



THE MIX



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Our Say – Cultural engagement and detachment

One of the most liberating developments to emerge at the Second Vatican Council was a willingness to acknowledge and respect ways of being in the world other than that to which we had grown accustomed within the Roman Catholic tradition. Specifically, formal acknowledgement and respect were given to other cultural and religious traditions, with their rituals and symbols and ways of organising life, their different but valid perceptions and priorities, each with its particular grasp of what it means to be human.

This gave rise to an engagement with these traditions in a serious dialogue. Encouragement was given to churches to adapt the liturgy and worship to the local culture. Missionaries became acutely conscious of the place of culture in evangelization. The ecumenical movement was begun with great enthusiasm. And so a new consciousness developed within the Church – one that was also developing in the wider world as we became more aware of the limitations of colonialism and cultural imperialism.

There has been a subsequent and perhaps unforeseen offshoot of this liberating development within the Church. As we became more and more alert to and conscious of the rights and riches of other traditions, it was inevitable that we would, sooner or later, become alert to and conscious of the limits of our own way of being in the world.

It is true that the ground-breaking thinkers prior to, during and after the Council, were already conscious of this. Over the last decade or so, however, this consciousness has become the normal Catholic perception. The cultural engagement beyond the Church has facilitated a cultural disengagement within the Church.

This development is both a danger and an opportunity. It is a danger because we may not deal well with the disillusionment and the loss of clarity and confidence, even if they were based on false premises. It may leave people cynical, resentful and angry. It may also leave people apathetic and without energy or interest for the immense task of

renewal that lies before us.

It is also an opportunity because it sets us free to ask the foundational questions with honesty and with the possibility that we can develop a whole new and more Gospel-centred way of being in the world.

We can ask, as Pope John Paul II has done, just how we might reform the papacy. We can begin to think of the Church as a community of local churches and ask how this might be developed. We can ask whether our ways of being Catholic in Australia today are more reflective of a bygone European culture than the current demands and possibilities of living the Gospel in this culture at this time.

We might also ask why Christianity in Australia has been so sectarian, and respond, not with abstract references to history, but with concrete references to our own lives and our personal contributions to that sectarianism. We could also ask what wisdom the first inhabitants of this continent, with their unique spirituality, might bring to our struggle for renewal. □

Catherine Hammond



The Human Face

My name is Catherine (Devine) Hammond. I grew up in Barre, Vermont, in the peaceful New England area of the northeastern United States. Irish Catholic in predominantly Protestant Yankee territory, I was fiercely proud of both aspects of my heritage, while still wanting to excel in the public school I attended, where my Dad was a much-respected deputy principal.

From my father I learned about the great Catholic intellectuals like Augustine and Aquinas, whereas my mother, straight from Co. Clare, gave me her never-doubting bedrock of faith, mixed with a fun-loving zest for life.

While trying to earn the grades needed to win a university scholarship, striving to be popular with the top basketball players, and dreaming of an illustrious career as a writer, I also was unable to get rid of the thought of doing something good in the world, something lasting. In hindsight, I can see that I only chose religious life -- and thus had to give up marriage and motherhood -- because there was no other way then for a woman to pursue a 'Church career'.

In over thirty years of religious life, spent teaching and writing, I felt content in the conviction that it was all worthwhile. I welcomed the post-Vatican changes, tried to make a few of my own, basically rode with the punches, and never seriously thought of any different life.

Posted to Australia in 1977, I soon found myself really feeling at home, both in the country and in the Australian Church community. But I experienced religious life as floundering, confused, and myself as feeling uprooted and alone as never before.

Eventually, in 1986, I left the convent and continued my lecturing and writing at the Sydney Catholic Adult Education office, Aquinas Academy and the diocesan Seminary.

Those first years 'out' were a challenge I thoroughly enjoyed -- that may be why I have no fears for the future of the Church as a whole: it, too, is going through tremendous change, but I have no doubt that great and good things will eventually be sustained by the familiar framework of working for the Church, I slowly began to 'spread my wings' and find value in the 'little things' that once I would have considered lacking in apostolic worth. I learned from pleasant experience that I could do good through the simple sharing of a cup of tea. For so long I had thought I had to do 'great' things to promote God's glory.

When I married Sam Hammond, in 1988, I experienced the joy I had seen in my

parents' marriage -- the joy of sharing everything with someone whose core values and interests are the same as your own.

I later became editorial manager at the well-known Catholic publishing firm, E. J. Dwyer, until its close, and now run my own editorial service for both publishers and authors. Although I work on all types of books -- not only religious material in a position to give professional help to all these writers, to do the best I can with each piece. I have come round in my thinking to see that *all* work and effort is 'good and holy'.

As a member of *Catalyst for Renewal*, I serve on the editorial committee of *The Mix*. I am firmly convinced of the need for the type of honest conversation in the Church which *Catalyst* promotes.

Too often, in my many years of Church life, I have seen a repression of fresh, innovative thought, of warm personal gifts, in the name of the greater good of the Church.

It took me many years to admit what I had known all along: too frequently that so-called 'greater good' was only one group's interpretation of the faith, or worse (perhaps unwittingly), the argument was a means of maintaining personal position and power. Well-meaning, hard-working people all too often, unfortunately, assumed for their own views the infallibility of the Church they served.

It is difficult to observe all the good that I find in the Church, but I do know that I'm still happy to be a part of it all, because the Church is my home, in some indefinable way, with Christ at its centre.

This journal is one of the works of the Sydney-based group *Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated*.

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

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

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes The Mix as one of its forums for conversation. All reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor 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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So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them; (Gen. 1:27).

I am a Catholic. I am also a wife, mother, and teacher in a Catholic school. I am involved in my Parish and I have done some theological studies. Yet probably the most valuable experiences I have had have come from parenting three children.

Being a mother has taught me invaluable lessons about life, love, and relationships and has opened me to large amounts of happiness and some degree of pain.

So the opinions I have on the current state of the Catholic Church in Australia are born of many years of living and reflecting on the many and varied encounters that have come my way.

As a parent, I am very aware that it is essential to communicate with your children; to be available to them, to offer guidance and support, but mostly to listen with an open mind and heart.

Yet, when it comes to communication within the Church, it seems that a common response to anyone expressing a diverse opinion is, 'If you don't like it, get out!'

Such an option doesn't make any sense. Evidently diversity leads to change and growth.

Ultimately however, my Baptism gives me a right to be, and remain, a part of the Church. Certainly it is a right that carries with it enormous responsibility. Yet, surely part of that responsibility, not unlike the role of teenagers in a family, is to think, reflect, question and challenge the ways the Church carries out the mission of Jesus in today's world.

I'm not talking here about the basic dogma of the Church, or about throwing out the vast and rich tradition that has come down through time.

All I want to open up to real and fruitful dialogue are the structures and rules that have evolved over the centuries since Jesus passed on his mission to humanity.

What I find disconcerting is that the knowledge, experience and skills of an ordinary member of the Catholic Church do not seem to be valued.

What seems to me to be lacking in the Church today is the ability to differentiate between the teaching of Jesus and to anyone or any group that is not prepared to move forward, learn from what has gone before and invigorate the message of Jesus for our own generation. For:

"You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars. You have a right to be here And whether or not it is clear to you No doubt the universe Is unfolding as it should..." (Desiderata, Baltimore, 1692).

DEMOCRACY FROM THE PEWS

by John Warhurst

(Excerpted from an article in the Canberra Times, 3 March 2000)

Australia's Anglicans have been in election mode. [In March] the Anglican Primate of Australia was elected... [later came] the election of a new Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. The winner, Peter Watson, emerged over three other candidates from a vote by the Anglican Synod of Melbourne. The process was quite an exercise in democracy. There were 980 voters representing clergy and laity. The successful candidate had to win a two-thirds majority of both groups....

As a Catholic, I am struck by how much healthier the Anglican method of election of leaders is to the hierarchical and secretive method by which Catholic bishops are chosen. Compare the election of Watson with the current process to replace the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Clancy. His successor will be announced one day by the Vatican. There are candidates. There is lobbying. But all of it is done secretly.

It could all be so much better, even while retaining the ultimate difference between appointment and election. There should be open discussion and recommendations by the relevant Catholic community....

Religion doesn't permeate Australian politics in the way that it does in the United States, but it is still an important factor. Church leaders... are major players in Australian politics. We should know how they get on to the stage.

For instance, the ABC [recently] profiled George Pell, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. Pell is a Vatican appointment just like Clancy's successor will be. His status in the community is of such importance in public debate that the process of his appointment should be of interest to everyone, not just Catholics.

"All human beings have the potential to 'incarnate' or 'live out' truths and values and love that reflect a divine reality at work in us" (Morwood, M: Tomorrow's Catholic, Spectrum, Richmond, 1997, p.92).

I am not claiming that I have the same depth of knowledge and expertise with regard to the Church as does the Magisterium. Yet, what I find disconcerting is that the knowledge, experience and skills of an ordinary member of the Catholic Church do not seem to be valued.

People who, on a daily basis, and often under less than conducive circumstances, try to follow the example of Jesus and spread his Word to others, are increasingly disenfranchised and alienated by the hierarchy of the church.

While I may be currently underwhelmed by certain positions held by the Church, it is not cause for despair. I know that I am not alone. In fact, after the Forum at the Sydney Town Hall last year, I realised that there are many faithful Catholics out there whose voices were well and truly heard that night. So, be assured I will not leave the Church - not yet anyway.

My dissenting voice will not go away, for I believe that the Church has a vital role to play in our world.

Such an option doesn't make any sense. Evidently diversity leads to change and growth.

Ultimately however, my Baptism gives me a right to be, and remain, a part of the Church. Certainly it is a right that carries with it enormous responsibility. Yet, surely part of that responsibility, not unlike the role of teenagers in a family, is to think, reflect, question and challenge the ways the Church carries out the mission of Jesus in today's world.

So the opinions I have on the current state of the Catholic Church in Australia are born of many years of living and reflecting on the many and varied encounters that have come my way.

Being a mother has taught me invaluable lessons about life, love, and relationships and has opened me to large amounts of happiness and some degree of pain.

As a parent, I am very aware that it is essential to communicate with your children; to be available to them, to offer guidance and support, but mostly to listen with an open mind and heart.

Yet, when it comes to communication within the Church, it seems that a common response to anyone expressing a diverse opinion is, 'If you don't like it, get out!'

If the inner Self has nowhere to go, we journey has no goal and no destination?

Journeying of the inner journey, if that inner knowledge, the dream journals, the techniques and the relaxation exercises, the cause what is the point of all the meditation stuck and often goes horribly wrong. Being where secular spirituality goes blank, gets ego, has to connect or 'bind-back' with. This promise freedom, but we become enslaved to them, as our new attachments. Scripture prophets, many speaking about sacred things, and promising liberation, but leaving us bound and tied just as before. The false prophet today is the New Age teacher who offers us freedom and hope, but who actually hands us a new and often very expensive

The only real problem with the secular idea of the 'true Self' is that it is difficult to know what it sees as the fulfillment of its longing. Because it refuses the idea of a transcendent God, or at least refuses to name God, secular spirituality is not sure what the true self, once it has been liberated from the ego, has to connect or 'bind-back' with. This is where secular spirituality goes blank, gets stuck and often goes horribly wrong. Being where secular spirituality goes blank, gets stuck and often goes horribly wrong. Being where secular spirituality goes blank, gets stuck and often goes horribly wrong. Being where secular spirituality goes blank, gets stuck and often goes horribly wrong.

The soul desperately longs for the freedom of a binding relationship with God, a relationship that the ego shuns and despises as imprisonment. In the binding connection with the sacred Other, the soul finds its true nature, and discovers its true and free existence. The soul's motto is adequately expressed by E.M. Forster's famous phrase, 'Only connect'. The soul works tirelessly to recover its original binding link with the divine, and this is what the word 'religion' actually means; in Latin, *re-ligio* means to bind back to, to reconnect with. Religion is the art or logic of this relationship, the way in which we escape the bondage of the separate self, of mere rationality, and bind back to the original and unitary reality.

To the soul, or the true self, freedom means liberation from the constraints of the ego, and release from its sense of entrapment, from the burden of its alienation. Perhaps paradoxically, freedom for the soul is found in relationship itself, and the most important relationship of all is the soul's relationship with God, its Creator and Source. ...

What religion calls the soul, but it is a kind of Clayton's soul; the soul you have when you are not being religious. ...

These religious insights add another dimension to our spiritual teasers and appetisers: when we take and consume these things, we hunger again, we want more - more therapy, more massage - and therefore many of the new therapies are quite intentionally and deliberately addictive. They promise freedom, but we become enslaved to them, as our new attachments. Scripture prophets, many speaking about sacred things, and promising liberation, but leaving us bound and tied just as before. The false prophet today is the New Age teacher who offers us freedom and hope, but who actually hands us a new and often very expensive

Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst' (John 4:14).

In other words, they just give momentary relief from the anxieties of the ego, but they do not turn us around, they offer no *metanoia*, no transformation, and no freedom from the ego, nor do they provide us with an entrance into a larger life. These therapies admit this quite openly: come and meditate with us to reduce stress levels, to reduce anxiety, to be more efficient in the workplace, to be better at whatever it is that you already do. Or come into regular psychotherapy with us, see us several times a week, and we will sort out your problems, help you recover the plot of your life's story, but we won't necessarily give you the Larger Story, the big narrative, that makes your own little story and your personal life meaningful. These programs and therapies are ... if you like, spiritual teasers, appetisers, but the main meal is never delivered, because the main meal involves religious engagement and devotion. 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:48-51). 'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst' (John 4:14).

Both secular and religious ideas of a life beyond the ego lead us out-side the ego and into relationship with a hidden, mystical, immanent, and present other life.

and woe's. This is the blind alley of so many of the popular 'New Age' therapies: there is a kind of parody of spiritual liberation at the heart of them. These therapies talk the talk of liberation, and offer spiritual freedom, but because there is no *telos*, no end-point, no Omega, they merely end up supporting the ego in its hassled pursuit of personal success. religious people who want spirituality speak about a true self, and spirituality speak about a true self, and Christ or the Holy Spirit. But both secular and religious ideas of a life beyond the ego lead us outside the ego and into relationship with a hidden, mystical, immanent, and present other life. And both secular and religious ideas of this other life lead to radically different ideas about personal freedom.

David Tacey is Associate Professor of Literature and Psychoanalytic Studies at La Trobe University in Melbourne. The full text of this talk is available - send a SSA long envelope to the Editor, together with four other stamps to help defray costs.

Like Lucifer, our human ego is noble just when it serves a higher reality, when it devotes itself in love to greater ideals and a greater spirit. But when it imagines it can do without the higher reality, that it can kill off God, suddenly it loses its former dignity and becomes darkly demonic. This is one of the important ways in which we can achieve spiritual freedom today, by learning from the ancient stories and applying them psychologically to our own lives. To take these stories literally is its own kind of enslavement, an enslavement called fundamentalism or Biblical literalism. But to read the story of Lucifer symbolically is to achieve a freedom of interpretation that also frees the spirit from its entrapment in an archaic or premodern view of the world.

It is the Luciferian element within us that decides to kill off God, that sees the sacred as the obstacle to our freedom. The Luciferian voice within the ego tells it that continued devotion to the divine is a drag and a burden, something it can and should shrug off in its own bid for supremacy and power. But as soon as it claims this unlawful supremacy, it falls out of Heaven and into the Underworld of Hell, where it writhes and squirms with the heat and intensity of its own misplaced desires. Dark Lucifer is nothing other than human intensity that works away from divine service.

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Secular, nonreligious man has a chip on his shoulder. He hates religion, and curses it as residual superstition, having no place in the modern world. He also hates the churches, and tries to find fault with them whenever he can. He despises the churches because they keep the ramour of God alive, even in this profane and modern time. But he also realises that religion has a radically different idea of freedom, one that challenges and overrides his own, and this is why he often despises the churches with such venom. This is why it is often so very hard to distinguish real anger from false in relation to the churches. ... The churches, for all their various faults, keep a different kind of freedom alive, and this different kind of freedom is an outrage to the rational ego and an affront to its commonsense.

Words for a Pilgrim People

Unless the wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. (John 12:24)

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Not only did John Paul II renew expressions of regret for the 'sorrowful memories' that mark the history of the divisions among Christians, as Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council had done (cf. *Ur Unum* Sin, 88) but he also extended a request for forgiveness to a multitude of historical events in which the Church, or individual groups of Christians, were implicated in different respects. In the Apostolic Letter Tertio Millenniumo Adveniente (cf. 33-36), the Pope expresses the hope that the jubilee of 2000 might be the occasion for a purification of the memory of the Church from all forms of 'counter-witness and scandal' which have occurred in the course of the past millennium. The Church is invited to 'become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children'. She 'acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters' and encourages them 'to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act'. The responsibility of Christians for the evils of our time is likewise noted, although the accent falls particularly on the solidarity of the Church of today with past faults. Some of these are explicitly mentioned, like the separation of Christians, or 'the methods of violence and intolerance' used in the past to evangelize. (International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, [April 2000], 1.3)

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The history of salvation narrates exactly this long and changing dialogue which begins with God and brings to humanity a many-splendoured conversation. It is in this conversation of Christ among us that God allows us to understand something of Himself, the mystery of His life, unique in its essence, trinitarian in its persons; and He tells us finally how He wishes to be known: He is Love; and how He wishes to be honoured and served by us: Love is our supreme commandment. The dialogue thus takes on full meaning and offers grounds for confidence. The child is invited to it; the mystic finds a full outlet in it. (Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 70).

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When we read the great classic of St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, we might forget that he is there providing an explanation of the stanzas of an intensely passionate love poem. The first stanza reads: "One dark night, Fired with love's urgent longings – Ah the sheer grace! – I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled." St John explains this in terms of God's love, "gradually drawing them out of the state of beginners"; the soul moves "because of the vigor and warmth gained from loving its Spouse." And how is this intense love of God experienced? It is experienced as "dark night". To love is to die. And in the dying we live. To be loved by Love is to be captured and set free. Once tasted, never forgotten. The more we taste and are satisfied, the hungrier we get. When we enter this realm of incomprehensibility and uncontrollability, we begin to sense something of what it means to be alive.

The Bible – Despair that signals true love

In the Prophet Jeremiah we hear a most unusual – and deeply painful – cry of despair. It is also one of the most poignant and powerful sentences in the whole Bible. The New Jerusalem Bible translates: "You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger" (20:7). The Hebrew word is *pathah*. The word normally, when used in such an expression as this, carries the negative meaning of drawing someone away from a course which he or she ought to have followed. (But the Revised Standard Version and the King James translate the word in v 7 of Jeremiah as *deceived*.) The word *pathah* is used in the Book of Judges, for example, to describe a very underhand act: "On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire'" (14:15).

There seems to be only one other place in the Bible where the word *pathah* is used in the enigmatic and startling way in which Jeremiah uses it of his relationship with God. In the Prophet Hosea we read: "I am going to seduce her and lead her into the desert and speak to her heart" (2:16). In meditating on these two uses of the word, the first thing that must be noted is that they are both spoken within the context of an unbreakable bond of love. Jeremiah goes on: "I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name anymore,' but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not do it" (vv 8-9). The following lines of Hosea are: "There I shall give her: back her vineyards, and make the Vale of Achor a gateway of hope. There she will respond as when she was young, as on the day when she came up from Egypt" (v 17).

We have here a unique if disturbing insight into the Covenant. Yet, to those who have known a deep commitment of love, it will seem only too real. The realism of our love for God and God's love for us can only be enhanced when we allow ourselves to admit, face and live through the derailment, confusion and dying that it inevitably brings.

The Tradition – The dark night of love

The tradition is under no illusions about the difficulty of the struggle that we must encounter if we take the human journey seriously. Once we start to move into the depth dimension, we encounter unnering paradoxes, perplexing ambiguities and a growing realisation that the more we know, the more we know we do not know. Nowhere is this more true than in our attempts to know and love God.

Graham Greene exemplifies this, in *The Power and the Glory*, with the observations of the whisky priest as he speaks with his executioner: "They lay quiet for a while in the hut. The priest thought the lieutenant was asleep until he spoke again. 'You never talk straight. You say one thing to me – but to another man, or a woman, you say, "God is love". But you think that stuff won't go down with me so you say different things. Things you know I'll agree with.' 'Oh,' the priest said, 'that's another thing altogether – God is love. I don't say the heart doesn't feel a taste of it, but what a taste. The smallest glass of love mixed with a pint of ditch-water. We wouldn't recognize that love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us – God's love. It set fire to a bush in the desert, didn't it, and smashed open graves and set the dead to walking in the dark. Oh, a man like me would run a mile to get away if he felt that love around.'" When we read the great classic of St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, we might forget that he is there providing an explanation of the stanzas of an intensely passionate love poem. The first stanza reads: "One dark night, Fired with love's urgent longings – Ah the sheer grace! – I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled." St John explains this in terms of God's love, "gradually drawing them out of the state of beginners"; the soul moves "because of the vigor and warmth gained from loving its Spouse." And how is this intense love of God experienced? It is experienced as "dark night". To love is to die. And in the dying we live. To be loved by Love is to be captured and set free. Once tasted, never forgotten. The more we taste and are satisfied, the hungrier we get. When we enter this realm of incomprehensibility and uncontrollability, we begin to sense something of what it means to be alive.

It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us – God's love.

