



THE MIX



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Our Say – The shape of the church to come

The future of the Church is assured. We can say this with the confidence we have in the promise of Jesus to be with us until the end of time (cf Mt 28:20). Jesus' promise also implies people to acknowledge His presence, people who will gather in faith and form *ekklesia*. Our confidence in Jesus' promise is also a confidence in the human family and the willingness of some to be put in motion by the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

This says nothing about the shape of *ekklesia*. From time to time the question arises: What will the Church look like in the coming generations? This question can – and perhaps should – be asked with both interest and urgency. Asking the question and pursuing the conversation it evokes does not necessarily imply a loss of confidence in the promise of the Risen Lord or obscuring of the vocation of *ekklesia* as sign of God's liberating love in the world (cf *Lumen Gentium*, 1).

The future, often enough, can be read – at least partially – in the present. This is

one aspect of reading the signs of the times. Perhaps we can offer some modest educated guesses about the shape of *ekklesia* in the coming generations if we look at the way we structure and celebrate one of the great Christian signs – the sacrament of Reconciliation.

In the middle of May this year, many of the clergy received a copy of a "Circular Letter" from the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Cardinal Medina Estévez. There was no addressee on this Letter – entitled "Concerning the Integrity of the Sacrament of Penance – but in the second paragraph reference was made to the *ad limina* visit by the Australian Bishops in 1998.

This is not the place to attempt an analysis of this Letter. However, it is an official communication from the Prefect of the Congregation and it is about a matter of grave pastoral importance. It must, therefore, be acknowledged. Suffice it to say

here, that both the content and style fall far short of what we might reasonably expect of the Prefect of any Congregation in the Curia. The content is theologically dubious and the style is patronising. One Cardinal – not an Australian – has described it publicly as "insulting".

The point of mentioning the Letter is to note the re-statement of a particular approach to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In particular, the ban on general absolution, other than in "altogether exceptional situations", is re-affirmed. This seems to be the main import of the Letter.

There are parishes in Australia where the people celebrate communal reconciliation – as allowed by the rite of the Church – without sacramental absolution. In at least one parish, it is not uncommon for 400-500 people to participate. Typically, they do not celebrate individually the sacrament. In fact, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as such, has gone from their lives. How might this shape our future as Church? □

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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The Human Face

My name is Michael McGirr. I was born in Sydney in 1961 and went to St Aloysius College. I have lived most of my adult life in Melbourne. I am a Jesuit priest and I work as a writer, publisher and an editor of magazines. This means I drive a desk. I have the body shape to prove it.

But on the desk lurks a phone, buried under mountains of paper. I get exercise unearthing the phone whenever it rings. Sometimes it's an advertiser wanting to drive a harder bargain on a rate I thought we had already negotiated. Sometimes it's a publicist wanting to promote the latest book/CD/lecture tour/event. Sometimes I'm glad that the phone gives up before I can find it.

But there are other times as well. Last Friday, I was rung and asked to say the funeral of a woman I had never met. The undertaker explained that he had already tried three or four other people without any luck. So the following day I drop in on a group of friends who are sitting around a kitchen table, drinking cups of tea and glasses of wine, smoking, sharing stories about a woman they are mourning deeply. There are tears and laughter. Outside, the world gets on with its business. There is football on the radio and shopping to be done. But I have been invited inside. Into an intimate space.

The friends show me the coffin of the dead woman. They are decorating it. They have painted it bright blue, stencilled flowers on the side, and will get some of the woman's young friends to put their handprints in the wet paint. They have already chosen music and speakers. They know exactly what they want to do. So why do they need me? Perhaps just to listen. Not to create a funeral service, but appreciate the one they have crafted. I don't want to make my contribution sound momentous, but I suspect my role was in some small measure to validate their experience.

Earlier in the week I had attended a book launch. A friend of mine had completed a novel after seven years pretty hard slog. The genesis of the story was a small journal written by the author's mother in her younger days; he had come across it after her death. It made me think back to the day the writer had rung me to say that his mother had just died on the other side of the world. We went together to St Ignatius church in Richmond and lit a candle. My friend said that he had just wanted his mother's death noted somehow, somewhere on the planet. He wanted somebody to stop for a moment and mark the event.

Of course, it doesn't take a priest to do any of these things. But I wonder if they

would happen in quite the same way if I didn't have a badge. It certainly doesn't take a priest to put together a magazine like *Australian Catholics*, but I would be dishonest if I didn't own that much of my sense of ministry comes from the sharing of stories that move in and around its pages. I was touched, for example, on the day that a priest in a bush diocese rang to talk about the discovery of his own homosexuality. I am touched by the great number of people who send in to our simple 'meeting place', all of them with a story and a hope.

It troubles me that quite a few of those single people describe themselves as active in their parish, or active in a social justice group or a prayer group and, at the same time, lonely. One thing a magazine like ours tries to do is to encourage people to attach value to their own spiritual experience, to trust the movement of the spirit in their own lives. I have long thought that the crisis of religious belief, so called, is not that people can't believe but that they are not believed.

And what about me, driving my desk? I quickly tire of the church politics that are on the fringe of my work. But I am a stronger and more free person than I was when I was ordained and came to this ministry seven years ago. The reason for that is that I have heard and read so many stories. I have seen that those stories are both formative and transformative of our Christian community.

(Michael McGirr is the author of a travel memoir, *Things you get for free*, published by Picador.)



Michael McGirr SJ

Your Say – A Buddhist spiritual encounter

By Maurice Costello

Since being introduced to the writings of Bede Griffiths six years ago, I have been meditating in the general tradition of John Main. Recently I was invited to attend a weekend Buddhist Calm Abiding Meditation retreat led by Lama Choedek, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhists in Australia.

The weekend was a "silent retreat", with a good balance of talks by the ever-friendly and smiling Lama Choedek, interspersed with periods of Walking Meditation and Breathing Meditation. The talks were basically about the Buddhist Dharma (teachings).

I came away spiritually refreshed and rejuvenated in my own Christian (Catholic) faith!

Why? Of what possible benefit could Buddhism be to my Catholic faith practices?

Although it is said the Buddha did not believe in "God", I suspect the Buddha *did* believe in a Higher Power (Causeless Cause of all Causes, the Ultimate Reality, Boundless Light) but, as Buddhist scholar Christmas Humphreys notes, such "a non-entity is infinite, unlimited and without attributes" and, therefore, the Buddha so respected this "Power" he refused to give it a name... It remained "nameless" – and therefore non-existent in terms of our human understanding – but still real.

**In spirituality,
words come from the heart,
not from the head.**

The Buddha recognised that humans have innate strengths and weaknesses and he taught that we have the responsibility to perfect our human qualities (we Christians would say, our "God-given" qualities). The ultimate Buddhist enlightenment is, to me as a Christian, the attainment of spiritual and human perfection in these (God-given) qualities – e.g. sainthood, attaining perfect harmony with "God".

I am convinced as I live the spiritual life and read of the other major spiritual traditions, that the Holy Spirit is at work in all of them. We must not be so arrogant as to consider ours the "only way" to obtain a life of harmony with the Powerful One, the Chief Spirit, Nirvana, Eternal Bliss, "God". What are *words* but an outward method of communicating our inner thoughts? It's the

reality behind the *words* that counts. In spirituality, *words* come from the heart, not from the head.

I was impressed during the retreat to learn details of the daily spiritual rituals of the Tibetan Buddhists:

1. On awakening, dedicate one's speech (throat chakra) for the day (correct speech), lest one offend any fellow humans encountered. This reminded me of how we say the Morning Offering.

2. 20-minute morning meditation, usually at sunrise – comparable to Christian mantra meditation.

3. Spend the day in "mindfulness": mindful awareness of being alive – somewhat akin to our Christian sacrament of the present moment.

4. An evening meditation of 20 minutes, around sunset.

5. Prior to retiring, a reflection on the day's activities, especially in relation to one's positive and negative actions, as they affected others, leading to a repentance of past wrongs and a determination to better oneself the following day. Surely this is reminiscent of the Christian practice of examination of conscience as part of our evening prayers.

6. Finally in bed, the Tibetan Buddhist lies in the reclining Buddhist posture while doing a sleeping meditation – shades of our practice as little children of reclining with our arms crossed over our chests (in memory of Christ's Cross) and reciting a prayer to God as we dozed off to sleep.

The weekend awoke in me the desire to return to the basics of my Christian daily practice (some of which, I must admit, I had long forgotten) and to live my Christianity by employing the practices of:

1. morning offering;
2. morning meditation;
3. sacrament of the present moment ... throughout the day;
4. evening meditation;
5. examination of conscience and evening prayers.

As a layperson, I find that the more I meditate, the more I want to read the Scriptures (Old and New Testament) and discover the roots of my own faith.

Buddhism talks of the Triple Gem: The Buddha, Dharma (teachings) and Sangha (Enlightened Community). We Christians have Christ, the Scriptures and the Communion of Saints – our own Christian Triple Gem.

The Dalai Lama talks of Compassion, Kindness, Loving. The 8-fold Path teaches Right Belief, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Exertion, Right Remembrance and Right Meditation.

**The weekend awoke in me
the desire to return to the basics
of my Christian daily practice.**

These concepts might appear to be unique to Buddhism, but when we reflect on the Ten Commandments and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, isn't the message familiar?

Buddhism has a broad application to all faiths. True wisdom is the understanding of the universality of truth.

"May all living beings be well and happy, free from anger, from craving, from hatred and from jealousy" – the Buddha. (But it could equally have been uttered prayerfully by St Francis of Assisi).

Maurie Costello is an orthodontist in North Rockhampton, Qld. Married to Glenda, he has four adult children. He is active in ecumenism, leads a weekly meditation group and was a contributor to Paul Harris' The Heart of Silence.

ON SILENCE
by St Ambrose of Milan

What ought we to learn before everything else, but to be silent that we may be able to speak? ... It is seldom that anyone is silent, even when speaking does him no good. He is wise then who knows how to keep silent. ... The first word God says to you is: Hear!

The Editor wishes to apologise for the error in the last issue of *The Mix*: the front page inadvertently announced Bishop John Heaps' article, "Loyal Dissent" -- which will in reality appear in our next (August) issue.

Your Say (cont.) – Is anybody listening?

by Elizabeth and Tom Young

Tom and Elizabeth Young wrote the following in response to Archbishop Adrian Doyle's "Call to Change" in the Archdiocese of Hobart (October 1998). It was developed with the help of their four eldest children.

Within our church we are an unempowered people. Yet for us, making our own choices is important. The young members of our family are adamant that lobbying about Mass and 'other values' of the Catholic Church is definitely a No! No! What has Mass to offer them, they ask?

The Word is alive to them in many other ways also. "We're interested in justice issues, action, living the Christian life; which we do through Eddie Rice, Vinnies Youth etc. It is the social and communal aspect of the work, coupled with 'the good,' which is the draw card."

The formal teaching (homily) we receive each week – what *is* the content? Why do we go away empty and frustrated? Where is the interaction?

The question is asked: Without the focus of Mass how will our church survive? We feel our church needs great STRUCTURAL CHANGES and we're sad and frustrated because we're unempowered.

Vatican II brought great hope to us, especially to those of us who were youths at the time. Thirty-five or so years later, we're struggling to hang in there and to hold onto our hope (now forlorn) in a church which is hamstrung still by old ways of thinking which stand in opposition to the new.

Tom and I (still under 50) find ourselves among the younger couples (and in a minority) in a parish community which doesn't want to face the challenges and tasks which discipleship demands. Living in our parish is like being among reeds in a tidal bay. The reeds bend and flow at the mercy of the tide.

We are so dependent on our parish priest. With a good one we're empowered, with a poor one we fall apart. Those of us who feel we have a stake in the future of our parish and our church, and a great responsibility towards our children, find ourselves, under a poor pastor, in a minority and unsupported by the bulk of our parish community. It seems to us that community identity and conscience is so irrevocably tied up with the identity of our parish priest that no other leadership is able to develop.

For us, and our family, being a part of our parish family is something akin to living in a broken home. There is tension, lack of

trust, hurt, bickering, taking sides, and some of us have learned to dislike each other, but externally we pretend everything is OK. We have an image to uphold, an ideal to defend, we even try to 'sell' the idea that we're a good family to belong to.

It hurts to hear the condemnation of flawed practices in our church family that our youthful children see, and express, with a candour that ignores the finesse of sensitivity. We are proud as parents that they have the independence, the discernment and the judgment to make sound, reasoned and articulate evaluations of their church and their Christian faith.

What hurts most of all is that their words are echoing our own words expressed in the late 60's and early 70's. How long does it take before we can 'own' our church?

We have encouraged (our children) to observe the world in which they live with open and compassionate eyes; to be responsible and discerning. Yet, we feel abandoned in many ways, and feel keenly the lack of support from our church and parish community.

The call to conversation in the Tasmanian church is only a good thing if all sides listen and act. It seems to us that the laity in the church – we 'younger' ones anyhow – have listened long enough and that some (perhaps the more independent or discerning) threw in the towel long ago.

With our experience of a church which takes (literally) generations to respond to the pastoral needs of the contemporary community of faithful, is it any wonder that many of us feel unloved, unimportant and abandoned? Any wonder that parents, like us, are breaking our hearts, and our kids are walking away?

We have children whose ages span from preschool to university, and we try to lead them through practice and philosophy into an appreciation of the faith and love of Jesus Christ and to a fulfilling participation in his church. We have encouraged them to observe the world in which they live with open and compassionate eyes; to be responsible and discerning. Yet, we feel abandoned in many ways, and feel keenly the lack of support from our church and parish community.

While our Catholic schools build a keen sense of social justice and generalised Christian attitudes and beliefs, the fundamental spiritual development of our children is largely ignored, especially in primary school. It saddens us that our children are 'processed' in sacramental preparation programs and that we allow it to happen that way.

When our children are in their teens (not an easy period), our parish family longs for them but can't accept them. They (the kids) must conform or go away, and not make demands on people who don't want to bother with their problems. The young people feel that they have love, enthusiasm and ideas to share but, even if they communicate them, they are not valued. The young ones acknowledge that they would definitely benefit from the wisdom and experience of older parishioners, but they realise that this will not happen when they cannot feel comfortable enough to even stay around.

As parents we find ourselves unsupported by our parish community. Our community only wants to know us when we can carry the load with them without presenting them with problems, making challenges or being disruptive. Is it any wonder that we ask ourselves, "Is this where we belong?" Why do we stick it out with a church that lets us down?

It is all very well to talk about a church and a commitment to the oppressed and marginalised in our world and to identify and focus our attention elsewhere. Often it is easier to face a distant reality than to confront the ugly and destructive divisions that are right here with us.

We remind ourselves that we do care about our children, that we do care about the church and the mission of Christ, and that we know and love God and that we know that he cares about us. We remember the message of discipleship as expressed by Mark and we know, also, that 'the way' is not going to be easy – but, where oh where, is the light at the end of the tunnel? We don't want to live a life in conflict; we don't want to be ever critical of our church and our faith community. We want to be proactive, not reactive, but how can we be that when our family and its needs (and those families without a voice) are an URGENT priority.

As a family, we have been actively a part of parish and community affairs through RCIA, Pastoral Council, Parish Bulletin production, Bible Study groups etc. Together and with the help of the children we run a computer business in Hobart and try to bring the ethic of the Christian life to

fruitfulness in the secular world.

Not mentioned above, and very important and valued by us, is the very real love, care and friendship which we have experienced and still experience on our faith journey with other members of our faith community. It is those blessed people and those faith experiences which have become our cornerstone, † foundation and our hope for the future.

Tom and Elizabeth Young live in Hobart. They have been married 21 years and have 10 children – the eldest 20 years of age, and the youngest 3 years.

THE CHURCH AND DEMOCRACY

By Julian Miller

From this vantage point in the antipodes, it would appear that there has been a serious abuse of power going on in Rome in recent years. Within the papal curia there seems to be a faction that is working against the programme of the Second Vatican Council. That Council was convened by a pope, presided over by papal legates and subscribed to by the pope – no-one is free to work against it. The Council stressed the collegiality of the bishops with the pope, and this implies a change in the way the curia should function.

After the First Vatican Council was interrupted in 1870, the definition of papal primacy was left standing alone, without a context. It was not surprising that there developed an emphasis on Rome, a centralising on the Roman curia and an enhancement of its role. But after Vatican II the opposite tendency should have begun: a decentralising, a scaling down, or at least a redirection of the role of the curia in support of the collegiality of the bishops with the pope.

The situation is becoming serious: episcopal conferences are being treated as servants, not collaborators. I am surprised that those of greater *gravitas* have not rebelled; perhaps they need to threaten economic sanctions! The so-called “synods of bishops” are becoming more and more like the “show trials” of totalitarian regimes! Clearly new ways have to be found to enable the collegiality of the bishops with the pope to serve the Church and its mission to the world. Perhaps we should take some lessons from democracy.

The standard teaching in seminaries for hundreds of years has been that the papacy is a monarchy and that this is of divine institution. I doubt if any modern biblical scholar would see Jesus as conferring “monarchy” on Peter. He called him a “fisher of men”, a “rock”, a “shepherd feeding His lambs and sheep”. He warned His disciples against the kind of authority the

gentiles wielded (Mk 10,41-45). What kind of “monarch” would He have had in mind? Herod? Caesar? David?

Furthermore, the historians of the early Church would have great difficulty with the notion of monarchy being applied to bishop or pope. We have a clear picture of the Church in Antioch at the beginning of the second century, where bishop, presbyters and deacons seem to have functioned as a single harmonious entity – in that sense a “monarchy”, the rule of one: one ministry, one college. No doubt one of the pioneers of such a “oneness” was Peter himself, before he left Antioch for Rome.

But in the fourth century, beginning during the reign of Constantine, the role of the bishop and of the pope began to assume more of a monarchical character in the image of the Roman-Byzantine political models. The “patriarchs” of Antioch, Rome and Alexandria were joined by Constantinople, the new Rome, before the end of that century. Their style and policy became more byzantine. Even so, synods of bishops remained crucial for major decisions – a collegial ministry.

Vatican II calls us the pilgrim people of God being led by the Spirit, and this opens the door to more popular forms of government.

After the fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751, the power of the Emperor ceased to be relevant in the West, and the pope became the temporal ruler of the papal states, both monarch and pope. This was with the blessing of the king of the Franks. That situation continued until the reunification of Italy in 1870, when the pope lost the papal states. But, in a sense, the concordat with Mussolini in 1929 prolonged that confusion between temporal monarch and papal office.

The development of the pope as solitary monarch reached its zenith with Pius XII. His belief in this policy was one of the factors in his relations with the Nazi regime in Germany: he created for himself an impossible role in World War II. I first saw him in 1952 when I was twenty, and I was very impressed. But as I learned more about his pretensions to a pseudo-aristocracy, I became disillusioned. That was why John XXIII was so refreshing to us all in his simplicity and humility.

Pope Paul VI, a great pope in many ways, spent many years as Secretary of State to Pius XII and unfortunately inherited something of the solitary high-priest

syndrome. Having consulted widely about the birth-control question, he reserved to himself the final decision and agonised for two years before publishing *Humanae Vitae*. Surely in such matters, the *sensus fidelium* of Cardinal Newman should have been allowed to prevail – and probably does.

Vatican II calls us the pilgrim people of God being led by the Spirit, and this opens the door to more popular forms of government. The Church has much to learn from the representative and democratic institutions which originated in Britain, the United States of America and France about 200 years ago, and which have spread around the world since then.

The College of Cardinals, the electoral college for less than a thousand years, should now become representative, not appointed by a monarchical pope. Each cardinal should be elected by an episcopal conference on a proportional basis and for a fixed term. Every conference should be represented, the larger ones with more cardinals, and this body could meet on a regular basis as a college of bishops to collaborate with the pope. The size of this college may need to be adjusted, but it should not be so large as to make frequent and regular meetings cumbersome.

To apply this democratic reform throughout the Church, bishops should not be chosen by the pope, but elected at a local level, as they once were, by an electorate broader perhaps than an individual diocese. Women should be recognised as having equal rights, nothing less, as the Lord intended (according to St Paul: Gal.3,28).

These are the reforms that the new millennium calls for: not Roman control, but Roman leadership of a college. Incidentally, this may make the primacy more accessible ecumenically. In my opinion, this is not a question of theology or ecclesiology, but of control and power. In a civil society an abuse of power is countered by a commission of enquiry, or a vote of no-confidence, or the fall of the government, or even a revolution. But in the Church abuse of power leads to schism, “the sundering of Christ’s seamless robe”.

It is sobering to recall that it was the goings-on in Rome that triggered Martin Luther’s call for reform in 1517. It took the papacy twenty years to agree to call a council, and it took Trent until 1563 to bring matters to a conclusion – by which time a large part of Europe had been lost to the Roman communion. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mt.11,15).

Julian Miller has studied at Oxford and taught History in the Seminary and University of NSW. He is married and lives near Bowral where he is also a member of the Sip organizing team.

The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him. (Mark 1:12-13)

□□□

What then is the purpose of this instrument, the Word of God and the New Song? To open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, and to lead the halt and erring into the way of righteousness; to reveal God to those who are foolish, to make an end of corruption, to vanquish death, to reconcile the disobedient to the Father. The instrument of God loves humanity. The Lord pities, chastens, exhorts, admonishes, saves and guards us; and over and above this, promises the kingdom of heaven as reward for our discipleship, while the only joy he has of us is that we are saved. For wickedness feeds upon corruption; but truth, like the bee, does no harm to anything in the world, but takes delight only in the salvation of humankind. You have then God's promises; you have his love: partake of his grace." (Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks, 1.)

□□□

*It follows for the Christian churches that they must fulfil further their old task of employing the Word of the cross to destroy religious idolatry and personal fetishism and to spread the freedom of faith into the very hovels of the obscure. Its new task then will lie in struggling against not only religious superstition but also political idolatry, not only religious alienation of man but also his political, social and racial alienation in order to serve the liberation of man to his likeness to God in all areas where he suffers from inhumanity. In this sense, I think, it would also be the task of the churches today to develop "social critical freedom" in institutions. I say "also" because man is basically enslaved by anxiety, and liberation from anxiety happens in the first place through faith -- not through social improvements. (Jurgen Moltmann, "Political Theology", *Theology Today*, 28 (1971), 20.)*

□□□

In the Gospel of John – 6:1-15 – we have an account of the so-called “multiplication of the loaves and the fishes.” Each of the Synoptics seems to tell exactly the same story, right down to details such as “five loaves and two fish” and the “five thousand men” who sat on “the grass” and the “twelve baskets” of scraps collected afterwards (cf Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:32-44; Lk 9:1017). Each account also gives the event a decidedly eucharistic mood: John says “Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks”; Matthew, Mark and Luke say Jesus “looked up to heaven and blessed and broke” the bread. Matthew and Mark then have Jesus send the disciples off in the boat while he dismisses the crowd before withdrawing “to the hills to pray.” Luke moves to a moment when he “praying alone.” John concludes a little more starkly by saying: “Jesus, as he realized they were about to come and take him away by force and make him king, fled back to the hills alone” (v 15 – NJB).

John’s conclusion is striking: “Jesus fled back to the hills alone.” Here he is, the great initiator of Eucharist, himself “bread” for the world, the incarnate expression of God’s liberating love in their midst and he withdraws to the hills to be alone. What is happening?

One thing is obvious: Jesus has a sense of himself and what he must do that has not yet been perceived, either by the disciples or the people at large. This is redolent with commitment and determination. It also strongly suggests that the real agenda being worked out here is not to be found in these events as such but in what they signify. They are signs of something else that is happening, a subterranean river of life and reality of which Jesus is acutely aware. Jesus is conscious of the fact that any of these signs – wonderful as they are in themselves – can become a distraction, an obstacle to the realisation of God’s liberating love.

Jesus withdraws, not for the sake of withdrawing. He withdraws – he fled – because he has somewhere more important to go, something more important to do. This is a movement born of the loving relationship between Father and Son. This man Jesus knows that he is about the Father’s work and that work can only be accomplished to the extent that he is faithful to the abiding love they share. Loving communion is the heart of his mission. □

Jesus withdraws because he has somewhere more important to go.

The Tradition – Facing one’s own absurdity

The authentic tradition has consistently placed great store on self-awareness and facing the truth that emerges within one’s experience. We could say that, for the tradition, experience is the great teacher. Life is an ongoing conversation between our experience, the Gospel, the experience of other pilgrims and the multiple sources of wisdom that have been developed within the human family. This truly catholic vision became a little dim at times, especially during the Counter Reformation period when Christianity tended to degenerate into a number of different ideologies.

The Desert Fathers moved away from the towns to face themselves and their God. Those athletes of the desert knew – like any thoughtful person of any ages knows – that each of us has much to face and work through because each of us is born with at least one remarkable talent: the talent for self-deception. It is a life’s work to keep cutting through the thickets of unreality we create for ourselves and connect with the Real beyond the real.

Thomas Merton, when speaking of solitude in his *Disputed Questions*, noted “the disconcerting task of facing and accepting one’s own absurdity. The anguish of realising that underneath the apparently logical pattern of a more or less ‘well organized’ and rational life, there lies an abyss of irrationality, confusion, pointlessness, and indeed of apparent chaos. This is what immediately impresses itself upon the man who has renounced diversion. It cannot be otherwise: for in renouncing diversion, he renounces the seemingly harmless pleasure of building a tight, self-contained illusion about himself and about his little world. He accepts the difficulty of facing the million things in his life which are incomprehensible, instead of simply ignoring them. Incidentally, it is only when the apparent absurdity of life is faced in all truth that faith real becomes possible. Otherwise, faith tends to be a kind of diversion, a spiritual amusement, in which one gathers up accepted, conventional formulas and arranges them in the approved mental patterns, without bothering to investigate their meaning, or asking whether they have any practical consequences in one’s life.” □

Otherwise, faith tends to be a kind of diversion.

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

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

mail: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

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

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie, August 24 “What God Means to Me” Lloyd Vidler & Marie Biddle rsj (Info: John 4878 5230).

° **Campbelltown** - The Catholic Club, July 12 “A Call to Justice” Mr Craig Thompson & Sr Anne Lane pbvm (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, July 17 “Workplace: Will Ethics get me promoted?” Bill Clarke & Tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St, July 26 “Turning Points: Living Stories” Marie Ficarra & David Scott (Info: Noline 9744 8141).

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

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel, August 14 “Is There an Australian Spirituality?”, Peter Miller & Barbara Asplett (Info Gaye 4232 2735).

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

° **Kincumber** – ‘Proclaim Jubilee’, The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive, August 1 “Ritual & Healing” Keith Taylor & Christine Carlton (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, July 5 “Reclaiming the Sabbath” Fr Michael Whelan & Marian Apple; August 2 “Feast or Famine?” Rev Bill Crews & Eva Cox (Info: Maree 9387 3152 (H)).

° **Penrith** - Golf Club, August 16 (Topic & Speakers tba) (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

° **Perth** - The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, 0pm-9pm (Info: Michael 9448 2404)

° **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler, Windsor Rd, Aug 1 “The Church – why stay?” Rev Bishop Howard Dillon & Br Julian McDon-

ald cfc (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, July 19 “Stumbling on the unexpected God” Mary Mockler & David Leary (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).

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

° **Clayton (VIC)** – The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm: July 25 “Healing symbols – search for an Australian identity” Dr David Tacey (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, August 30 “The Spirit of Public Life”, Terry Laidler & Julie Fewster (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).

° **Fortitude Valley (QLD)** – Dooley’s, First Monday of month (Info: Lois 3260 7384).

° **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.

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

° **Catalyst Forum for the Future:** “Woman and Man: One In Christ Jesus” with Sr Sonia Wagner SGS and Ms Catherine Harris, Sunday August 6, 2pm-4pm at ACU Campus, Edward St, N Sydney (Info: Pauline 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).

° **The Centre for Christian Spirituality, Randwick** “Wisdom from the Christian East” with Rev George Maloney sj, July 15, 10am-3pm (Info: Kate on 9398 2211 or 0412 400 519).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre, Pennant Hills, July 29** “Faith and Church in our time of Transition” with Fr Frank O’Loughlin (Info: 9484 6208).

PILGRIMAGE

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

Write snail mail or email

terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

° **Spirituality Courses Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, “Australian Spirituality”** July 26, 1.30-3.00pm, July 30, 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)

° **Personal and Spiritual Growth and Development programmes** “Christian Meditation: An Introduction”, Bexley, July 15; Inner Gaze, Engadine, August 6; “Meditation: Its History”, St Mary’s Cathedral, August 27 – all 9.15am-4pm, (Info: Br Gregory Holland 9386 9632).

**AQUINAS ACADEMY
SUMMER SCHOOL
JANUARY 15, 16 & 17 2001**
St Ignatius College Riverview

Featuring

Dr David Tacey

And a variety of workshops

Live in or commute

Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651

Recommended Reading

Clifford Longley, *The Worlock Archive*, Geoffrey Chapman, 2000, 388 pages, index, (\$26US + \$3.95US p/p from alibris.com).

Derek Worlock was Archbishop of Liverpool, England, when he died in February 1996. During his life, Worlock had kept substantial records of meetings and letters and his own diaries of events he had observed and/or participated in – like the Second Vatican Council. After Derek Worlock's death, Clifford Longley – well known for his work with the London *Tablet* – was invited to research those records. This book is the result of his efforts. Longley says, "by far the most interesting documentation in the Archive refers to the Second Vatican Council." (Worlock was private Secretary to the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Godfrey, in 1959 when Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council.) Longley does not focus on the details of his subject's life. He is interested in the world – more specifically the world of the Catholic Church – and its events, as observed by that subject. This is more than an informed and informative book – it is a delightful one to read. Longley clearly loves his subject. Rather than obscuring his vision, this aids it. There is no idealisation of Worlock here, no simplistic "goodies and baddies" stuff. Nor is there any joy over the faults of the Church. This is a thoroughly compassionate book, well researched, with astute and objective observations of one of the outstanding bishops of the twentieth century. Read it!

John Thornhill, *Christianity's Estranged Child Reconstructed*, William B Eerdmans, 2000, footnotes, index, pb.

Thornhill takes a hopeful view of our times. He speaks as a scholar who is very perceptive in unveiling the inner dynamics of the modern and post-modern minds. Despite its substantial deficiencies, modernity should not be simply abandoned, says Thornhill. He argues that it contains the seeds of something more fruitful. But he also argues that, so long as it holds to a style of thinking dominated by the scientific methodology, it will not be able to deal with the ultimate questions that face us as human beings in search of a viable future. The lack of metaphysics is a radical flaw in the modern mind, one that does not permit an in-depth and ultimately productive conversation, for example, about ultimate issues. Post-modernity is right in deconstructing the uncritical empiricism and sheer rationalism of modernity. Thornhill, from a strong Thomistic grounding, is able to draw on a very wide array of authors and engage them all in serious and objective debate without losing sight of what is real. At no point does he become ideological – a serious failing in some critiques of both modernity and post-modernity. Thornhill reminds us that the challenge to develop good conversation for renewal must include good and substantial content. It is not enough to simply voice opinions. The Church and wider society in Australia at this time should welcome this challenging but readable book.

Michael Ford, *Wounded Prophet: A Portrait of Henri J M Nouwen*, Doubleday, 1999, 233 pages, index, bibliography, hb.

Henri Nouwen hardly needs an introduction. Or does he? Many of us who have sought spiritual guidance in our reading these past thirty or so years will be very familiar with Nouwens' work. Ford describes the man behind that work and his own personal search for spiritual depth. We read of an immensely gifted man, a truly wise man, a restless man, a man who in many ways seems to have been also terribly self-absorbed. What motivated Henri Nouwen? He was clearly motivated, in part at least, by a strong desire to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. Amidst all the personal conflict, the over-work and the sheer drivenness of his life at times, Nouwen's focus on Christ seems to have been deep and real. Jean Vanier said of him: "He loved Jesus and wanted to reveal the name of Jesus." He was a brilliant teacher who regularly packed lecture halls at Harvard when he was on the staff of the Divinity School in the early 80's; he had a remarkably warm nature and a gift for friendship, but he found personal friendships hard to sustain; he was very generous and compassionate to many, yet he was emotionally needy, suffering from awful depression; spoke at times severely about homosexuality and finally came to admit his own identity as a gay priest. This book introduces us to God at work in our world in the way God seems to work best – through brokenness.

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Recommended Reading

John McSweeney, *A Meddling Priest: John Joseph Therry*, St Paul's, 2000, 178 pages, index, bibliography, pb.

This little book has obviously been a labour of love for the well-known Pastor Emeritus, Fr John McSweeney. Writing of fellow Corkman and first pioneer Catholic priest to the colony that was to become Australia, Fr McSweeney has given us a most informative and endearing portrait of the man. Not all the scholars will be in Fr McSweeney's corner mind you. But then, the basis for this biography is not scholarship but an instinctual appreciation for a priest who gave so much to the people. There is an undisguised admiration here. At the beginning of the book McSweeney makes the disclaimer: "My many years of experience in the art of pasturing and searching for a pastoral spirituality constitute my only claim to have anything unique to offer". When readers proceed in full awareness of the author's intent and scope, they will be enchanted – even inspired – by the anecdotes and information so graciously told. The hardships of the early settlers are easily forgotten in the light of material gains since then. And the particular difficulties facing the Catholics and their priests – when the priests eventually were allowed to minister here – are just as easily forgotten. We do well to remember. Our life as a culture depends on remembering. Fr McSweeney has done us all a favour by writing a very readable book about a very interesting and significant character. It will help us remember.

James F Puglisi, editor, *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: "Toward a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue"*, The Liturgical Press, 1999, 211 pages, footnotes, index, pb.

In December 1997 an ecumenical group of scholars gathered in Rome to share a symposium on the Petrine ministry in direct response to Pope John Paul's call for fraternal dialogue in his 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint*. The Secretary for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – Bishop Pierre Duprey – was in attendance for most of the Symposium. Apart from Catholic scholars, others represented the Oriental and Orthodox tradition, the Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist and Free Church traditions. The first paper, by Klaus Schatz SJ, presents an excellent historical overview concerning some of the key questions and issues. Participants noted the deep mutual respect evident throughout. Lutheran scholar Harden Meyer writes of "the conditional openness" for papal primacy in the Lutheran Reformation. Anglican Bishop John Hind put the point that most characteristic of an Anglican ecclesiology is "bishop-in-synod". He also noted that, for some Anglicans, the Petrine institution is flawed from its inception and therefore to be wholly rejected. Scholars representing the other traditions exposed both further complexities and a genuine desire to continue the dialogue. This set of Symposium papers is a valuable contribution to the dialogue Pope John Paul asked for.

David J Stagaman, *Authority in the Church*, The Liturgical Press, 1999, 143 pages, footnotes, index, pb, \$35.95.

Authority in the Church is an excellent complement to John Thornhill's *Model* (reviewed on this page in the last issue of *The Mix*). Stagaman, focusing specifically on the issue of authority, gives an excellent summary of many of the key ideas that have been integral to changes within the Church over the past fifty years. He notes shifts from "status to charisma", "obligation to persuasion", "hierarchy to dialogue", "orthodoxy to orthopraxis", "institution to pilgrim people" and "essence to relationships". He makes no easy or simplistic distinctions. The pages of this book are the fruit of many years of research and teaching. While that has ensured a certain denseness to the writing, it has also prevented a drift into anything that might be construed as shallow polemic. This is nowhere more true than in Chapter 3, where the author addresses the question, "What is authority?". Chapters 4 and 5 give a very useful overview of the historical development of authority within the Church. This section begins with the New Testament – drawing heavily on Yves Congar – and proceeds with particular reference to the development of the papacy through the ages. This is a well-considered and enlightening reflection on a topic that is both complex and subtle. It is also a topic that demands urgent and intelligent conversation. Stagaman makes a fine contribution here.

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