



THE MIX



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Our Say – The examined life is worth the effort

In Plato's *Apology*, he offers a record of Socrates' defence of himself at his trial. Plato attributes some memorable words to Socrates, among them the following:

I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your property, ... but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul ... daily to discourse about virtue and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living.

Human beings tend to slip easily into routines and habits. With those routines and habits come certain expectations – implicit or explicit – about the way things should be. We can, if we are not vigilant, begin to take things for granted, accepting things we should not accept, allowing things we should not allow. Socrates is right: Such a life – “the unexamined life” – is not worth living.

As we become habituated to change and the increasing pace of life, we may lose both our inclination and ability to examine what

is happening. We might also be overtaken by a gnawing sense of impotence, that we have less and less control over more and more facets of our lives. So, we conclude, why bother?

Thus we might also become habituated to and accepting of behaviours within the Christian community that either do not sit well with the Gospel or are clearly obstacles to the Gospel.

The first issue of this little journal was published in April 1996. This issue of March 2001 is the fiftieth. We might say that *The Mix* is concerned with promoting “the examined life”. To that end it has, over the past five years, encouraged conversation by publishing letters, essays, personal stories, reflections on the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition and informing readers of other conversations – especially *Spirituality in the Pub* – in various parts of Australia.

The Editors of *The Mix* and the convenors of its parent organisation, *Catalyst for Renewal*, have become aware, over these few short years, of just how much wisdom, generosity, patience, time and energy are

required to keep the conversation happening. “The examined life” demands persistent, consistent and hard work! Fatigue and despondency can easily set in, especially when the results seem negative.

The response from readers of *The Mix* has been critical to the whole venture. Without others to promote and share the conversation, *The Mix* would be a pointless exercise. We can, must and will continue to ask the questions that seem important.

A number of issues, which demand dedicated conversation, have emerged more clearly over the past five years. Pope John Paul II has noted one of the biggest: reform of the papacy. We might add the following: Church governance – especially the role of the curia, the appointment of bishops and the general manner of decision-making in the Church; ministry – especially the nature and role of priesthood and the celebration of Eucharist

Conversations about these and other questions are already underway. *The Mix* will continue to play its modest part in promoting those conversations. □

50th issue of *The Mix*!

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

These are the current Members:
Dominic Beirme, Patrice Beirme, Marie Biddle RSJ, Kevin Burges, Aidan Carvill SM, Susanna Davis, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Paul Durkin, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Francois Kunc, Maryellen McLeay, Dr Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Dr Tim O'Hearn, Margaret Rigotti, Roy Rigotti, John Robinson, Louise Robinson, John Sharples, Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan SM, Carole Wilson

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

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

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor reserves the right not to publish a submitted text. Not all the opinions expressed in *The Mix* are those of Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated.

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All original work in *The Mix*, unless otherwise indicated, is the work of the Editor.

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The Human Face

My name is Michael Whelan. I was born on July 30th 1947, at St Margaret's Hospital in Darlinghurst. The Second World War had just finished; my father, who had served in the Air Force in West Papua, was flung back into civilian life with the rest. St Margaret's Hospital was run on a shoestring by the Sisters of St Joseph, under the auspices of the famous Sr Anne RSJ. I cherish the thought that one of those mighty women whacked the first scream out of my little lungs. As was her wont, Anne treated my mother like a queen. She deserved it, as I was the fourth of thirteen children – ten boys and three girls.

On a returned serviceman's scholarship, my father completed a teacher's certificate at Sydney Teacher's College the year I was born. His service in one-teacher schools meant we lived in ten different places, mostly in north-eastern NSW.

I began school when I was able to walk across the playground from the teacher's residence to the schoolroom. My first appearance was inglorious. Standing on a stool, I stuck my head through the window and shouted to my father: "Hey teacher! Bum!" I learned early that life is a comedy and if you don't get the joke, you'll become cynical, despondent or just plain po-faced.

On December 1st 1951 my brother Martin was born, severely retarded. Fortunately he died eleven months later, on the feast of St Martin de Porres. I can still see his little white coffin on the back seat of our green 1936 Chevrolet, after my father collected him from Grafton hospital. I learned early that life is tragic and if you pretend it is not, you spend your life doing just that – pretending.

Remember Empire Day? State school kids used to have races through the long grass, with little prizes, a picnic lunch with lots of tomato and onion sandwiches and a half-day holiday. On Empire Day in 1955 my sister won her race. The following day, a delegation came to the school to lodge a protest: second against first. I was never sure whether it was prompted by religious bigotry – there was plenty of that around – or just tiny-mindedness – there was also plenty of that around. The five Whelans walked out of the Tyndale Public School that day, under the teacher's direction, and went to the local convent.

We moved on at the end of that year, to Arding in the Armidale Diocese. To avoid excommunication, my father had to get permission to teach his own children in the State school. Permission was given.

My five years at Ballina High School were good years. I was not particularly interested in study at that time, but I loved sport. Fortunately for me, so did the

headmaster. That all helped to hide the fact that I was under-performing in my studies.

I always had a devotion to Mary, the mother of God; I wanted to teach; I also wanted to do something great for God; the idealism and heroism of St Peter Chanel appealed. I wrote to the Marists. "Turn up on January 30th", said the Vocational Director. So I did.

The Seminary prepared me for a Church and world that had actually disappeared before I was ordained in 1972. I hold no resentments about that. I believe people have generally done their best in my regard.

Five years studying under Adrian van Kaam has given me a spirituality in which human experience and the Gospel merge in the most compelling and liberating ways.

In 1989 I was appointed Principal of the Catholic Theological Union at Hunters Hill. In both its program and spirit, CTU was unique in Sydney, with more than 300 part-time and full-time students – mostly laity – and an excellent Governing Council. Its passing is one of the tragedies of the contemporary Sydney Church.

In 1994 I was one of the group that founded Catalyst for Renewal. I helped set up Spirituality in the Pub and have edited *The Mix* since its inception. I am pleased to remain very actively part of Catalyst for Renewal.

Catholicism has given me an appreciation for mystery, the mystical, the sacramental and ritual; an acute sense of the absurdity of human existence and yet an undying conviction that it is meaningful; an appreciation of the need for authority and structure together with an awareness of human fallibility and the power of forgiveness; a sense of church that is, like life itself, shot through with ambiguities and outright contradictions, paradoxes and scandals – a sign both of God's liberating love and human frailty.



Michael Whelan SM

In September 1999, 4500 Australian servicemen and women deployed to East Timor in the aftermath of extensive bloodshed and wholesale destruction wrought by the Indonesian military and the militias they established.

Despite numerous acts of retaliation, by the militias in particular, peace was restored with minimal loss of life. That peace was restored in the main by 18-22-year-old soldiers and officers, some of whom had only completed their basic training days before deploying.

In reality the stage was set for a mighty conflagration; the troops we deployed were significantly outnumbered by many thousands of militiamen. Twenty-one year-old platoon commanders with 26 soldiers were given responsibility for securing areas of up to 100 sq km with little more than they could carry on their backs for resources.

But many of them deployed with something more powerful than what the militias could muster: faith and hope in Jesus Christ, and the support in prayer of many in Australia! Some of their reflections are shared here.

John, 22, from 3 RAR, wrote: "On a recent operation our company came under fire from some militia. A heavy machine gun also opened up. We closed with them, and they made a run for the border. I must say that 'the Lord is my rock and my strength'. I live from week to week on the strength I get from Mass ... and the inspirational words of Psalm 91 have been my guiding light: The Lord is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust."

"This man [Jesus] is about as loving as it comes, so I think it's fair to say his advice is as good as you will find."

Peter, 21, in 2 RAR, wrote: "Before I deployed I was anxious about this whole ordeal, but I drew a lot of comfort from knowing your faith had sustained you overseas and I knew I was going to rely heavily on my faith to sustain me.

"Now here, I try to pray every morning. Thank God for everything and everyone in my life. I ask him not to let me take counsel of my fears but to help me lead my platoon well. I ask him to help me become a better Christian and better man. I finish

with: 'Lord Jesus, for the rest of this day, I'm in your hands'.

"I know God has meant me to be here. Everything I have done in the past, every path taken has led to this experience. Without doubt, faith has become the central strong point in my life!"

All of the commanders at platoon level in East Timor were trained at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. There, in addition to their training in tactics and weapon handling, they all received training in ethics and character development, under the direction of the College Chaplains.

In addition, from one quarter to one half of each graduating class participated voluntarily in faith development activities: "Antioch" in 1998 and "Discovery" and "Alpha" in 1999, programmes in which they explored their own spirituality through reflection on life issues.

Brett, 23, from 3 RAR, wrote: "Thanks for the prayers. I have asked God for help many times while over here – when confronted with a difficult situation – and every time he has cleared my head and shown me the path I should take".

Besides personal faith development, a number from each graduating class – from six to twenty-six – accepted a call to lay ministry, to be trained and commissioned to exercise ministry in the absence of a chaplain. (The small number of chaplains is stretched over vast distances.)

Tim, 21, from 5/7 RAR, wrote: "There is probably no more Christian an act that a soldier could do than what we are doing now ... The chaplain has been getting Holy Communion for me to distribute ..."

The Catholic Church in the Australian Defence Force has recently been calling young men and women to exercise their baptismal right and responsibility to be "light, salt and leaven" in the society within which they find themselves. Young adults are being trained to lead worship in the absence of a chaplain, to carry and distribute Holy Communion, and to exercise pastoral care through prayer for the sick, dying and dead.

They are undertaking spiritual direction and theological formation appropriate to their circumstances and environment.

Most significantly, Australian Defence Force operations are being undergirded by soaking prayer. At chapels across the country, young people are coming together

to pray for peace, safety for those deployed, and the restoration of justice for the many troubled peoples of the world.

To be prepared to risk one's life for the safety of others is a big call. At the same time, the prospect of having to use appropriate lethal force to defend the defenceless is both a big burden and a grave responsibility. But, the additional responsibility of exercising specific Christian ministries, in the cultural climate of a workplace like the military, where people come from all segments of society, with and without any previous contact with church, is an awesome undertaking! Nevertheless, young adults are answering this call.

In no other profession would men and women so young face such grave responsibilities.

Michael, 22, of 2 RAR writes: "One of the greatest appeals the Army has for me is the mateship ... one of its strongest values is to look after your mates, to be there for them, to shield them from pain and adversity and, if need be, to die for them. This ultimate sacrifice was displayed in one of the biggest events in world history, when Jesus showed his unconditional love for his friends. Jesus gives us many examples of how to love, and live life to the full.

"This man is about as loving as it comes, so I think it's fair to say his advice is as good as you will find..."

I hope you go to sleep tonight comfortable in the thought that our country's honour is in good hands, God's hands, being made flesh by young Christian men and women, called to serve their God and those in need.

Tonight more than 2,000 men and women will still be standing watch in some lonely outpost far from home, with forces of evil ever ready to catch them off guard. In no other profession would men and women so young face such grave responsibilities. They can do it confidently through their faith, hope and love in Jesus Christ.

"There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Chaplain Gary Stone is a deacon and serves with 2/14 Light Horse Regiment, Enoggera, Qld.

Essay – You visited me in prison

by Julia Ryan

The following is most of the text of a presentation by Julia Ryan, given at the Catalyst Dinner in Hunters Hill, October 14 2000.

I am 25 years old and have been visiting prison for about 6 years now. At the moment, I visit Mulawa women's prison regularly. I'm here to tell you my story.

Prison is a punishment. I shake my head when I see things on TV depicting prison as 'motel style' accommodation or whipping up victims to be outraged because their offender has only spent 12 years in jail. Visiting jail is enough to break down the myths and illusions we often hear. I can't imagine living there.

When you are arrested and taken to jail, there is no time to say goodbye to your kids, explain to your parents or pack up your house. You are ripped out of your life and can stay that way for years. I think this is particularly a strain on women.

It is different for the majority of men in jail, who have a wife or a mother who takes care of their interests outside jail. The women I visit in jail are often alone in the world or are involved with the men who put them there. A woman said she really wanted to wear her grandmother's cross around her neck. We asked if she could contact someone to bring it in for her, but she didn't want to ask her boyfriend, as she thought he might hock it.

To me the punishment of jail is:

- The constant humiliation;
- The lack of control over your own life;
- Living in close quarters with people you don't know, and don't necessarily like;
- Using the same knives and forks as women who may have communicable diseases (as many prisoners do), or may not clean properly;
- There are also inmates who torment others, stealing or using their things;
- I have also had women tell me that they are being stood over for their medication (particularly psychiatric medication);
- Some just get enjoyment out of making the lives of other people hell.

When I got married earlier this year, Adrianna, who is from Brazil, made me a card from recycled paper and sent it to be read at my wedding. It was a beautiful wish for happiness. This was a really tangible show of her appreciation for my visits.

It's hard to know what effect my visiting has on others. I know I get a lot out of meeting the women. This was affirming for me because I am often reluctant to share my good news, because I feel like I'm rubbing it in, that I'm free.

Why did I start visiting prison? When I was in Antioch, the Black Josephite sisters came to give a talk to the group one night, and they spoke about the work they do every day – helping new immigrants, teaching them English and visiting people in prison.

I was struck by its simplicity and power. It took me back to the passage in the bible: "when I was naked you clothed me and when I was in prison you visited me". I loved the fact that it could be interpreted literally.

I told my family that I was interested in visiting prison. My Mum, around this time, met Marg Wiseman, who does just this. Marg offered to organise a security check with the police and take me to Long Bay jail.

I don't make a judgment of whether the women I visit are innocent or guilty. I accept that they are all at the lowest point of their lives. I work within the system we have. I take them where they are at and look for justice from that point on.

We went to the minimum security section, with guitars and smiles. As we got nearer I think I was almost hoping that I would not be allowed in or that it would be called off. But we had a service with Father Terry and Sister Janet. The Epping group sang and socialised with the inmates. I realized how easy it is to give a bit of cheer in a jail. The men were really happy to see us and participated fully in the service.

We also visited the remand section which is maximum security – and the worst – because no matter what your crime is, you are together with everyone else who is waiting for their trial. This can range from fraud to violent crimes.

In jail the door behind you is locked before the one in front of you is unlocked, and you can be left there for some time. We walked past the men in protection, who were in their own tiny segregated cages

outside. I think it would be tempting to try your chances in with everyone else.

Prison Fellowship is an ecumenical organisation of religious visitors to prisoners all over the world. It was started by Charles Coulson – of Watergate fame – after he was freed from jail. This is where I received my training.

They organise security checks for volunteers who visit men and women, do court support, write letters and run "Life After Prison" support for people who leave prison with nobody and nothing. It is through PF that I was given the 'rules' of visiting prison:

- Nothing in and nothing out – don't pass on messages;
- Never give your home address;
- Don't be judgmental;
- Support the guards as well as the inmates;
- Report any mistakes you make as quickly as possible;
- Don't ask inmates what they are in for or how much time they have left. If they want to talk about it, they'll bring it up in conversation.

Through PF I tried the court support ministry. This was for prisoners in the cells at the Downing Centre Courts in the city. The inmates on trial are driven from prison to the court at 5am and have to wait in cells most of the day. One meal is provided before they are all driven home again at 5pm. This doesn't sound so bad when you picture a hardened, dangerous criminal, but the truth is that the majority are scared people just like us, who have reached the lowest point in their lives. Just a friendly face, a cup of tea and a magazine can really lift them. Many prisoners remember this throughout their time in prison and tell us later how much it meant to them.

The cells are glass-fronted and there is a little openable hole to pass through coffee or a meal. There is also a toilet bowl in the room, open and exposed. Often the room is crowded.

The worst time in anyone's sentence is when they are on remand, not knowing if they will be found innocent or guilty and how long they will have to stay in prison. Once they have a sentence they can start counting down the time and be more sure of their future.

I don't make a judgment of whether the women I visit are innocent or guilty. I

accept that they are all at the lowest point of their lives. I work within the system we have. I take them where they are at and look for justice from that point on.

I was asked by Cynthia to sponsor her for day release and work. She is from South America and lived in Australia with her Australian husband and child. She was pregnant with the second child when she was arrested. She had been in Mulawa and was moved to Emu Plains, which is lower security. There she was allowed to have her two children live with her. They are lovely children, but the effect that growing up in prison is having on them is questionable. The older boy, who was about 4 when I visited, does not talk at all. He grunts to indicate if he wants something. He was often minded by other women in the jail, and I was told the story of how one of the women would give him a treat like a Snickers bar by putting it between her breasts and asking him to retrieve it.

Cynthia needed to have two visits and a sponsor to move to the Parramatta transitional centre, where she would be allowed to get a job and go out during the day. She asked me to be a sponsor and take her and the boys for a sponsored day out.

This was a difficult decision for me, because I would have to vouch for her and be responsible for her. I thought a lot about it and decided that it would involve a personal commitment for someone whom I don't really know. I decided that it wasn't my place as a volunteer visitor to vouch for women I don't know. It would help her but I think it is exploiting the system and my good will. I needed to draw a line of how far I would go.

At the moment I visit Mulawa women's prison on the first Sunday of the month for a Catholic chapel service. We alternate the other Sundays of the month with the Anglicans and the Salvation Army. Many of the women who attend have a Catholic background, others are there because they are bored, some are other religions and come to share prayers. We don't question their motivation. But whatever their reason is, they are making a sacrifice: Sunday is the only day of the week they are able to sleep in if they choose.

The women at the service (anywhere from 6 to 40 people) are all ages, shapes, colours and backgrounds. I have met a 17-year-old and a 70-year-old, people with a university education, people who can't read, guilty and innocent.

The inmates can have short attention spans and may not have ever been to church before, so it's a balance between explaining what is happening and keeping them involved. Some women are on methadone treatment and come to the service just be-

fore or just after being treated.

We use the readings of the day, so there is a link between the prison and the rest of the world (it is easy to feel a million miles away). We are all asked to reflect and share an element of the readings that stood out to us. We have shared prayers of the faithful. And during the sign of peace everyone gets up from their chairs and hugs and kisses, and these people who have had to set up boundaries and are starved of affection are embraced. It is such a spontaneous show of love and support.

After the formal part of the service we have morning tea with the women. This is the opportunity to talk and mingle. This atmosphere allows the women to let down some of the boundaries they need to have in prison. They are also able to meet women from different areas of prison who will support them outside the chapel.

Each inmate is a person with her own hopes, dreams, illusions and misgivings. Most are victims in their own right.

I think a lot of women struggle with forgiving themselves for their crime. They feel they deserve punishment. This reminds me of the story of Emma. She is a beautiful woman, about my age, who killed her de facto boyfriend after years of mental abuse. Every time she came to a service she would end up crying with raking sobs and once she fell from her chair crying and lay on the floor screaming out "Why? Why?"

There is nothing to do except let her cry. I felt very helpless and my heart went out to her. She could not forgive herself for what she had done and I think she hated herself and felt there was no point living.

The parents of her de facto had been able to forgive her and vouched in court that their son had been extremely paranoid and mentally unstable. Over time she has come to accept what she did. She is still in prison but now has the job of driving the garbage truck which collects throughout the prison and drives the rubbish out of the gates to the bin – a plumb job.

The best part of the services is the social element. The prayers of the faithful are peoples' stories. We are all asked to share our prayer with the group. This section is the most significant and can often take the longest. They are straight from the heart. It can range from a prayer for their mother, their children or spouses, for World Peace, or other prisoners having their cases heard in court. It can become very emotional.

The sharing and soul-baring within the ritual is what I find so uplifting. The simplicity of the requests and the selflessness of the prayers are striking. The coming together to hear each other's story is the thing we love the most, the reason I have been asked to speak and why some of you are here tonight.

These women are the kind of people Christ would have spoken to when he was on earth and who are most in need of the healing offered by Christianity. The inmates say that prayer calms them and reading the New Testament comforts them.

I also go to prison to show them that they are not forgotten by the outside world. I don't go there to convert anyone to Catholicism. I go to show love and support and maybe make them forget where they are for a few moments while we're chatting.

I will never forget the time in the early days when I went to prison wearing a green skirt and green jumper, forgetting that this is not recommended for visitors, as it is the colour of the inmates' uniforms – if you could call them that. During the time with the prisoners I was asked how I had scored a green woolen jumper, when they could only get a sloppy joe. When I went to leave, a hand was put on my shoulder and one of the guards said: "Oi, where are you going?" It was only through the protestations of the other volunteers with me, and showing my ID, that I was able to convince them to let me go. I must say green is conspicuously absent from my cupboard these days and, apparently, once most inmates leave, they never wear green again.

But this made me realise how thin the line is between me and them. 'There but for the grace of God go I.' The difference is a loving family, educational opportunities, supportive friends and good luck.

I have realized through my visits that there are extenuating circumstances to every case. There is not the black and white of the newspapers when you meet the women and hear their stories, backgrounds and explanations. Each inmate is a person with her own hopes, dreams, illusions and misgivings. Most are victims in their own right.

Prison is a very false and extreme environment and I don't think it prepares people for the outside world, or for giving up drugs (which is what an overwhelming number of women are there for). But Prison certainly is a punishment.

When the women I visit, heard I was giving this presentation tonight, they were very happy. They wished me luck, offered me prayers and told me they would think of me tonight. In turn I told them that I would bring them with me in my heart and tell you what I see there. I hope I have.

He came to his senses. (Luke 15:17)

□□□

The fatherly and holy conversation between God and humanity, interrupted by original sin, has been marvellously resumed in the course of history. 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. (Pope Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam (1964), 70)

□□□

Are we afraid quiet afternoons will be interrupted by gunfire? Or do we hope they will? Was there ever a truly uneventful time, years of long afternoons when nothing happened and people were glad of it? (Walker Percy, The Second Coming, Farrer, Straus, Giroux, 1980, 17)

□□□

I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: they struggle with the evil inside a human being (inside every human being). It is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person. And since that time I have come to understand the falsehood of all revolutions in history: they destroy only those carriers of evil contemporary with them (and also fail, out of haste, to discriminate the carriers of good as well). And they then take to themselves as their heritage the actual evil itself, magnified still more. (Alexander Solzhenitsyn Gulag Archipelago, III-IV, 615-616)

□□□

Each child has something to teach us, a message that will help to explain why we are here. (The Talmud)

Luke's Gospel is alone in recording the famous parable that is variously called "The Prodigal Son" or "The Lost Son and the Dutiful Son" or, occasionally, "The Prodigal Father" (see 15:11-32). Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel begins by recording that "the tax collectors and sinners were crowding around to listen to him, and the Pharisees and Scribes complained, saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'". Jesus is clearly revealing a disposition towards people, events and things that is radically at odds with the expectations of representatives of the established social and religious order.

In this context, Luke then tells three parables – "The Lost Sheep", "The Lost Drachma" and "The Lost Son". These stories imply God in search of the oppressed – any person or thing, any part of our world, any part of our beings, held in bondage, "lost". In this encounter of the lost-being-found, there is release and relief, joy and celebration. This can only happen because the lost is *being sought*. God longs to find and release that which is lost.

"Come," says Jesus, "let us love you into freedom!"

Each of us is "lost", each of us has parts of our beings that are "lost". "Come," says Jesus, "let us love you into freedom! Let us find what is lost; let us welcome home those parts of your being that have wandered off into the darkness; let us anoint with infinite mercy that which has been hurt, and let us celebrate!" This is good news! Gospel morality is not found in what we do for God, but in what we allow God to do to and for and through us. Immorality is found in the obstacles we place in front of God's desire to be present in the world in liberating love. And sometimes the biggest obstacles are our fixations on what is right.

Luke uses a highly significant word in describing the father's response when he sighted his son returning home. The word is a form of the Greek word *splagchnizesthai*, meaning *to be moved with compassion*. *Splagchnizesthai* is rooted in the word *splagchna*, which refers to the so-called noble viscera – heart, lungs, liver and intestines – and is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *raham*, which is variously translated as *compassion, pity, tenderness* and so on. This Hebrew word is rooted in the word that describes that part of a woman's body which nurtures new life into being and is used to describe God's love. Taste and see! Only when we are loved into freedom will we be able to love others into freedom. □

The Tradition – Mysticism versus moralism

Too often the Gospel is reduced to moralism, and its stupendous life-giving and liberating moral vision – grounded in mysticism – is diminished or even lost. Moralism says life is about getting it *right*; mysticism says life is about letting God into the world through us, with us and in us. Moralism is an ideology; mysticism is living relationships – with God, self, others and the world. Moralism seeks to control; mysticism seeks abandonment to the Mystery. Moralism is exclusive and judgemental; mysticism is inclusive and hospitable. Moralism supports and is supported by dogmatism and legalism and institutionalism and is fertile ground for sectarianism; mysticism remains detached from all human ideologies and systems, always seeking that deeper level of being where relationships thrive. Moralism is a travesty of morality; mysticism gives birth to a rich moral vision. Jesus is first and foremost a mystic.

Thomas Merton represents the best of the authentic tradition when he writes in "A Letter on the Contemplative Life": "I have learned to rejoice that Jesus is in the world in people who know Him not, that He is at work in them when they think themselves far from Him, and it is my joy to tell you to hope Hope, not because you think you can be good, but because God loves us irrespective of our merits and whatever is good in us comes from His love, not from our own doing. No one on earth has reason to despair of Jesus, because Jesus loves people, loves them in their sin, and we too must love people in their sin. ... God seeks Himself in us, and the aridity and sorrow of our heart is the sorrow of God who is

We exist solely for this, to be the place He has chosen for His presence.

not known to us, who cannot yet find Himself in us because we do not dare to believe or trust the incredible truth that He could live in us, and live there out of choice, out of preference. But indeed we exist solely for this, to be the place He has chosen for His presence, His manifestation in the world, His epiphany. But we make all this dark and inglorious because we fail to believe it, we refuse to believe it. It is not that we hate God, rather that we hate ourselves, despair of ourselves. If we once began to recognize, humbly but truly, the real value of our own self, we would see that this value was the sign of God in our being, the signature of God upon our being." □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Promoter – Terry O’Loughlin on (02) 6 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

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

◦ **Boorowa** – The Boorowa Hotel – resumes 2001 (Info: Margaret 6201 9802 or Christine 6385 3304).

◦ **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie – resumes 2001 (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

◦ **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club March 14 “Are you Passionate for God?” Monica Brown & Margaret Shanks (Info: Sue Brinkman 4627 2953).

◦ **Canberra** – The Canberra Workers Club, Childers St, Canberra – resumes 2001 (Info: Rita 6288 4715).

◦ **Lower North Shore** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, Nth Sydney – resumes 2001 (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St March 28 “Blessed are the Poor ... not the penniless, but those whose heart is free” Dominic Drouliers & Sr Evonne Heffernan (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).

◦ **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel – March 12, “Cries of the Human Heart: The Need to be Heard” Tony Doherty & Gina Parker (Info: Anne 4232 1062 or Gaye 4232 2735).

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

◦ **Kincumber** – Seeds of Wisdom The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive March 6 “To the Center” John Sheehan & Peter Chang; April 3 “Sacred Windows to the Soul” Fr Dan Donovan & Karen McCarron (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).

◦ **Newcastle** – The Mary Ellen Hotel, Glebe Rd, Merewether – resumes 2001 (Info: Lawrence 4967 6440).

◦ **Paddington** – Crossroads The Bellevue Hotel, March 7 “The Public Voice in a dis-integrating culture – crossroads for the media & accountability” Julia Baird & Patrick Kirkwood; April 4 “Women at the Crossroads” Bishop Kevin Manning, Jean Curthoys & Andrea de Carvalho (Info: Marea 9387 3152 (H)).

◦ **Penrith** – Golf Club – resumes 2001 (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

◦ **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Wind Rd March 6 “What are the values of popular culture?” Steve le Marquand & tba; April 3 “Integrating faith and work – an impossible mix?” tba (Info: Tim or Margaret 9634 2927 (H)).

◦ **Waitara** – Things You Learn Along the Way The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy March 21 John Menadue AO & Robyn Lawson; April 18 Fr Michael Whelan SM & Major Margaret Sanz (Info: Kathryn 9983 0162).

◦ **Wollongong** – Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla – resumes 2001

Other States:

◦ **Ballarat (VIC)** – Golden City Hotel, Cnr Sturt St & Dawson St South (Info: Kevin 03 5332 1697).

◦ **Clayton (VIC)** – The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm – resumes 2001 (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).

◦ **Collingwood (VIC)** – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm – resumes 2001 (Info: Maree 0412 136681).

◦ **Geelong (VIC)** (Info: Denis 03 5275 4120).

◦ **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm – resumes 2001 (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

◦ **Spirituality Café, Rosanna (VIC)** (Info: Marian 9459 4403).

◦ **Devonport (TAS)** – Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, 7.30pm-9pm, Last Wednesday of each month – resumes 2001 (Info: Fr Richard Ross 6424 2783).

◦ **Fortitude Valley (QLD)** – Dooley’s, First Monday of month – resumes 2001 (Info: Lois 3260 7384).

SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB COMMUNITY WEBSITE

<http://communities.ninemsn.com.au/SpiritualityinthePub>

◦ **Perth (WA)** – The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, Northbridge, 7.30pm-9pm – resumes 2001 (Info: Michael 9448 2404).

◦ **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.

SPECIAL CATALYST DINNER

To celebrate 50 issues of *The Mix*, there will be a Special Catalyst Dinner on Friday April 6, 7pm for 7.30pm, in the parish Hall at 3A Mary Street, Hunters Hill. Theme: “Hope in the Church of the 3rd Millennium”. Speakers: Geraldine Doogue and Francois Kunc (Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262).

◦ **Reflection Morning** Saturday April 28, 9.30-12.30, with Fr David Ranson, at Marist Centre, 1 Mary St, Hunters Hill (Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262).

◦ **Spirituality in the Pub has begun in Glasgow!** If you are passing through, it’s in Chambers Bar, Cochrane St. All the best to Br Stephen Smyth and his team!

Other Matters and Events

◦ **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney runs a series of programs, day and evening, with a special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM is the Director. Ask about the **Spirituality Home Study Program**. The Academy is also running a series entitled **Lenten Lunchtimes, 12.30-1pm, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays** during Lent, in the Crypt under St Patricks in the City (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).

◦ **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, March 31 “The Road to the Cross in Luke’s Gospel” (Info: 9484 6208).

◦ **The Centre for Spiritual Formation North Sydney** offers courses in Spiritual Direction (Info 8912 4881).

◦ **St James Spirituality Centre**, King St, Sydney, runs a variety of adult education programs (Info: Susanne on 9232 3022).

◦ **Quest for Life Centre, Bundanoon** Workshops (Info 4883 6599).

◦ **Weekend Marist Enneagram Retreat**, Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, April 6-8 (Info: Br Don 9349 7333).

THANK YOU, SR ANNETTE

Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC, completes her term as President of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW (CLRI). In that position she served also as a Patron of Catalyst for Renewal. We are very grateful to Annette for her generous support and our prayers and good wishes go with her. We look forward to our continuing friendship with her.

WELCOME, BR PAUL

The new President of CLRI is Br Paul O’Keeffe FSP, Congregational Leader of the Patrician Brothers. Paul has generously agreed to be a Patron of Catalyst for Renewal. We look forward to a rewarding relationship with him and through him a continuation of the very good relationship we have always had with CLRI.

Recommended Reading

Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, St Pauls, 2000, 209 pages, footnotes, bibliography, index, pb, \$29.95.

Brendan Byrne is an internationally renowned, Australian biblical scholar. He specialises in the writings of St Paul. In *The Hospitality of God* we find a book that is well-grounded in good scholarship, but also very readable. It has emerged from the repeated experience of exploring the theme of "the hospitality of God" in workshops with a variety of people. Byrne's text manages to stay in touch with both those grassroots origins and the Gospel text. The result is a book that is lively and informative, as helpful to the general reader as the serious student. The twenty-three chapters each cover key events and themes of Luke's Gospel, for example, the infancy stories, the Galilean ministry, the journey to Jerusalem, hospitality of the poor, Jesus in Jerusalem, discourse on the future, the passion and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Byrne writes: "Luke's account of Jesus, no less than those of Mark, Matthew and John, is shot through with a vision of faith. The essential core of what Christians believe about Jesus – that his death upon the cross under Pontius Pilate was followed by his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God – colors the entire account." The way to read and study Luke is through the eyes of faith – as someone who seeks to know Jesus who is present now. Highly recommended for home study group.

Michael McGirr, editor, *The Good Life: Stories of Faith and Life*, Aurora Books, 2000, 216 pages, pb, \$21.95.

Andrew Greeley wrote an article for the *New York Times* in July 1994 entitled: "Why Do Catholics Stay in the Church? Because of the Stories." Much as we hate to admit it, Greeley may have been onto something. *The Good Life* is a book of Australian stories – more than fifty of them. A key to this book is found in McGirr's observation: "I have come to suspect that the crisis of belief is not that people can't believe but that they aren't believed." Perhaps we are just beginning to discover what the Church and ancient cultures have known – at least implicitly – for millennia, that our sanity is mysteriously and essentially connected to storytelling. For too long, in our rationalism and dogmatism, we have paid too little attention to the individual's experience – his or her story. Our practice has been to expect individuals to simply fit the belief system, whether that be secular or religious. Could it be that one of our biggest challenges in renewing the Church and society is to find new and effective ways of storytelling? Each of us is a story, begging to be told, needing to be heard. We must learn to tell and hear the human stories; otherwise, the individual stories will not be connected in community with other stories or the greatest story ever told – the liberating love of God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. *The Good Life* makes a contribution to this.

Walter J Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You: A Theologian Reflects on His Church*, Orbis Books, 2000, 506 pages, endnotes, index, pb, \$16(US) through amazon.com

Walter Burghardt SJ, a fine patristics scholar, reflects on his experience within the Church and world over more than sixty years. There are the scholars and fellow Jesuits: Henri de Lubac – condemned in the wake of Pius XII's *Humani generis* (1950), then named a cardinal by John Paul II in 1983 – and John Courtney Murray – prime architect of Vatican II's *Declaration on Religious Freedom*. There are writers and activists – people like Flannery O'Connor, Gerard Manley Hopkins SJ, Dorothy Day, Anne Morrow Lindbergh and Cardinal Bernardin. Burghardt's style is lively and very readable, even when he is dealing with subtle ideas, such as the changing paradigm in theological thinking in the last half of the 20th century. *Long Have I Loved You* is an excellent tour of the people, events and ideas that have helped to shape the Church as it begins the third millennium. Burghardt notes: "Within Catholicism, the traditional search for certainty has been relentlessly replaced by the quest for understanding. The paradoxical result? Less attachment to incontrovertible propositions; more profound attachment to the God to whom all propositions point; less clarity on the meaning of experience, greater conviction that religious experience cannot be 'cabined, cribbed, and confined' by law or system." Highly recommended.

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