



THE MIX



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Our Say – A certain way of thinking

The eminent scholar, Louis Bouyer, makes an observation about Tertullian (155-222AD) that describes a way of thinking and acting that we might recognise:

Where Tertullian's influence has proved most harmful is, perhaps, in the kind of polemics which he succeeded only too well in acclimating in ecclesiastic circles: combining an abstract and completely *a priori* logic with the supposition (candid or implied) that the adversary must be a fool or else dishonest.

Tertullian, as a type, is worth remembering, if only to help us avoid the world-hating teachings he promoted and the confrontational style at which he was adept. Those who profess faith in Jesus, on the one hand, and dispose themselves towards the world as Tertullian did, on the other hand, are particularly effective in undermining the Good News – especially if they are bright.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei was teaching "the theory" – developed by Copernicus a little

over half a century earlier – that the earth was not stationary with the sun revolving around it, but rather that the earth revolved around the sun.

Cardinal Barberini – later to become Pope Urban VIII – was one of many who wrote to congratulate Galileo. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine – Jesuit scholar, senior theologian in the Curia and later canonised – opposed Galileo, albeit gently and moderately, arguing that what he was presenting was only hypothetical and that one was not allowed to interpret the Scriptures in ways that contradicted the Fathers.

Bellarmino – and those Church authorities who subsequently condemned Galileo in 1616 and 1633 and forbid him to teach the Copernican "theory" – overlooked an important teaching, espoused by both Augustine and Aquinas: The Bible was never intended to teach science as such and therefore its authority must never be invoked to settle disputes in that field.

It is worth noting also, that the opposition to Galileo's teaching was not only

based on a simplistic interpretation of Scripture, but also strongly influenced by the philosophy of Aristotle, which espoused an earth-centred view of the universe.

From this distance, the opposition of the Church authorities to Galileo is recognised not only for the injustice it did to the latter, but for the tragic missed opportunity it was. Instead of that moment being a watershed in which the Church embraced the truth being uncovered in a hitherto hidden realm, it became a symbol of irrational superstition and "proof" that science can and must replace religion as the bearer of truth for the human family.

The Galileo incident, in fact, probably has much less to do with the interpretation of Scripture or philosophical theory than it has to do with anxiety and a "completely *a priori* logic" unwilling to enter true conversation. Although we have apologised to Galileo – 350 years after the fact – perhaps the same anxiety and "*a priori* logic" still governs much Church thinking today. □

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

These are the current Members:
Dominic Beirne, Patrice Beirne,
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,
Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn,
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)

The Patrons are:

Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM
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Prof Francis J Moloney SDB, AM
Dr Richard J Mulhearn OAM
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The Editorial Committee is:

Michael Whelan SM, Geraldine Doogue,
Catherine Hammond and consultants

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Address all correspondence to:
PO Box 139, Gladsville, NSW 1675, Australia
Tel/Fax: +61 2 9816 4262
Web site: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au



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 Susanna Davis. Reading the Human Face articles in *The Mix*, I often wondered what I would say if I were asked to contribute. We have many faces – which one would I present, in 750 words or less?

Would I talk about my family? Being the fourth child of six in six years? About growing up in Adelaide in the 60s and 70s, having moved there from Sydney? About going to St Joseph's primary school, when the nuns wore dark brown from head to foot, relieved only by flashes of white, and Sr Assumpta ruled her class of over 70 children with the aid of two canes, Red Devil and Bluey?

What about the big adventure of the family going to California in 1968 while Dad went to work at the University there? And the contrast between quiet Adelaide and chaotic California, deep in the throes of anti-Vietnam feeling?

I could talk about how my understanding of what it is to be a Catholic has been shaped by different influences in my life. How my parents, who had always been deeply involved in the Church — to the extent where Dad even went to Vatican II as a lay representative — became 'unstuck' in the 70s and left, taking us out of Catholic schools.

For a while I went to Mass on my own, and was fortunate to meet up with the wonderful Sr Margaret Purchase, one of the Daughters of Charity who lived around the corner from us in Adelaide. The Daughters had a little chapel, where all sorts of people used to go of a Sunday morning, from Dame Roma Mitchell, to men who didn't know where they would be sleeping that night.

I became an atheist when I was 14, full of teenage existential angst because I could not understand why God had made us to worship Him in spite of how much we suffered. I recovered a few years later, when I finished my first novel and, in a flash of insight and feeling about my feeble creation, realised how much more sense it made to think that God made us out of love and desire to share the joy of creation, rather than from any need for our 'worship'.

That was the high point for a while of my stormy relationship with God. I left the Church for many years, finding it a barren and unwelcoming place, more concerned with making sure people followed the right rules than that they tried to enter into relationship with God.

But eventually I found my way back home to God, and realised that I had never really left. I used to talk to God, saying, "I don't really believe in you, God, but if I did, then..." and tell Him off good and

proper – about world peace, starvation, arms proliferation, etc.

Then one day, I started my usual spiel and stopped, because it suddenly hit me that I did believe, that faith had crept up while I wasn't looking, and had me in its grip.

The grip was tenuous, and I nurtured it. I read. I talked to people. I meditated. I prayed.

And somehow I realised that I was at a very vulnerable and dangerous stage of my faith journey. I had this sense that it was important to belong to a faith community, that trying to be in relationship with God on my own somehow would not, could not, work.

So I explored different faith traditions. And I ended up back in the Catholic church, feeling lonelier than I have ever felt.

But, somehow, that wasn't such a bad thing. I realised that I had to make an effort, that relationship was exchange. So I started to get involved in my local parish, first through a Lenten group. And I was amazed at the depth of the people I spoke with, and at what they were willing to share with me.

That was well over 10 years ago. My faith helped me, and has continued to grow, through the death of my parents and grandparents, and two beloved uncles. I am part of a Mass group that has met where I work for over 20 years. I am involved in Spirituality in the Pub and Catalyst for Renewal, and of course my parish, too.

Of my four brothers and my sister, only my youngest brother is a practising Christian, and (to the horror of my father) very much involved in the Baptist church in Adelaide. We are able to share our faith, and that is a great joy to me.



Susanna Davis

Your Say – Tomorrow's priest

Michael S Parer

The parish and priest of 1959 are gone. More clergy are over 80 than under 40. Only Phoenix-like changes will allow us to continue our Eucharistic celebration.

I've requested the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) to review their treatment of 'former clerics and religious' as a matter of justice, development and peace. This may be read on <http://www.datafast.net.au/acc/>

This issue rates low among the poverty issues to be addressed by Jesus' followers but, like pedophilia among priests, it must be faced, and offers an opportunity to examine 'the priest and the Eucharist' in 2001 as a follow-up to the Jubilee year of forgiveness.

The Council of Trent in Session 23 defined: 'If anyone says that a validly ordained priest can again be converted into a layman, let him be anathematized.' And from Canon 290: 'After it has been validly received, sacred ordination never becomes invalid.'

Some Dogmatic theologians claim an ontological reality of priestly ordination, others that priesthood was entrusted to the hierarchy, others that the priest's prime function of presiding at the Eucharist is activated only within a community. My own view has progressed from the first to the third.

Should we use 'former cleric' or 'married priest' and avoid 'former priest', 'expriest', 'resigned priest', 'non-canonical priest' or 'laicized priest'? The scripture's 'tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech' gives a basis for the former.

Many 'former clerics and religious' share a vision that our new vocation is from Jesus. He pulled us from the sycamore tree of our presbytery and monastery, where we thought we could see and serve God best. Zacchaeus was pulled off his perch into the hurley-burley bustle of the crowd, to a personal metanoia that had a societal impact. I see that Jesus wants 'former clerics and religious' to live for him and for people as prophets with feet firmly planted in work-a-day living.

Are the current constraints on the ministry necessary?

The statistics of my own ordination year show the changing face of priesthood. From those of us who entered Corpus Christi Seminary in 1952 and were ordained in 1959, six are now dead; six are

married and have 19 children; two are retired; one resigned on pedophilia charges; another has 'gone'; three remain 'on the mission'.

Bishop Patrick Power of Canberra-Goulburn 'appealed for reconciliation with married priests, divorced-remarried Catholics and the marginal poor'. He noted a reconciliation process was severely limited by the discipline that now binds the universal Church, but implied it was 'worth a go'. He met with five who have departed the traditional exercise of the parish ministry.

Epiphany, under Jim Madden, beavers away with much tenacity and has made submissions to the Bishops Conference.

These matters are also canvassed on The Married Roman Catholic Priest Web Site, <http://www.rentapriest.com/>

Many former clerics and religious share a vision that our new vocation is from Jesus.

For a vision of priest and Eucharist today, I revisit Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard's *Mission to France's Worker-Priests* of 1941: 'to train a clergy capable of adapting itself to a country that ceased to be Christian'. Margaret Hebblethwaite's *Tablet* reference to Melbourne and Sydney surveys shows that 95% of Catholic youth tick the census box as RC, but avoid any church and lack respect for professional clerics. Has Australia, too, ceased to be Christian?

Former clerics and religious do not wish to supplicate 'forgiveness and a prodigal's return', but rather to collaborate with the ACBC and consider:

- *What can former clerics and religious do to resurrect the Eucharistic meal today?*
- *Are former clerics and religious led by the Spirit to discover new ways of redemptive liberation and Eucharist, by integrating work and family and sharing fully the human dimension?*

Consider Cardinal Martini's third dream expressed in his European synod speech on 'knotty problems' since Vatican II, and the possible contribution of former clerics and religious to: deepening of the Vatican II doctrine of Church; priests, and laity in ministry; women in society and Church; sexuality, marriage; sin, penitential practice; ecumenical hopes with Orthodox Churches; relationship of democracy and values, civil law and moral law.

Now I learn that Michael McGirr SJ, who recently wrote in *The Mix*, and Paul Collins have departed the 'traditional exercise of the priestly ministry'. They go, like Abraham, in quest 'of a new land not knowing where he was going', to use Julian Miller's reference in reply to the submission from 21 'former clerics' at the National Association of Priests meeting in 1971 at Hunters Hill.

My expectant hope is that the Church where they serve/d Jesus so well may bestow on them patrimonial, familial and professional solidarity. The current practice is devoid of this.

Is the Spirit at work in this outgoing movement of priests and religious asking: where is 'priest' today? As vocational directors repeat, since the command of Jesus was to share bread and wine in the Eucharistic meal, He will provide presiders at the Eucharist. Should we question, along with Ivan Illich, whether the constraints that currently confine the ministry are necessary?

Returning from a 'Movement for a Better World' involvement with the Goulburn parish, my wife gave me a metaphor from a Shepparton woman speaking to Canberra priests. I adapt: 'Let our former clerics and religious offer palliative care to the dying church and be midwives to our emerging ecclesia'.

You gather that I think the ACBC needs former clerics and religious as much as former clerics and religious need the ACBC?

I ask the ACBC to take up this issue as a matter of justice, development and peace.

Michael S Parer mparer@net-tech.com.au

WHERE ARE WE?

"God and humanity are like two lovers who have missed their rendezvous. Each is there before the time, but each at a different place, and they wait, and wait, and wait. He stands motionless, nailed to the spot for the whole of time. She is distraught and impatient. But alas for her if she gets tired and goes away. The crucifixion of Christ is the image of the fixity of God. God is attention without distraction. One must imitate the patience and humility of God. (Simone Weil, "The Things of the World" in G. A. Panichas (ed.) *The Simone Weil Reader*, David McKay Company Inc., 1977, 424f.)

Essay – Lenten pastoral letter

by Francis P Carroll

This is the text of Archbishop Carroll's Pastoral Letter to the people of the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese. It was read at all week-end Masses 24-25 February, 2001. All emphases are as in the original text. The Letter is printed with the Archbishop's permission.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Launch out into the deep. I am sure that Jesus is saying these words to the Church of our time, just as he did to Simon Peter after he and his mates had spent all night fishing and caught absolutely nothing. I am in good company in thinking that way as Pope John Paul II is also convinced of it.

You remember the Gospel story – Peter and Andrew and the brothers James and John are washing and mending their nets after a fruitless night fishing. Jesus asks Peter to let him speak from his boat to the crowds pressing around him to hear his words. When he has finished, Jesus tells Peter to **put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.** Peter must have been really discouraged by the failure to catch anything. He was deadly tired after being out in the boat all night and he'd already washed the nets and packed them away for another day. Added to that, he was the expert and experienced fisherman and now was being told by a landlubber to go out again at an obviously wrong time.

But Peter had heard and seen enough of Jesus to take him seriously and somehow to trust him against the odds.

We don't know what he had expected; perhaps he was just being nice and expected nothing. None of that mattered; he did what Jesus told him to do and did it *precisely because* Jesus said so. The results were amazing, nets full to breaking point. He calls his partners to help out and all the nets are filled with a catch the like of which they had never seen.

Why is this story so relevant today? Why does John Paul use it in writing to the whole Church after the renewing experience of the Jubilee Year, and in his call to meet the challenges of a new millennium of Christianity? Why do I say that our local Church must take it to heart, do what Peter did and launch out into the deep?

The Church, and so many in it, are like Peter and his fellow fishermen. Weariness and discouragement bow many shoulders. So much effort and so little to show for it. Experience and expertise, hard work and well-planned programmes, and still nothing

in the nets.

I see Priests looking like Peter and his friends. So many have laboured long and hard, and the Churches continue to empty. The young do not appear. There are few priestly fellow workers coming to help. The promise of powerful lay participation does not seem to materialize. So they clean their nets, maintain the boat and don't really believe anything is going to change, but will probably get worse.

I see parents and grandparents who are saddened by the fact their children no longer come to Church with them and disregard so many aspects of the faith and morals their parents value and have tried all their lives to impart. Younger parents are burdened in a different way. They wish to give spiritual sustenance to their children, but their own faith understanding is vague and they do not know what to say.

Teachers in Catholic schools and Catechists in State schools and parishes see the wholesale exodus from the visible Communion of the Church. They too have laboured all night long, and the fish have become invisible.

If we have truly seen the face of Christ and felt the beat of his heart, our prayer and pastoral planning will be inspired by the new commandment, *Love one another as I have loved you.* While that love must be all-inclusive, it gives first place to the poor and marginalized.

Religious Brothers and Sisters gather, too, around their nets of consecrated life which are empty of vocations and point to the likelihood of dissolution of a whole way of life. Who will continue their mission, who even will look after them in their old age?

Lay parishioners, promised a new springtime flowering of their baptismal call and mission, are wearied by frustration because of unhelpful attitudes and structures. Women, particularly, are not allowed even to go out in the boat.

Many young people are weary in spirit at an age when they should be bursting with hope. There is a lack of meaning, the emptiness of self-indulgent ways and the darkness of addiction and even suicide. Their nets, too, are empty of purpose and hope.

The whole Church Community knows the weariness of living under the constant pressure of a secularised society and the loss of sleep because of division within, opposition without, the Body of Christ.

There we are, all standing on the shore contemplating the fruitless labour, cleaning and mending nets that suddenly seem out of date and inadequate. Is it worth going out again to seek the illusive fish?

Then Jesus comes. He asks the simple courtesy of sitting in Peter's boat, of being welcomed into our lives. He speaks the word of God to the crowd, and to all of us today. He looks with compassion and understanding at Peter, and at us. He understands the weariness and discouragement of those who have no earthly reason to hope. And yet he says, ***put out into the deep.***

Peter listens to Jesus' word, puts trust in him and follows his direction. The result is beyond all expectations.

Will we listen to God's word, put our trust in Jesus and be humble and wise enough to follow his direction? If we do, the result will be beyond all our expectations also.

For the Jubilee year, and at the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity, Pope John Paul has written a letter to the Catholic people of the world. He begins and ends with the encouraging words of Jesus to Peter, to convey a message of hope.

"*Now is the time,*" he writes, "*for each local Church to assess its fervour and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities ...*" This is the task facing us in our local Church in Canberra and Goulburn. For the next few years, our prayerful reflection and pastoral planning will be in the context of preparation for a Diocesan Synod in 2003. In our last Synod in 1989, we considered the whole mission of the Church. This time we will concentrate on just some of its key aspects and our approach will draw from the experience of Jubilee.

We experienced, as did the Universal Church, the Jubilee as a time for the purification of memory. In other words, we repented of past sins against God, God's people and God's creation. We asked forgiveness and we readily granted forgiveness to others, even our enemies.

We recalled afresh that our primary call is to holiness of life based on a personal relationship with Christ.

The Jubilee centred on Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospels and we gave priority time to prayer. We must remain firmly

anchored in the sacred scriptures and re-commit ourselves to the primacy of prayer.

In the Jubilee Year, we contemplated the face of Christ and sought to depth his compassionate heart. Now we must show the face of Christ and reflect his compassion to those around us, in the Church, and in the world.

If we have truly seen the face of Christ and felt the beat of his heart, our prayer and pastoral planning will be inspired by the new commandment *Love one another as I have loved you*. While that love must be all-inclusive, it gives first place to the poor and marginalized.

John Paul II was deeply impressed by the young people who came in their millions as pilgrims to Rome. In our local Church, we will begin our new millennium with young people, both to support them and to draw vitality from them in the life of the Church. A group of enthusiastic young women and men are already meeting to pray and plan their part. I ask that the place of young people in the Church and in the world will become the number one priority for this year of 2001 in every Catholic Parish, School, local Community, Movement and Agency of the Church.

I see parents and grandparents who are saddened by the fact their children no longer come to Church with them and disregard so many aspects of the faith and morals their parents value and have tried all their lives to impart. Younger parents are burdened in a different way. They wish to give spiritual sustenance to their children, but their own faith understanding is vague and they do not know what to say.

As we continue on our journey towards the Synod, we will gradually broaden our horizons. Within the Christian calling of all the baptized, we will give particular attention to the role of lay persons in the life and mission of the Church, including many issues raised in the report, *Woman and Man; One in Christ Jesus*.

Right now, we are about to enter the season of Lent and begin our journey with Christ to the Cross of Good Friday and Resurrection of Easter Sunday. Surely this is the time really to **launch out into the deep**.

Let us put out into the deep waters of intense prayer and contemplation of Jesus,

seeking to meet him, especially in **Sacred Scripture and in the Eucharist**. Let us plumb the depths of repentance and forgiveness, climaxing in a sincere celebration of the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**. Let us put out into the depths of compassionate love that takes seriously the needs of the poor and inspires a truly sacrificial support of **Project Compassion**.

St Paul reminds us that we should never give in to a sense of weariness or a spirit of pessimism: *"So let us thank God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". Never give in, then, my dear brothers and sisters, never admit defeat. Keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain*. In other words, *"Launch out into the deep"* and expect great things.

REMEMBERING VATICAN II

**"The Dignity of the Human Person:
The Vision of *Gaudium et Spes*"**

October 11 2002 will mark the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The Council was a watershed moment in the life of the Catholic Church. It was both a result and a cause of an extraordinary turning point in the life of the human family. In the coming months *The Mix* will carry various pieces to both remember that event and promote reflection on the unfinished business that subsequent generations must address. The following piece is taken from the ground-breaking document of the Council – *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 26-28.

There is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to human persons, since they stand above all things, and their rights and duties are universal and inviolable. Therefore, there must be made available to all people everything necessary for leading a life truly human: such as food, clothing and shelter, the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one's own conscience, to protection of privacy and rightful freedom, even in matters religious.

Hence, the social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person if the disposition of affairs is to be subordinate to the personal realm and not contrariwise, as the Lord indicated when he said that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mk 2:27).

This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained.

God's Spirit, who with a marvelous Providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development. The ferment of the Gospel too has aroused and continues to arouse in people's hearts the irresistible requirements of their dignity.

Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this Council lays stress on reverence for humanity; everyone must consider his or her neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all our neighbor's life and the means necessary to living it with dignity (cf. Jas 2:15-16), so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus (cf. Lk 16:18-31).

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping them when they come across our path, whether, they be old persons abandoned by all, foreign laborers unjustly looked down upon, refugees, children born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin they did not commit, or hungry people who disturb our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Mt 25:40).

There is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to human persons ...

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.

Words for a Pilgrim People

Do whatever he tells you. (John 2:5)

□□□

Though humankind is stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of the human person in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole People of God gathered together by Christ, this Council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems. The Council brings to humankind light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence, the focal point of our total presentation will be the human person, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will. (Gaudium et Spes (“The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”), 3.)

□□□

In the Scriptures we say the words are the clothes of Christ and their meaning is his body. The words veil, the meaning reveals. It is the same in the world, where the forms of visible things are like the clothing, and the ideas according to which they were created are like the flesh. The former conceal, the latter reveal. For the universal creator and law-maker, the Word, both hides himself in his self-revelation and reveals himself in his hiding of himself. (Maximus the Confessor, Amigua, cited by Olivier Clément, The Roots of Christian Mysticism, New City Press, 1995, 217.)

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On the third Sunday of Easter the Church meditates on the last chapter of John’s Gospel (Year C). This chapter describes the third and final post-resurrection meeting of the disciples with Jesus. It is a beautiful story of grace. Like all the Johannine writings, you must read this story with an eye for the drama that is being presented. Signs and symbols abound.

“Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together”. Seven – the number of fullness and completion. They go fishing, on their own – ie, without Jesus – and it is night. While the night was a normal time for fishing – and indeed, fishing was a normal work for at least some of these men – there is more to this than meets the eye. Jesus is the Light. Recall John’s description of the Last Supper and the reference to Judas: “... he went out. It was night” (13:30).

The Christian life and the apostolic mission are grace first and last ...

At first light Jesus appears on the shore, but they do not recognise him. “Jesus called out, ‘Haven’t you caught anything, friends?’ And they answered, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Throw the net out to starboard and you’ll find something.’” They do as he says and catch 153 fish – perhaps the number of local churches in existence at that time – all held together in unity in the net. Through him, with him and in him the disciples bear much fruit. The Christian life and the apostolic mission are grace first and last, pure gift, the work of God.

The story finishes with the threefold questioning of Peter by Jesus: “Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these others do?” If it were not for the context – which gives this interaction a feeling of intense tenderness – Jesus’ questions to Peter might be read as a reproach. The issue is grace. It is the Lord who speaks. His intent is to love people into freedom and send them forth so that they may enable the Father to love many others into freedom through them. We might also note the mysterious mingling of grace and sinfulness in the Church’s first leader, specifically chosen by the Lord himself. □

The Tradition – Grace and freedom

There are at least two distinguishing marks of an authentically religious person, particularly one who professes to be a disciple of Jesus: Grace and freedom. When we experience our very beings as gift, the unfolding of our lives as a graced process, our identity as grounded in and expressive of the Eternal Mystery, we will inevitably manifest that. Our disposition towards people, events and things will be marked by gratitude; our manner of speaking will have a certain graciousness to it; our very physical presence will reveal something of this same graciousness – even if we are by nature physically clumsy or inept. Hand-in-hand with the grace will be a recognizable measure of freedom. Our intimacy with the Source of grace will have led us more deeply into the experience of healing and reconciliation. Our first-hand experience of both our need for mercy and the effective presence of infinite Mercy will have begun the ever-deepening process of breaking the bonds that hold us and cause us to choose death rather than life.

Sadly, there are many instances in the life of the Church where this grace and freedom have been either absent or notably deficient. Such aberrations hardly reflect the spirit of the person and teaching of Jesus, whose whole intent is to set us free from all that holds us in bondage. Through his Cross he has enabled us to be free of the source of all bondage and oppression. Invariably, in those instances where the freedom and grace are not evident, you will find that the people concerned have shifted the focus from Christianity as relationship with God in Christ towards ideology and system, from intimacy with the Risen Lord towards adherence to a particular idea or set of ideas, from mysticism to moralism (and/or dogmatism, legalism, institutionalism).

A transformed being is our best gift to the world.

The history of religions shouts a warning that we ignore at our peril: Beware the religion-zealot! Run a mile at the sound of grinding teeth and the sight of white knuckles. The Gospels themselves remind us that something is wrong when we profess to be disciples of Jesus and are authoritarian or dogmatic or moralistic or legalistic or simply rigid. The best of the tradition says a transformed being is our best gift to the world. □

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].

° **Albury** – New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St, May 9 “Reconciliation” Rev Cec Grant & Ms Helen McGoloaw (Info: Fr Glen 6026-5333)

° **Boorowa** – The Boorowa Hotel (Info: Michael 6385 3351 or Marty 6385 3196).

° **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie, April 18 “The Quest for Belonging” Dr Patricia Brennan & Mr Laurie Halloran (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club, April 11 “How open are we to Ecumenism?” Sr Pauline Rae smsm & Dr David Gill (Info: Sue Brinkman 4627 2953).

° **Canberra** – The Southern Cross Club, May 30 “Under the Southern Cross” Vince Ford (Info: Rita 6288 4715).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St, April 25 “Blessed are those who mourn ... not those who whimper, but those who raise their voices” Tom Uren & Beryl Page (Info: line 9744 8141).

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel, May 14 “Cries of the Human Heart ... The Way of Gentleness” Dr Roger Cole & Noel Davis (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, April 3 “Love in Abundance” Fr Dan Donovan & Karen McCarron; May 1 “Beyond bolts and bars” Fr Tom Rouse & Sr Monica Sparks (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).

° **Lower North Shore** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, April 14 “Gay Movement: Born Me, Why Scorn Me?” Bruce Meagher & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

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

° **Paddington** – Crossroads The Bellevue Hotel, April 4 “Women at the Crossroads” Bishop Kevin Manning & Jean Curthoys; May 2 “Men at the Crossroads” Mark Le-Byrne & tba (Info: Marea 9387 3152)

° **Penrith** – Golf Club, April 18 “Sharing Christianity” Sr Mary Farrelly sm & Sr Trish Madigan op (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

° **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd, April 3 “Integrating faith and work – an impossible mix?” Speakers tba; May 1 “Leading the way to reconciliation – East Timor & South Africa” Susan Connolly & Margaret O’Hearn (Info: Tim or Margaret 9634 2927 (H)).

° **Waitara** – Things You Learn Along the Way The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy, April 18 Fr Michael Whelan sm & Major Margaret Sanz (Info: Kathryn 9402 7842)

° **Wollongong** – Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla.

Other States:

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

° **Clayton (VIC)** – Does Religion Have a Future? The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 1 “Who and where are the prophets?” Speakers tba (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).

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

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

° **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm, April 25 “Our search for meaning in Relationships” Colleen Gleeson & Nicholas Galante (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB
COMMUNITY WEBSITE
<http://communities.ninemsn.com.au/SpiritualityinthePub>

° **Spirituality Café, Rosanna** May 2 “Prophetic Voices Today” Maryanne Confoy (Info: Marian 9459 4403).

° **Devonport (TAS)** – The Seven Deadly Sins – Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, 7.30pm-9pm, April 25 “Healing through Meditation” Fr Gilbert Carlo svd (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

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

° **Perth (WA)** – The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Michael 9448 2404).

° **The Talking MIX** is now available on tape, thanks to the generosity of several volunteers. For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 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).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, June 2 “Pentecost Vigil” (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Spirituality Courses Mary MacKillop Place**, North Sydney, (Info: Sr Jeanette Foxe on 8912 4887)..

° **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).

FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

“Two Faces of Hope”
with

Sr Mary Anne Confoy rsc
Sunday May 20 2001, 2-4pm,
The MacKillop Campus,
Australian Catholic University,
Edward Street, North Sydney.
Entry by Donation.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB

A live-in weekend for members of
organising committees - share re-
sources, help new people set up
their SIPs, learn about making your
venue more successful. November
24/25 2001. Watch this space for
more information.

REFLECTION MORNING

with

Fr David Ranson
Saturday April 28,
9.30am – 12.30pm
Marist Centre
1 Mary Street, Hunters Hill.
Morning tea provided.
No need to book.
Donation appreciated.
All welcome!

Recommended Reading

Kenneth R Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, Cliff Street Books, 1999, 338 pages, index, pb, \$26.95.

Kenneth Miller is a trained and practising biologist. He is also an excellent teacher – or so it seems from the way he writes. The first thing that strikes the reader about this book is that it is a pleasure to read. In fact it is absorbing. And this reviewer is not an experiential scientist. Miller gives credible and positive descriptions of scientific research, showing clearly that it cannot be dismissed as “only theory”. He is committed to evolution as the best explanation of the biological facts before us. He deals with – and rejects - three common arguments made in defence of religion against evolution. Firstly there is the argument that simply rejects the evidence and concludes that evolution is indefensible – thus he speaks of “God the charlatan”; secondly the argument that rejects the fossil records – thus he speaks of “God the magician”; thirdly the argument that demands an intelligent designer – thus he speaks of “God the mechanic”. This last piece is probably the least convincing part of the book. Miller concludes that the rejection of religion by scientists is not based on science but the materialistic humanism of our culture. There is no religious “answer” to the disbelieving scientist any more than there is a scientific answer for the religious quest. There is, rather, a necessary conversation and Miller has contributed well to it.

Ian G Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers or Partners?*, Harper, 2000, 205 pages, index, endnotes, pb, \$26.95.

Barbour's book is a good companion to the other book discussed on this page – Miller's *Finding Darwin's God*. The latter is more concerned with the specific issues and implications for religion arising from the theory of evolution. Barbour is more generally concerned with the relationship of science and religion. Like *Finding Darwin's God*, *When Science Meets Religion* is eminently readable. The latter, however, is probably a better introduction to the general area. Barbour rejects the thesis of Harvard professor, Stephen Jay Gould, who argues that religion and science address different questions and therefore can never conflict. Barbour is a committed scientist with at least as much commitment to the validity of religion and he does not want to assign them to different spheres ultimately irrelevant to each other. Science needs religion every bit as much as religion needs science. He is unhesitating in his acknowledgement of science's discoveries and how they challenge many old religious views. However, he sees this not as a threat but as a promise, for it promotes – and demands – a rethinking of religious belief, a certain amount of which is quite simplistic. Both Miller and Barbour would be excellent books for senior high school students who, sadly, too often take for granted a belief that science has rendered religion obsolete.

Elizabeth Jordan, *Reconciling Women: A Feminist Perspective on the Confession of Sin in Roman Catholic Tradition*, St Paul's 2000, bibliography, endnotes, pb, \$24.95

This is a welcome book. Elizabeth Jordan, in examining women's experience of “confession” within the Roman Catholic Church, successfully addresses – or at least points to – at least two highly significant issues for Catholics today, issues that could hold some important keys to the future of the Church. The first is the general one of the dominant voices in the formulation of the Church's moral teachings down through the ages. Those voices were exclusively male. We might ask whether our articulation of the moral vision of the Gospels might not have been different – how different? – if the dominant voice had been female or if the voices had been shared as part of an ongoing conversation. The second issue – and it has many sub-sets – pertains specifically to the concrete reality of women always finding themselves confessing to men within a moral vision articulated by men. This must certainly be a critical part of any conversation that seeks to find new and appropriate forms for celebrating the liberating mercy of God at work in the community. By taking a largely historical approach, Elizabeth Jordan's work has the very helpful effect of situating the reader beyond the present historical moment, fraught as that moment is. *Reconciling Women* deserves a wide readership. Especially recommended to the clergy.

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