



THE MIX



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Our Say – Becoming a community in dialogue

The official recognition by the Catholic Church, in modern times, of the essential importance of dialogue can be assigned a date: August 6, 1964. That was the day on which Pope Paul VI published his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*. This encyclical also embodied much of the mood and movement of the Second Vatican Council, which was only half completed at that time.

We could say that the Catholic Church began, with *Ecclesiam suam*, to take the first hesitant steps along the path of a radical, new, yet ancient way of being Church in the world. Over the centuries, especially in the wake of the Reformation, that ancient sense of being a pilgrim people who have no lasting kingdom here, a communion of people being drawn into a covenant of love with the incomprehensible and uncontrollable One revealed in and through Jesus, a people utterly given over to that One and to His mysterious ways, a people called to enter daily into “the dialogue of salvation” — that ancient sense had grown more than a little dim.

Our experience since that day in August 1964 would, however, suggest that the realities of dialogue are as difficult to learn as they are rewarding to experience. These realities are at times very subtle; they are sometimes complex, sometimes surprisingly simple; they are easily lost or misrepresented amid our fears and egotisms; yet they are stunningly liberating and unmistakably of God when they are allowed to flourish.

It would be naïve to assume that commitment to dialogue will quite simply and easily bring dialogue into being. To begin with, we are not used to conducting our institutional life — ecclesiastical or secular — in that way. We all come to the task as novices.

And the stakes are high. It is an official Catholic recognition that the way of renewal includes dialogue as an essential element; there is no way forward without it. In other words, our future — of the Catholic Church and the wider human community — depends, at least in part, on our ability to be a community in dialogue.

This issue of *The Mix* (see pages 4 and 5) carries excerpts from a fine essay by Cardinal Avery Dulles, with a response by Monika Hellwig. While the *content* of these presentations explores well the nature of dialogue, their *style* exemplifies it very nicely. We might note several characteristics evident in both the process and content of their conversation.

Firstly, they show the value of good scholarship and clear, refined thinking in service of dialogue. Dialogue cannot thrive unless there is a willingness to submit the content to a process of thorough, critical examination.

Secondly, in seeking to become a community in dialogue, we are serving both the Church and the wider community. As human beings in a time of immense transition, we simply must commit ourselves to effective dialogue.

Thirdly, Dulles and Hellwig remind us that we are still in the early days of understanding what dialogue is and how we might become a community in dialogue. □

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 R SJ, Kevin Burges, Aidan Carvill SM, Susanna Davis, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Paul Durkin, Maria George, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Catherine Hammond, Sam Hammond, Francois Kunc, Maryellen McLeay, Chris Needs, Rita O'Connor, Margaret O'Hearn, Tim O'Hearn, Margaret Rigotti, Roy Rigotti, John Robinson, Louise Robinson, John Sharples, Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan SM, Carole Wilson

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

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

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

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

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Margaret Mildred (how could I forget this name?) Simmons was born 19th October 1940 in Sydney, the youngest of three children by nine years, to parents who were both teachers. My childhood was lonely because my siblings were much older, as were the other children in the street at Bondi. I was always the nuisance, the one who was always left out of games and activities, the 'baby' who repeated 'everything'!

Going to school at St Patrick's was challenging, but exciting for me. With my parents' background, I became eager to learn, especially Maths, at which I excelled. The mystical ceremonies of the Church fascinated me, and my attempts to be good in class meant that I could be chosen, together with about thirty other children, to kiss the petals and scatter them before the priest carrying the Monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament in the Easter ceremonies. I looked forward to this celebration every year.

As I matured, my faith grew, but not as fully as it should have.

Absorbed in my own little world, I was unaware of the storm clouds gathering over mum and dad's marriage. My parents parted when I was 15 years of age, and my world fell apart. Looking back, I know it was the strength of my sister and brother, and a quietly determined mother who kept us together as a loving family. Herself a convert when she was 15 years old, my mother would say, 'Never lose your faith, no matter what happens', and that gift of faith which she gave me has been a constant source of strength.

I transferred to Holy Cross College at this crisis time, financially supported by Father Jordan, a special family friend. (Thank you, God, for this dear priest, now 97 years old). After completing high school, I qualified as a pharmacist at Sydney University. However, my spiritual growth was at a standstill, in many ways. In my self-centred world, I saw church teaching as a list of 'no's' inhibiting my new-found freedom.

Fortunately, at this time, the person who was to do so much to help my faith development entered my life. Roy Rigotti and I were married shortly after, and we were blessed with three wonderful children, who are themselves married now. (So far, they have presented us with ten grandchildren.) Roy encouraged me to think about deeper issues and challenged me to reach beyond myself.

On a faith level, we became involved with the Cursillo Movement, which was a real conversion experience for me and made me aware of the importance of renewal in

my faith journey. Also, for the first time, I realised that I had a role as a lay-person in the Church family.

At this stage, I saw clearly the central role of relationships in every aspect of my life – Roy, family, church and society. By nature I am a warm and caring person, qualities which proved to be an advantage in fostering those relationships. Later, our involvement with Marriage Encounter and talks to school students on the topics of matrimony and relationship gave us the opportunity to make a contribution as a couple.

When we were invited to help the Antioch Movement get started, we accepted willingly. The Antioch experience was a wonderful period of growth for both of us, with the added joy that we were able to accompany our three teenage children in their own faith journey. We received so much from the interaction with hundreds of young people at that turbulent time of their lives, and we thank God for the opportunity to be part of their growth.

I thought, 'It's that Voice again!' when it was suggested that we present the 'Evenings for the Engaged' program. With our background in Marriage Encounter and Antioch, it seemed a natural progression to undertake this program. After having presented the six-week course to about 350 couples over a period of 15 years, we have retired from a ministry that we loved and enjoyed. The most notable outcome for me from participation in these ministries has been the challenge that has kept me growing in my understanding and practice of my faith.

I find my God in people and delight in being part of their lives. Various parish ministries help to keep me on focus in my personal growth, and I have a great affection for my parish family. I reflect with gratitude on the inscription on my mother's headstone: 'Thank you for the gift of life, love and faith'.



Margaret Rigotti

Your Say - Parish renewal after Vatican II

Roy Rigotti

I have had a keen interest in parish renewal for more than twenty years, triggered by my experience with the Cursillo and Marriage Encounter movements. These movements, both of which — interestingly — originated in Spain, are essentially lay movements incorporating much of the post-Vatican II thinking about the laity.

I remember how surprised and impressed I was by the realisation that I had been led into a much deeper level of understanding and 'ownership' of my faith by lay-persons at the conclusion of my first Cursillo weekend. This awakened an awareness of the pivotal role that the non-ordained could have in parish life — contrasting sharply with the pattern of clerical control that was prevalent at the time.

Those years in the mid-seventies, when both Cursillo and Marriage Encounter were at their peak, produced large numbers of individuals and couples who returned to their parishes highly motivated to make a difference. Sadly, when they attempted to implement some initiatives, difficulties arose, and a great deal of enthusiasm and momentum dissipated. The hurdles were at two levels.

Firstly there was the reluctance and inertia of priests to accept and embrace the possibilities arising from greater lay participation in the administration of parishes. This is quite understandable, because there was a lack of precedents, meaning that most proposals would be pioneering ventures with attendant risks.

An awareness of the pivotal role that the non-ordained could have in parish life contrasted sharply with the clerical control prevalent in the mid-seventies.

Moreover, it so often happened that parishioners started something and then departed without putting a successor in place, leaving the priests to pick up the pieces.

In addition, there was the desire to control the outcome of any new initiatives, both from a practical and a philosophical point of view. A priest might not agree with a proposal, leaving him in the position of having to cooperate with, and even to participate in, some activities with which he did not agree.

Secondly, there was the reluctance and inertia of parishioners to accept the possi-

bilities and, indeed, the *necessity* for them to become much more proactive in parish life and the mission of the Church. Most church attenders were quite satisfied to be mere consumers of pastoral services. They had no desire to accept any responsibility for the provision of these services.

In addition, not enough had been done to prepare for the new ecclesiology that demands active participation by all members of the community. For so long, the faithful had been inducted into a mindset of unquestioning loyalty to the Church — often on matters that were not church teaching at all, but merely Father's opinion or preference.

The principle of subsidiarity would provide the key to the empowerment of the laity, because it [means] that decisions should be made at the lowest level having the appropriate competence.

Even when some *could* see the need to step out into this new world of parish life, there was, and there still is, a lack of readily accessible opportunities for interested and motivated parishioners to learn the skills these new roles require. If there is a desire to prepare liturgies, for example, or conduct sacramental programs, or do some bereavement counselling, appropriate training and instruction are necessary.

As a member of a Parish Council that was endeavouring to anticipate what a parish might look like in the absence of a full-time parish priest, I did a considerable amount of reading around the subject of lay leadership. Much of the extensive literature available is based on 'success stories' of models adopted in other places. Most of the proposals still depend on the active leadership of a pastor. They are 'priest-centric': everything revolves around the priest.

While not denying the crucial role played by the parish priest — as the one responsible for the authentic teaching of the faith, to cite just one aspect of his priestly role — it would seem that others might well relieve him of many of his burdens by taking on the responsibilities of community leaders, administrators and trustees of the parish assets.

We should also question whether the

'parish' model is the optimum one. A number of alternatives have been proposed. For example, the 'Movement for a Better World' and the Adelaide Diocese's 'Basic Ecclesial Communities' both advocate the dividing of parishes into 'zones', each with its own lay leadership team. The parish, in effect, becomes a 'community of communities', with the parish priest having a modified role of mentor and co-ordinator.

There is much reference in the literature to the Second Vatican Council and some of the principles espoused in the documents. Words like *collaboration*, *collegiality* and *subsidiarity* occur regularly, yet there seems to be little evidence of these principles being upheld and promoted. In particular, the principle of subsidiarity would provide the key to the empowerment of the laity, because it states that a higher authority must not override a lower authority: in other words, decisions should be made at the lowest level having the appropriate competence.

Lay persons would thus become fully aware of the responsibility bestowed upon them through baptism to advance the mission of the church. They would know that they have full authority to act independently on any evangelising initiatives that they wish to undertake.

The challenges, therefore, are to teach the non-ordained persuasively and persistently about their role in the life of the Church, and to provide accessible training and instruction on the practical aspects of that role, before real progress can be made towards full lay participation.

Roy Rigotti is a member of the Executive of Catalyst for Renewal, and lives in Sydney with his wife, Margaret.

Readers' Comments:

The Mix arrived a couple of hours ago and as usual, I have read every word already. It is the joy of my monthly reading.

'Our Say' is always meaty, topical, to the point. I take it that it is Fr Whelan's work. How does he keep so calm and objective, and how does he keep track of all his references?

Enclosed is an envelope for the full text of Francois Kunc's 'Hope in the Church'. It is a must.

Tony Wilkinson, Shoalhaven Heads, NSW.

Many thanks for endeavours in encouraging reflection and discussion. Gives great heart.

Monica Dowdell, Brownsville, NSW

Essay – Dialogue, truth and communion

by Avery Dulles

On June 22, 2001, Cardinal Avery Dulles delivered the Third Annual Lecture of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative at Georgetown University, Washington DC. Monika Hellwig gave the response. What follows are some brief excerpts. The full text is available from the Editor – please send a long SSA envelope with five 45 cent stamps to cover costs.

The term “dialogue” has a long and respectable history. In its etymological meaning, it is a synonym for conversation, but in practice it is limited to certain kinds of conversation. To different people it means different things. For the sake of clarity, I would like to distinguish several different meanings that the term has had and continues to have.

In the classical tradition, a dialogue was a sustained conversation about a particular topic on which the interlocutors were initially not of one mind. The discussion was conducted with a view to letting the truth prevail. Once the weaknesses of erroneous opinions were exposed, those in error could be won over to the true opinion. Often enough the format was that of a master teaching his pupils, by putting questions to them and exposing, by logical argument, the rightness or wrongness of the answers. For this type of discourse, the dialogues of Plato are paradigmatic. They were imitated by other philosophers, including Aristotle in his lost dialogues and the young Augustine at Cassiciacum.

Beginning with Justin Martyr, Christian apologists used the dialogue form to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over other systems, such as Judaism. In the Middle Ages, Anselm of Canterbury, Gilbert Crispin, Rupert of Deutz, Abelard, and Denis the Carthusian wrote memorable dialogues that defended Christianity and exposed the errors of other religious opinions.

In the twentieth century a second type of dialogue arose. The concept was enriched and transformed by personalist philosophers. Martin Buber, for example, insisted that the partners to a dialogue meet simply as persons, respecting one another regardless of their beliefs. The personalist view of dialogue was taken up by Catholic ecumenists such as Yves Congar, who quotes Buber as saying: “Real dialogue takes place when each of the partners is really concerned with the others in their existence and in their particular character

and turns to them with the intention that a living mutuality may be created.”

According to Congar, not every verbal exchange is a dialogue. In polemics we assert our own position and seek to refute the other, whom we cast in the role of adversary. We treat the other as an object. In dialogue, however, we treat the others as subjects, who may be expected to have their own view of the world and their own ideas. We grant, at least provisionally, that the other may have good reasons for differing from us. All parties to the dialogue must submit their own ideas to examination, with the hope of surpassing them.

The hope is that the process of dialogue itself may generate shared insights transcending the partial views held by each of the participants when the dialogue began. In other words, dialogue has a heuristic function: precisely through interaction the interlocutors arrive at a truth they did not previously know. ...

The hope is that the process of dialogue itself may generate shared insights transcending the partial views held by each of the participants when the dialogue began.

The two forms of dialogue I have described are differently related to truth. In the classical model, the aim is to demonstrate the truth of the master's position or of revealed religion. The other parties to the dialogue are expected to submit voluntarily to the truth, once it is demonstrated. In the personalist model, the emphasis shifts to intersubjective relations. The hope is that all the parties, learning from one another, will progress to a shared truth that was beyond their horizons when they entered the dialogue. The dialogue, as a heuristic process, functions as a catalyst for the emergence of new insights.

In the past few decades, a third model of dialogue has appeared and become almost dominant in secular contexts. For purposes of identification, I shall call it the liberal model.

The assumption seems to be that truth about anything transcendent or metaphysical is beyond the scope of genuine knowledge. No effort, therefore, is made to argue others into holding one's own positions or abandoning their positions about philoso-

phic or religious matters. Each person is assumed to have a right to hold what he or she is inclined to believe, whether as a matter of spontaneous choice, habit, or tradition.

Dialogue, then, has the aim of getting people to live in peace and harmony notwithstanding their disagreements. It is considered offensive to urge one's own point of view and convert others to one's own faith. Religious preferences are seen as matters to be settled in the privacy of the individual's own conscience. As matters of taste, they are not subject to debate.

The three models of dialogue are differently related not only to truth but also to community. The first model aims at forming a community whose members are united in professing the same doctrine. Such a community may take various forms. In a political party, it can mean adherence to a platform; in a school of philosophy, it can be a matter of accepting certain basic principles; in a church it can mean the acceptance of confessional statements, which are assumed to be true.

The second model of dialogue is less insistent on explicit agreement. It fosters friendship and mutual respect and, in some cases, builds up what we may call a community of inquiry. This community is accessible to persons who reciprocally stimulate one another in the search for truth without necessarily reaching the same conclusions.

The third model of dialogue deliberately brackets questions of truth and morality on which agreement is found to be difficult. It does not seek a community of shared conviction, but a looser community of mutual tolerance.

In a religiously pluralistic civil society, space must of course be given for certain divergences in faith and worship. For the sake of domestic tranquillity, rival faith communities within the same civil society should tolerate one another. But if a church claims to be a community of faith standing for certain definite truths, it must have a way of professing its faith and requiring its members to adhere to the doctrines judged to be essential. Dialogue, if it is to be authentic, must respect the confessional standards of the religious bodies that participate in it.

During the years of Vatican II (1962-1965) the concept of dialogue in its personalist form began to figure prominently in official Catholic teaching. Pope Paul VI made it a central theme of his first

encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam* (1964). Dialogue, he pointed out, depends upon courteous esteem for the dignity of the other and the avoidance of offensive and timeworn polemic. "If this approach does not aim at effecting the immediate conversion of the interlocutor, inasmuch as it respects both his dignity and his freedom, nevertheless it does aim at helping him, and tries to dispose him for a fuller sharing of sentiments and convictions" (ES 81).

From his own perspective as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, Paul VI distinguished three spheres of dialogue. The first circle, the widest, embraced in principle the entire human family. He invited all persons, even atheists, to participate, provided only that they were lovers of truth and were not using dialogue simply to serve their partisan ends. The second sphere included all monotheists, notably Moslems and Jews. If these adherents of other religions were not prepared to discuss the Christian creed, Christians could at least join with them in promoting and defending common ideals of religious freedom, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare, and civil order. The third sphere took in all Christians, including those not in union with Rome. Besides ecumenical dialogue, this third sphere included what we may call intra-ecclesial dialogue. The Pope expressed his hope that the holiness and vitality of the Mystical Body would be increased by vibrant dialogue at all levels of the church.

Vatican II attached great importance to dialogue on all three levels. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World referred to four zones of dialogue: within the Catholic Church, with separated Christians, with believers in God, and with all lovers of truth (GS 92). Dialogue within the church received little attention, but was at least hinted at in the Constitution on the Church, which in its chapter on the laity recommended familiar exchange of ideas (*commercium*) between the laity and their pastors (LG 38; cf. GS 62).

The Decree on Ecumenism spoke at length of dialogue with Christian believers who were not in full communion with Rome. It described such dialogue as a meeting in which each side, dealing with the other on an equal footing, explained the teaching of its own communion and sought to gain a more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of the other (UR 4 and 9).

The Declaration on Non-Christian Religions called upon Catholics to engage in dialogues (*colloquia*) with followers of other religions (NA 2). The Decree on Missionary Activity directed that seminary formation should prepare future priests to enter into cordial dialogue with non-Christians (AC 16). The Declaration on

Religious Freedom advocated dialogue within the civil community. Dialogue, it taught, should permit people to explain to each other the truth they had discovered and to assist each other in their search for truth so that, when it is discovered, they might embrace it with personal assent (DH 3).

Paul VI at the end of the Council set up secretariats for dialogue in three areas: ecumenical, inter-religious, and secular. The first was aimed at Christian unity, the second at inter-religious understanding and reconciliation, the third at healing conflicts between secular thinking and religious faith.

These dialogues were premised on the theory of dialogue that had arisen in the first half of the twentieth century, exemplified by Congar among others. The parties were expected to enter the dialogue with an attitude of mutual respect and readiness to learn. The hope was that certain obstacles would melt away and that closer friendship, cooperation, and consensus in the truth might be the result.

Dialogue, John Paul II asserts, is "an indispensable step towards human self-realization." It has an existential dimension and therefore involves not only an exchange of ideas but an exchange of gifts.

In 1972 the Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication issued its long-awaited Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication (*Communio et progressio*), which had been mandated by Vatican II. More than fifty pages long, it devotes about two important pages (CP 115-121) to dialogue within the church – a theme that Vatican II had somewhat neglected.

John Paul II, as we know, has ardently supported various types of dialogue and given directives for its conduct. In his encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut unum sint*, he relates the contemporary interest in dialogue to "today's personalist way of thinking." Dialogue, he asserts, is "an indispensable step towards human self-realization." It has an existential dimension and therefore involves not only an exchange of ideas but rather an exchange of gifts (UUS 28).

In his apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (1984), Pope John Paul II gave what may well be the most authoritative description of inner-church dialogue that has thus far been put forth. After recalling what Paul VI said about the "dialogue of salvation" in *Ecclesiam suam*, he

states that pastoral dialogue aimed at reconciliation continues today to be a fundamental task of the church in different spheres and at different levels. In order to engage credibly in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, he observes, the church must maintain a permanent and renewed dialogue within herself. And then come the important words:

In order to overcome conflicts and to ensure that normal tensions do not prove harmful to the unity of the church, we must apply to ourselves the word of God; we must relinquish our own subjective views and seek the truth where it is to be found, namely in the divine word itself and in the authentic interpretation of that word provided by the magisterium of the church. In this light, listening to one another, respect, refraining from all hasty judgments, patience, the ability to avoid subordinating the faith which unites to the opinions, fashions, and ideological choices which divide – these are the qualities of a dialogue within the church which must be persevering, open, and sincere. Obviously dialogue would not have these qualities and would not become a factor of reconciliation if the magisterium were not heeded and accepted. (RP 25)

MONIKA HELLWIG'S RESPONSE

The thesis of the paper, as I understand it, is that the first two models but not the third are appropriate in the internal and external dialogue of the church, but that the third keeps creeping into both spheres of dialogue. I am comfortably in agreement with this thesis, but offer what I hope is a friendly amendment, making space in the first model for the collegial variety in matters that are not of the essence of Christian life and faith. I think that Cardinal Dulles will probably agree with me at that level of generality, but that our ways might begin to part on some of the specific applications.

The second major part of the paper is concerned with official church documents that deal with the concept of dialogue. As always I am in awe of the dogged (not to say ferocious) thoroughness with which Father Dulles has always done his homework, and of the fact that elevation to the cardinalate has not changed the habit. Who would have realized without his presentation that so many of the twentieth century documents of the Catholic magisterium address the need, purpose, and conditions of dialogue explicitly? I am particularly pleased that the survey of the teaching is introduced with the chief themes of *Ecclesiam suam*. It has always seemed to me unfortunate that this visionary encyclical that opened up great new vistas received so little attention. The excitement of the Second Vatican Council, which was then beginning to issue its significant documents, overshadowed even the event of a new pontificate. □

Words for a Pilgrim People

'Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.'
(Luke 14:27)

□□□

*Called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, "the true light that enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9), people become "light in the Lord" and "children of light" (Eph 5:8), and are made holy by "obedience to the truth" (1 Pet 1:22). ... we are constantly tempted to turn our gaze away from the living and true God ..., exchanging "the truth about God for a lie" (Rom 1:25). The human capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and our will to submit to it is weakened. In the depths of the human heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. This is eloquently proved by tireless search for knowledge by human beings in all fields. It is proved even more by the human search for the meaning of life. The development of science and technology, this splendid testimony of the human capacity for understanding and for perseverance, does not free humanity from the obligation to ask the ultimate religious questions. Rather, it spurs us on to face the most painful and decisive of struggles, those of the heart and of the moral conscience. (Pope John Paul II, **Veritatis Splendor**, (1993) 1.*

□□□

*"How did it happen that now for the first time in his life he could see everything so clearly? Something had given him leave to live in the present. Not once in his entire life had he allowed himself to come to rest in the quiet center of himself but had forever cast himself forward from some dark past he could not remember to a future which did not exist. Not once had he ever been present for his life. So his life had passed like a dream. Is it possible for people to miss their lives in the same way that one misses a plane? And how is it that death, the nearness of death, can restore a missed life? Why is it that without death one misses his life?" (Walker Percy, **The Second Coming**, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980, 123f.)*

Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel tells three similar parables. The first is about a lost sheep (4-7); the second is about a lost drachma (8-10); the third is about a lost son (11-32). In each parable there is a movement from "being lost" to "being found" and a movement from anxiety to joy; in each parable the story pivots around "a responsible person" to whom the person or thing lost is profoundly important – the shepherd, the woman and the father.

The way the three parables are presented by Luke suggests that the first two prepare the listener for and lead into the third parable. The first two are presented in question form: "Which one of you etc." and "What woman etc."

The readers and listeners are thus invited to begin imagining a new world – one in which mercy triumphs. You see, underlying the plot of these first two parables is a certain madness and we need to be drawn into that carefully, slowly; otherwise we might simply run for cover. There is a foolishness about leaving the ninety-nine sheep in the desert and going off to look for the one. Yet Jesus says: "Wouldn't you?" There is something just a bit over-the-top about dropping everything and cleaning out the whole house to find one drachma; then spending much more than a drachma on the party to celebrate finding the drachma. Yet Jesus says: "Wouldn't you?" And thus we are prepared – somewhat – for the stunning madness of the third parable.

We should be wary of those who reduce these parables to some kind of comprehensible moral fables that say something nice about God and teach us a lesson about being nice like God. Such reductionism will prevent our hearing one of the greatest and most explosive revelations of the Bible: God is madly in love with us!

The main thing about our relationship with God is not found in what we can and must do for God, but what God has done for us and still desires to do for us. These parables remind us that our performance – moral, intellectual, emotional, spiritual or any other kind we care to think of – is quite secondary in God's scheme of things. Grace – which is another name for God's presence and action – is the beginning and end of our relationship with God, and, therefore everyone and everything else. □

The Tradition – Freedom and grace

Beware the sight of white knuckles and the sound of grinding teeth – especially in matters religious. Religion can open up the deeper reaches of the human being, generating as much danger as opportunity. History reminds us of this: Some of the most destructive events in the history of the human family have been perpetrated in the name of religion. Christians may be even more guilty than others in this regard.

Two of the authenticating signs that we have embraced the genuine Gospel faith – as distinct from some counterfeit – will be freedom and grace. When we have begun to be gripped by the mystery of God in Christ, it will manifest itself in a certain deep freedom. The focus of our lives will be growing relationships – primarily with God in Christ, but also with ourselves and with the people, events and things of our world. We will be able to live with structures, rules, doctrines, etc, and will appreciate their limited but necessary role in human affairs.

But we will not find our identity and security in such things and, therefore, will not be in bondage to them.

Free people are gracious people. They generate an environment of hospitality where people feel welcome; they live life as gift and know that all goodness – yes even their "virtues" – are expressions of God's presence in and for the world. Christianity for such people is not primarily a moral code or an organisational structure, though, as a matter of fact, it includes all these things and more. Christianity is rather a mystical journey that is the deepest expression of what it means to be human. These people know that to be human is to be the one through whom God enters this place at this time in this unique way. Such is the stuff of a free and gracious life. □

These parables remind us that our performance ... is quite secondary in God's scheme of things.

... to be human is to be the one through whom God enters this place at this time in this unique way.

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

° **CP 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 November 14 “Where do I find Spirituality in the Environment?” Terry Hillman & Sue Schilg (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

° **Alstonville** – Federal Hotel (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

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

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie October 31 “Christian/Muslim Dialogue in Australia” Jameela Ahmed & Sr Pauline Rae smsm (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club October 10 “How much do we judge by Appearances?” Chris de Souza & Narelle Penman (Info: John 4647 3528).

° **Canberra** - The Southern Cross Club Woden Informal Dinner \$15 October 24 “Australia – A Spiritual Melting Pot” Therese Vassarotti (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St October 31 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice .. not because they suffer but because they love” Sandie Cornish & Bill Johnston (Info: Noeline 9744 8141).

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel (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 October 2 “Sacred windows to the soul” Bishop Graeme Rutherford & tba; November 13 **Celebration Dinner** “A Love that Dares to Question” Bishop John Heaps & Sr Veronica Brady (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 October 8 “Are we Rubbishing our Children’s Heritage?” Sandra Monteith & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

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

6440).

° **Paddington** – Crossroads The Bellevue Hotel, October 3 “Who is my sister’s keeper? Who is my brother’s keeper?” Geraldine Doogue & Fr Tom Rouse (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 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 October 17 Fr Geoffrey Plant & Sacha Bermudez-Goldman (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 November 13 “In the beginning was the Word” Dr Mary Coloe pbvm (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).

° **Collingwood (VIC)** – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm October 3 (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)** 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, November 25 “The Carlson Chorale” (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Catholic Theological Union Ex-students** are having a back-to-CTU reunion on Friday, November 2, 6pm for 6.30pm liturgy in the grounds of the Marist Centre, 1 Mary St, Hunters Hill. Bring your own chair, food and a bottle. All welcome.

EUCCHARISTIC REFLECTION
with Fr Stephen Hackett msc
Saturday November 17th 4-7pm
Villa Maria Parish Hall
Cnr Gladesville Rd & Mary St
Hunters Hill
Followed by light meal

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.

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THE CHURCH, BIOETHICS AND SOCIETY TODAY
Tape of the seventh Catalyst Forum for the Future is now available \$10 + \$2 postage. Written text of Fr Anthony Fisher op available – please send stamped addressed envelope.

AQUINAS ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL

January 21, 22, 23, 2002

“Spirituality in Australia”

Keynote speakers:

Les Murray, Morag Fraser,
David Millikan

Workshops

Info: 02 9247 4651

Recommended Reading

M Basil Pennington, *Vatican II: We've Only Just Begun*, Crossroad, 1994, index, 167 pages, pb, available from amazon.com, \$11.16(US).

The Second Vatican Council must be remembered as much for what it did not do – indeed could not do – as for what it did do. Vatican II could not complete the work of renewal nor could it answer all the questions it raised nor could it envisage all the questions that would necessarily arise for subsequent generations of believers. The subtitle of this very readable little book says it well: *We've only just begun*. Pennington notes: "We tend to forget that the important part of any council, if not *the* important part, is the reception of that council and its teaching by the People of God. Historically, this phase of the ecumenical councils has been very diverse. ... The enormous shift in perspective, if not in direction, the Holy Spirit has asked of the People of God through the Second Vatican Council is not going to take place overnight ... The three decades we have lived through are little more than a long weekend in the centuries-long history of the Church." The book goes on to offer a series of meditations or study guides to various key documents from the Council. Pennington acknowledges the limits of the Council (eg, an all-male gathering) and is not naïve about the path ahead. He does, however, seem to be on sure ground when he encourages us to study the documents of Vatican II. A good book for a home study group.

Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Speaking with Authority: Catherine of Siena and the Voices of Women Today*, Paulist Press, 2001, end-notes, 168 pages, pb, available from amazon.com, \$8.95(US).

In 1985 the Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, launched the annual Madaleva Lecture in Spirituality. The series honours Sr M Madaleva, who pioneered the graduate program in theology at the College, and its previous sixteen presenters include Monika Hellwig, Sandra M Schneiders (twice), Kathleen Norris and Joan Chittister, OSB. Together they make a very worthwhile contribution to both the appreciation of women's contributions to the life of the Church through the ages and the exploration of possibilities for the future. Hilkert focuses on one of the great figures of Christian history: The thirteenth century mystic, St Catherine of Siena, a Doctor of the Church. The presentation is very readable and informative, awakening us to some of the dynamics of history at the same time as it issues us with a challenge now. In our rationalism we have, sadly, lost touch with the mystical heart of our faith; theology has come to see itself as prior to spirituality rather than the other way around; rules, dogmas and moral dictates have tended to displace the primacy of relationships. Time with someone like Catherine of Siena can stir the soul to imagine other possibilities and recognise that recent history is more properly a beginning than an ending.

John Thornhill, *Questions Catholics Ask in a Time of Change: Understanding the Hope We Must Share*, Society of St Paul, 2001, index, references for further reading, 199 pages, pb, \$24.95.

John Thornhill has been teaching theology in Australia for more than forty years. Throughout that time – and increasingly over the past twenty years – he has maintained close contact with grassroots Catholicism, beyond the realms of academe. In this book he shares his responses to many of the straightforward questions asked of him by people over the years. The style is readable and the content is simple rather than complex. The references at the end of each chapter will give further reading to those who want it. And many will want to follow those references, because *Questions* is bound to evoke the desire to understand more. As the subtitle suggests, this is also a book that engenders hope. Thornhill does not avoid the difficult questions or evade the naming of limits manifest in the life of the Church. However, he recognises the Church as the institutional bearer of the Gospel, the community that, amidst its brokenness, can and must speak of a God of infinite and unstoppable mercy revealed in and through the Incarnation. *Questions* is a useful book for personal study and reflection; however, it is probably best studied within the context of a group – especially, by those Catholics who are old enough to remember what Catholicism was like before the Second Vatican Council.

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