



THE MIX



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Our Say – Unfinished business

The eminent Dominican theologian, Yves Congar (d. June 1995), will go down in history as one of the pioneering and prophetic thinkers who helped to shape the Second Vatican Council. One of Congar's concerns was that the Catholic Church had, with increasing emphasis since the twelfth century, paid too little attention to the biblical and historical foundations of Christianity for its teachings, and paid too much attention to Aristotelian logic and the scholastic method for those teachings.

God is revealed in every age, argued Congar, in the midst of the ongoing conversation we have with the revelations of the Bible and the events of history. Pope Paul later referred to this conversation as "colloquium salutis", "the dialogue of salvation".

The Council led us in search of roots of Christianity in the Bible and history. In this way it sought to re-discover the unique power of Jesus and the Good News of God's liberating love at work in the world at this time. The Council has prompted us, therefore, to ask – with a measure of ur-

gency – questions we might otherwise have taken for granted: Who is Jesus of Nazareth and how does he affect my life now? In what way is Jesus' life, death and resurrection redemptive? What does the human family – through its cultures and religious traditions, its discoveries and inventions, triumphs and failures, joys and agonies – have to teach us of the loving plan of God and the liberating message of Jesus? What does this ask of us as Church?

The Second Vatican Council is an event of history. It behoves us to pay close attention to it *as an historical event*. As Pope John Paul II said to the Extraordinary Synod in Rome in 1985: "(The Council remains) the fundamental event in the life of the contemporary church. ... We must ceaselessly refresh ourselves at that source."

The Council was, in fact, one of those great events in which human beings begin to chart a course different from that previously set. In such events, people begin to think differently about themselves and their insti-

tutions, they re-assess their understandings and re-align their relationships, they change their expectations and commitments, their sense of limits and possibilities. The Council said: "Listen! The Spirit of God is abroad! God's liberating love is at work in our midst! Pay attention!"

The Council was an inspired catalyst for change – a much-needed change. We have hardly begun; we must press on.

Catalyst for Renewal invites you to join in celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Council. Catalyst will be prompting conversation through its normal forums - *The Mix*, Spirituality in the Pub, Forums for the Future and Catalyst Dinners. Catalyst is also organising a special conference in July 2002 entitled "**Vatican II in Australia: Unfinished Business – A National Forum**". Fr Joseph Komonchak from Catholic University in Washington DC will be the keynote speaker and will provide an outside and global voice to help us situate our peculiarly Australian conversation. □

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 Angela McCarthy and I was brought into this world by Helen and Peter Murray in Cessnock, in the Hunter Valley region of NSW in the year of the '53 vintage. I am one of the seven survivors of nine siblings and was brought up mainly in the Newcastle area.

While both are people of deep faith, my parents are also vastly different in outlook and so nurtured a freedom of thought that has produced great variety in our family. Political/religious discussion was pretty much part of the family dinnertime conversation from my father's end of the table. My mother introduced me to social justice and environmentalism long before either of them were normal agenda for many Catholics.

They have both had a powerful and deep-rooted effect on my faith and love of Church.

My childhood experiences of wonderful liturgies in our parish and the life-changing event of Vatican II stimulated an interest in liturgy and particularly liturgical music.

Towards the end of my high schooling, I went to Canada as an exchange student and then, after year 12, came across to Western Australia to meet up with one of my friends from the Canadian experience and to work there for 12 months. It was a life-changing move.

I returned to Sydney to do a Bachelor of Arts degree that had a rich mix of anthropology, Biblical Studies, literature and art. During this time a WA visitor introduced me to John McCarthy, another West Australian who had just finished some years as a missionary in PNG and had just taken his dispensation from the priesthood.

We got engaged the first time we went out and, romantic as that might sound, it was really a deep spiritual decision. We both recognised in the other a connection in faith that we knew we both needed for the rest of our lives. He is the love of my life and we have now been married nearly 27 years.

John's profound interest in, and knowledge of liturgy supported me in that area where my artistic and music skills were well used, and it developed further my love of the prayer of the Church. I have now worked, lectured, taught and published in the area.

As a young married girl, I thought that we would decide to have children and that would be that; then I would think about other directions in life. It wasn't to be. We had many difficulties, and our son Benedict is the blessed survivor of eleven pregnancies and many death-defying experiences.

Our initial losses of children drew me into a teaching career in Catholic schools and a

consuming interest in religious education and liturgy in schools.

In 1978 we moved to Western Australia with our six-month-old Benedict and have lived here ever since. In Benedict's early years I remained home with him, but began to take part-time work teaching music and working as a musician in restaurants & theatre.

Our near neighbour and her three little girls became close friends and, when she came close to her death from cancer, she asked us to care for her girls and give them all the things that she wanted for them: a dad and mum, a Catholic education, a brother and a dog! We took them in 13 weeks before she died and have now cared for them for 17 years.

This Spirit-driven decision has led us on a journey that has often been extremely painful but, through that pain and the power of prayer, we have become what we are as a family. Our two eldest daughters have diagnosed mental illnesses and the second girl has had a difficult struggle with drug addiction — so now her two-year-old lives with us — and she has regular contact on her long journey back to health and responsibility.

Our eldest daughter and her husband have two boys but, sadly, they lost their third boy last Christmas to SIDS. Our youngest daughter has also had a struggle with drugs, but as she is approaching 20, she is working hard to establish her independent life. Benedict is 24, a town planner and a wonderful human being.

My teaching career in Catholic education reasserted itself in 1988, along with a desire to study theology and education, which I began at Notre Dame University in Fremantle in 1992. I am now in the throes of a PhD.

That, plus a two-year-old, plus being involved in liturgy and music in the parish, as well as the Academy of Liturgy, keeps me out of mischief and dependent on God.



Angela McCarthy

The following letter from Archbishop Hickey of Perth is dated 16 July 2001 and was written by the Archbishop in response to a copy of the Catalyst for Renewal Annual Report. Archbishop Hickey gave his permission to publish this letter along with the response from Fr Michael Whelan SM, Executive Director of Catalyst for Renewal and Editor of *The Mix*.

Archbishop Hickey's letter:

Dear Father Whelan,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Fifth Annual Report of Catalyst for Renewal. I found it most interesting.

I hope it continues to promote discussions within the Church and with society about the Good News of Jesus Christ.

I am glad to see in the Report that Catalyst for Renewal does not have its own agenda or ideology, although a different impression was given by the public meeting held in Sydney in response to the "Statement of Conclusions". Reports filtering over here to the West indicated a dissatisfaction with Roman authorities.

I pray that we maintain our solidarity with one another.

With Best Wishes,

Yours Sincerely in Jesus Christ

Most Rev B J Hickey
Archbishop of Perth

Fr Whelan's response:

Your Grace,

Thank you for your thoughtful response to my letter accompanying the Catalyst for Renewal Annual Report. I appreciate your taking the time to do that.

It is our intention to continue to promote good conversation for the sake of renewal within the Church. One of the features of life today – both inside the Church and beyond – is the tendency of people to either withdraw into private worlds and enter the public sphere only when their interests are at stake, or else assume hard ideological positions and fight to have those positions "win the day". In neither case are they able to contribute well to the hard work of addressing the enormous questions and challenges that face us

ly. In Catalyst for Renewal, we believe good conversation can help to move us beyond the kind of intransigence that is implied in this.

You mentioned the Public Forum we organised in the Sydney Town Hall in

April 1999. It was a splendid evening. One of my own fears had been that it might degenerate into some kind of public slanging match. It was far from that. Despite the attempts of a small group of hecklers to disrupt the event, it proceeded with an almost tangible sense of faith, hope and joy. I will try to find a tape of the evening and the little booklet containing the texts of the presentations and have our Secretary send them to you.

Yes, I must be honest and say there was – and continues to be – some dissatisfaction with Roman authorities. I have voiced such a dissatisfaction myself. I do that because I love the Church and want to see it thrive. I eschew aggressive attacks and intemperate and ill-considered criticisms. I would like to think, however, that we are all - Catalyst for Renewal included – welcoming of constructive criticism and any invitation to engage in open and honest conversation about what is happening. The Church has nothing to fear and everything to gain from being utterly transparent.

Would you be willing to let me publish your letter and my response in our little journal *The Mix*? There are Catholics who would share your concern about Catalyst – I think it opens the possibility of a very fruitful conversation.

Thank you again, Your Grace.

Fraternally,

Michael Whelan SM, PhD
Executive Director

CHURCH AS ECOSYSTEM

Jim Brown

A basic truth about all ecosystems is that, if they survive for very long, they are open and learn from their environment. Another truth is that everyone and every living organization is part of an extended network of relationships because open ecosystems are essentially boundary-less. What happens across Hyde Park in St James Church or the Commonwealth Bank influences the people in St Mary's Cathedral in ways that they usually aren't aware of, and vice versa, but the influences are there nonetheless.

In the June issue of the *The Mix*, Margaret Beirne spoke of her own local church having a "passion for the constant renewal of the wider Christian community". In my language, such passion indicates a local community or church ecosystem is seeking ways to exchange life with its environment. This is a divinely inspired impulse. In *The Passionate God*, Rosemary Houghton uses an exchange metaphor to describe the rela-

tionships and flow of life within the Trinity and from the Trinity with all creation. The divine exchange, enlivening all ecosystems, stimulates the passion Margaret described.

In the same issue, Fr. Komonchak said that the Church is "not itself divine; it is a community of creatures". That community (ecosystem) exists at both the local and the global level, but its vitality springs largely from the local level. Since the Church is an open ecosystem, one can see Matthew's Great Commission in ecosystem terms. Local churches and small communities are commanded to exchange Christian vitality ("light and salt") with the world. In an open exchange, we also receive what we need as well. Receiving gifts from the world is often overlooked in a church that sees itself as "not of the world" or as a fortress against the world. The gifts from the world are as necessary for our life as Christian vitality is necessary for the life of the world. We need gifts from the world like sustenance, stimulation and rest, human stories that spring from culture, and opportunities for good works.

How does the Church ecosystem sustain an authentic organization and direction? Father Komonchak described the global function that does this: "It is a long-standing conciliar practice to work to achieve the greatest possible consensus which, when achieved in conditions of freedom and charity within a common faith, is regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit." Authentic organization and direction are also sustained locally. Within the overarching conciliar context that we must not ignore, we must also attend to the energy, creativity and knowledge that the Holy Spirit is creating in us and our local groups or churches. Things are on the "right track" in the Catholic Church when they fit both the global conciliar sense and the local sense of right.

We are seeing the reemergence of the local dimension in the church ecosystem in our time. We don't have a conciliar consensus of what church is or how it works, globally and locally. The answer is being invented locally and theologians are learning from this inspired activity. This is the way it should be. Knowledge in ecosystems emerges from individual and local experiences. Ecosystem language provides a new lens that can help all of us better understand the emergence of church – and our own local roles in exchange with the Trinity and one another in its creation.

Jim Brown lives in Sydney. He is a management consultant and has recently written a book (as yet unpublished) called Lessons for Innocent Fools which is about transforming corporations through the bottom-up actions of change agents [You can see a summary of the book on his web site <http://innocentfools.com>.]

Essay - Looking forward with confidence

by Francesco Canalini

On October 11, 2002, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. As we approach that date, *The Mix* will publish the reflections of a variety of different people concerning the Council and its influence in the history of the Catholic Church and beyond. The following reflection is by His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Francesco Canalini. This reflection was occasioned by the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, and presented to the Australian Bishops Conference on May 4, 2001.

With great timely initiative, at the beginning of the new year, the Holy Father John Paul II has given the universal Church the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, signed during the concluding celebration of the Great Jubilee 2000, on the feast of the Epiphany.

The freshness, the optimism, the vision that come forth from the Papal Letter have been welcomed with appreciation almost everywhere; a sign of that in Australia is the prominent attention given to it by way of the favourable comments that appeared in many diocesan newspapers.

The strong pastoral impulse intended by the Pope is inspired by the Second Vatican Council, "the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century". "With the passing of the years, the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance" (n.57).

In the mind of the Supreme Pontiff, in fact, the celebration of the Great Jubilee 2000 was linked with the examination of the Church, thirty-five years after the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to see "how far she had renewed herself, in order to be able to take up her evangelizing mission with fresh enthusiasm" (n.2).

Recalling the words of Jesus to St. Peter: "Duc in altum" (Lk. 5:6 - "Go forth into the deep") the Holy Father applies them to the actual moment of the life of the Church, inviting her "to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence" (n. 1).

Inspired by this basic thought, I would like to share a couple of reflections with you this morning, focusing in particular on references to the Second Vatican Council.

I am led to that also by a personal reminiscence of forty years ago. A group of us, deacons of the Roman Seminary, previous to our priestly ordination, was received by Pope John XXIII, who as Car-

dinal and Patriarch of Venice, used to come to our Seminary during his visits to Rome. The Blessed Pontiff told us: "You are the priests of the Council. You have been formed in the school of the past with sound foundation, you are open to the new times that are coming".

I want to recall the start of the Council, rereading the opening speech of the Pope on October 11, 1962.

John XXIII had, for sure, a new approach to world realities, inspired, firstly, by a sense of history ('In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, ...can see nothing but prevarication and ruin... They behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life'), and, secondly, by a deep sense of confidence in God ('In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by men's own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfilment of God's superior and inscrutable designs').

John XXIII had, for sure, a new approach to world realities, inspired, firstly, by a sense of history ... and, secondly, by a deep sense of confidence in God.

In the face of the "marvellous progress of the discoveries of human genius", the Church makes its voice heard and admonishes men so that "they may raise their eyes to God".

And the Church, while always opposing errors, considers that she "meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching ... raising the torch of religious truth".

This positive approach to modern world realities could be possible - in the mind of the Pontiff - only if the sacred deposit of the Christian doctrine is guarded and taught efficaciously ("In order, however, that this doctrine may influence the numerous fields of human activity, with reference to individuals, to families, and to social life, it is necessary first of all that the Church should never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers").

And speaking about the task of the Council, John XXIII is adamant: "to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral without any attenuation or distortion which throughout twenty centuries, notwithstanding difficulties and contrasts, has become the common patrimony of men. It is a patrimony not well received by all, but always a rich treasure available to men of good will".

To make even clearer his position, with the exclusion of any possible misunderstanding, the Pope emphasizes that the task of the Council is not "a discussion of one article or another of the fundamental doctrine ... For this a Council was not necessary... but ... a renewed, serene and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness... The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another". This papal affirmation was popularly translated into the image of bathing a baby: "Let us renew the dirty water, but not throw away the baby".

Paul VI, in ordering the continuation of the work of the Council, articulated further these same concepts, which remained the guiding stars for the elaboration of the documents.

With the passing of the years, the first concept, of a positive approach to modern world realities, became the leit-motiv of many comments and developments. Not the same consideration was always given to the second one, which was so strong and definitive in the mind of John XXIII.

Why?

Factors from different sources were responsible; some coming from secular society, others from within the Church herself.

After the Second World War, the Church remained the credible entity that opposed nazism and fascism. When the time of reconstruction arrived, the secular forces realized the need to unite their energies with the Church, modernity and faith together, in order to achieve the restoration of society. In this atmosphere, the Second Vatican Council was convoked.

Once the post-war reconstruction ended, followed by an improved economic situation, and the Vatican Council was closed, the secular forces wanted to separate themselves from the Church and assert their own autonomous power, breaking apart from tradition and institution. The events that occurred in 1968 in the western world society were emblematic: they aimed at a new modern man, with full confidence in reason,

in search of all its spaces of freedom, beyond what had been received from the past.

This wind of generalized polarization did not spare some spheres of the Church that, for different reasons, were interested in bringing about certain significant changes in the institution of the Church.

Pope Paul VI realized that this trend was a going astray from the aim of the Council and was harmful for the life of the Church. Taking the occasion of the 19th century of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul (which with great probability took place in the year 67), the Holy Father proclaimed the "Year of Faith", which he concluded with a solemn Profession of Faith during the celebration of 30th June 1968 in St. Peter's Square.

With extraordinary passion and interior strength so typical of Paul VI, the Pontiff reaffirmed the same Creed in a marvellous and well-known hymn to Christ in Manila, on 29 November 1970.

A new tension reappeared between modernism and institution, progress and tradition, freedom and truth.

The analytic method, proceeding from daily experiences, became gradually more credible than the teaching method from principles of truth.

Catholic "novatores" with a different attitude to life than the Magisterium elaborated and applied the theory of remaining inside the Church in order to bring about changes from within.

Some influential people organized a Congress, in 1978 in the United States, to promote the theme : Toward Vatican III, with the indication that Vatican II had to be considered as a point of departure for other shores.

With time, these different approaches prolonged their effect on the mentality of the world community, including some catholics.

In spite of these understandable post-conciliar differences and contrasts, the global vision of the recent past asks for an expression of **deep gratitude** to the Lord for so vivid, purifying and challenging years in the life of the resilient Church.

Christianity, since its origins, has experienced a sound tension between past and future, old and new, tradition and progress.

Those forms of christian life that achieve keeping together both poles of the tension are authentic. Other forms, that put such an emphasis on one pole, thus losing the balance, walk along an erroneous path.

There is no need to fear tradition, but not even progress, the newness that God continuously creates in each period of history. Newness, if it comes from God, brings always with it a going beyond of what already exists. Tradition, if it is au-

thentic, receives and gives a solid base to new advances (cfr. Mt. 13: 52).

To keep the balance, anyway, implies always a certain dimension of the cross. It was true for priests and faithful who were asked to adapt themselves to the new directives coming out from the Second Vatican Council. It is true for priests and faithful today, as in any other period, when they are asked to be attuned to the directives of the Magisterium.

But it is just there that you see Divine Providence in action and the possibility for the Church to leave behind some faded leaves of its tree and open up, facing new challenges, towards a new springtime.

This awareness and "sensus" of history allow us to **live the present with enthusiasm**, in particular after the wonderful experiences savoured during the past Jubilee Year in all dioceses and in the centre of catholicity.

The strong pastoral impulse intended by the Pope is inspired by the Second Vatican Council, "the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century".

The mindfulness of being sent by Christ ("As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" - Jn. 20:2 1); the awareness that Jesus Christ is the "good news" of salvation made known to people yesterday today and for ever; the experience of the transforming encounter with the Lord; all this spurs us to evangelization, to teach what we have come to know, but also - like the Samaritan woman with her fellow-citizens - enabling others to encounter Jesus personally: "come and see" (Jn. 4:29-42).

As the core of her mission, the Church has the joyful duty to lead all people to encounter the living Christ: it means to accept the love by which he loves us first, to choose him, to adhere freely to his person and his plan, which consists in proclaiming and in bringing about the Kingdom of God (cf. *Ecclesia in America*, 1999, n. 68).

The particular challenge of evangelization in our times is that God is not denied, but is always less known; the interest of people is somewhere else. In the last decades, in fact, the advancement of technology has favoured the formation of a post-modern culture, that is fragmentary, transient, strongly sensational. Consequently, the respect for tradition, for authority, is diminished in the younger generations, which experience a kind of social relations marked by superficiality and provisional-

ity. Even confronted with religious commitments they feel rather uncertain.

In these circumstances, the Church cannot evangelize the world by trying to imitate its way of doing, but rather by presenting a dramatic alternative to the secularized vision. The example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta comes to mind. Her personality of authentic faith captured the attention of so many people who were in search of something that was more spiritually enriching than what the contemporary culture could offer them.

It is no surprise, then, that the Holy Father, inviting us to start again afresh from Christ at the beginning of the new Millennium, points to holiness as the first task. In the contemporary world the Church can exercise her influence, realize her mission through holiness. She is called to embrace the cross of Christ, entrusting herself to the power of His resurrection. If the Church firmly adheres to the paschal mystery, she can courageously challenge the vanity of consumeristic culture, counter-attack the culture of non-belief. Thanks to her constant union with Christ, she can offer that communion with God that alone can satisfy the profound aspirations of the human heart.

"I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt.28:20). Trusting in this promise of the Lord, the Church can **look forward** to meeting **with confidence** the challenges of today's world and those that will come in the future.

I have read recently an aphorism: *pessimists are right; but optimists succeed*. Our optimism, in spite of all the problems we meet in everyday life and gloomy perspectives sometimes presented, is rooted in that promise of the Lord, who also assured us : "In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (Jn. 16:33).

During the preparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII asked the then Monsignor Pericle Felici, in charge of the preparation, how things were going. "Very well" - Mons. Felici answered - "the inputs are coming from all over the world, everything is organised by themes, and officials are working on the elaboration of the preparatory documents". "If everything is going so smoothly, it is not good news", observed John XXIII. "If there are no difficulties, it means that it is not something valuable".

This is a good encouragement for all who dedicate themselves to continue in the faithful application of the Second Vatican Council, the documents of which "have lost nothing of their value or brilliance". □

The Bible – Perspective is everything

Words for a Pilgrim People

'Watch and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs.' (Luke 12:15)

□□□

*One of the monks, called Serapion, sold his book of the Gospels and gave the money to those who were hungry, saying: I have sold the book which told me to sell all that I had and give to the poor. (Thomas Merton, **The Wisdom of the Desert**, New Directions, 1960, 37)*

□□□

*Today the Church is witnessing a crisis underway within society. While humanity is on the edge of a new era, tasks of immense gravity and amplitude await the Church, as in the most tragic periods of its history. It is a question in fact of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the gospel, a world which exalts itself with its conquests in the technical and scientific fields, but which brings also the consequences of a temporal order which some have wished to reorganize excluding God. This is why modern society is earmarked by a great material progress to which there is not a corresponding advance in the moral field. (John XXIII, **Humanae Salutis**, December 25, 1961 – the apostolic constitution by which Pope John XXIII convoked the Council for some time in 1962.)*

□□□

Thirty spokes together make a wheel for a cart. It is the empty space in the center which enables the wheel to be used. Mould clay into a vessel; it is the emptiness within which creates the usefulness of the vessel. Cut out doors and windows in a house; it is the empty space inside that creates the usefulness of the house. Thus, what we have may be something substantial, but its usefulness lies in the unoccupied, empty space. The substance of your body is enlivened by maintaining the part of you that is unoccupied. (Lao Tzu)

□□□

One of the best known stories of the Gospels is that of The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Luke is the only one to tell this story and he places it soon after one of the other better known stories of the Gospels – The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Again, Luke is the only one to tell this story. Comparing and contrasting the plots in each of these classic stories is revealing.

In both stories poverty and destitution are brought into sharp focus alongside wealth and prosperity. The listener is forced to feel the tension. We would rather turn away from such things. They are an affront; they typically provoke reactions like anger, disgust, contempt, fear, anxiety, pity, sadness. Why does destitution disturb us so? Yet these stories say – indeed the repeated teaching and example of Jesus say – “Look at it, face it, pay close attention and learn.” By taking us imaginatively, through storytelling, into the region of poverty and destitution, the Gospel is saying something about how and where truth might be learned. It also reminds us, by the way, of the game-playing and pretence that capture so much of our lives.

The eternal love of God ... sets all else in an infinite, God-centred perspective.

In both stories the main characters “re-emerge”, they are “born into new life” from the midst of utter poverty and destitution. This happens because of the mercy of God – explicitly named in The Rich Man and Lazarus, implied in the rich father of The Prodigal Son. And here is where we find a contrast between the two stories. In The Prodigal Son it is another human being who reaches out in mercy; in The Rich Man and Lazarus the other human being who might well have reached out in mercy refuses to do so. The former lives in a bigger world of meaning, one circumscribed by the eternal love of God that sets all else in an infinite, God-centred perspective, and allows forgiveness to triumph over resentment. The latter lives in a tiny world, one circumscribed by his own meanness, which sets all else in a finite, ego-centred perspective, and allows selfishness to triumph over generosity.

Stories appeal first and foremost to the imagination. In hearing Luke’s stories with the imagination, it is not difficult to see ourselves in all the characters and to see the intersections between our story and the Gospel stories. Who among us is not “destitute”? Who does not know the power of mercy, given and received? □

The Tradition – The big picture

A living sense of the big picture is a wonderful gift to bring to any community. It will also stand those individuals in good stead who have such a living sense. Things find their relative place against the horizon of the Transcendent. No person, event or thing is idealised or takes on disproportionate dimensions; everything maintains its size and place. In the big picture, everyone and everything belongs, even when we do not know how or where they fit. The cosmos is sacrament; all creatures point. All that reminds us of our heart’s deepest desires. That too is *our* vocation – to be living reminders.

In Book X of his *Confessions*, St Augustine conveys something of this big-mindedness and big-heartedness that come from having a living sense of the big picture: “And what is this? I asked the earth, and it said, ‘I am not he!’ And all things in it confessed the same. I asked the sea and the deeps, and among living animals the things that creep, and they answered, ‘We are not your God! Seek you higher than us!’ I asked the winds that blow: and all the air, with the dwellers therein, said, ‘Anaximenes was wrong. I am not God!’ I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon and the stars: ‘We are not the God whom you seek,’ said they. To all the things that stand around the doors of my flesh I said, ‘Tell me of my God! Although you are not he, tell me something of him!’ With a mighty voice they cried out: ‘He made us!’ My question was the gaze I turned on them; the answer was their beauty.”

A living sense of the big picture is a wonderful gift to bring to the community.

When we have a living sense of the big picture, our perspective can be radically different from what is taken as “normal”: “unimportant” becomes “urgent”, “urgent” becomes “unimportant”, “clarity” becomes “confusion”, “confusion” becomes “clarity” and so on. Death, or the nearness of death, can put us in the big picture. □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

JP 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 September 12 “Where do I find Spirituality in Health?” Francis Sullivan & Dr Penny Vine (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

° **Alstonville** – Federal Hotel September 25 “Who Gets Saved and by Whom? The Salvation Dilemma” Fr Frank Devoy (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

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

° **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie August 22 “How Young People see their Relationship with God” Several Young Speakers (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club September 12 “Cosmos and Environment – Stars and Stardust” Robert Bee & Noel Davis (Info: John 4647 3528).

° **Canberra** – The Southern Cross Club Voden September 26 “Australia – land of the Holy Spirit” Dawn Casey & Bishop Pat Power (Info: Rita 6288 4715).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St September 26 “Blessed are the peacemakers .. not those who shun conflict, but those who face it squarely” Fr Brian Gore & Bernice Moore (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel September 10 “Cries of the Human Heart: To Learn from Life's Experiences” Lucy Limbers & John Menadue (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 September 4 “Remembering” Dennis Farrar & tba; October 2 “Sacred windows to the soul” Bishop Graeme Rutherford & tba (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).

° **Lismore** – **Crossroads**. Mary Gilhooley's Pub, Cnr Woodlark & Keen Sts October 24 “How do young people minister to one another?” Becky Gordon & Chris Hassett (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Lower North Shore** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney September 10 “Women in the Church – Why can't we preach what we practise?” Bishop

Geoffrey Robinson & Bernice Moore (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

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

° **Paddington** – **Crossroads** The Bellevue Hotel, September 5 “Can we make Christian claims in an inter-faith world? – Religion at the crossroads” Rabbi Apple & Sr Mary Leahy rsj; October 3 “Who is my sister's keeper? Who is my brother's keeper?” Geraldine Doogue & David Leary (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** – Golf Club October 31 “Culture & Faith” Trish Hindmarsh & Jeff Borg (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

° **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd September 4 “Is addiction replacing spirituality?” Fr Chris Riley & David Leary; October 2 “Taking the mickey out of the micks” Speakers tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H)).

° **Waitara** – **Things You Learn Along the Way** The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy September 19 Gerard Windsor & Dr Bernadette Tobin (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 September 5 (Info: April 9391 0787).

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

° **Mordialloc (VIC)** – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm October 24 “Our search for meaning at the Margins” Linda Bradley & Vince Corbett (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

° **Spirituality Café, Rosanna (VIC)** September 7 “Christian Community – a Youth Perspective; Oct 5 “Open Family” Fr Bob Maguire (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).

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

Other Matters and Events:

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney runs a series of programs, day and evening, with a special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM is the Director (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, 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).

CATALYST DINNER

Friday October 12 7pm for 7.30pm

“Hope in the Church of the New Millennium – The role of Church leadership in addressing the issues of youth and young adults”

Speakers: **Bishop Peter Connors & Claire Barbeau**

Tickets \$40 (\$32 for Friends of Catalyst - \$25 for under 25's)

Parish Hall, cnr Gladesville Rd & Mary St Hunters Hill.

TWO FACES OF HOPE

By Sr Maryanne Confoy rsc

The text of Sr Maryanne's presentation at the sixth Catalyst Forum for the Future is now available in small booklet form. \$5 per booklet + \$2 p/p.

Inquire about other Catalyst literature including texts from the first Forums.

NATIONAL FORUM

celebrating the 40th anniversary of the commencement of Vatican II

July 12, 13, 14, 2002

at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill with

Fr Joseph Komonchak as keynote speaker.

Watch this space!

Recommended Reading

Eugene Kennedy, *The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality*, Harper Collins, 2001, endnotes, 214 pages, pb, \$24.95.

This book is about much more than the title suggests. It is first of all about a particular way of thinking – Kennedy uses mythology to explore his subject. In so doing he is flying in the face of centuries of scholasticism that has reduced thinking to a very rationalistic process. Kennedy is to be applauded for this, though some readers will find the mythological mode difficult to accept. It is secondly a critique – at once compassionate and honest – about a certain kind of culture that has dominated Catholicism for many generations. That culture – closely allied to the rationalism – has been characterised by, among other things, an abstract way of dealing with pastoral issues, an assumption that hierarchical structure is essential to the life of the Church and a rather severe kind of institutionalism. In the 20th century that culture – in the West at least – also came to mimic the culture of affluent capitalism. Kennedy, thirdly, situates his discussion of sexuality against the backdrop indicated above. Both the critique and the assertion that the Church contains within its life the sacramental and pastoral capacity to deal well with sexuality seem entirely valid to this writer. As an ex-priest and practising psychologist, Kennedy shows a sure-footedness in both the Catholic story and the psychodynamics of sexuality. Highly recommended.

Lucien Richard, ed., *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, Paulist Press, 1987, endnotes, 223 pages, pb, available in libraries or as second hand.

“It is difficult to implement something whose directives are disputed. Interpretation of the Council is thus at present as burning an issue as it has ever been and, to many people, an increasingly distressing one.” So wrote John O’Malley, SJ in 1987, in his fine little essay, “Vatican II: Historical Perspectives on its Uniqueness and Interpretation”, published in this volume along with fourteen other essays. One of those essays is by Karl Rahner, SJ – his now well-known reflection, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II”. No event in the history of the Catholic Church has so engaged and affected the lives of Catholics so immediately as the Second Vatican Council. Unlike other Councils, Vatican II occurred within a world of mass media and large numbers of highly educated and aware Catholics. Those two truths are both danger and opportunity. They are simply dangerous if we, the bulk of the baptised, do not take the trouble to educate ourselves well concerning the Council; they are marvellous opportunity if we do educate ourselves. *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda* is a book of solid essays, a little encyclopaedia of thinking that highlights most of the key issues. Those Catholics who are able should commit themselves to reading at least one book like this over the coming twelve months.

Rembert G Weakland, *Faith and Human Enterprise: A Post Vatican II Vision*, Orbis Books, 1992, endnotes, 168 pages, pb, available through amazon.com, \$12.95(US)

“Some events are turning points in history, changing people’s attitudes and assumptions, altering common ways that groups have of seeing themselves and how they relate Vatican II was such an event for Catholics. It is the benchmark all must use in talking of the Catholic Church these days.” Weakland sets the tone here for this little book of essays and talks, given by himself as Archbishop of Milwaukee over a period of ten years. Pope John XXIII had urged us to read the signs of the times; outstanding shepherds like Rembert Weakland are wonderful guides in this process that is as challenging as it is necessary. In this book hear him address questions like, What is the role of the Church today with regard to the central problems that this globe must face for the future? What do we mean by *sensus fidelium*? What does the Gospel have to say to the way we construct national economies? What are the implications for our new awareness of the role of women in society? Ever pastoral, thoroughly honest and always readable, *Faith and the Human Enterprise* is a stimulating and rich lit’ book. It serves the particularly useful purpose of making us aware of the Council and its vision, even as it constantly addresses the tough questions that stand between us and tomorrow. A very good book for group discussion and home study.

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