



# THE MIX



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## Our Say – An opportunity for the bishops’ conference

As was noted in a previous issue of *The Mix*, Pope John Paul II sent an urgent plea to the bishops of the world – among others – to engage with him in “fraternal dialogue” for the reform of the papacy (cf *The Mix*, “Our Say”, March 2000). The Holy Father’s plea, given in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* of May 1995, seems to have gone largely unanswered.

The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference has a wonderful opportunity to make a clear and forthright response to the Holy Father’s plea at this time.

May 25 will be the fifth anniversary of the Pope’s courageous and visionary encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*. Fifth anniversaries are not normally anything special. However, since no action of note has been taken as yet by the Conference in regard to this matter, a fifth anniversary could be something special in his instance.

But there are at least two other more substantial reasons for the Conference to give a clear and unequivocal supportive response to the Holy Father’s plea: Firstly,

it would be an act of good leadership. Secondly, it would greatly assist the conversation for renewal.

Providing leadership in Australia today – whether in the church or wider society – is not easy. Frequently, leaders find themselves caught between competing factions and pressure groups. It seems they simply cannot win. Their role is easily reduced to one of reacting to difficulties and complaints or keeping the lid on things.

From time to time, however, moments arise which give leaders an opportunity to establish their credentials as genuine leaders – or fail. One such opportunity has been placed before the bishops of the world by the Holy Father.

Certainly, the bishops could expect opposition – perhaps fierce and aggressive opposition – from some quarters if they were to make a statement clearly supporting the Holy Father in his plea for reform of the papacy. But it would be precisely in the face of such opposition that the bishops

could confirm their place as leaders within the Catholic community and beyond. They might just find themselves with a significant and unified Australian Catholic population standing four square behind them. They might also find that many who have lost their confidence in the ability of the bishops to lead will be forced to think again.

Conversation requires commitment, sacrifice and much consistent energy if it is to be sustained. It also benefits from some signs that it is worth the effort.

Conversation for renewal within the Catholic Church in Australia would be greatly enhanced if the Bishops’ Conference was to publicly state its acceptance of the Holy Father’s call for “fraternal dialogue” with regard to “the immense task” of reform of the papacy. Such a statement would, of course, have to be supported by some practical action. They could, for example, invite a senior curial official – say Cardinal Ratzinger? – to Australia to commence the “fraternal dialogue”. □

This journal is one of the works of  
the Sydney-based group  
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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  
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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  
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## The Human Face

**M**y name is Denys Goggin. I am 60  
years of age, married to Margaret and  
have three adult children, Gerard, Mark and  
Louise and one grandson, Brendan. I was  
born in Sydney and spent my early life in  
Beecroft. I was the third of seven children  
with caring parents and grew up in a strong  
Catholic faith environment.

I was educated by the Good Samaritan  
Sisters in Pennant Hills Parish, and the  
Marist Brothers at St Kevin's Eastwood.  
From school I moved to Sydney University  
and graduated with a degree in Chemical  
Engineering in 1960. I later studied part-  
time at Macquarie University and graduated  
with a degree in Economics in 1972.

I worked for 39 years in the Chemical, Oil  
and Gas Industries, with 31 years spent with  
the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. My career  
was spent in a variety of technical and  
operational management roles in oil  
refineries and large gas plants.

In 1985, I was seconded to Woodside, the  
Operator of the North West Shelf Gas  
Project, as General Manager of the on-shore  
Gas Plant. This role developed to cover off-  
shore gas operations and responsibility for  
the commissioning and early operation on  
the Liquefied Natural Gas Plant.

I later returned to Sydney as Manager of  
the Shell Clyde Refinery at Parramatta and  
retired from Shell in 1998. In that year I  
was honoured to be elected as a Fellow of  
the Australian Academy of Technological  
Sciences and Engineering.

My faith and loyalty to the Catholic  
Church have been constant threads in my  
life. In 1977-78 I lived with my family in  
Holland and attended the English-speaking  
Catholic Parish in the Hague. Each Sunday  
we had education sessions before Mass, on  
faith and Church, with inspiring lectures  
given by visiting academics from Louvain  
University in Belgium. I still have notes on  
topics such as Trinity, Ministry of Church,  
Discipleship and Parables.

The final lecture was on "The Catholic  
Church in the 80s" -- the progress of the  
Church from the high pinnacle of priestly  
position to the priest viewed as an integral  
part of a "love-based" community. I grew  
up in a Church with the pre-Vatican II  
clerical leadership model, and so these  
lectures represented a turning point in my  
understanding of faith and leadership in the  
mission of Church. I have subsequently  
been active in faith-learning and in  
promoting lay leadership and ministry.

I have had long-term involvement in the  
St Vincent de Paul Society and Parish  
Councils, often in leadership roles.

I have also found, as a Christian manager  
in industry, a latent spirituality in industrial  
communities; it is possible to help and

influence people by being yourself, always  
operating to the values you believe in, being  
present to people in their workplace/space,  
and supporting them in their difficulties.

It is my experience from the reactions I  
had that most people have a real spiritual  
need - often not recognised by them and  
mostly unspoken. I find the same principle  
apply in being a parent and even in Parish  
communities - you must be affirmative,  
make your values visible, but then be  
'present' and not judgemental.

Following my retirement from Shell, I am  
now involved in a voluntary capacity in my  
own Parish (Neutral Bay/Kirribilli) and a  
variety of Church-related organisations.  
These include the St Vincent de Paul  
Society, the Bishops' Committee for Justice,  
Development and Peace, and Catalyst for  
Renewal. Both Margaret and I are involved  
in Catalyst and are attracted to the mission  
to promote conversation on Church and  
spiritual matters. I am convenor of the  
Development Committee, which works to  
promote and develop the Catalyst mission,  
including fundraising.

I have a great love for the tradition and  
achievements of the Catholic Church, and  
believe there must be open dialogue on  
problems impacting on all of us in the  
modern world and especially the Church.

The Church of tomorrow, while retaining  
the eternal truths, may be radically different  
in some aspects to the Church I have  
known. I see young adults today as talented,  
generous and spiritual. However, they  
not always comfortable with the sometimes  
rigid structures of the Church.

We must grasp the challenge and work  
together in love, commitment and wonder  
to find the key to a future Church which  
reconnects with those who have moved  
away.

I look forward to this future with  
excitement and believe organisations like  
Catalyst for Renewal have a vital role to  
play.



Denys Goggin

# Your Say – Spiritual Journey in Australia

by Elizabeth Cain

I would like to begin by exploring some possible meanings of the word, "spirituality". It is a word that is much in vogue and, as such, its meaning can at times be quite nebulous.

What is spirituality? Is it for the Christian the path of discipleship of Jesus? Is it placing our being in relation to what is infinite and eternal? Is it attunement to the living presence of God? The quest for wisdom?

And how is this spirituality expressed? As a quest? An expression of love or devotion? As work that is worship? As the practice of compassion?

And what is it *not*? It is not a placebo effect. It is not about comfort and complacency, nor about being recognised. It is not elitist nor self-aggrandising.

We in Australia are uniquely placed for the making of a spiritual journey. In fact, we can perhaps hardly avoid it. There is, first, the land itself. In its immensity, mystery and power, and its vulnerability, it causes us, often at the last, to come to reverence. Without such reverence, no spiritual journey is even possible.

The Aboriginal people, for whom land, spirit and people are one, hold the deepest treasure of spirit in their Dreaming. As Australians we, too, are invited to live into the spirit energy of the Dreaming. Perhaps our awakening to this precious treasure is just beginning to be felt.

Over the past six years I have been privileged to spend time with the Aboriginal community in Warmun in the far north-west of Australia. Their leader, Hector, would say to us, "Jesus is your Dreaming".

Spirituality in the Australian collective journey is inevitably complex and multi-levelled, and bears the shapes and patterns of our collective history.

That so many people are seeking to live a spirituality is one of the great signs of hope in the Australia of our times. Les Murray wrote in one of his essays that while it is bad form for Australians to talk religion, they will talk spirituality all day. In a life of much travelling and work with people, I have found this to be true -- spirituality in the sense of searching into the meaning of life and surrendering to its mystery.

Often, the most powerful tides of the spirit are recognised and named by the "seers" or prophets in our society, perhaps those who write, serve the community, paint or sculpt, pray or lead with integrity.

A true spirituality, the one journeying becomes aware that "the ordinary is indeed extraordinary", and that true spirituality weaves itself through every moment of

time, every circumstance, and every encounter. It is the catalyst of the creative spirit.

Our country has its own biblical literature. Along with the stories of the dreaming, and the Christian scriptures which form our living, there are writers, artists, musicians, and communities of ordinary people who in their lives are searching into what it is to be human and to be attuned to the Divine.

Every Australian is a weaver of a spiritual tradition that is uniquely Australian. Some of the names of these weavers we are aware of: Patrick White, David Malouf, Arthur Boyd, Judith Wright, Fred Hollows, Fr Chris Riley, Veronica Brady, Patrick Dodson, Morris West -- to mention a few. The list is endless, and somewhere in that list is your name and mine.

The necessary foundation for the spirit journey is a right relation to oneself, affirmation of the preciousness of one's own being -- in spiritual terms, a sure deep knowledge that we are loved by God, and that God is the very Ground of who we are. Quite often a person has come through life without ever having known this true and necessary self-love.

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## Every Australian is a weaver of a spiritual tradition that is uniquely Australian.

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Every spiritual tradition would indicate that the person be then invited to pray into that awareness of the true worth and beauty of their own being as enfolded in love. When this awareness is stable, the person is ready to be called to launch out into the deep waters.

At this point, he or she is usually cast into this journey by some form of wounding of the ego. It may be an illness, a grief, a loss, a disillusionment, or some form of dislocation. Life as we have known it is not in our control.

These times, difficult though they are, and outside our ability to order or explain, are actually the catalyst of a process of reforming our being...For some people, this happens gently and almost imperceptibly. For others it is dramatic and seems ungentle, even violent. But, at whatever level, and in whatever way, this experience readies and disposes us for the inbreaking of God.

We are led, maybe kicking and screaming, to surrender, to humility and to love, and these times are the most powerfully formative in our lives.

In the collective spiritual journey of Australians, there are many patterns of spirit that are evident. And indeed, a profound spiritual journey is taking place.

This has been highlighted by the fact that Australia is now not seeing itself in isolation, but as part of a global system. It is therefore possible to see Australia differently and as having adult and equal rather than subservient relationships on the global scene. It is enabling something of a maturing of the Australian collective psyche; at one level heightening the recognition and appreciation of Australia's uniqueness, and at another causing it to recognise and address what Carl Jung would call its shadow.

The recognition and interaction with the shadow is a crucial aspect of any spiritual journey, personal or communal. The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* writes that we, each of us, must come to "know ourselves as we really are". He goes on to say, "I suspect it will not be long before you know God as God really is".

Conscious engagement with the shadow is a real sign of a maturing self-knowledge and spirituality.

Certain aspects of collective shadow are progressively coming into the light out of their hiding places -- for instance, the abuse of power, institutional corruption, the personal greed at the base of some forms of altruism, the manipulative and unethical measures imposed by governments, the levels of anger in the community.

In every spiritual journey, the question of balance is paramount. If, for instance, people become rigid in "the good" as they see it, it subtly turns round and becomes negative. We are all capable of creating monsters, and there is always need to realise that only God is absolute.

In Australia, the shadow is being owned, recognised and addressed, for example, in those who continue to work toward true reconciliation, in those who address the drug problem with courage and compassion, in those who have courage to name the truth, and to act rightly in response to it, and, I believe, by many Australians who are in the everyday living into the true meaning of spirituality.

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*Elizabeth Cain is a well-known spiritual director, facilitator and seminar leader.*

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"How is man going to be good without God? .... all things are lawful." (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Modern Library College Editions, 1950, p.721 & 717.)

# Essay – Dialogue in the church

by Roger Mahony

The following is part of an address given by Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles in the diocese of Colorado Springs on October 16 1998.

Not long before his death, Cardinal Joseph Bernadin issued a challenge at the heart of what is now commonly referred to as the Catholic Common Ground Initiative:

American Catholics must reconstitute the conditions for addressing our differences constructively – a common ground centered on faith in Jesus, marked by accountability to the living tradition, and ruled by a renewed spirit of civility, dialogue, generosity, and broad and serious consultation.

The record on our dialogue with people in the modern world, with those of other religions and other Christian traditions, is quite a bit better than the record on our dialogue between and among ourselves – especially in recent years. I believe that the insights from our tradition of dialogue with others can provide a rich resource for understanding and developing the attitudes and skills necessary for authentic dialogue among Roman Catholics within the church, which in recent years has become an even more pressing task than dialogue with those outside the church.

We live in a world that often appears to be breaking down and coming apart, and in a church that seems increasingly divided. There is a strong tendency to think of ourselves and one another in terms that can be terribly divisive: “conservative” or “liberal”, “traditionalist” or “progressive”, “pre-Vatican II Catholic” or “postconciliar Church.” In such a milieu dialogue is not simply desirable, but required. And it can be difficult. What’s more, it is required not only of those who are in positions of leadership within the church, but of all who are baptised into Christ’s body, the church. As Pope John Paul II has written, dialogue “has become an outright necessity, one of the church’s priorities” (*Ut Unum Sint*, 31).

What exactly is dialogue? And why is it one of the church’s priorities? First and foremost, dialogue is not argument. Nor is it contention or controversy. Its hallmark is not conflict. It is not about coming out on top or winning a debate. It is not about negotiating away or diluting the teachings of our church. And it is not a contest in which we engage an opponent in intellectual or doctrinal “strong-arming”. Dialogue is more akin to a real conversation, in which there is an exchange of gifts.

For the Christian, authentic dialogue is rooted in the great dialogue in which God enters into relationship with humanity (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 70), speaking a word of life, of light and of love. In the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, God enters into conversation, offers a gift and waits to be received by human beings, welcomed by the human heart. Indeed the whole of divine revelation can be looked upon as God’s entry into dialogue, staying faithful in a conversation with humanity. In this perspective, the dynamics of sin and grace may be understood as a movement from deafness and hard-heartedness to listening, openness and receptivity to a gift.

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**Authentic dialogue is rooted in the great dialogue in which God enters into relationship with humanity, speaking a word of life, of light and of love.**

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A necessary condition for authentic dialogue among us is our willingness to participate in yet another, even more important conversation. This is a “dialogue of conversion” that is not just horizontal but vertical, directed toward God as the source of reconciliation and rooted in an awareness of our own sinfulness (*Ut Unum Sint*, 35). Thus, “dialogue does not extend exclusively to matters of doctrine but engages the whole person; it is also a dialogue of love” with roots long, deep and strong in the love of God poured out in Christ and the Spirit (*Ut Unum Sint*, 47). Unless we are willing to dive into this dialogue of conversion, that great mystery where the only answer is mercy, our efforts at dialogue between and among ourselves will likely come to little practical effect.

In the great dialogue, God opens the conversation. God first speaks the Word. Because the divine initiative in the great dialogue makes it possible for us to enter into relationship with God. The spirit of true Christian dialogue demands that we then make the first move toward others (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 72). Created in the very image of God, it is our gift and task to open the conversation, to initiate the relationship, to begin the dialogue with others who may be quite different from ourselves, who hold contrary positions, who challenge our deeply held values, our cherished convictions, our central beliefs. Our willingness to make the first move is only possible if we

undergo a “change of heart which is the essential condition for every authentic search for unity.” And this conversion of heart “flows from prayer and its realization is guided by prayer” (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 26).

As I see it, it is our deeply ingrained personal attitudes and dispositions that constitute the real challenge to our dialogue in the church. What are some of these “bad habits” of the heart?

Often unwittingly, we are caught up in the self-absorption, self-preoccupation and self-fixation so characteristic of our times. The self is so often viewed as the first and final arbiter of what is real, true and good. In a climate such as this, a real wintry season of the human spirit, do we have room enough for others? Is there a place, a space, in us for a point of view that may challenge us to reconsider our tightly knit worldview?

We are also a people short on patience. Many of us have lost the knack for following a line of thinking to its conclusion or the course of a conversation to completion. Rather than stay with a television program from start to finish, we channel surf from this station to that, looking for momentary, constant sound bite stimulation. We are hungry for experience, moving from one thing to the next. We are unable to really hear the other make a statement because our mind is racing to figure out what we think we should say in response. For many of us, we have the answer before the other says “Hello!” Listening is a real art. And, unfortunately, there appears to be a short supply of those schooled in its practice.

For so many people, the world in which we live is a harsh place. So many are affected by negative factors that bring about such depersonalization, dehumanization, such massive suffering. Many have been hurt in ways beyond counting and in a manner beyond telling. As a consequence, so many of us are inclined to be suspicious of others. Often, and very understandably, we are reluctant to give the other the benefit of the doubt. If the truth be told, we sometimes lack generosity of spirit. We can become mean-spirited and aggressive toward others within the church as well as those in the world at large.

Another serious obstacle to real dialogue is our lack of tolerance. Not only can we be intolerant of the perspectives and positions of our partner in dialogue; we can also find the sometimes very painful process of real dialogue to be utterly intolerable. We want it to be over! When it goes on too

long, there is a defensiveness that can set in. We may find ourselves appealing to authority in order to end the conversation. We may be inclined to close the question when what is called for is yet more dialogue.

Or, it may be that what is called for is silence - an end to words. In our day, there is so much noise. Our lives are cluttered. This affects us and can bear negatively on our ability to enter into dialogue. We are inclined to think that we must always have something to say in a conversation! We may feel compelled to put in our "two cents." And then conversation is reduced to chatter, and dialogue becomes drivel.

Sometimes for the good of the dialogue it is better to say nothing - because there is simply nothing to say. For it is only in silence and receptivity that we can make room for the other, to really hear the Word beneath and beyond the words of our partner in dialogue.

**W**hat are the dispositions, attitudes or "habits of heart" we need if we are to move from contention and controversy to a conversation in which there is an exchange of gifts between persons who at times appear so different as to be irreconcilable?

At the outset there must be a clear recognition that dialogue is both gift and task; dialogue can be a great blessing, but it is not a free and easy ride. Real differences cannot be glossed over in a spirit of forced chumminess. Dialogue can be very diffi-

It; it takes commitment and perseverance. It can be painful, because "by engaging in frank dialogue, communities help one another to look at themselves together in the light of the apostolic tradition" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 16). In the course of dialogue, we may learn truths about ourselves as human and as Christian that we would rather not face. A commitment to dialogue thus calls for a firm intention to stay in the conversation - come what may.

Entering into dialogue also demands that we accept the fact there are no quick results, and rarely are there easy answers to the highly complex issues and concerns we face in the church today. Dialogue is a process, one that takes a good deal of time for a real exchange of gifts. It entails a willingness to understand the questions and concerns of the other, sometimes listening long and lovingly enough to hear the question behind the question and discern the underlying issue beneath the issue on the agenda. We often use the same or similar words, especially when it comes to matters of Catholic faith and life, but we may mean very different things reflective of very different experiences. So we must develop the capacity to hear with the ear of the heart and cultivate the skill of paying attention - long and lovingly.

When we are engaged in dialogue, each person must presuppose that the other does have a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth (*Ut Unum Sint*, 29). The fact that each "thinks that he [or she] is in possession of the truth" does "not invalidate dialogue," and each may come to a fuller knowledge of the truth in the process ("On Dialogue with Unbelievers"). Real dialogue enriches by way of mutual exchange, even if each party goes back to positions previously held with greater vigor. There must be a clear recognition from the outset, then, that dialogue does not always lead to agreement. It has great value nonetheless in clarifying disagreements, which can then be faced and embraced with charity, respect, humility and love for the truth. And in the process, each one may be changed personally by virtue of the gifts exchanged.

It is also true, however, that when there is openness and willingness to listen to the other in a spirit of respect and charity, and when there is humility in the face of the truth which may come to light in dialogue, this may "require a review of assertions and attitudes" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 36).

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**Truth, for the Christian, is not a thing we possess, but rather a Person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed.**

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**A**t the heart of any understanding of dialogue lies this central question, How do I relate to those who disagree with me? Through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit we are enlightened, enlivened, guided and healed so that we may approach even those at the opposite end of the spectrum with a balanced attitude, with openness and receptivity. This calls for enormous reserves of respect for the mystery of the other person as well as an appreciation for their sincerity and integrity. It also demands a willingness to admit the possibility that we may have our own blind spots! Insofar as we are able, we must seek to be impartial and unselfish, and be willing to relinquish what the truth demands of us so that we might stand ready to be transformed in grace and by truth.

In entering into dialogue, we must speak the truth in love - freely, without constraint or fear of condemnation. In the simplest of terms we must state what we mean, and state it clearly. And we must try to do so in light of the needs and capacities of our partner(s) in dialogue.

But our words must be offered in a spirit of humility. The antithesis of humility is arrogance. Humility does not take offence nor does it offend. It is not at home

with rancor or bitterness. It does not demand having its own way. It is not smug or self-reliant. Rather, humility is expressed in healthy self-effacement so that there is room enough for the other - even when the other makes a claim on us that we would rather not hear. In dialogue, humility is expressed in the avoidance of peremptory language, in tranquillity, in patience under contradiction, in gentleness, in generosity toward the other. Along with respect for the other, humility is a *sine qua non* of the spirit of dialogue.

Along with respect and humility, what dialogue also requires is confidence and prudence. We must be confident not only in the integrity and plausibility of our own convictions and positions, but also confident in the good will and integrity of the other in the dialogue. If we are suspicious of the motives of the other, or so overly confident in the plausibility of our positions that we think they are above scrutiny, then in fact we may be unable or unwilling to enter into the spirit of dialogue. But if there be mutual respect and confidence, then dialogue may promote genuine friendship, indeed intimacy on both sides of a gap which sometimes seems so wide as to appear that it cannot be bridged.

Consequently, dialogue demands deep reserves of prudence. In mature and responsible dialogue, prudence is expressed in knowing and putting into practice what is possible. It recognizes what is essential and what may, indeed sometimes must, be left aside in a shared quest for truth and reconciliation. It moves ahead guided by the truth that comes to light in dialogue. It does not linger in resentment. To put it plainly: Prudence is the art of the possible learned through a long apprenticeship in the workshop of careful and considered compromise.

**T**ruth, for the Christian, is not a thing we possess, but rather a Person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. The great Dominican theologian Yves Congar, *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council, named cardinal by Pope John Paul II, captured this insight so beautifully when he once remarked: "I have come to know the truth, and the truth is a Person."

For us, the purpose of dialogue is to arrive at a greater measure of fidelity to the God revealed in Jesus Christ in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit - to be seized by the grace of Christ and the Spirit so that we may respond with our whole mind, heart, and soul to the Word of Love first spoken and spoken for all.

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*For the complete text of Cardinal Mahony's address, send a SSA long envelope with 4 other stamps to the Editor to defray costs.*

## Words for a Pilgrim People

What more do I need to do? (Matthew 19:20)

□□□

*This type of relationship indicates a proposal of courteous esteem, of understanding and of goodness on the part of the one who inaugurates the dialogue; it excludes the a priori condemnation, the offensive and time-worn polemic and emptiness of useless conversation. (Pope Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 79)*

□□□

*You are, they say, an Unbeliever. On the other hand you are not a professional and militant Unbeliever. The militant Unbeliever is, in fact a Believer – though perhaps a Believer-in-reverse. I will take care not to patronize you by seeming to doubt your unbelief. Though technically it would be more accurate to say you are a Non-believer rather than an Un-believer. You are one who neither rejects belief or accepts it. In fact you have given up thinking about it because the message of faith does not reach you, does not interest you and seems to have nothing to do with you at all. Or if it does reach you or does seem somehow relevant to you, yet you do not understand how one can know there is such a thing as divine revelation. The concept of “revelation” is, to you, meaningless. It is to you that I now say, with all the honesty at my command, that you are a sorely affronted person. Believers have for centuries made a habit out of reviling and disparaging you. Have they perhaps done this to fortify themselves against their own secret doubts? Do all these Believers believe in God, or are they more intent upon believing that they themselves are Believers? Are you – the Unbeliever – more useful to them in this devout exercise than God Himself? (Thomas Merton, “Apologies to an Unbeliever” in **Faith and Violence**, University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, 206f.)*

□□□

*Only in freedom can human beings direct themselves towards goodness. ... For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within the human person. (Vatican II, **Gaudium et Spes**, 17)*

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## The Bible – Abide in my love

John’s Gospel makes frequent use of the Greek word *meno* (μένω). It is a primary verb meaning *to stay* (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy). It is used to mean *to abide, to dwell, to continue, to endure, to be present, to remain* and so on. At the very beginning of John’s Gospel, however, this common word begins to take on an uncommon significance: “Jesus turned and saw them (ie the first disciples) following, and said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ And they said to him ‘Rabbi (which means teacher), where are you staying (μένεις)?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying (μένει) and stayed (ἐμείναν) with him the rest of that day.”

The profound significance of this term for John is already implicit in the obvious symbolism of the foregoing passage. The reader is prompted to wonder: Where does Jesus abide? From where does he draw His life? Where is “home” for Him? And then we hear his simple invitation: “Come and see”. And the disciples “came and saw”. There is a meeting, the disciples are attracted by “something” and are moved to ask the question; the response is straightforward, unambiguous, unextraordinary; they make the next move and they see.

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**‘He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides (μένει) in me, and I in him’**

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And what did the disciples see? The disciples begin to understand what it means to *remain with Him*. In chapters 6 and 8 we return to the theme: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides (μένει) in me, and I in him” (6:56); “If you *continue* (μείνητε) in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free” (8:31-32).

John presents, through this concept of *abiding*, a thoroughly rich and coherent view of what it means to be a disciple. It implies both a moral vision and the mystical reality that underpins that moral vision. Perhaps it is nowhere better summed up than in the image of the vine (cf 15:1-17; see similarly 14:23). In the space of eleven verses there, he uses the concept eleven times. In the middle of that passage, soon after the actual use of the image, we read the awesome words: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; *abide* (μείνατε) in my love” (v9). □

## The Tradition – The presence of God

The most obvious theme in the Bible and Tradition is that of God’s liberating love at work in the world. The initiative belongs to God and God’s initiative is one of love and God’s love, when it is received, always liberates. This is the heart and soul of the great story of our redemption. It is also the heart and soul of the authentic Tradition: God at work in every moment in every person, event or thing, loving us into freedom. Whether or not we allow God to do this is up to us. Once we taste the Love and the freedom it brings, however, there will be no turning back. That experience also becomes an invitation for us to live in that Love so that God may love others into freedom through us.

In the little classic by Brother Lawrence (1611-91) – *The Practice of the Presence of God* – we find some practical wisdom that is as topical for us today as it was for Brother Lawrence’s contemporaries: “The most necessary practice in the spiritual life is the practice of the presence of God, whereby the soul finds her joy and contentment in His companionship, talking humbly and lovingly to Him always and at all times, without rule or system, but particularly in moments of temptation, of trouble, of spiritual dryness, of revulsion and especially when we fall into unfaithfulness and sin. We should try unceasingly to allow each one of our actions to become a moment of communion

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**The most necessary practice in the spiritual life is the practice of the presence of God.**

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with God: not a studied act, but just as it comes from purity and simplicity of heart. ... We must work quietly, calmly and lovingly before God, beseeching Him to accept our labours. ... During our work and other activities, ... we ought to stop for a moment, as often as we can, in order to worship God in our hearts, to touch Him as it were by stealth as He passes. Since you know that God is with you in all your actions, that He is at the very depth and centre of your soul, why not then pause an instant in your external occupations, and even in your prayers, to worship Him inwardly, to praise Him, to petition Him, to offer Him your heart and to thank Him?” □

# Bulletin Board

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

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

Email: [terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com)

[NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified].

- **Ballarat** - (Info: Kevin 03 5332 1697).
- **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, June 22 "Does Conversation Transform?" Tim & Margaret O'Hearn (Info: John 4878 5230).
- **Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, May 10 "A Right to Rest" Fr Chris Toohey & Petrea King (Info: Sue Brinkman 4627 2953).
- **Canberra** – 'The Australian Story' - The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra, (Info: Rita 6288 4715).
- **Chatswood** – 'Sowing Seeds: Fostering Growth' Orchard Tavern, Cnr. Victoria Ave & Orchard Rd, May 15 "Church: Are Rituals Relevant for Spirituality?" Fr Paul Coleman sj & Sr Jan Barlow ibvm (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).
- **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta & Croydon Rds, May 31 "New Approaches to Conversation" Bishop Geoffrey Robinson & Mrs Marea Donovan (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).
- **Geelong** (Info: Denis 03 5275 4120).
- **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel, (Info: Gaye 4232 2735).
- **Glen Innes** – The Club Hotel, Grey St, (Info: Kerrie 6732 2023).
- **Kincumber** – 'Proclaim Jubilee', The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, June 6 "Humour & Healing" Ken Shakespeare & Sr Mary Leahy rsj (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).
- **Newcastle** – The Mary Ellen Hotel, Glebe Rd, Merewether, "The Seven Deadly Sins – Sloth", Kevin Markwell & tba (Info: Greg 4957 3621).
- **Paddington** – 'The Signs of the Times', The Bellevue Hotel, May 3 "Trust and Vulnerability" Liz Mullinar & Fr Richard Lennan; June 7 "A Fair Go?" Sr Susan Connolly rsj & tba (Info: Marea 9387 3152 (H)).
- **Penrith** - Golf Club, June 21 (Topic & Speakers tba) (Info: Dennis 4773 8429).
- **Perth** - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, 7pm-9pm (Info: Michael 9448 2404).
- **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd, June 6 "Women – Created Equal, Running Second" (Speakers tba) (Info: Tim or Margaret 9634 2927 (H)).

- **Waitara** – 'Living the Gospel: What Sort of People Do We Want to be' -The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, May 17 "Hey, I need you! Working with People Who Have Special Limitations" L'Arche representative & Margaret Wiseman (Info: Kathryn 9983 0162).
- **Wollongong** - Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla, (Info: Tom 4228 5038).

### • SIP for young adults:

- Hopefully commencing later in year (Info: Maree 9680 3121).
- **Clayton (VIC)** - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: May 30 "Healing the Earth" Pat Long (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).
- **Collingwood (VIC)** – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm. (Info: Maree 0412 136681).
- **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm, June 28 "Community & Mutuality" Race Matthews (Info: Maria 9579 4255).
- **Devonport (TAS)** – Molly Malone's Irish Pub, 7.30pm-9pm, Last Wednesday of each month (Info: Fr Richard Ross 6424 2783).

### SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB

SIP is now a "ninemsn" community! You can check the diary, read some transcripts and stories, post or look at pictures, and share your thoughts and ideas and reactions: another forum for conversation!  
Go to  
<http://communities.ninemsm.com.au/SpiritualityinthePub>  
If you have Hotmail you can even join! Terry O'Loughlin can be emailed at: [terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com.au](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com.au)

- **Catalyst Dinner** Friday June 23, cnr Mary St and Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill, 7pm for 7.30pm. Topic: "Is There An Australian Spirituality?". Speakers: Fr Michael McGirr SJ and Joanna Thyer. (Info: Pauline 9816 4262). [NOTE: The texts of presentations by Annette Cunliffe RSC and Michael Whelan SM on "Obedience in the Church", given at the last Catalyst Dinner, are available on request. Please send the Secretary a SSA long envelope plus four other stamps to help defray costs.]
- **AudioMIX?** The Mix is now available on audio tape, thanks to the generosity of several volunteers. For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

### Other 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).
- **A Workshop with Margaret Guenther** "The Practice of Prayer: The Art of Living Faithfully", May 13, 10am-4pm, Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta (Info: Eremos 9683 5096).
- **The Centre for Christian Spirituality, Randwick** "Why I Am Still a Catholic" May 7, 2pm-4pm with John Menadue; (Info: Kate on 9398 2211 or 0412 400 519).
- **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, June 3 "Reading John" Therese Quinn sgs; June 10 "Pentecost Vigil" (Info: 9484 6208).

### PILGRIMAGE

Catalyst is exploring ideas for a possible pilgrimage to "places of conversation" (eg Gethsemane Abbey, Kentucky, Rome, Lambeth, United Nations...). Are you interested? Any suggestions?

Write snail mail or email  
[terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com.au](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com.au)

- **Spirituality Courses Mary MacKillop Place**, North Sydney, "Sabbath Celebrating Jubilee – A Time of Mindfulness" May 24, 1.30pm-3pm, May 28, 11am-1pm (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887).
- **St James Spirituality Centre**, King St, Sydney, runs a variety of adult education programs (Info: Susanne on 9232 3022).
- **Jubilee 2000 Coalition** – July 23 Vigil (Info: Thea Ormerod on 9150 9713 (AH)).
- "Who is Worthy?" by Fr Ted Kennedy, \$20 plus postage (Info: Pluto Press Aust (02) 9519 3299)
- **Art and Healing** – A creative workshop with Rob O'Brien, 27 May (Info: 9457 0703).
- **Mary in the New Millennium**, Reflection Day, Marist Centre, Hunters Hill, May 27, 10am-4pm (Info: Maria 9680 2220).
- **Journey into Compassion**; One day workshop with Dorothy McRae-McMahon & Judy Laws, June 25, 10am-4.30pm (Info: 9564 1528).
- **Book Sale** – new and used books, including altar-size *Missale Romanum*, theology texts, spirituality, Myers-Briggs, enneagram and much more: Aquinas Academy, 141 Harrington St, Sydney, Sunday May 7, 10am-4pm. (Info: 9247 4651).

# Recommended Reading

Philip J Murnion, ed, *Church Authority in American Culture*, Crossroad, 1999, 157 pages, endnotes, pb.

Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, Crossroad, 1999, 155 pages, pb, \$32.95.

Denise Desmarchelier, *Voices of Women: Women and the Catholic Church*, Spectrum Publications, 2000, 168 pages, bibliography, endnotes, pb.

Shortly before he died, Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago, with the backing and support of a number of US Catholics – including Cardinal Roger Mahony – launched the “Catholic Common Ground Initiative” in 1996. The first Common Ground Conference was held in 1997. The early documentation is published and available through Crossroad. *Church Authority* contains the papers presented at the second Common Ground Conference in 1998, together with reports on some of the discussions held. True to Bernadin’s initiative, a spectrum of thought is presented. True to the complexity and subtlety of the matters addressed, no answers are given. The focus is on dialogue, listening, allowing the Spirit room to move. Papers were given by Avery Dulles SJ (“*Humanae Vitae* and *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*: Problems of Reception”), Joseph Komonchak (“Authority and its Exercise”), James Coriden (“Church Authority in American Culture”) and Philip Selznick (“Authority in America”). The texts of the Discussions are as rich as those of the papers themselves. We can learn much both from the content and the process manifest in the Common Ground Initiative in general and this book in particular. In reminding us of the necessity of dialogue, and plunging in, this book also reminds us of the complexity and richness of dialogue pursued in good faith.

Richard Rohr was the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is well known internationally as a speaker, retreat-giver and writer. In fact he will be visiting Australia in November this year. In the first chapter of *Everything Belongs*, Rohr reflects that we live on the surface for the most part – “we’re all sleep walkers” – unlike “earlier peoples, who didn’t have as many escapes and means to avoid reality, (so they) had to find Essence earlier – just to survive.” In the beginning of Chapter 5 he cites the former Jesuit Superior General, Pedro Arrupe: “Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute and final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evening, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart and that amazes you with joy and gratitude.” Rohr calls us to “the centre”, the depths of our beings. Only there can we begin to read well what is happening in and around us. His writing is practical and readable. He is not afraid to confront us with our simplistic analyses of history or our shallow response to the present. This is a good book for personal meditation. It would also provide much content for group study and reflection.

In August 1996 Denise Desmarchelier wrote to 800 women – members of Women and the Australian Church – and invited them to answer the following questions: “Please describe how you experience the Catholic Church, whether in worship and liturgy, in teaching and policy, in governance and decision-making, or in any other way. Please suggest why you experience church in this way. Please suggest what changes, if any, you would like in the Catholic Church for yourself or for women, and why you would like these changes. Please suggest what, in your experience, might limit or prevent the changes in the Catholic Church that you suggest and why this may be so.” Two hundred and eighty nine women responded and their responses are analysed in the pages of this little book. The first five chapters contain their responses; Chapter 6 draws conclusions and offers suggestions for ways to foster change; Chapter 7 gives “background to ‘man’-made dimensions of contentious issues.” There is an Appendix outlining the findings of the Inquiry reported in *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*. Desmarchelier has offered a further stimulus to conversation on some critical matters here. This book will be taken seriously by most women. Let us hope that it also finds a generous reception in other quarters.

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