinn makes reference to the concept of "directed autonomy". This concept has been used very successfully in the renewal of international corporations in recent years. In brief, "directed autonomy" simply means "that people in every nook and cranny of the company are empowered" to work within and for the mission of the institution concerned (page 179). He then goes on to say:

The Church is both affected by and can learn from the world and in particular from the experience of international corporations or the United Nations or the Red Cross. Directed autonomy simply shows how secular corporations that are international, multicultural, and dealing with complex, diverse, and swiftly changing situations have learned an effective way of avoiding obsolescence, chaos, and fragmentation. Directed autonomy in international corporations can offer some suggestions to the Church to help it to learn how, in the practical realm, it can decentralize, encourage diversity, elicit participation, and implement the principle of subsidiarity

and the doctrine of effective collegiality without running the risk of chaos or of schismatic or national churches.

It shows how legitimate and creative diversity can really be an antidote to centrifugal independence. Legitimate diversity and creativity will bring with them the need for coordination and the need for accountability. If in the thirteenth century Thomas could illuminate divine revelation through co-opting the systems and categories of pagan philosophers, surely it is not heterodox for the Church of the third millennium to consider how the categories and structures of international corporations could be adapted to serve diversity within communion and unity.

Once the decision is made to move toward decentralization, the substantial reform of the Roman Curia will be inevitable. At the same time, decentralization will only serve to make the Curia more important as a means of coordination, of information gathering and sharing, in support of collegial, directed autonomy. If the curia does not change, and decentralization does not take place, there will ensue great disorder in the Church because of its inability to respond to changing situations with sufficient rapidity, and the inability of an omniscient central bureaucracy to have an adequate grasp of swiftly changing, multicultural situations. It will be the paradox of the insistence on central control being, in reality, the loss of control.

It is immensely significant that in Orthodox, Anglican, or Protestant dialogues about Christian unity, there is no mention of abolishing the papacy as a condition for unity. There is, in fact, a growing realization of the true service the Petrine ministry offers the whole Church, how truly providential the primacy is. A major example of the importance of the primacy is the Second Vatican Council. It did not come about because of a great groundswell among the people, priests, or bishops of the world. It was the result of a papal initiative. Without the council it is anyone's guess where the Catholic Church might be at this time. Without the council it is likely that there would never have been an encyclical like *Ut unum sint*. The combination of this growing openness and the Pope's prophetic call to probe the primacy is one of those unique moments in history. If there is too much delay, too much diffidence, the time will pass. It is imperative not to lose this moment of grace.

Now the question is: When will the Catholic bishops of the world and their conferences take up the dialogue about the exercise of the primacy raised in *Ut unum sint* with the honesty and seriousness it deserves?

Quinn's book is the fourth in a series entitled Ut Unum Sint: Studies on Papal Primacy. The other three are Hermann J Pottmeyer, Towards a Papacy in Communion, Michael J Buckley, Papal Primacy and the Episcopate, Phyllis Zagano & Terence W Tilley, eds, The Exercise of the Primacy. All are available through John Garratt Publishing, 32 Glenvale Cres, Mulgrave, VIC 3170, tel. 03 9545 3111. (See insert in this issue of The Mix.)

Words for a Pilgrim People

Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than people'. ... When (the high priest and council) heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honour by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while. And he said to them, 'Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. ... for if this plan ... is of merely human origins, it will fail; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!'. (Acts 5:33-39)

□□□

At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of people follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations. ... Even more important, experience has taught the human family that violence inflicted on others, the might of arms, and political domination, are of no help at all in finding a happy solution to the grave problems which afflict the human race. (John XXIII, from his opening speech to the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962)

□□□

*As regards all the commandments given us by God, we have received from him already power to keep them, that we may neither feel aggrieved as though anything strange were demanded of us, nor be elated as though we paid more than was given us. And by this power, if we work rightly and fittingly, we fulfil in godly manner the life of virtue; but if we corrupt its working we are carried away into vice. (St. Basil the Great (330-379), **The Longer Rules**, Resp 2:1)*

□□□

*Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts. (Evagrius, **De Oratione**, 70)*

The Bible – Jesus gets physical

The Liturgy of the Word for the Third Sunday of Lent (Year B) proclaims one of the most remarkable pieces to be found anywhere in the four Gospels. It is Jn 2:13-25 and describes in vivid detail an encounter between Jesus and the money-changers and sellers of the sacrificial offerings in the Temple. This is one of those stories that appears in all four Gospels, each confirming – more or less – the details of the other. It is the only passage where Jesus is clearly represented as expressing his anger in a physical way.

Each of the four accounts says he “drove them out”; Mt, Mk and Jn describe how he overturned furniture. (Lk, “the Gospel of mercy”, omits these stronger statements, as he omits, for example, Matthew’s account of Jesus’ rebuke of Peter: “Get behind me Satan!” (cf Mt 16:13-23 and Lk 9:18-22). This must have been a powerful moment in the life of Jesus, one that left itself seared on the memories and imaginations of those who witnessed it.

Jesus is clearly represented as expressing his anger in a physical way.

But Jn’s account is the most detailed, and the only one to tell of Jesus making a “whip” to attack these people. It would be impossible to exhaust the depth and complexity of this brief story as presented in the Gospel of John. The author of this Gospel tells us his Gospel is written as “a book” (cf Jn 20:30-31). We can reasonably assume that nothing appears in this “book” haphazardly or without considerable and deliberate thought. If it is there, it is there – in all its detail – for a reason. For example, Jn places this story at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry rather than with the story of the passion, as the other three Gospel writers do. This suggests something symbolic, a pointer to how Jn perceives Jesus and his ministry.

Two sets of questions might be worth prolonged meditation: Firstly, what was going on inside Jesus as he made “the whip out of some cord” and proceeded to “drive them out”, as he “scattered the money-changers’ coins (and) knocked their tables over”? What thoughts might have been on his mind? What feelings might he have experienced? Can I identify with any of this? How does it make me feel to watch Jesus behave in this way? Does it fit my image of Jesus and what I am called to as a disciple?

Secondly, can I think of any times or circumstances in which Jesus might repeat this behaviour today if he were physically present? Perhaps he is “present” in and through certain folk and I do not recognise him? What would have to happen in my life for me to be free enough to behave like Jesus Christ did in this instance?

The Tradition – Physicality versus angelism

The enfleshing of God is an infinite act of liberating love. We are liberated in the flesh, the wonderful, troubling, fascinating, messy fleshiness of it all. The Christian life takes body, physicality, incarnation, very seriously indeed. The instinct of the authentic tradition is beautifully and succinctly found in the Letter to the Hebrews (cf 2:5-18): “For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself the line of Abraham.” (Cf also 2Thes 3:6-15)

Already the heresy of *angelism* (the belief that discipleship is essentially a disembodied affair, a matter of “the spirit”, as if we were really “angels”, not bodily beings) had reared its destructive head. Down through the ages *angelism* can be found in one form or another in the many misguided attempts to achieve “perfection”. For example, the Jansenism originating in 17th century France and enduring even to recent times. Typically, all forms of religious *dualism* also imply forms of *angelism*.

(Note: *Angelism* – in the Christian tradition – is a corollary of *docetism* [the belief that Jesus only appeared to be human]).

The enfleshing of God is an infinite act of liberating love.

In the Desert Fathers we find some wisdom: It was told of Abbot John the Dwarf that once he had said to his elder brother: I want to live in the same security as the angels have, doing no work, but serving God without intermission. And casting off everything he had on, he started out into the desert. When a week had gone by he returned to his brother. And while he was knocking on the door, his brother called out before opening, and asked: Who are you? He replied: I am John. Then his brother answered and said: John has become an angel and is no longer part of the human race. But John kept on knocking and said: It is I. So the brother did not open, but kept him waiting. Finally, opening the door, he said: If you are a human being, you are going to have to start working again in order to live. But if you are an angel, why do you want to come into a cell? So John did penance and said: Forgive me, brother, for I have sinned.

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Promoter – Terry O’Loughlin on (02) 9816 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

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

° **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie, 7.30pm-9pm: February 24 “Dissent” (Bishop John Heaps & Geraldine Doogue); April 27 “Kids, Clowns and God” (Peter Spitzer & Mary d’Apice) (Info: John on 02 4878 5230).

° **Campbelltown** – The Catholic Club, 7.30pm-9pm: March 1, “Jubilee & Celebration” (Greg Whitby & Bernice Moore); April 12 “Proclamation and the Practice of Freedom” (Sr Susan Connelly rsj & Brian Murnane) (Info: Sue Brinkman on 4627 2953).

° **Canberra – The Australian Story** – The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra, 7.30pm-9pm: March 29 “According to David Milliken & Marie Louise Uhr” (David Milliken & Marie Louise Uhr) Info: Rita on 02 6288 4715).

° **Chatswood – ‘Sowing Seeds: Fostering Growth’** Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, 7.30pm-9pm: March 20 “Ethics: Does Science have Morals?” (Dr Bernadette Tobin & tba) (Info: Michelle on 995 7963).

° **Colyton (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).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta & Croydon Rds, 7.30pm-9pm, commencing May (Info Tony on 9181 2725).

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

° **Gerrington/Jamberoo** – The Gerrington Hotel/The Jamberoo Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: Hopefully commencing April 3 (Info Gaye on 4232 2735).

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

° **Kincumber – Proclaim Jubilee** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, 7.30pm-9pm: March 7 “Forgiveness & Freedom” (Fr Jim McKeon & Bernadette Speciale); April 4 “Reflection & Restoration” (Rob O’Brien & Kerry & Sean McArdle) (Info: Robbie on 4390 0370 or Clair on 4344 6608).

° **Lialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Maria on 9579 4255).

° **Newcastle – The Seven Deadly Sins**, The Mary Ellen Hotel, Glebe Rd, Merewether,

7.30pm-9pm: March 20 “Avarice” (Speakers tba) (Info: Gail McBurnie on 02 4979 1141 (W))

° **Paddington** – The Bellevue Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm: March 1 “Signs of the Times: Hope and Anguish” (Dorothy McRae-McMahon & David Leary); April 5 “Our Multicultural Mix” (Colette Rayment & Dr Tony Pun) (Info: Marea on 9387 3152 (H))

° **Penrith** – Golf Club, 7.30pm-9pm, February 16 “Justice & Spirituality: Hope for the Future” (Nicole Breeze & Terry O’Connell); April 12 “Topic tba” (Fr Tony Doherty & tba) (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)

° **Ramsgate** – Venue tba; 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: March 7 “Jubilee: Media Hype or Genuine Renewal” (Fr Chris Toohey & Br Malachy Yates); April 4 “A time to mourn, a time to change” (Kevin Morgan & tba) (Info: Tim or Margaret on 9634 2927 (H)).

° **Waitara – Living the Gospel: What sort of People do we want to be** – The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, 7.30pm-9pm: March 15 “Falling in Love with God” (Chris Sidoti & Lois Finn) (Info: Kathryn on 9983 0162).

° **Wollongong** – Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla, 7.30pm-9pm: March 20 Topic: tba (Helen Hamilton & June Pronk) (Info: Tom on (02) 4228 5038).

• SIP for young adults:

° Hopefully commencing later in year (Info: Maree on 9680 3121).

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

° **Reflection Morning with Fr Michael Whelan sm**, March 25 in the Parish Hall, Cnr Mary St & Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill, 9am-12noon. Conjointly sponsored by Aquinas Academy and Catalyst.

° **Catalyst Dinner** – Parish Hall, cnr Mary Street and Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill, Friday April 7, 7pm for 7.30pm. Topic: “Obedience in the Church”. Speakers: Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC and Fr Michael Whelan SM. Reservations essential. Info: Pauline on 02 986 4262).

Other Matters and Events:

° **The Aquinas Academy adult education centre** in Harrington St Sydney runs a series of programs, day and evening, with a special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM is the Director. (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).

° **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>.

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, “Attitudinal Healing (1)”, March 11.12, Anita Brennan sgs; “Preparing for Christian Funerals”, Sr Judy Foster sgs, April 1 (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Spirituality Courses** Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, “Spiritual Exploration of Lent: ‘Sackcloth & Ashes?’”, March 22, 1.30-3.30pm; March 26, 11am-1pm (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887).

Welcome to Terry O’Loughlin

On January 31 Terry began in our new full-time position promoting and developing the Mission and Spirit of Catalyst for Renewal. Thanks to all our Friends who responded generously to our Annual Appeal last year, we have been able to take this step in employing Terry. We welcome Terry, pray that the spirit of God will enliven him in this wonderful work.

° **Jubilee 2000 Coalition** – March 4, Public Meeting “Jubilee Justice & Poor Country Debt”, 10am-12noon, Clune Centre, 89 Shaw St, Kingsgrove; March 5 “Jubilee Drop the Debt Sunday”; March 26 Fundraiser Picnic, 12noon, Cabarita Park in Mortlake; April 1 Rally “Don’t be Fooled: Debt Kills”, 10.30am-12.30pm, Archibald Fountain in Hyde Park (Info: Thea Ormerod on 9150 9713 (AH)).

° **St James Spirituality Centre**, King St Sydney, runs a variety of adult education programs. (Info: Susanne on 02 n9232 3022)

° **St Agatha’s in Pennant Hills (NSW)** has a special Lenten program: “Rediscovering Catholicism” with Michael Whelan SM – 8pm-9.30pm on March 23, 30 and April 6. (Info: Teresa on 0412 369 286).

Recommended Reading

Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, Continuum, 1986/1992, 148 pages, appendices, glossary of terms, pb. (Available from Amazon.com - \$10.36(US) + post.)

Thomas Keating is a Cistercian monk, former abbot and a founder of the so-called Centering Prayer Movement. *Open Mind, Open Heart* is the first of a trilogy of books offering practical assistance for developing a prayerful life. The books have grown out of Keating's personal experience of prayer and his extensive work assisting others. Keating describes contemplation and contemplative prayer as "the development of one's relationship with Christ to the point of communing beyond words, thoughts, feelings and the multiplication of particular acts; a process moving from the simplified activity of waiting upon God to the ever-increasing predominance of the Gifts of the Spirit as the source of one's prayer." He says that a recovery of the contemplative dimension of the Gospel is essential to the process of renewal. The method of Centering Prayer is clearly and concretely outlined, step by step. Those who are familiar with the teachings of John Main on "meditation" will feel at home with Keating's teaching. They both draw on the method, well known to the monks of the early centuries, of using a sacred word to open one's self to God. Any one serious about renewal must also be serious about contemplation. This book will be a great help.

Eugene Kennedy and Sara C Charles, *Authority: The Most Misunderstood Idea in America*, The Free Press, 1997, 244 pages, endnotes, hb. (Available from Amazon.com - \$17.50(US) + post.)

Kennedy and Charles argue that we need to distinguish our understanding of authority from our thoughts about power and control, "natural authority" from "authoritarianism". "In the truest sense, authority means to author something from within oneself ... to engage in creative works of other types ... Authority does not control, it authors." It is "a function of, and is not found outside of, human relationships". "Natural authority" is always oriented to growth and freedom. The book also argues that the "hierarchical" model of authority was born out of a particular view of the universe - the good order of the universe, from the Creator to the lowest being, is mirrored in the good order of society and its many parts, from the highest to the lowest. This can no longer be upheld, say the authors. Whatever you might conclude about the theories proposed (eg the origins of hierarchy or the Virgin Birth), this book is most stimulating and evocative. Its emphasis on relationships and "institutions of intimacy" seems particularly enlightening. A most useful contribution to the conversation we must pursue about the way authority is exercised within the Church community. Whilst we hold firm to such principles as papal primacy, we must nevertheless ask how such principles can be concretized at this time.

Garry Wills, *Certain Trumpets: The Nature of Leadership*, Simon & Schuster, 1994, 336 pages, endnotes, index, pb. (Available from Amazon.com - \$11.20(US) + post.)

Garry Wills is a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*. He is also an historian of some note, the author of numerous books, including the 1992 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. In *Certain Trumpets* Wills gives a sketch of sixteen people he regards as exercising "distinctive kinds of leadership" in some field, and sixteen others he regards as "anti-types" in those same fields. Those he regards as good leaders include Franklin Roosevelt, Napoleon, King David, John XXIII, Mary Baker Eddy and Dorothy Day. The book begins and ends with more general reflections on the nature of leadership. In this way Wills is able to present us with a thoughtful discussion of leadership that is at once complex and multi-faceted, yet accessible and real. He assumes that leadership is a dynamic reality that includes both the leader and the led. It also includes some shared goal. All of which is relevant to the most challenging and potentially liberating or debilitating issue of leadership within the Church. Who would have expected the kind of leadership the Church and world got from John XXIII? Are we entering a time in which people will be chosen for leadership because they are perceived to be "ideologically safe" rather than good leaders of the Christian faithful? *Certain Trumpets* helps us to think about such questions.

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