



THE MIX



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Carole Wilson

The human face 2

Michael Furtado

Diversity and Dr Pell 3

François Kunc

Hope in the church of the 3rd millennium 4

Remembering Vatican II

Christ the prophet 6

The bible

Teach us to pray 6

Our Say – Dialogue is an essential part of being church

On May 18, John Paul II received nine new ambassadors to the Vatican – from Nepal, Tunisia, Estonia, Zambia, Guinea, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, South Africa and Gambia. In separate messages to the ambassadors, the Pope John Paul focused on dialogue as the way to build “a world in which all the members of the human race can occupy their rightful place and live in peace and harmony”.

In speaking this way, the Holy Father was being utterly consistent with his thinking reflected in previous statements. For example, in his ground-breaking 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, we read:

“The capacity for ‘dialogue’ is rooted in the nature of the person and human dignity. the human person is in fact ‘the only creature on earth which God willed for itself’; therefore we cannot ‘fully find ourselves except through a sincere gift of ourselves’ (cf *Gaudium et Spes* 24). Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization, the self-realization of both

each individual and every human community” (28).

In fact, this affirmation of the critical need for dialogue at all levels has been one of the features of Catholic Church teaching, contained in numerous documents, since the Second Vatican Council. Among the significant legacies of the Council, this recognition of the place of dialogue must surely be one of the most important.

Pope Paul VI was first to formalise this teaching in his first encyclical of 1964 – right in the middle of the Council. In that encyclical – *Ecclesiam Suam* – the Pope referred to four “circles of dialogue” that we, as the community of the baptized, must pursue – with all people of good will, with all believers in the one God, with all other Christian believers and with other Catholics.

This dialogue finds its meaning, purpose and manner within the context of “the dialogue of salvation” which is God’s liberating conversation with the world. Thus we read, for example:

“This type of relationship (ie of dialogue) indicates a proposal of courteous esteem, of understanding and of goodness on the part of the one who inaugurates the dialogue; it excludes the *a priori* condemnation, the offensive and time-worn polemic and emptiness of useless conversation” (79).

On May 21-24, a Consistory of 155 Cardinals met in Rome, with the Pope, to reflect on the state of the Church and raise the questions and issues that seem most important. The Consistory was conducted behind closed doors, with a fairly predictable one-page statement by way of a “message” published afterwards.

However, several of the Cardinals – among them Cardinal Daneels of Brussels – have spoken publicly of the Consistory. Two key topics discussed were collegiality and the need for more effective synods where open debate takes place. It seems the Consistory heard again the call for genuine dialogue. Let us hope our shepherds never tire of giving and heeding this call. □

THE HUMAN FACE

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,
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Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue,
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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)

The Patrons are:

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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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indicated, is the work of the Editor.

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My name is Carole Wilson (nee Neill). I
was born in 1937 and grew up in
Randwick.

I have a brother, John (a Dominican priest)
and a sister, Janet, who is married and lives
in Perth, WA.

My parents had a "mixed marriage" –
married in the sacristy. My dad became a
Catholic when my brother was born.
However, from an early age, I learnt about
ecumenism. My father's sister, Amy, lived
with us. She was a devout Anglican, a
more Christian person you couldn't meet.
My dad didn't have good health, my mum
went to work and Amy looked after us. She
was a positive influence in our lives and I
thank God for her.

As I said, I grew up in Randwick and
attended an MSC Parish. I was so
fortunate. I grew up without any "hang-
ups" or guilty complexes. I learnt only of a
God of love. I was educated by the
Brigidine nuns, and although I wasn't a
scholar, I have happy memories of those
days also.

From the time I was a little girl, I wanted
to be a nurse and to train at St Vincent's
Hospital. And that is exactly what I did —
from 1954-1958. It was a great time in my
life, and I cherish the friendships that were
made.

From St Vincent's I went to Hobart to do
my obstetrics. Then, in 1961 I entered the
novitiate at Lewisham (the Little Company
of Mary nuns). I enjoyed my novitiate days
very much. It was most certainly a time of
spiritual growth. As Father David Ranson
said during a recent Reflection morning:
"My spiritual limbs began to stretch". I was
there for 3½ years.

I returned to St Vincent's, saved enough
money and went on a working holiday
overseas. I was away 18 months in all. On
my return, I worked at OLSH Hospital in
Randwick, which is now the Spirituality
Centre. This is where I met my future
husband, Hugh Wilson. We were married in
1968.

Gary, our son, was born in 1969 and then
the wheels fell off. My dad died when Gary
was five months old. I had so wanted Gary
to know my dad and vice-versa.

The following year I had a miscarriage. In
the next two to three years, we had two
daughters, both born prematurely. They
both lived 24 – 36 hours.

In 1973 we adopted our son David. I just
couldn't bury another baby. David was
delightful. He brought us so much joy.
However, when Gary (our first son) was
five and David had just turned one, my
husband died. He had a cerebral aneurysm
that ruptured, and he was dead in a matter
of hours.

My mum died nine months later, and I was
numb. Absolutely numb and lonely. I
ached with loneliness.

I spent the next – I don't remember how
many years — in Gethsemane. Some call it
the wilderness, others the desert, but to me
it was Gethsemane. I was there with God,
and this is where our friendship grew. "“
your pain you will discover me.” And I c
discover my God.

It has been difficult for me to tell this
story. But I had to tell the bad part, so I
could tell the good.

The thing that amazes me most of all, even
to this day, is that the only emotions I
remember during that period of my life
were loneliness and sadness. I never
remember being bitter or angry or blaming
God. I think that is incredible – nothing to
do with me and everything to do with the
power of God's love.

Naturally, I got on with my life – I had to.
I had two little boys. I worked part-time till
the boys had left school. Then I worked
full-time for ten years. I'm semi-retired
now – I work as a registered nurse at a
Methadone Unit.

At present, I'm in an oasis. Back in 1997 I
started going to Spirituality in the Pub, and
I am hooked. I'm one of the co-ordinators
at Waitara and enjoy it immensely. I think
it is marvellous that people of a like mind
come together and talk of God and of
humanity.

I'm a member of Catalyst for Renewal and
am grateful for that spiritual input. I'm al
on my Parish Pastoral Council. We have a
new parish priest and Carlingford parish is
going ahead spiritually and socially. It's
great to be a part of it.

Nelson Mandela said in his inaugural
speech: "We are born to make manifest the
glory of God within us. It is not in just
some of us, it is in everyone. And as we let
our own light shine, we unconsciously give
people permission to do the same." I strive
to do this.



Carole Wilson

Your Say - Diversity and Dr Pell

Michael Furtado

If media coverage is to be believed, Archbishop Pell's somewhat muscular statements, evidently breaking tradition with the pastoral intimacy of the Australian episcopate, will ensure that nothing he says or does will be without impact on the Australian Church. In a perverse sort of way, we can look forward to at least one diocese in which politics, albeit within the Church, will become the media flavour of the month, despite the Archbishop's proclamation of a Church that is above politics....

The matter of who might approach the Table (of the Eucharist) is deeply troubling and not as clear-cut as the Archbishop and his supporters would avow. Until now the general advice and practice of the Church has been that all who do so are to be assumed to be acting in good grace. Beyond that, the Eucharist is widely taught as the Bread of Sinners, pastoral theology having forsaken the angelism that made the reception of Communion a rarity until relatively recently.

The moderating voice of Catholic opinion, while proclaiming heterosexual marriage as the norm, must resist positions taken by Jansenists and puritans that implicitly persecute homosexual people

This opinion does not contest the Archbishop's right to take a stand. The question is what kind of stand does he take. Since Rome has spoken, how does the Archbishop intend to promulgate Vatican instructions, a matter that is clearly his responsibility as the chief pastor of his people?

Is there value in simply repeating the attitude of the Pope in this matter or is it Dr Pell's job to enter into dialogue with his people to ensure that such a message does not fall on deaf or unavailing ears, or worse, contribute to the oppression of homosexual people? ...

He has been widely reported as offering homosexual clergy access to psychotherapy as a condition for serving the Church. As one called to safeguard a Catholic tradition that values reason as much as revelation, Dr Pell cannot be oblivious to the fact that a well-authenticated case of a change in sexual

orientation has never been recorded. Nor even is homosexuality officially regarded as an illness other than in the context of assisting the human person to come to terms with such a sexual orientation. From such an engagement with the whole of life does health and growth, and even faith come alive.

Such an acknowledgment would bolster the Archbishop of Sydney's credentials to challenge the view that sexuality is a private matter and beyond moral examination. Homosexual people are, like heterosexuals, called to wholeness and holiness, and cannot expect to answer such a call without reference to their sexuality, no more than the Archbishop can.

The absence in Dr Pell's media attention of any reference as to how this might be done suggests that gay and lesbian people must commit themselves to a life of celibacy, a gift, the Archbishop must know, that is not given to many, and which has driven several who embraced it to abusive and dysfunctional practices that have caused great harm to society and considerable grief to the Church.

It cannot be that the Archbishop would wish to set the Australian Church back on a former course that assured it of failing to address issues of sexuality in its clergy as well as its people in an adult and faith-filled way. If such a nightmare is not to be repeated, pastoral practices must therefore reflect the belief that the homosexual person needs to work out of an ethic that makes life as celebratory and fulfilling as it is for others.

A vital opportunity faces the Church at a time when the competing claims of the sybarite and the wowser assume centre-stage on this important matter.

The moderating voice of Catholic opinion, while proclaiming heterosexual marriage as the norm, must resist positions taken by Jansenists and puritans that implicitly persecute homosexual people, and in relation to which the fullness of scientific opinion has yet to be heard.

To conclude: since Vatican II the Church has entered into major dialogue between religion and science that cannot be abruptly brought to a halt by a refusal to recognise the complexity of Creation and the problems of moral refinement that it poses for the people of God. The pursuit of purity, in an argument as much as in sexual expression, must also be mediated by love and honesty.

Indeed, without either there cannot be any significantly Christian and human

contribution to contemporary moral discourses, which focus on sexual identity rather than behaviour as a matter of social and cultural construction....

Michael Furtado

I have recently read your *Reflections Apropos Recent Appointments of Bishops in the Catholic Church in Australia* dated 30 March 2001.

Surely what you have said needed saying. You have managed to write with clarity and with moderation. There is not a trace of rancour or of polemics in your message. I was deeply impressed by your ability to discuss rationally a matter that arouses such resentment among so many.

I grew up as an enthusiastic Catholic. I continued "in the faith" for many years, but I have long since become quite disillusioned. However, my wife and I both belong to families that include some very loyal Catholics. During a recent family visit we were impressed by copies of your journal that we saw and were glad to accept the offer of a gift subscription. Hence the recent arrival in our mail of a copy of *The Mix*.

You have managed to write with clarity and with moderation. There is not a trace of rancour or of polemics in your message. I was deeply impressed by your ability to discuss rationally a matter that arouses such resentment among so many.

I admire your contribution to the "conversation" for which you call. I know too that it calls for considerable courage for a priest to go public on such an important issue. I trust that you will be given a special grace to withstand the pressure to which you will be subjected by those whose ruthlessness has given them such power.

Thank you for such an enlightened article. And thank you for setting such an example to the local church.

Denis B Matthews, Dunoon, NSW.

Essay – Hope in the church of the 3rd millennium

by François Kunc

At the Catalyst Dinner on April 6, 2001, celebrating fifty issues of *The Mix*, François Kunc and Geraldine Doogue were the speakers. The following is part of François' presentation – about one quarter, minus the footnotes. The full text may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed long envelope, with four 45 cent postage stamps, to the Editor.

Tonight's topic is simultaneously a statement, a question and an exhortation. It invites us to identify what it is that we hope for. No doubt deliberately, it could encompass a wide variety of responses ...

For such a little word, "hope" is full of nuance. Consider some of the titles of books to do with the Church: George Weigel's monumental biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*; the Holy Father's own book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*; Cardinal Văn Thuân's recently published Lenten reflections, *Testimony of Hope*, and Father Bernard Häring's, *My Hope for the Church*. I suspect that each author uses the word in a slightly different way and what gives one person cause for hope will be another's source of despair.

Hope is also, of course, one of the three theological virtues, but we are not here to talk about it in that guise. One definition I like is St Thomas Aquinas' that hope "is the desire and search for a future good, difficult but not impossible of attainment". Karl Rahner SJ said that hope is "the name of an attitude in which we dare to commit ourselves to that which is radically beyond all human control". These definitions identify the sense I wish to adopt tonight: the expectation of a future good, difficult but not impossible to achieve, but requiring something beyond human effort alone.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church is the entire people of God. "By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all people. She is also an instrument for the achievement of such union and unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, n.1). I will concentrate on that instrumental or institutional aspect.

I will also confine myself to the Church of the First World, which includes Australia. As the newly created Honduran Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga recently observed, "many of the problems of the First World are not ours", although I will later suggest that the Church of the Third World may have some things to teach the Church of the First.

While it was debatable last year, in 2001 no one doubts that we are in the third millennium of the Christian era. However, for the Church the significance of that fact is that it is the first millennium of the post-Constantinian era (cf George Weigel). Between Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 and for a few decades after the loss of the Papal States (including Rome) by 1870, there was a "deep entanglement" between the Church and the secular western state. The triumph of liberal democracy in the twentieth century has severed the privileged connection between them. As a result, the Church, particularly in the First World, has become one institutional voice among many, whose message is even seen as antithetical to the interests of a significant proportion of the population. The Church is still adjusting to that millennial seachange.

"True Christianity will always be critical, questioning and continually developing in its understanding of God and of human life."

So are there good reasons to expect that the Church as an institution in the third millennium will be able to fulfil its mission of bringing all people to and supporting them in the way of true Christianity? And what is true Christianity? While the answer to that is manifold, for me an important part of it is captured by Gerard W Hughes SJ in his book *God of Surprises*, where he writes that "a mark of true Christianity will be its intellectual vigour and its search for meaning in every aspect of life. True Christianity will always be critical, questioning and continually developing in its understanding of God and of human life. The subject matter for religion is every human experience."

Without taking much time over them individually, let me list some of the things that are usually pointed to as leading to despair, rather than hope, in the Church today. These include:

- A practising church population declining in numbers and increasing in age.
- The lack of vocations.
- A general perception that the Church and its teachings are irrelevant.
- The Church is hopelessly divided between so-called liberals and conservatives or, in theological terms, between optimistic Thomists and pessimistic Augustinians.
- The Pope and the Roman Curia are sclerotic and reactionary, examples of which include:

- The harsh treatment, including excommunication, meted out to theologians such as Leonardo Boff, Hans Küng, Charles Curran, Tissa Balasuriya and Jacques Dupuis SJ (the last of whom was defended before the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith by the Australian theologian Gerald O'Collins SJ).
- The apparent extension of the doctrine of papal infallibility formalised by the Apostolic Letter *Ad Tuendam Fidem*.
- The Apostolic Letter and complementary norms "On the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences"
- The Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* foreclosing the possibility, and even discussion of, women priests and the accompanying declaration that the letter was a definitive teaching of the ordinary Papal Magisterium and therefore infallible. ...

And closer to home:

- The *Statement of Conclusions*.
- The *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* said to be in part directed to irregularities in Australia.
- The prohibition of the Sisters of Charity operating a medically supervised drug injecting room.

While tonight I can't deal with each of those obstacles individually, I would like to make two general comments. First, before anyone – but especially a Catholic Christian – leaps to the barricades in support of or protest against any of these developments, they must make some effort to understand them beyond the press reports. Any official pronouncement of the Vatican is now usually available on several websites within minutes of its release. With some exceptions, most of the documents do not require theological training to appreciate.

Second, we must keep a sense of perspective. My model is Archbishop Alfonso Carinci. As a boy of seven he served as an acolyte at the First Vatican Council. He attended the Second Vatican Council as secretary emeritus of the Congregation of Rites, celebrating his 100th birthday during the first session. ... I often think about Archbishop Carinci and the enormous changes which he lived through in the Church, the world and the relations between the two.

The plain historical fact is that on many issues beyond the central tenets of the faith, the Church has modified its stance over the years. This is true not just of issues, but of people. One example is the French theologian Georges-Yves Congar OP. As a result of his writings he was effectively silenced in the 1950s. During that time he wrote that Pius XII had "developed to the point of

obsession a paternalistic regime consisting in this: that he and he alone should say to the world what it has to think and what it must do" and "the whole quality of being Catholic consists in obeying him". However, Blessed Pope John XXIII appointed Congar a consultant to the Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council and his work profoundly influenced a number of conciliar documents. In 1969 Paul VI added his name to the newly founded Pontifical International Theological Commission and in 1994 he was created a cardinal by John Paul II. ...

My first and greatest reason for hope is the current Pope. This Pope is very much a Pope of the Council, who has acknowledged that "with the Council the hour of the laity truly struck". It is difficult to argue to the contrary in the face of his own words in his latest Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI):

"What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council! ... With the passing of the years, the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition. Now that the Jubilee has ended, I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning."

What can be done to turn hope into reality? Everyone will have their own list and this is mine. First, two of the obstacles I referred to earlier must be addressed. The means of assessing theologians' work must be reformed. Those whose work is under investigation are still not given the fundamental rights, particularly natural justice, which the Church asserts belong to all people. ... It is interesting to recall that in 1968 the then Professor Ratzinger joined more than a thousand Catholic theologians in signing a statement which asserted that "the freedom of theologians, and theology in the service of the church, regained by Vatican II, must not be jeopardised again ... Any form of inquisition, however subtle, not only harms the development of a sound theology; it also causes irreparable damage to the credibility of the church as a community in the modern world". ...

The second obstacle is the apparent extension of the scope of infallible pronouncements beyond that contemplated by the First Vatican Council. It is asserted that a doctrine may be confirmed as infallible by

the Pope doing no more than declaring it to belong to a particular category of the ordinary and universal magisterium. This seems to me to be one of the great "sleepers" in the Church today which is likely to

produce much confusion and dissension in the future. ...

Turning from the obstacles, the next way of making hope a reality is to become familiar with and to encourage others to discover the rich spiritual heritage of the Church. There is philosophy, mysticism and spirituality aplenty to be found if only we bothered to look. ...

We cannot but help be disappointed and dismayed from time to time about what happens among the people of God, including the institution that is both a sign and instrument of our salvation. That is our Holy Saturday after the events of Good Friday. But we are also a resurrection people and therein lies our hope.

I then come to the troubling reality of the so-called conservative and liberal wings of the Church. ... The problem and the solution were neatly summarised last month by Cardinal Avery Dulles SJ at the time of his elevation to the Sacred College. While he was speaking about American theology in particular, I believe his remarks are of general application:

"Here you might say there is a question of the sacred and the secular. How many of the traditions are really sacred and inviolable? How many of them depend upon revelation itself, divine law, divine revelation? And how many of the traditions are things that God has placed in our own hands to adapt as we see fit? The problem, which cuts across the divisions between dogmatic theology, moral theology and liturgical theology, is the main source of polarisation in the American church today. First of all we have to listen to one another and sit down and talk together in a civil spirit. I regret the way in which some go off in a sectarian way within the church and make their own little home in one wing or the other and become either liberal Catholic reformist types or truly adamant conservatives. Then they just tend to shoot across at one another from their trenches. This is not a healthy thing within the church. We have to cultivate the spirit of unity among Catholics and try to understand one another's point of view and learn from one another. This would be my hope."

"To cultivate the spirit of unity among Catholics and try to understand one another's point of view and learn from one another" sounds very much like the ethos of Catalyst for Renewal. ...

Finally, in welcoming our new Archbishop, I urge him to take up the Pope's express invitation in NMI to use the structures for participation of the entire

community envisaged by Canon Law.

I suggest a programme of examination and planning in each parish of the Archdiocese over a period of, say, 12 months, culminating in a synod pursuant to Canon 463 where each parish was represented by a member of the laity as well as its parish priest. I can think of no better way in which we would get to know our Archbishop and he would get to know us, and a vision of our future together under his leadership could be developed. ...

In making this suggestion I should make it clear that I do not see a synod as a form of parliamentary democracy, a notion which I consider inapt for the Church. We are not citizens of a state but fellow pilgrims. As such there is no doubt that we can and should participate in how that pilgrimage is made in our local Church.

As members of the Church we cannot but help be disappointed and dismayed from time to time about what happens among the people of God, including the institution that is both a sign and instrument of our salvation. That is our Holy Saturday after the events of Good Friday. But we are also a resurrection people and therein lies our hope.

François is married and lives with his wife Felicity and children in Sydney, where he is a practising barrister.

REMEMBERING VATICAN II

"Christ the Prophet"

"The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to his name (cf. Heb 13:15). The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. Jn 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's supernatural discernment in matters of faith when 'from the bishops down to the last of the lay faithful' they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the People of God accepts that which is not just a human word but truly the Word of God (cf. 1 Thes 2:13). Through it, the People of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life." ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" n 12)

Words for a Pilgrim People

Say this when you pray: 'Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test. (Luke 11:2-4)

□□□

"But do we live, build, and bear this bodiliness of the church as something that has to pass through death? Do we not glorify or blame (both amount to the same thing) this concreteness of the church as if it were eternally valid and would not have to pass away so that the eternal kingdom of God can come? Aren't we too interested in restoration, too anxiously worried about the letter of the law and of dogma? Too anxious in the face of the novel and the unusual? In the face of the dangerous and the not yet secure? As if we had to defend a church that itself was already the definitive kingdom and not just the tent (that needs ever again to be dismantled and put up again provisionally) of the pilgrim people of God, which with inexorable courage, is even now in the period of time heading toward that point where there will be no church? Aren't we secretly and without admitting it to ourselves on a march into the ghetto, which means nothing except that we build up a church that is dogmatically, juridically, and liturgically as perfect as possible, without seriously asking ourselves if contemporary people also can and want to live in this church? Aren't we people, who with backs bent over, busily construct the little fields of our plans without ever standing up straight and looking out for the coming of Jesus, who approaches out of the unfathomability of God as one who has died, and who through his death and our dying along with him, breaks up dogma, law, and rite (without abolishing their historical significance) and so liberates us into the freedom of God?" (Karl Rahner, *The Great Church Year: The Best of Karl Rahner's Homilies, Sermons and Meditations*, Crossroad, 1995, 209-210)

□□□

In the Gospel of Luke, a favourite theme is that of Jesus at prayer (eg 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18 and 29-29; 11:1; 22:41). The first verse of chapter 11 is particularly instructive: "It happened that he was in a certain place praying." The sheer ordinariness and taken-for-granted quality of this text is striking. It comes as no surprise then, that one of his disciples – "when he had finished" – said "teach us to pray". What does seem surprising, however, is the motivation behind the request: "Teach us to pray as John taught his disciples"

Luke thus implicitly situates praying within the work of God – praying is not only part of the work for the coming of the Kingdom, it is a manifestation of the Kingdom in our midst already partly realised. John is the messianic voice that "cries in the wilderness (to) prepare a way for the Lord" (see Luke 3:1-18). When Jesus speaks of prayer, here he instructs the disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. The disciples are also instructed to pray in expectation of *present* signs of the Kingdom: Give us what we need for this day, forgive us rather than call in our "debts" because that is how we are living with our brothers and sisters, and you will not allow more to be asked of us than we can give. Pray this way, says Jesus.

The disciple did not ask to be taught a prayer; he said: "Teach us to pray".

The disciple did not ask to be taught a prayer; he said: "Teach us to pray". We ought to assume that Jesus' response is in accord with the request. There is a spirit and attitude manifest in the words of Jesus; it is more about dispositions than words, more about fostering and celebrating a fact of life than reciting a formula. We might say his response has more of a mystical intent than a moral intent. "Through me, with me and in me you are already children of the Father; you are my brothers and sisters – speak that word and never forget it! You already share in the freedom and life of my death and resurrection – hear that truth and live in remembrance of it! This will help you to avoid being presumptuous and judgemental, it will keep you mindful of your own need for the Father's mercy, which is infinite and always on offer!" □

The Tradition – The experience of prayer

Much of the immensely rich literature about Christian prayer comes from the orient. Perhaps one of the greatest texts on Christian prayer is *The Life of Moses* by St Gregory of Nyssa (330-395). Texts like *The Life of Moses* speak of the *experience* of prayer. They assume a simplicity and straightforwardness in the practice of prayer that might take the modern Westerner by surprise. The first thing we look for is technique, rule and structure; we want to quantify and measure and count. This is utterly foreign to the best tradition of Christian prayer. It is also probably the major obstacle we have to face, as children of a culture marked by functionalism and rationalism.

St John Chrysotom (347-407) said that "(prayer) is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but a gift of God's grace. ... Once (you) have tasted this food, (you) are set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up (your) soul." This is not to be read as a "definition" of prayer – how very Western it is to want not just a definition but *the* definition.

"(Prayer) is a desire for God, ... not of human origin, but a gift of God's grace."

The great guides of the inner life – guides like Gregory and John – were aware that prayer is gift. Furthermore, it is a gift that is already given. Contemporary author, Andre Louf, represents the tradition well when he writes: "This *state of prayer* within us is something we always carry about, like a hidden treasure of which we are not consciously aware ... We are deaf to our praying heart, love's savour escapes us, we fail to see the light in which we live. For our heart, our true heart, is asleep; and it has to be woken up, gradually, through the course of a whole lifetime. So it is not really hard to pray. It was given us long since. But very seldom are we conscious of our own prayer. Every technique of prayer is attuned to that purpose. We have to become conscious of what we have already received, must learn to feel, to distinguish it in the full and peaceful assurance of the Spirit, this prayer rooted and operative somewhere deep inside us. It must be brought the surface of our consciousness. Little by little, it will saturate and captivate our faculties, mind and soul and body. Our psyche and even our body must learn to answer to the rhythm of this prayer, be stirred to prayer from within ... as dry wood is set ablaze." □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar
(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

NSW Promoter – Terry O’Loughlin on (02) 9816 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 (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).
- ° **Boorowa** – The Boorowa Hotel (Info: Michael 6385 3351 or Marty 6385 3196).
- ° **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie (Info: Julian 4861 4649).
- ° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club July 11 “Does God have a Sense of Humour?” Grahame English & Fr Peter Fitzgerald (Info: John 4647 3528).
- ° **Canberra** – The Southern Cross Club (Info: Rita 6288 4715).
- ° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St July 25 “Blessed are the merciful .. not those who forget, but those who forgive” Speakers Julie Kelly & Fr Peter Maher (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).
- ° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel July 9 “Cries of the Human Heart: The Search for If Knowledge” Sue Jackson & a Buddhist Monk (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 July 3 “Bridges” Sr Pauline Rae & Rev Ken Day; August 7 “Just Hug Me” Pat Killelea & Ron Barr (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).
- ° **Lismore** – Crossroads. The Lismore Workers Club August 15 “Men at the Crossroads” Speakers tba (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).
- ° **Lower North Shore** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney July 9 “Reconciliation: The Bridge to Where?”; Amanda Gordon & tba; August 13 “Ecumenism – On the Same Journey” Rev Grahame Ellis & Sr Mary Cresp (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).
- ° **Newcastle** – The Mary Ellen Hotel, Glebe Rd, Merewether (Info: Lawrence 4967 6440).
- ° **Paddington** – Crossroads The Bellevue Hotel, July 4 “Is there time for God?” Fr Michael Whelan sm & Gabrielle Carey; August 1 “Crossroads for education in our schools” Trish Hindmarsh & Chris Faisandier (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

- ° **Penrith** – Golf Club August 22 (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).
- ° **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd September 4 “Is addiction replacing spirituality?” Fr Chris Riley & tba (Info: Tim or Margaret 9634 2927 (H)).
- ° **Waitara** – Things You Learn Along the Way The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy July 18 Julie Kelly & Fr Peter Maher (Info: Kathryn 9402 7842).
- ° **Wollongong** – Mt Kembla Hotel, Mt Kembla.

Other States:

- ° **Ballarat (VIC)** – Spirituality and the Past Month 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 September 4 “Has religion failed in stewardship of the earth?” Wendy Chew (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: Denis 03 5275 4120).
- ° **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm August 22 “Our search for meaning in Community” Mary Crooks & Jacques Boulet (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 (WA)** – The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis and Lake Sts, Northbridge, 4th Wednesday of each month February-October 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Michael 9448 2404).
- ° **Macclesfield (SA)** – Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street, First Tuesday each month (Info: Michael 8388 9265).

Overseas:

- ° **Glasgow** – Chambers Bar beside the City Chambers June 19 7.30 (Info: Stephen 778 9323).
- ° **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

- ° **Armidale, Wicklow County Fair Hotel: “Conversation Can Transform”** – July 6, with Geraldine Doogue & tba. (Info: Jennifer 6772 6516)
- ° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, **Winter Seminar with Terry O’Connell**, Monday July 9 – Wednesday July 11. (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).
- ° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, September 29 to October 5 “For me to live is Christ” (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** Residential programs designed specifically to meet your needs; The Petrea King collection of Tapes & Books (Info 4883 6599).
- ° **Commission for Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations** – Intensive Study course July 16-21 - \$370; Faith and Order Symposium July 21 - \$12 (Info: 9299 2215).
- ° **An Invitation to an Outback Experience “Cathedral” Station**, Winton to explore the evolution of the Australian psyche with Morrie Dando, Elaine McEwan OA, Richard Magoffin & Nev Hunt September 15-16 (Info: John 07 4741 8716).

FORUM FOR THE FUTURE Sunday August 12 2001 2-4pm

“The Church, Bioethics and Society Today”

With
Fr Anthony Fisher op, Dr Malcolm Fisher & Mrs Bernadette Tobin

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 resources, help new people set up their SIPs, learn about making your venue more successful. November 24/25 2001. Watch this space for more information.

Recommended Reading

Michael Fallon, *A Priest After My Own Heart: Exploring Priestly Spirituality*, St Pauls, 2001, bibliography, 172 pages, pb, \$24.95.

Michael Fallon is probably best known for his outstanding work in presenting the Gospels in a lively and accessible way. He brings the same knowledge and style to the extremely difficult question of "priestly spirituality". This book is not polemical or controversial – in fact it explicitly avoids discussing those issues (eg the wisdom of the rule of celibacy for the priest in the Catholic Church). This gives the book a slightly abstract feel at times; while clearly and firmly grounded in Sacred Scripture and the tradition, it is not so obviously connected to the world in which the contemporary priest moves. Fallon works under headings like: "Consecrated in Love"; "Priesthood in a Church with a Mission"; "Prayer in a Priest's Life"; "Suffering and Priestly Ministry and Life"; "Priestly Celibacy". As the sub-title suggests, the intention is to explore the spirituality implied in living the priesthood today. Under these headings we are given an array of valuable insights, supported by references to classical and Church texts, with practical suggestions. The need for serious reflection on the life of the priest in the Church and world today hardly needs to be emphasised. Fallon's serious and solid reflections, firmly grounded in the Gospels, should help priests work honestly and courageously with their vocation as it is today.

Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, Crossroad, 1999, index, bibliography, footnotes, 258 pages, pb.

Sandra Schneiders is one of the leading New Testament scholars within the Catholic Church today. She is also one of a small group of scholars who is able to speak of the scriptural texts in a way that makes them readily available as sources for spirituality. She describes her approach as "an attempt to engage the spirituality of the biblical text through rigorously critical study undertaken in the context of living faith". The fact that she feels it necessary to justify this approach gives some indication of its originality – sadly, too many theological and exegetical writings bear little or no trace of genuine spirituality. In Part 1 of the book, Schneiders gives a non-technical summary of the best contemporary scholarship on John's Gospel. This immensely rich book, grounded in solid scholarship, is thus accessible to the reader who is not another academic or at least a serious student. Part 2 is more academic, concentrating on interpretive studies of seven symbolic narratives within the Gospel. Part 3 is a feminist reexamination of the authorship. This could hardly be called "devotional" reading; it is rather very challenging, enlightening and inspiring solid food for anyone serious about developing a thoroughly Gospel-based spirituality. Be prepared for a demanding and rewarding read. A book for individual or group study.

Robert Coles, *The Secular Mind*, Princeton University Press, 1999, 189 pages, hb – available through amazon.com at \$18.36 (US).

Robert Coles is a research psychiatrist for the Harvard University Health Services, Professor of Psychiatry and Medical Humanities at Harvard Medical School, and James Agee Professor of Social Ethics at Harvard University. He is the author of more than sixty works on psychology, literary criticism and teaching. He also describes himself as "an unashamed heathen" – though the reader will quickly see that this "heathen" is a strikingly honest and sympathetic one. Coles' voice is a profoundly moral voice, all the more convincing because he has no religious allegiances to promote or protect. In *The Secular Mind* he explores "the secular mind" by examining the Bible, the writings of thinkers such as Darwin, Freud and Einstein, at the end of the 19th century, and the thoughts expressed in conversations with 20th century folk like Dr William Carlos Williams and Dorothy Day. Coles' style is lively and engaging, poetic and at times haunting. He writes as a genuine searcher; the reader is inexorably drawn into that search. And it is purifying and enlivening, even if it leaves one a litt' more uncertain. Perhaps this is one of Coles' greatest gifts: He faces the necessary uncertainties of life and refuses to step back. In this the "unashamed heathen" becomes a very useful guide for the believer and the non-believer alike.

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