



THE MIX



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Our Say – A spirituality of communion

In January this year, John Paul II published his Apostolic Letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*. He began that Letter by observing that “a new stage of the Church’s journey begins” as we enter the new millennium. He then turns to the Gospel for inspiration: “Put out into the deep!” (cf Luke 5:4).

The Letter pivots around a substantial reflection on the Incarnation and the reality of Jesus Christ in the world, Jesus Christ “the goal”, “the foundation and centre” of history, Jesus Christ the life of the Church and the source of renewal – a renewal which asks us

to make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings. (43)

Paul goes on to say that our ability to respond to this challenge will depend first and foremost on a “spirituality of communion” (see “Words for a Pilgrim People”,

page 6 of this issue of *The Mix*). He emphasises this point, at the same time sounding a warning:

Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth. (43)

The modern Western mind-set tends to be imbued with a rationalism and functionalism that is more at home with “doing” than “being”, more inclined to focus on “outcomes” and “products”, becoming forgetful of the subtleties, rewards and pitfalls of the “process”, very vulnerable to reducing life to a series of problems to be solved rather than a mystery to be lived. This can be fatal when dealing with the community of those baptised into Christ – the Church, that is – and its need for ongoing renewal.

The Church resembles many different human systems and organisations and, as such, shares many of the same dynamics as

these social realities. But, in the end, the Church is essentially different from all of them because it is constituted by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, not by any functional intent. It is the place of communion through Him, with Him and in Him. All its structures, activities, rituals and customs are in service of that communion.

When we sit on the cross benches, as it were, it is easy to see what “should be done” and to say “what we would do if ...” And perhaps we speak some truth. Given the nature of the Church, however, it is difficult to see that any of our words or actions can contribute to genuine renewal if they do not come out of and express a “spirituality of communion”. Again, John Paul II’s words challenge us:

It is important that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement, which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of ‘doing for the sake of doing’. We must resist this temptation by trying ‘to be’ before trying ‘to do’. (15) □

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

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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

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

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THE HUMAN FACE

It is rather daunting to think about one's
life in terms of what is most important.
The problem is not in knowing what you
think is important, but in having to choose
among so many things deeply felt.

My name is Peter Sheehan. Born in
Sydney in 1940 and the younger of two
boys, I studied at St Patrick's College
Strathfield under the Christian Brothers
after coming to secondary education from
the Dominican Sisters. My education as a
young boy taught me a lesson in life that
has always stayed with me. It was in
childhood that I learnt about practising
faith and judging faith in others in terms
of their human efforts.

Most of us are complex mixtures of
actions and feelings, and many times they
are not in tune with words. Faith stands
above all the human effort. For me, it is a
tenet of existence that gives purposes and
meaning to the complexity and set of
paradoxes that constitute our human
vulnerability.

The reality of the world outside hit me at
the University of Sydney, which then
(even looking back on it now) was a
profoundly stimulating place for me. The
same complexities were there at
University, but now they were all
intellectually rationalised in a seductively
coherent way. My doctorate at Sydney set
the pattern for scholarly life abroad: at the
University of Pennsylvania and the City
College of New York. I was excited by my
time studying and researching mental
consciousness, hypnosis, the fallibility of
human memory, fantasy, and the analysis
of deception.

In 1973, I became Professor of
Psychology at the University of
Queensland and, for the next 25 years, I
grew to appreciate the separate demands
of teaching and research, and the
challenges of professional administration.

What were the things that stood out as
most important to me in all of this? Let
me answer that question as best I can.

First, I think, there is the internal
satisfaction I found in what I did. I liked
Psychology and I always enjoyed
practising it. For me, it never clashed with
my faith; rather, it complemented it.

I was drawn inevitably toward the study
of moral matters. That was by natural
inclination, I believe, but also due to my
spiritual commitment. The skills I tried to
hone through my career joined with that
commitment and I found myself writing
and discoursing about "lying", "forced
compliance", "free will" and "censorship".

The last of these areas of inquiry captures
for me a true passion in my life – the
appreciation and analysis of movies.

From the time I first acted as a film critic
for the *Catholic Weekly* back in the 1950s,
while a postgraduate student, to the time
in the late 1980s when I was formally
responsible for final classification of
movies on appeal in Australia, I was
enthralled by the lure of fictionalised
representation and the visual depiction of
peoples' experience of themselves
their relationships with others.

In all of that, the enjoyment impelled me
to inquire about the proper rationale for
censorship. Does Society need to draw
any line between total exposure to events
– imaginary and otherwise – and
reasonable moral restraint? My religion
says it does, and I believe reason says it
does, too.

The second thing that stands out for me
relates to my current position as Vice
Chancellor of Australian Catholic
University. This job presented me with an
exciting opportunity to look for, and
institute, change. The challenge for me as
a Catholic was to find change that can be
built around the education of a sense of
purpose and spiritual meaning.

A Catholic University has a critical role
to play in educating youth about what
some have described as the endless array
of life-style possibilities, and meeting the
challenge of this for the youth of today
represents, I believe, a major task for the
Church. Education according to a firm set
of values can provide meaning and
purpose, and such seems incredibly
important at a time like now, as the world
is shattered by the unbelievable events of
September 11th in the USA.

On that day, the seeming stability of
Society was changed for all of us:
abhorrent images streamed into our
consciousness, evil occurred, and our
belief in a just God was tested sorely. The
humanity of man and woman carried us
forward, both tragically and imperfectly.
We have to use rationality, education and
faith to make sense of those bewildering
events and their very probable
consequences.



Peter Sheehan

Your Say - Vatican II, a personal reflection

Susanna Davis

As the 40th anniversary of the Council approaches, the invitation has gone out for us to send in our thoughts about Vatican II. I am not a theologian. I was a child when Vatican II occurred. So this is very much a personal reflection, bound up in my own experience.

My parents were very involved in the Church. They had six children in six years, and would display us — rather defiantly, I suspect, at times — at Mass, marching us to the front of the church. My parents were from Sydney, but we moved to Adelaide via Mildura, and it is in Adelaide that I grew up. Dad had gone to a Jesuit school, and I still have a book of poetry he won as “Best Junior Debater”. He loved to argue. I remember him sitting intently during sermons, making notes so that he could corner the priest afterwards and challenge him.

Mum and Dad were excited by the possibilities of Vatican II. Dad went to Rome as a lay representative — I assume at the recommendation of the parish priest (who was perhaps looking forward to some relative quiet!). Groups of people would come to our house after Mass and talk, and wine would flow, and children would run in packs as adults discussed the Church and Change. There was an atmosphere of great hope and anticipation.

I remember the Before and the After. Before: sitting in Church, mantilla on my head, while the priest spoke in Latin. The Mass as such meant very little at that stage.

And much of what I remember of religious education, imparted by nuns clad forbiddingly from head to foot in brown and white, with black boots that squeaked, was wanting to play with the miniature chalice which Sr Assumpta used to explain the Mass to us. My knees would hurt from kneeling on the hard wooden floor, especially if I were silly enough to position myself so that the cracks dug into my flesh.

And the stories were used to frighten and subdue, rather than uplift and ennoble. The Holy Spirit was a little white bird who would tell sister if we misbehaved (and in those days it did not seem at all unbelievable that Sr Assumpta would have a direct line to God — I was sure He didn't make a major decision without checking it with her first!).

I remember crying because Sr Assumpta told us we had to love God more than our parents. When I told Mum that I knew I

was bad because I loved her more, mercifully she explained to me that by loving her and Dad, I was loving God.

Dad came back from Vatican II. There was great hope and excitement. Many people like my parents looked forward longingly to a freer church, with greater lay involvement. Dad was an academic, and we went to California in the late 60s for a year, when he took sabbatical leave. We joined a Catholic church group at the university, and it was marvellous! Wholemeal hosts, outdoor Masses, visiting African drummers providing the music. The people were full of joy, and very welcoming to this strange Australian tribe (Americans weren't accustomed to such large families as ours — we were a distinct novelty.)

There was an atmosphere of great hope and anticipation

We came back to Adelaide but, apart from the Mass now being said in English, not much had changed. And though my parents tried to recreate that feeling, by involvement in the Aquinas Society (and I still remember the wonderful Christmas parties at our place, when Dad would mix the meanest punch), somehow, the hope and enthusiasm ebbed away, and was replaced by eventual despair.

My impression was that the Church, that canny old institution, had subverted the push for change, by involving lay people in the same way that schools might turn bullies into prefects. The energy for change got subsumed into propping up the structures of the Church. And many people, my parents among them, got worn out by the struggle, and left. They did not send us to Catholic schools any longer. Nor did they themselves go to Mass.

For a while there, I was the only one in my family going to Mass. And though there were some changes — Rock Mass and Sr Janet Mead — I didn't get the feeling that the changes went very deep. Eventually I, too, lost heart and drifted away from the Church.

People's hopes had been raised only to be dashed, while others were dismayed by the changes they felt forced upon them, and looked back longingly to the days when they felt secure, when they knew what to believe, and the Church was solid and stable...

It wasn't until my early 30s that I began my journey back into the Church, and I was only confirmed in my mid 30s. But I

realise that my involvement with Christ's church is now shaped and enhanced because of the changes of Vatican II. The very existence of Catalyst for Renewal, which has become such an important part of my faith journey, is because of the Council. The people I most admire in the Church are living evidence of its power. When people gather together for Spirituality in the Pub all over Australia, they may not know it, but they are there because of the power of Vatican II.

I have a dear friend, not a Catholic, who complains (and I'm never sure whether he is serious) that we should go back to the good old days when nuns were nuns (and everybody else was afraid?) and wore habits, etc. Pre-Vatican. And yet, when I look at the many religious women and men that I am privileged to call friends, to eat with, pray with, talk with, and work with, I cannot wish to go back to those dark days when the religious were discouraged from forming such relationships, and the lay were discouraged from reading the bible themselves, in case they should think independently.

Those days may have been secure, but I suspect it was the security of the prison to a long-term inmate, afraid of freedom, with its possibilities, its challenges, and its risks as well as its rewards.

It's how we handle change that is important. In hindsight, maybe we could have handled it better than we did.

Change is an inevitable part of life's journey. I don't have to be a theologian or an historian to know this. It's how we handle change that is important. In hindsight, perhaps we could have handled the change better than we did. And had we done so, then perhaps many people would not have fallen by the wayside — people like my parents.

From my involvement in Catalyst, I have come to understand the importance of conversation, and how this can be a sacred interaction between people, a call to understanding and growth. And this is the call of Vatican II. It is still calling us.

Susanna Davis holds the position of Research Ethics Officer at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Essay – Pope John XXIII and Vatican II

by Geoffrey Robinson

Geoffrey Robinson is an Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Sydney; he wrote this piece for *The Mix* at the invitation of the Editor.

I was a student in Rome throughout the entire time that John XXIII was Pope (1958-1963). I met him two days after his election, when Cardinal Gilroy took the Sydney students with him for his visit. He was exuberant and constantly moving about, so that his brand new white skull cap kept slipping off his bald head and, as the youngest person present, I had the job of picking it up and handing it back to him. I was a blond, fresh-faced youth and the first papal words ever addressed to me were "Ah, no beard".

I remember that first exhilarating month when he left the Vatican more often than Pius XII had in nineteen years. I remember him visiting the major prison in Rome and, rather than delivering a profound discourse on the morality of prison life, telling the prisoners instead of an uncle of his who had done time for sheep stealing. He won my imagination and my undying affection, as he did for millions of other people.

There are three reasons why I consider him one of the greatest popes in all of history. The first is that for him the gospel truly meant what the word itself means, "good news". This good news filled him with joy, and he constantly radiated a true Christian joy to all around him. He decried the "prophets of doom" and he instinctively knew that praising one good thing in the life of either a person or a whole society achieves far more than condemning ten bad things. Ever since that time it has seemed to me that the very first task of any pope or priest or, for that matter, of any Christian, is to tell the world with their whole being that the gospel is indeed good news.

The second reason is that, even though he carried the office of pope with great dignity and distinction, the greatness of the office was never allowed to obscure his humanity. Pope John XXIII and the boy and man Angelo Roncalli were never two different people. If you want a good priest, even a papal one, first find a good Christian, and if you want a good Christian, first find a good human being. One builds on the other and without the good human being, there is little hope of building a good priest.

The wholeness and goodness of a most likeable human being shone through everything Pope John did. He had suffered many things and had become through his suffer-

ing a deeper and better person. He possessed the "natural virtues" in abundance and the Christian and priestly virtues built on them.

The third reason is that he had the humility to know that he did not have all the answers to the problems facing the Church as it entered the new and difficult world of the 1960s. And so it was with his heart first and his head second that he instinctively turned to the collective wisdom of the whole Church and called a Council.

An integrated and whole human being, whose priesthood and papacy built on the firm foundation of his humanity, filled to overflowing with the joy of the good news of Jesus Christ and with the humility to turn to the collective wisdom of the whole Church – to me this will always be the basis of the Second Vatican Council. Without in any way lessening the importance of the contributions of Pope Paul VI and many, many others, to me it will always be Pope John's council, for he gave it its spirit and inspiration.

His emphasis on the importance of our basic humanity is reflected in many statements of the Council, particularly in the documents on *The Church in the Modern World* and on *The Training of Priests*, with its emphasis on qualities which are esteemed by all people and which make Christ's ministers acceptable, such as "sincerity, a constant love of justice, fidelity to one's promises, courtesy in deed, modesty and charity in speech" (n.11).

... the inspiration of those years formed my priesthood and my life. I have never wanted to leave them behind and I do not want to do so now.

His joy in the good news of Jesus Christ and his positive attitude towards the world are perhaps nowhere better reflected than in the famous opening sentences of the document on *The Church in the Modern World*:

"The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts."

His instinctive turning to the collective wisdom of the Church is reflected in the Council's teaching on the collegiality of the

bishops, the priesthood of all Christ's faithful and the *sensus fidei* of the whole Church, that instinctive sensitivity and power of discernment in matters of faith that Christ's faithful collectively possess (*Lumen Gentium*, no.12).

May we not say that, taken together, these represent many of the greatest achievements of the Council? And they all reflect the wonderful person who, against much opposition, called this Council together.

Two years after Angelo Roncalli became Pope John, John Kennedy was elected President of the United States. For a brief two and a half years, we had the era of the two Johns. To young people of today it is hard to describe the extraordinary sense of euphoria that we, the young people of that day, felt in those years. A new world seemed to be dawning, a world that was without limits in its promise and in which all problems could be overcome if only we were prepared to give generously of ourselves.

The great, inspirational phrases from both of these leaders filled our minds (Pope John: "Distrustful souls see only darkness covering the face of the earth. We, instead, like to reaffirm all our confidence in our Saviour, who has not abandoned the world he redeemed." John Kennedy: "Ask what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.")

The first session of the Council took place in this atmosphere. There was the heady moment when a Cardinal stood up and said solemnly, "*Schema non placet*", in effect, "The tired document the Roman Curia has presented to us is not even an adequate basis for discussion. Take it away and start again. Give us something more exciting and inspirational, something that will lift our hearts and lead us into the future."

Events like this exploded like bombshells in the college in Rome where I was studying. Who cared about a mere tied test match in far away Brisbane when there was excitement like this in one's own backyard? The Church appeared to be renewing and changing before our very eyes.

Pope John died in June 1963, after only one session of the Council. John Kennedy was assassinated in November of the same year and his reputation would later be tarnished. Other people came to the fore and powerful forces rocked the world and the Church during the 1960s. The dream those few glorious years of the two Johns did not become a reality.

I recently re-read some of the speeches

of President Kennedy and Pope John. The speeches of Kennedy now appear dated, but those of Pope John still ring out fresh and strong for those who are ready to listen. I may now belong to another era, but the inspiration of those years formed my priesthood and my life. I have never wanted to leave them behind and I do not want to do so now.

The spirit of Pope John lived on in the three remaining sessions of the Council after his death. It is to the eternal credit of Pope Paul VI that he did all in his power to be faithful to that spirit. Though he was a very different person himself, he respected the collective wisdom of the whole Church and sought to implement the Council over the following years.

I met Pope Paul VI briefly on one occasion, but it was a meeting of two shy people, with neither really knowing what to say. There was none of the sheer wonder and exhilaration of the meeting with Pope John.

And yet Paul VI embodied the documents of the Council. He was Pope for three of the four sessions and it was he who helped to give flesh to many of John's dreams, just as it was Lyndon Johnson who gave flesh to Kennedy's dreams.

In hindsight, visionaries like the two Johns will never be at centre stage for long, and the reality that comes from them will always be less than the dream. And yet those who lived the dream will never forget and will always long for it.

Not all the documents of the Council are of the same value, with one or two already being little more than historical curiosities. And yet the great documents of that Council still have the power to move and inspire me. They have the power to revive memories and take me back forty years to a time when John Kennedy inspired thousands of young people to join the Peace Corps and Pope John inspired love, enthusiasm and a belief that it truly was possible to create a better world.

WHY DO I REMAIN IN THE CHURCH?

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Why do I remain in the Church? In any case not because I am able to read off from any kind of indicator that the Church corresponds (a) to my expectations or (b) to God's expectations. For where (a) is concerned, the question in fact lies the other way about: whether, that is, I correspond to the expectations of the Church; and where (b) is concerned, even the dimmest of people can see that the Church as the collection of sinners which it is can never correspond

to God's expectations. ...

Why do I remain in the Church? Because it is the Church of the Saints, of the hidden saints and of a few who, against their will, are pushed out into the light of day. ... The saints know that God is never strange, other. He is, when he calls me, closer to me than I am to myself. They are spurred on by his self-giving to attempt and to realize things which those who remain tied to their own resources could never have dreamt of. ...

The saints are the proof that Christians can become whole people, out of grace better than nature; they are wholly aflame but they do not need other people for kindling, before they start to burn, and they do not, like Nietzsche, leave them behind in ashes. They burn with an absolute fire; like the salamander, they inhabit it; they are selfless and are yet wholly a self, a human being; they do what others plan to do or deliberately forget: Peter Claver, Las Casas, Philip Neri, Don Bosco. (I would enter a special plea for the attacks on those who have done nothing but expose themselves to the fire, have burned for the sake of burning, for if the absolute fire takes responsibility for the world, it is surely enough to burn with it for the world. Eg De Foucauld and those like him.)

They are the true realists, they take seriously the hopelessness of humanity as it is, and do not seek a refuge from the present in the future. They are the true utopians: they get on with the job in spite of everything and hope against hope. They are clever but not calculating, they live out of a desire to squander themselves which stems from God's eucharistic love.

And they are humble, that is to say that the mediocrity of the Church does not deter them from joining themselves to it once and for all, for they know well enough that without the Church they would not find their way to God. ...

I would enter a special plea for the attacks on those who have done nothing but expose themselves to the fire, have burned for the sake of burning, for if the absolute fire takes responsibility for the world, it is surely enough to burn with it for the world.

They do not fight the mediocrity in a spirit of contestation, but by spurring on those who have quality, by inspiring them, by igniting them.

They suffer at the hands of the Church, but they do not become embittered, nor do

they stand sulkily aside. They do not set up their own conventicle alongside the Church, but they throw their fire into its very centre.

And if they are genuine, they never point to themselves; they themselves are only a reflection, it is the master of the flame who is all-important. This pointing away from themselves is an exact criterion: "He was not the light, but was only to bear witness to the light." But it is also said of the same man that he was "light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79).

Is it not true that such pointing away from oneself occurs uniquely within the Church, which is more than a "congregation", a sociological unit, which is, that is to say, the "handmaid of the Lord" who points away from herself (and the humiliated office of the Church is precisely related to the handmaid), who is herself fullness, but not a fullness which is full of a sense of its own superiority, but "the body and fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23)?

Why then do I remain in the Church? Because it is the only chance to escape from oneself, from this curse of one's importance, of one's own gravity, from the role which is identified with my own person, so that if I lost my role I would end up by falling in love with my own person: to escape from all this without becoming estranged from humanity, because God has become human, not in a vacuum but in the community of the Church.

I do not doubt for a moment that God's incarnation is intended for all people and that he is sufficiently God to reach all whom he will. But God has set up, in the middle of the history of humanity with all its terrors and hells, a marriage bed, splendid and untouchable – it is portrayed in the Song of Songs – and even the endless problems of the Church cannot create a fog so thick that it cannot from time to time be penetrated by the light of love which shines from the saints: a love which is naïve, which cannot be suspected of any ideological bias, which cannot be taken over and built into any program. ...

Of course the Church "should" It "should" do everything and much more than it ever can. ... Whenever I hear "the Church should", then that simply seems to say to me, "I should". The more so since I receive so much more from the Church than I deserve. More than ever a single person or a human society could give. It is up to me, up to us, to see that the Church comes closer to that which in reality it is.

*From "Why Do I Still Remain In The Church?" in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Elucidations*, SPCK, 1975, 208, 214-216.*

Words for a Pilgrim People

'I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth ... he abides with you and he will be in you.' (John 14:15-17)



*To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings. But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me". This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. (John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.)*



Luke – like all the Gospel writers – tells his story from the empty tomb. He knows the ending before he writes the beginning. The reader needs to be alert to Luke's theological intent, the significance of his Old Testament references, the many ironies and paradoxes embedded in the details. We should assume that nothing is there by accident.

The story culminates in Jerusalem – on Calvary actually. "He set his face towards Jerusalem" (9:51). The drama is moving to the point of the Cross. The reader joins the people following, listening, wondering, expecting When Jesus is crucified, Luke says simply: "The people stayed there watching Jesus" (23:35). The reader is invited to "stay there watching Jesus". The English word "watching" translates the Greek verb which literally means "contemplating". In other words, the reader is invited to stop, pay attention, listen and allow the reality of that moment and that event to penetrate. As you "stay there watching Jesus", what might you hear and see? Indeed, what might happen to you?

In the being of Jesus of Nazareth, Being itself is revealed and asserts itself over non-being.

Here is the one for whom the whole of Israel has waited. In him, the Great Mystery of existence – revealed as Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, and, more recently, as "Abba" ("Father") – is manifest. In the being of Jesus of Nazareth, Being itself is revealed and asserts itself over non-being. And the being of Jesus of Nazareth is being destroyed ... no-being seems triumphant. "Stay there," says Luke, "and contemplate." Know that the whole of existence is focused on this event; something of cosmic proportions is unfolding. Being – Yahweh, the Lord of the Covenant, Abba – is re-defining the very structure of existence. Henceforth, you will find in this event the pivot and purpose of history – your own history and the history of the cosmos. In the context of this event, a million light years will be as a second, the dreadful triumphs of non-being will be as ugly reminders of what might have been our destiny except for the Cross.

Place yourself in the way of God: "Stay there watching Jesus." Do not try to understand or describe or explain. Let it be done unto you. Watch! □

The Tradition – Lectio divina

In the *Rule* of St Benedict (c480-c547) we read: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brothers should have specified periods for manual labour as well as for prayerful reading (*lectio divina*)" (48.1). This type of reading – known as *lectio divina* – is more about *formation* than *information*. We make ourselves available to the Spirit of God at work in and through the given text. Rainer Maria Rilke describes this practice well when he speaks of a man reading: "He does not always remain bent over his pages; he often leans back and closes his eyes over a line he has been reading again, and its meaning spreads through his blood".

The twelfth-century Cistercian guide, William of St Thierry, suggests: "Some part of your daily reading should also each day be committed to memory, taken in as it were into the stomach, to be more carefully digested and brought up again for frequent rumination; something in keeping with your vocation and helpful to concentration, something that will take hold of the mind and save it from distraction." Memorising texts and recalling them during the day has been strongly encouraged through the ages. A remnant of this may be found in the Catholic piety of last century where we were encouraged to recall little pious phrases and prayers. The rosary and litanies shared something of this practice. It is a process that takes us beyond rational comprehension and disposes us to be instructed by the Spirit and transformed in ways we could never imagine or devise. Our spirit and the Holy Spirit join to bear a united witness that we are children of the Father (see Romans 8:16).

This type of reading is more about formation than information.

In the tradition, the Gospels were given pride of place in this practice. St Augustine says: "So let us listen to the Gospel as though the Lord Himself were present." We have lost something of this in the life of the Church. It must be recovered – both individually and corporately – as part of the renewal process. It is, for example, vitally related to the quality of preaching in the assembly. □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

IP 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 - Resumes 2002 (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

° **Boorowa** - The Boorowa Hotel - Resumes 2002 (Info: Michael 6385 3351 or Marty 6385 3196).

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie - Resumes 2002 (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** - Campbelltown Catholic Club - Resumes 2002 (Info: John 4647 3528).

° **Canberra** - The Southern Cross Club Woden - Resumes 2002 (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

° **Five Dock** - The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St - Resumes 2002 (Info: Noline 9744 8141).

° **Jamberoo** - The Jamberoo Hotel - Resumes 2002 (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 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** Mary Gilhooley's Pub, Cnr Woodlark & Keen Sts - Resumes 2002 (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Lower North Shore** - Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney November 12 "Justice: Who can Afford it?" Pat O'Shane & Fr Frank Brennan sj (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Newcastle** - The Mary Ellen Hotel, Glebe Rd, Merewether - Resumes 2002 (Info: Lawrence 4967 6440).

° **Paddington** The Bellevue Hotel - Resumes 6 March 2002 "Unfinished Business for the People of God" (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** - Golf Club - Resumes 2002 (Info: Dennis 4773 5521).

° **Rouse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd - Resumes 2002 (Info: Maria 9680

2220 (H)).

° **Waitara** The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy - Resumes 2002 (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 (Info: April 9391 0787).

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

° **Mordialloc (VIC)** - The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

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

° **Devonport (TAS)** - 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).

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

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.

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.

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

ADVANCE NOTICE

"VATICAN II: UNFINISHED BUSINESS A NATIONAL FORUM"

On the occasion of
the 40th anniversary of
the commencement of Vatican II

JULY 12, 13, 14, 2002

St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill
with

Archbishop George Pell
(Archbishop of Sydney)

Fr Joseph Komonchak
(Catholic University in Washington DC)

John Wilkins
(Editor of *The Tablet*)

Australian Catholic thinkers
Including

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson,
Mr Robert Fitzgerald,
Fr Michael Whelan SM
Ms Geraldine Doogue

Morag Fraser
And many others.

Recommended

Lantana – recently released Australian film, directed by Ray Lawrence and starring Anthony LaPaglia, Geoffrey Rush, Barbara Hershey, Kerry Armstrong and Rachel Blake.

Lantana is a wise and compassionate film. It reminds us that we are constituted – or de-constituted – as human beings in and through relationships. Lawrence recognises that this terrain of relationships belongs to the realm of the non-rational and therefore does not submit to the easy “solutions” of the rationalistic mind and often enough leaves reason – and especially but not exclusively, men – looking pathetically impotent. He also recognises that the fault line which runs through human existence will manifest itself in our relationships. And that is precisely where it must be dealt with; and that is precisely where we typically fail. *Lantana* never moralises; it is sometimes poignant, occasionally funny, constantly disarming in its unpretentious portrayal of people we all know. As with life itself, fidelity competes with infidelity, truth with the lie, trust with mistrust, order with chaos; sexuality is portrayed frankly and realistically, in all its ambiguity, complexity and subtlety; this film never loses its energy or focus, it is never brash or cute. *Lantana* – like the best of Australian cinema – has a naivete and understated quality that suits its subject beautifully. Go and see this film with someone who is willing and able to engage in a good conversation about it afterwards. Highly recommended!

Jean Vanier, *Seeing Beyond Depression*, Harper Collins, 2001, 89 pages, pb, \$14.95.

There would be few people in the world who would embody the essence of the Gospel more effectively than Jean Vanier. He is best known as the founder of L’Arche, an amazing organisation in which the mentally retarded are cared for in community, and they in turn care for their carers. Vanier is also known for his lectures, retreats and books. This latest volume addresses one of the most serious issues of the Western world: Depression. Vanier does not offer answers or strategies so much as a mood or environment. He writes simply, describing real life examples. His deep understanding of and compassion for the fragility of the human heart comes through on every page. “The wounds of the heart are a normal part of life,” he writes. “When we feel loved or admired everything seems easy. But when nobody cares about us anguish fills our hearts.” Vanier recognises that depression is a disease that may require professional help. He also recognises that one of the keys to dealing with this hellish condition is loving relationships: “To get out of depression, which is a kind of imprisonment, first of all we must want to do so. We also need a good therapist and, even more important, a network of friends who love and accept us.” *Seeing* is probably best read as a meditation. Readers should sit with this remarkable man and absorb his spirit. This little book is valuable for those who suffer from depression as well as those who do not.

James Finley, *The Contemplative Heart*, Sorin Books, 2000, 223 pages, endnotes, pb, \$32.95.

Central to the task of renewal is the task of recovering – or re-discovering and appropriating – the mystical heart of our faith. For a variety of reasons, Christianity has too often been reduced to its legal, doctrinal and moral components; “passing on the faith” has then tended to be reduced to imparting information. Finley – once a student of Merton’s at Gethsemani Abbey – points in the right direction when he urges us to develop a more contemplative lifestyle. The first challenge is, quite simply, to wake up. Much of our life is spent sleep-walking, unaware of “the divinity of what just is”. Because we are unaware, we tend to miss the point and fall into “sadness, absurdity and despair”. Finley describes how we might come home to ourselves. He summarises his advice as follows: “Find your contemplative practice and practice it. Find your contemplative community and enter it. Find your contemplative teaching and follow it.” Finley concentrates on the ordinary stuff of living. His style is very accessible and his content well-grounded in the best of the Christian tradition. If Karl Rahner is right, that the Christians of the future will be mystics or nothing, then Finley’s message is urgent. Individual and corporately, we must wake up to what is, we must learn to submit to the grace of the present moment and participate in life rather than master it.

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