



# THE MIX



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## Our Say – The faith of our mothers and fathers

The times in which we find ourselves have many Catholics asking serious and searching questions about the future of their Church – or at least their future in that Church. Such questions – provided they are honest and intelligent questions asked in faith – are not only useful, they are necessary. They point to life and possibility.

A truly adult faith emerges out of a vigorous conversation about those things that matter most, and such a conversation can only emerge from a commitment to thoughtful and honest questioning. In this way the Church is born anew in every generation.

Facing and struggling with our inevitable doubts, ignorance, disappointments and frustrations concerning the mystery of God at work in our lives is a *sine qua non* for a mature faith. If we had no faith we would not bother struggling. This faith is nothing more than an intimate relationship with the living God, the unutterably incomprehensible One, enfleshed in Jesus who is the Christ, at work in every age and every heart and mind through the Holy Spirit.

Because this faith is a relationship and this relationship is a being drawn into the eternal love affair we call the Trinity, our faith is never static, it never allows us to feel as though we have “arrived”; it is always demanding that we break the boundaries of our current existence, that we move on, that we abandon ourselves more and more to the liberating ways of Infinite Love.

This faith is always an ecclesial faith. It draws us towards others in communion in the same way that we are drawn towards God in communion. It is never an individual or private affair, though it is always profoundly personal. The very notion of “private” religion or spirituality is an absurdity.

The concrete circumstances of the Catholic Church today – particularly in regard to decision-making processes and the general push towards centralism – might lead some to walk away from the Church. This would be sad, though understandable.

Those very same concrete circumstances, however, might evoke an entirely

different response from others. They might, for example, cause them to ask with even greater urgency and focus: What matters in the end? What is worth fighting for and what is not worth fighting for? What is the essence of the faith? What does Jesus mean to me? What is “Church”? What are the rights and responsibilities of my baptism?

Such questioning can only be fruitful if it is firmly grounded in the faith. If ever the Church needed women and men of faith who can ask those questions courageously, with intelligence and gentle firmness, she needs them now.

We may see little or no positive effects from such a process. Many will probably not even want to join the conversation. Some may level accusations of “infidelity”; others may simply ask, “What’s the use?”

To all who oppose or question the value of this conversation, we might ask: What if no one cares to ask these questions or pursue these matters any more? What if the conversation ceases? □

## THE HUMAN FACE

This journal is one of the works of  
the Sydney-based group  
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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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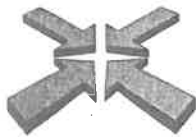
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity  
giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal  
Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture,  
in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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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My name is John McNamara. Lismore  
NSW, where I was born in 1931, had  
the dubious reputation of being one of the  
most frequently flooded towns in the state.  
My father, who was the Clerk of Petty  
Sessions there in that year, reminisced that  
one night 30 inches of rain fell between  
dusk and dawn! Yes, water has played a  
significant part in my secular and spiritual  
life, the waters of Baptism having flowed  
over my head in St Carthage's Cathedral in  
June 1931.

I had two brothers and one sister –  
considered a large family then, as the birth-  
rate declined dramatically during the great  
Depression. We left Lismore for Sydney in  
1934 and began our formal education at St  
Joseph's convent school, Enfield, staffed by  
the "Brown Joeys". The imposing church  
on Liverpool Road, with large two-storeyed  
presbytery, housed the parish priest and two  
assistants. The nuns lived in an old lath-  
and-plaster cottage on Burwood Road. My  
mother told me that they often were short of  
food and were helped out by the  
parishioners. The parish priest drove  
around in the latest Chevrolet!

After 4<sup>th</sup> grade we three boys were sent to  
Christian Brothers Burwood and my sister  
completed her Intermediate Certificate at  
Joeys. Confirmation by Archbishop Gilroy  
was a truly memorable spiritual experience  
for me.

Marist Brothers, West Maitland, was the  
next stop for us boys. Dad had been  
transferred once more. More water here.  
During flood time most of the school would  
rush to the river bank at recess and hope the  
water would break over it so that the school  
would be inundated!

Having miraculously passed the  
Intermediate Certificate (even in Latin, to  
my father's surprise), I gave up study the  
following year. I then preceded the family  
to Sydney in 1946 to begin work in the  
printing trade with an experienced  
typesetter.

When I was 20 the principal of the firm I  
worked for died and I took over the  
management for his widow – a quick  
learning experience! I was supervising men  
much older than I, some of them seasoned  
war veterans.

In 1961 I went outside Sydney Harbour for  
the first time on the "Oriana". Once more  
water played its part in my life: on board I  
met Carole, my dream girl. She was a  
stenographer and an active member of the  
CYO. Her mother, of Anglo/Celtic descent,  
came from a large family and Carole's  
father also of RC (retired Catholic)  
background.

Carole and I married at St Joseph's  
Camperdown in 1963. We built our own

house in the West Pennant Hills valley, a  
place of gum trees, poultry farms and  
orchards. Peter was born in 1964 and they  
just kept on coming – Patricia, Jane,  
Andrew and Sarah, the last, in 1972. More  
water and candles at Castle Hill parish! We  
were into Parents and Friends, Liturgy  
Committee, Music and the momentous  
Vatican II.

As the family grew, so did the financial  
burden, so in 1967, realising the futility of  
making money for someone else, I started  
my own business in a deconsecrated  
Methodist church in Annandale, previously  
owned by the Freemasons.

Retirement came in 1989 after 42 years,  
and we moved house to Cheltenham, the  
five kids being either at University or  
completing high school. In 1990 I was  
shanghaied into rejuvenating the national  
Vinnies journal as head of the editorial  
board and for 4½ years witnessed first-hand  
the politics of the great St Vincent de Paul  
Society. 1994 saw Carole and I shake off  
the dust of Sydney for a quiet life on the  
farm in Joadja.

SIP had begun in Sydney, so the time was  
ripe to set up in the Southern Highlands.  
Gathering a few enthusiasts also seeking  
church reform, we kicked off with the help  
of Michael Whelan and CFR. We are now  
in our fourth year.

The people and events that have  
influenced my faith journey make up the  
real church for me, as distinct from the  
institution. God for me resides in people  
of faith.

The final SIP for the year in Bowral in  
November 2000 explored the topic "Unity  
in Diversity". My life experience of human  
families and the family of church leads me  
to the hope that we may all follow this  
ideal.



John McNamara

# Your Say – Is there an Australian spirituality?

François Kunc

The distinguished Church historian Eamon Duffy once wrote an article entitled, 'An Excess of Spirituality?' which began:

Like Goering whenever he heard the word 'culture', I find myself reaching for my revolver when I hear the word 'spirituality'. Nowadays that means that my hand is rarely off the holster. This is an age of 'spirituality'. Open the pages of any religious magazine, walk along the shelves in any religious book shop, and there it is by the bucketload – Creation Spirituality, Celtic Spirituality, Ignatian Spirituality. (*Priests and People*, Nov., 1997.)

What concerned Duffy was that the emphasis on spirituality had become so great that, while undoubtedly worthy, it encouraged an undesirable disengagement from the intellect. He also drew attention to the development of what he called a 'supermarket' of religious ideas and the 'cultural tourism' implicit in the attempt to appropriate various forms of spirituality from their original context. He was troubled by advertisements for courses in spirituality along the lines of 'Summer is for the soul: Find your soul in Belgium'.

Hopefully not in the style of Duffy's spiritual tourist and supermarket shopper, we ask the question, 'Is There an Australian spirituality?' That there are plans for a National Centre of Spirituality and Culture in Canberra is one example of why this is a timely question.

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**Starting with Aboriginal culture, one can identify many strands in the Australian fabric that make an Australian spirituality – if such a thing were thought desirable – an impossibility.**

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Some Australian observers may have views in common with Dr Duffy. Les Murray, for example, has written that 'we now live in a sort of spiritual supermarket, full of competing systems and brand names' ('Some Religious Stuff I Know', *The Quality of Sprawl*, p 39). But he confidently asserts the place of God in Australia, which he describes as follows:

God, in Australia, is a vast blue and pale-gold red-brown landscape, and His votaries wear ragged shorts and share His sense of humour. Space, like peace, is one of the great, poorly explored spiritual resources of Australia. In the huge spaces of the Outback, ordinary souls ex-

pand into splendid and often innocent grotesquerie which the cramping of urban surroundings might transmute into ugly, even dangerous forms. And it may be, in the end, that humour is the touchstone for the viability of any import here. (*The Quality of Sprawl*, p 31).

Others will tell you that the closest we come to an Australian spirituality is how the majority of Australians respond to Anzac Day.

I would like to make three brief observations. The first is that the topic presupposes the question, 'Should there be an Australian spirituality?' 'Should' can invite either a normative or an empirical inquiry. I shall leave the latter to the sociologists. In its normative sense the question can be answered both 'yes' and 'no'.

The answer should certainly be 'no' if by an Australian spirituality we mean something derived from or dependent upon Australia's status as a nation state.

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**"Space, like peace, is one of the great, poorly explored spiritual resources of Australia. In the huge spaces of the Outback, ordinary souls expand into splendid and often innocent grotesquerie which the cramping of urban surroundings might transmute into ugly, even dangerous forms."**

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The West has been prone to such spiritualities. They are inevitably ultramontane and triumphalist, inimical to authentic spirituality. The answer should probably be 'yes' insofar as we recognise that authentic spirituality, being the individual's intimate expression of the encounter between Creator and created, Lover and beloved, is necessarily affected by and affects the community in which each person lives.

My second observation is that I am always suspicious of questions that look for an Australian 'anything'. If the ensuing discussion manages to avoid cultural cringe, in nearly all cases it seems to me doomed to founder upon the geographical and cultural diversity of contemporary Australia.

Starting with Aboriginal culture, one can identify many strands in the Australian fabric that make an Australian spirituality – if such a thing were thought desirable – an impossibility.

We do spend a lot of time today talking about what it is to be an Australian. Whatever that may be can obviously have an influence upon the spirituality of individual Australians. To quote Les Murray again: 'It is probable that many Australians now spend more of their spiritual energy on the quest for national and communal identity than on any other theme' (*The Quality of Sprawl*, p 28).

The problem is that the debate about national identity eclipses and can be mistaken for a debate about spirituality, which is something quite different and more profound.

My final point is whether we have really asked the right question at all. In 1965, shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council, the French Jesuit theologian, Jean Cardinal Daniélou, wrote:

It is sufficiently clear that Christians ought to be trying to change the shape and pattern of society so as to make possible a Christian life for the whole of mankind. It is also obvious that such a transformation must in any case be slow and may sometimes be ruled out by circumstances. However that may be, somehow a start has to be made, and this can be done by creating oases in the prevailing secularism where the Christian vocation can develop (*Prayer as a Political Problem*, pp 16-17).

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Oasis is a powerful metaphor in a dry country like Australia. Today we continue to face the challenge of creating oases of the kind to which Cardinal Daniélou refers. It follows that, for Australian Christians, the question may not be, 'Is there an Australian spirituality?' but rather, 'Is there a spirituality for Australia, and how can we best make it available to all?'

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François Kunc is a Sydney barrister and a member of *Catalyst for Renewal*.

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*Lord, let us know the shortness of our days that we may gain wisdom of heart (Psalm 90:12)*

# Essay – Church as communion

by Patrick Granfield

The following is part of a paper given by Patrick Granfield OSB, Professor of Systematic Theology at Catholic University of America, March 27, 1999, during a symposium on ecclesiology. The full text may be found in *Origins* 28:44 or by sending a stamped self-addressed long envelope to the Editor, together with five 45 cent stamps to cover photocopying costs.

Nearly 34 years have passed since the end of the Second Vatican Council and nearly 21 years since John Paul II became the bishop of Rome. These two events will have a significant impact on the study of the church in the future. Acknowledging this influence, it is appropriate to examine some of the major directions and trends in ecclesiology as we move into the third millennium.

I shall use the word church in the way Karl Rahner described it: “the sociologically and historically tangible and structured community of those who believe in Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the definitive and victoriously prevailing self-promise of the one and living God to the world.” ...

Walter Kasper explains that Christianity needs a church and some kind of institutionalization if it is to survive and to keep alive the memory of its source, Jesus Christ. “Christianity without a church,” he writes, “is a utopian fantasy.”

Our discussion will comprise two parts. First, since ecclesiology does not exist in a vacuum, I shall identify some of the unresolved issues facing the contemporary church. ... Second, after indicating some fundamental principles related to the study of the church, I shall present one particular idea that can help us integrate these current ecclesiological challenges and bring the church to a more perfect unity.

This list of challenges does not claim to be exhaustive, but all of them are widely discussed in the church today. The adjective unresolved does not mean that the teaching authority of the church has not addressed these questions. On the contrary, the pope and the bishops have spoken on virtually all of these issues, and the position of the church is clear. The issues are “unresolved” in the sense that many are still being debated and the process of implementation and reception continues.

The five challenges I shall now treat all have a common theme: the unity of the church. “The Decree on Ecumenism” affirmed that “Christ the Lord founded one church and one church only” (n. 1). How can we preserve and strengthen that unity as the church faces critical problems in its jour-

ney through history?

The first and most obvious challenge is how to deal with the widespread diversity present in today’s church. The Roman Catholic communion alone has a billion members with marked ethnic, racial, economic and theological differences. The Roman Catholic Church can be called a world church with believers in every part of the inhabited world. ... Throughout the world, the substance of the faith will endure, but it will be shaped anew in diverse cultures.

The positive side of diversity within the church is that the contributions of various cultures can be a rich source of vitality for the church. “By virtue of this catholicity,” according to Vatican II, “the individual parts of the church bring their own gifts to the other parts and to the whole church” (*Lumen Gentium*, 13). The result of this exchange of gifts is that “the whole and each of its parts receive increase” (ibid.).

In some instances the downside of diversity is polarization, which divides rather than unites. ...

A second challenge concerns resistance to ecclesial authority in both the local and universal church. Always an ongoing problem, it is especially widespread now. In fact, it is difficult to locate a particular period in the church - from New Testament times to the present - when authority, hierarchy and decision-making were not strongly contested. Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example, writing before Vatican II, said that “the chief stumbling block which non-Catholics come up against in the church is authority, the impersonal institution.”

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## “The individual parts of the church bring their own gifts to the other parts and to the whole church”

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The specific issues concerning authority are many: the role of the pope, the relationship between the relative autonomy of the local church and the central administration of Rome, the role of the magisterium and the reception of its teaching by the faithful, the meaning and limits of the principle of collegiality, and the selection of bishops. ...

In an interview shortly before his death in November 1996, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin made an insightful comment on the exercise of authority within the church. The cardinal was asked what issues he thought the next pope would have to face. He listed two.

“The first,” he said, “is what should be the relationship between the center and the periphery.” It is necessary, he explained, to acknowledge the competencies of both the pope and the local bishops, but to encourage them to work together for the good of the church. He cautioned that the central administration, whether in Rome or in the dioceses, be careful lest it become so dominant that it discourages creativity.

“The other issue,” he continued, “has to do with the notion of subsidiarity: that you shouldn’t insist that a higher level do something that can be done at the lower level. Sometimes we don’t give enough freedom to people at a lower level.”

A third challenge in the contemporary church - in view of the dwindling number of priests - is the issue of relating clerical and lay ministries. A shortage of priests means that in many places the sacraments are not readily available. That is a disturbing development when one recalls that Vatican II referred to the eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11) ...

An aging priesthood, the merging of parishes and the increasing number of “pastoral administrators” in the United States and elsewhere influence how we understand the ministry of the laity. Vatican II (in *Lumen Gentium* n. 31) and the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of John Paul II in 1988 insisted that the mission of the laity is primarily in the temporal or secular spheres. No one can question that lay Christians should bear witness to their faith in the marketplace and share with others the values of the Gospel. But in fact, generous lay Christian faithful - due to the shortage of priests - also pursue a progressively active ministry within parishes. ...

A fourth challenge facing the present church is to develop a balanced and mutually productive relationship between the church and the world in light of the increased secularism and pervasive relativism in our culture. How do we practice, in the words of Peter L. Berger, “cognitive accommodation” with the world but avoid a “cognitive surrender” which would blur the distinctiveness of our Catholic identity?

The church is related to the entire human family. Who can forget the moving words that begin *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and hopes and the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human

which does not also affect them" (n. 1).

Vatican II may have been overly optimistic about the perfectibility of the world, but one of its greatest contributions was its insistence on the dignity of the human person. That theme has been a leitmotif of the pontificate of John Paul II. In his prolific writings and international pastoral visits, he has taught that every human being is sacred and of immense worth. He has argued that the church has the duty to announce the Gospel of justice and denounce any individual, program or system that neglects or exploits human rights. ...

**A** fifth and final challenge for the church is how to unite Christianity and how to evangelize the non-Christian. "The Decree on Ecumenism" said that divided Christianity is against the will of Christ and impedes the preaching of the Gospel (See *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 1). Calling the ecumenical task "one of the priorities of my pontificate," John Paul II has stated that "the ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full, visible unity among all the baptized." The movement toward Christian unity is not an optional task of the church. It is, in the pope's words, "an organic part of her life and work."

We are moving, according to the veteran American ecumenist John Hotchkin, into a third stage of the ecumenical movement. After a pioneering and organizational period, followed by a period of dialogue, we are now entering into what he calls the "stage of phased reconciliation." More and more Christian churches wish to be in full communion with other Christians, but they also want to remain separate churches and to retain their own histories. An analogy might be drawn from the Roman Catholic Church, which is a communion of 19 distinct churches in the East and in the West, each with its own heritage.

If the church, as Vatican II noted, "is missionary by its very nature" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 1), then it must respond to the Gospel mandate to "preach the Gospel to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). The church is always evangelical. Four billion non-Christians now live in the world. That figure is twice what it was at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Asia has 60 percent of the world's population, but only 2 percent are Christian.

John Paul II spoke of the urgency of missionary activity in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* in 1990, and he encouraged the renewal of missionary activity in the church. He called evangelization "the primary service which the church can render to every individual and to all humanity." (14) To evangelize is to open hearts to the "good news" of salvation. Faith should not be forced on anyone; it should be presented to others as an invitation that attracts by its beauty, truth and power. ... John Paul II in

his apostolic exhortation "Ecclesia in America" (1999), said that "for the disciple of Christ, the duty to evangelize is an obligation of love." ...

**W**alter Kasper writes: "There is only one way into the future: the way pointed by the council, the full implementation of the council and its communion ecclesiology. This is the way which God's Spirit has shown us."

In addition, the Synod of Bishops affirmed in 1985 that "the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the council's documents." And the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith observed in 1992 that "the concept of communion ... can certainly be a key for the renewal of Catholic ecclesiology." The congregation wisely insisted that the image of communion be integrated with other images of the church found in Scripture and tradition such as the church as the body of Christ, the people of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the sacrament of salvation and unity.

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**"There is only one way into the future: the way pointed by the council, the full implementation of the council and its communion ecclesiology. This is the way which God's Spirit has shown us."**

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One reason why the notion of communion is widely used in ecclesiology is because communion in its broadest sense refers to some sort of relation with another person or persons. It connotes interrelationships, solidarity and intimacy - all easily applicable to the church. Even in God there is communion, because of the relations that exist between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus the Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas can say that "God has no true being, apart from communion." In society and in the church communion is a fundamental concept.

The word *koinonia* or *communio* is used 19 times in the New Testament, and 13 of these are in the Pauline writings. It is not a univocal concept. It is interpreted, in view of the context, as either participation, contribution or association. The primary meaning of *koinonia* - what John Paul II calls the vertical dimension - refers to our intimate relationship with the triune God. Communion is our participation in the life of the Spirit through faith, word and sacrament. Especially significant in realizing communion are the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, through which we enjoy the gifts of salvation won by Jesus and bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

The secondary meaning of *koinonia* is its horizontal dimension: the relationship among believers that is based on prior communion with God. *Koinonia*, then, is a dynamic reality that forms us into the one body of Christ. Union with Christ and in Christ fosters union among Christians in the church. ...

**H**ow, then, does communion relate to the five areas of unresolved challenges that we spoke of earlier?

In the challenge raised by diversity and polarity, the church needs communion, which in turn relies on communication. "Where there is one communion," wrote St. Ambrose, "there should also be common judgment and harmonious consent." We must learn to live with racial and cultural differences and avoid rigid ideological positions that divide us and make dialogue more difficult. ...

In the challenge of ecclesial authority, church governance should be more participatory, with wider consultation and representation. Granting more autonomy and subsidiarity to local churches can strengthen the relationship of the periphery to the center. The integrity of the church demands a vital communion between the hierarchy and the faithful. Collegiality at all levels of the church is an expression of communion.

In the challenge of ministry the ideal is collaboration, not competition between the clergy and the laity. This attitude of communion is built on a common trust and a recognition that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all in the church. Women should be involved in as many forms of ministry as possible.

In the church-world challenge, the church is not the world, but it should be in dialogue with it. Respecting the communion it has with the entire human family, the church can act as the guardian of justice and the voice of the voiceless.

Finally, in the challenge of ecumenism and evangelization, it is necessary to acknowledge that the church is a communion of communions and that the Catholic Church is already in real but imperfect communion with other Christians (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3). The ecumenical movement, in all likelihood, will make major advances in the years ahead. The bilateral consultations have contributed greatly to the cause of Christian unity, and they should continue. Perhaps in the near future it would be helpful for the world's religious leaders to meet with the pope in a synodlike assembly of some duration. Their work would be to identify areas of agreement and disagreement and to take practical steps to heal the division among Christians.

Our relations with non-Christians must always be characterized by love and respect, as together we seek to solidify the bonds we already share in common.

### Words for a Pilgrim People

*You have seduced me Yahweh and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. I am a daily laughing stock, everybody's butt. Each time I speak the word I have to howl and proclaim: 'Violence and ruin!'. The word of Yahweh has meant for me insult, derision, all day long. I used to say, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name anymore'. Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it. (Jeremiah. 19:7-9)*

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*You will never have real mercy for the failings of another until you know and realize that you have the same failings in your soul. (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, **The Steps of Humility and Pride**, III:6, in *Treatises II*, Cistercian Publications, 1974, 35.)*

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*Religion has two sides, a severe side, and a beautiful; and we shall be sure to swerve from the narrow way which leads to life, if we indulge in what is beautiful and put aside what is severe. (J H Newman cited in H A Reinhold, **The Soul Afire**, Image Books, 1973, 157.)*

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*The transformation through which the world must pass will not be merely political. It is indeed an illusion to think that the forces which are at work in our modern society are, above all, political. The great political movements of our time, so complex and so often apparently so meaningless, are the smoke screen behind which are developing the evolutions of a spiritual war too great for men to wage by any human plan. This is something that is going on in the whole of mankind, and it would go on even if there were no political movements. The politicians are only the instruments of forces which they themselves ignore. These forces are more powerful and more spiritual than man. (Thomas Merton, **The Monastic Journey**, Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1977, 36-37)*

In the Old Testament, everything is written in the light of the Exodus Event. The Exodus is, as it were, the genetic code that is the key to understanding everything else in that library we call the Old Testament. In exactly the same way, everything in the New Testament is written in the light of the New Exodus Event of Jesus' Passover. The Gospel writers knew the ending before they wrote the beginning. Or, to put it another way, the writing ends where their experience begins.

On the Feast of the Ascension, this year Catholics throughout the world will listen to a proclamation of the Gospel of Luke (24:46-53). At the Easter vigil we heard Luke's account of how the women found the tomb empty (12:1-12). We now listen to this later text knowing the tomb is *empty*. The place of death is empty – death is no more! That empty tomb speaks eloquently of the desert of Calvary and the Passover of Jesus: it was a *good* Friday. With the disciples we begin to get some inkling of just how good this news is. We can feel ourselves being put in motion by the Easter Mystery. It is the most natural thing in the world to do as those women did – go and tell the good news.

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**The work of redemption is a work of liberation through and by Love.**

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At the so-called Ascension – theologically of a piece with the liberating death and resurrection of Jesus – there are at least two noteworthy things. In the first instance, this description keeps the initiative with God. This is first and last God's action. The disciples are being drawn into God's action and they too will become part of God's action – this same action that has manifested itself definitively in Jesus' triumph over death. God's action – the action of Love – is always liberating. The work of redemption is a work of liberation through and by Love. Discipleship is to be a co-operator in this work.

In the second instance, this work cannot be reduced to words and deeds. These first disciples are transformed, loved into freedom and so they go back to Jerusalem "full of joy" to await "the power from on high". In this way they will become a redeeming presence in their world – people through whom God can love others into freedom. □

## The Tradition – Continuing the witness

In 1967 the seminarians at the Marist Fathers' Scholasticate in Toongabbie, NSW, painted their dining room. In order to do the painting, they took down a large crucifix which hung on the wall at one end. For some reason, the crucifix was not returned to its place on that wall when the painting was done. Now it had been the custom to begin meals by turning and facing the crucifix and saying the grace. That custom continued after the room had been painted, even though the crucifix was no longer in place. It was only after some months of turning and facing the blank wall to pray that a visitor asked why we had this odd custom before meals, and we realized what had happened.

There was nothing terribly momentous about this oversight. Yet, it does point to a common human failing: In the routines and habits of daily living we become forgetful. Relative things can easily become absolutised, and means insidiously replace the ends. In the Catholic Church – so rich with ritual and symbol – we are prone to this forgetfulness. If we are to keep the authentic tradition alive – as distinct from the forms that are chosen as relative means to that end – we must be constantly vigilant, constantly alert to what is actually happening in both our individual and corporate lives. We could say that the Second Vatican Council was driven by this very same thought. The Council was an exercise in critical self-examination by the Catholic Church, and the guiding question for every aspect of the Church's life was: Does this – ritual, symbol, law, style of dress, organizational structure, statement of our faith and so on – help or hinder our witness to the liberating love of God in the world at this time?

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**Relative things can easily become absolutised, and means insidiously replace the ends.**

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Part of the confusion and agony for Catholics at this time is found precisely in the fact that must join the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in asking that question. It was not definitively answered by the Council. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Council was its willingness to begin the questioning process. Our vocation is to continue that questioning. □

# Bulletin Board

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

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

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

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

° **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 June 27 “Where is the Church going?” Mary Shanahan rscj & tba (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club May 9 “Who are the Salt of the Earth?” Christine Rose & Alec Nelson (Info: John 4647 3528).

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

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St May 30 “Blessed are the meek...not the soft but those who are patient and tolerant” Speakers tba (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel May 14 “Seeds 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, May 1 “Beyond bolts and bars” Fr Tom Rouse & Sr Monica Sparks; June 5 “He Ain't Heavy – He's my Brother!” Murray Davis & Yvonne O'Donnell (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).

° **Lismore** – The Lismore Workers Club, May 7 “Woman & Man: One in Christ – Women's Role in the Church” Sandy Cornish (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Lower North Shore** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, May 14 “I was Homeless...and you gave me a Detention Centre” Zita Antonios & Michael Costigan (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

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

° **Paddington** – Crossroads The Bellevue Hotel, May 2 “Men at the Crossroads” Mark Levon Byrne & Br Graham Neist fms; June 6 “A conversation on alienation: crossroads for the young” Robert Fitzgerald & Lisa Alonso Love (Info: Marea 9387 3152)

° **Penrith** – Golf Club Sunday June 17<sup>th</sup> Luncheon Noon (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

° **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd May 1 “Leading the way to reconciliation – East Timor & South Africa” Susan Connolly & Margaret O'Hearn; June 5 “Does the media lead or respond?” Speakers tba (Info: Tim or Margaret 9634 2927 (H)).

° **Waitara** – Things You Learn Along the Way The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy May 16 Fr Brian Gore & Chris Hannon (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 July 3 “Has art abandoned religion?” 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 (VIC)** (Info: 03 5275 4120).

° **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm June 27 “Our search for meaning in Prayer” Jennifer Glenister & John Stuart (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

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

° **Devonport (TAS)** – The Seven Deadly Sins – Molly Malone's Irish Pub, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Fortitude Valley (QLD)** – Dooley's in Patrick's Bar First Monday of month (Info: Madonna 3840 0524).

° **Perth** – 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** 141 Harrington St Sydney: “Principles of Persuasion”, Andrew Murray, SM, PhD, May 19 and June 2, 10am-5pm; “Benedictine Spirituality”, David Ranson, May 21, 28, June 4, 18, 25 and July 2, 6pm-8pm; “Developing Your Own Spirituality”, Michael Whelan SM, PhD with Marie Biddle RSJ, MA, MTh, Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings

for seven weeks beginning May 15; “Reading the Spiritual Classics”, Marie Biddle RSJ with Michael Whelan SM, Tuesday mornings and Wednesday evenings beginning May 15. Ask about the Winter Seminar, July 9, 10 & 11, with Terry O'Connell, internationally renowned for his work in “restorative conferencing”. (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).

° **The Halifax-Portal Lectures** Lidcombe Catholic Club, 24 John St, Lidcombe, 7.30pm, May 8 “Reading the Bible – the Catholic ‘Two step’ way (Rev John McSweeney); May 15 “How Anglicans understand and read the Bible” (Rev Dr Mark Thompson); May 22 “Prayer and the spirit, Anglicanism and the devotional life” (Rev Dr Ivan Head); May 29 “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary...where do we go with Mary in Catholic devotional life?” (Sr Marie Farrell rsm) (Info: Sr Patricia 9390 5168).

### CATALYST DINNER

Friday June 15 7pm for 7.30pm

“Hope in the Church of the Third Millennium – How do our Catholic Schools cope with this challenge?”

Speakers: Seamus O'Grady & Sr Denise Desmarchelier ibvm

Tickets \$40 (\$32 for Friends of Catalyst)

Parish Hall, Cnr Gladesville Rd & Mary St  
Hunters Hill

### FORUM FOR THE FUTURE Sunday May 20 2001 2-4pm

“Two Faces of Hope”

with Sr Mary Anne Confoy rsc

The MacKillop Campus,  
Australian Catholic University,  
Edward Street, North Sydney.

Entry by Donation.

## Recommended Reading

Michael Casey, *Truthful Living: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility*, Gracewing, 2001, endnotes, 256 pages, pb, \$30.

One of the essential tasks for the Church in a time of significant transition is to mine the riches of the authentic tradition. But this is not easily done, as the uninitiated reader will find much that perplexes and even repels; it requires the wise and discerning guidance of a good guide. Australian Trappist, Michael Casey, is such a guide. Very few people of Christian history could rightly claim as much positive influence as St Benedict. His Rule is a masterpiece of practical wisdom. *Truthful Living* addresses the centrepiece of that Rule – the call to humility. While it is written specifically for those who do in fact attempt to live by the Rule, both the style and content of this book make it immensely valuable for the rest of us. Casey makes it clear that humility is not something that can be achieved or mastered by clever and disciplined strategy. Humility – like all the virtues – is a gift and manifestation of God in our lives. The English word humility – like the word human – comes from the Latin word *humus*, meaning *earth*. Humility emerges in our lives as we endeavour to know ourselves and live in accord with who and what we are. Put most simply, humility is “truthful living”. The spiritual landscape opened up in this insightful treatment of St Benedict is exhilarating and challenging. This book is highly recommended, to be read and re-read many times.

Margaret Press, editor, *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, St Pauls, endnotes, 128 pages, pb, \$19.95.

On more than one occasion the documents of the Second Vatican Council refer to the Eucharist – in these or similar words – as “source and summit” of the Christian community. In it the community is assembled to remember and give thanks, to celebrate and allow themselves to be drawn ever more deeply into the Paschal Mystery – the very heart of the authentic tradition. *The Eucharist* is a gathering of seven essays – originally presented as public lectures – exploring some key aspects of Eucharist. The authors are all lecturers at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. Themes and issues include the biblical roots of Eucharist, Eucharist as “event”, the eucharistic community as “mystery” and “pilgrim people”, Eucharist as “sacrifice”, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the parts of the Mass and the call to social justice, Sunday as “the Lord’s day” and intercommunion. The language and style of each of these essays may be challenging for the reader who has no theological education. Yet, the thoughtful reader will be variously informed, inspired and stimulated to think further about this most important subject. *The Eucharist* contributes to perhaps the most important conversation we need to have. It invites us to explore more deeply the mystery of Eucharist and to consider how we might facilitate expressions and experiences of that central mystery in ways that are meaningful today.

Donald J Goergen and Ann Garrido, editors, *The Theology of Priesthood*, Liturgical Press, 2000, footnotes, index, 224 pages, pb, \$56.95.

This book assembles ten very rich essays on various aspects of priesthood. It is a veritable compendium of both Church teaching and issues and problems that we must address. The first essay, “Issues for a Theology of Priesthood: A Status Report”, offers a very balanced and probing discussion that opens most of the key issues. The second essay, “Ministry, Ordination Rites and Language”, while seemingly remote from the rock face of pastoral concerns, indicates some of the deeper subtleties that must be put on the table in this conversation. The ninth essay, “Priest, Prophet, King: The Ministry of Jesus Christ”, explores the connection of priesthood with a sound Christology and includes a discussion of Christology within an African (ie third world) context. One of the important effects of these essays is to remind us of the richness, subtlety and complexity of the priesthood. The third essay, “The Ministry of Presbyters and the Many Ministries in the Church”, reminds us that ministry in the Roman Catholic Church changed “rapidly”. In a sense, the practice has probably outrun the theory. Much serious study and more projects like the one recorded in this volume are urgently needed. It is essential that good theology rather than mere pragmatism – no matter how well meaning – determines the shape of priesthood.

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