



THE MIX



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Our Say – Recovering the role of community

Central to the Good News is the healing action of God in and through Jesus Christ. The brokenness, in which we all share as human beings, does not have the last word. In the mercy and compassion of God enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth we have the assurance of healing and wholeness.

Like all of God's actions on our behalf, this forgiveness and reconciliation is made available in human history, through the human community, by human means. Mark's Gospel records the horror of the Pharisees when this becomes manifest in Jesus' declaration to the paralytic: 'My son, your sins are forgiven' (2:7). Matthew's version offers another view of the event: 'The crowd glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings' (Matthew 9:8). There can be no doubt that the New Testament communities believed they, as partakers through baptism in the life of Christ, shared in Christ's power to forgive sins. This conviction has remained with the community of the baptised ever since.

While the belief in the Christian com-

munity as a place where one can find forgiveness and reconciliation has never changed, the forms for celebrating and dispensing the mercy of God to this end, have changed throughout history.

This is not the place to attempt an overview of the historical development of the forms for celebrating reconciliation within the life of the Church. History in general resists brief overviews, and this topic is no exception to that.

However, it does seem reasonable to note some trends, especially when they are still evident today. The first trend might be characterised as one from "public and communal" towards "private and individual" structures for dealing with sin. This trend becomes evident from about the sixth century.

The second trend, interdependent with the first – though it pre-dates it – may be characterised as one from a "communal centre of gravity" towards a "clerical centre of gravity" within the Church. This trend

gave rise to a strong clerical culture that began to dominate the life of the Church, consequently diminishing the effective participation of those who were not clerics.

One consequence of the many tragic incidences of sexual abuse, is that we must reassess our ways of dealing with sin individually and communally. The awful inadequacy – if not alarming hypocrisy, deceit and even criminal negligence – in our efforts to deal with these matters privately and individually has caused immense harm to the Church as a sign of God's liberating love.

Ironically, the law of the land and the media are both forcing the Church to be more open and communal in this matter of dealing with sin. We may, through this experience, also come to realise the value of the communal celebrations of reconciliation and the need to involve the whole community of the baptised more effectively in the daily decision making processes and actions of the Church. □

THE HUMAN FACE

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

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

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

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

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My name is Mary Lowcock. I am a
Sister of Mercy, a member of the
Townsville, Queensland, Congregation. I
grew up in Bowen, a little country town on
the northern tip of the Whitsunday Islands.

Looking back I now know that growing
up in such an environment was magical. I
was very fortunate to have parents who
devoted one hundred per cent of their time
and energy to family. Everything they did,
their whole existence, was concentrated on
their four children. My primary and early
secondary education was at the local
Catholic schools in Bowen, but I was a
boarder at Saint Patrick's College in
Townsville for Years Eleven and Twelve.

The only teachers I had at school were the
Sisters of Mercy, so it was a natural
transition to enter that Congregation when I
decided that I wanted to be a Religious
Sister.

In the 70s and 80s my ministry was
mainly in primary schools as a teacher and
then in administration as principal. Another
ministry I had during these years was
running St Patrick's Boarding School, and I
discovered that the best training for this
ministry was my own personal experience
as a boarder.

In the late 80s I spent three wonderful
years at the Catholic Theological Union at
Hunters Hill. Academically, my studies
gave me a Masters in Theology from the
Sydney College of Divinity but, personally,
I gained much more from my experience: I
was fortunate in being a participant in a
course under the direction of Michael
Whelan SM, on Ongoing Formation, a
course that strongly influenced me and
impacted on my life. I also had the
privilege of sitting at the feet of other
outstanding lecturers – John Thornhill,
Marie Biddle, Tony Corcoran and many
others. My study was largely in spirituality
and christian life formation, but I also
received a grounding in scripture and
ecclesiology. The combination of these
courses was providential for my ministries
during the 90s (for the first two years
leading a parish and then being responsible
for Diocesan Pastoral Planning).

As the face and voice of the Diocesan
Pastoral Planning Commission, I spent ten
years organising parish reflection and
discussion programs, conducting parish
meetings, arranging diocesan (and national)
conferences, devising strategies to
implement different parish leadership
structures, managing the change process
when boundaries shifted and new parishes
were created out of the old, encouraging
parishes to try different ways of being on
mission, such as breaking the parish into
smaller communities, neighbourhood

groups or basic ecclesial communities.....
The list is endless.

I am no longer working for the Diocese.
At the end of 2001, due to financial
constraints, it had to terminate employment
of people working in a number of its
ministries: youth, Liturgy, the House of
Prayer and Pastoral Planning.

Working in Diocesan Pastoral Planning
challenged my faith and made me questi-
my Church. I cannot look into the crystal
ball and foretell the future, but I do know
that the Church will have to change the
shape of its structure if it is to survive as an
organisation. I also know that its challenge
is to seek further understanding about *who*
it is and *what its purpose is* in today's
world. I understand that the Church is all
baptised people and that it 'exists in order
to evangelise' (E.N., n.14).

If so, I would expect that the Church as an
organisation would be plunging its
resources into evangelisation: educating
those who worship; supporting and training
people for mission; employing personnel to
set up parish structures focused on
strategies that outreach to people in need:
people who are housebound, sick,
struggling financially, who are in danger —
for example, abused women or those
ostracised because of race or creed; and,
most importantly, learning from those it
seeks to help and evangelise.

I do not understand evangelisation as a
one-way process where the Catholic Church
has all the answers. Rather, it is a mutual
process where the main task of those who
are evangelisers is to learn from those with
whom they connect.

The Church has done a wonderful job
inside its church buildings establishing
vibrant liturgies, employing personnel for
leadership, involving parishioners in its
life.... Now it is time to focus on its
mission – a mission that will put it in touch
with its Mystery.



Mary Lowcock

Your Say - A Personal Memory of and Response to Vatican II

Annette Cunliffe, RSC

When the announcement was made that the Second Vatican Council was to be convened, I had only recently made my first Profession as a Sister of Charity and was in my second year of preparation for teaching.

Much excitement was generated by the announcement, and expectations were high. We also set about gaining an understanding of what Ecumenical Councils were all about — there was even much discussion about how to spell the word and what connection it had with the fledgling ecumenical movement.

As school students and very young religious, we had had some exposure to the innovations of new approaches to Biblical scholarship and to changes brought about by the Liturgical Movement. Little else had changed in the Church, as far as we were aware, for thousands of years. We were keen to hear the news as it emanated from the Council.

Later, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to attend numerous lectures on the Documents it published. My well-thumbed, annotated and yellowed copy of Flannery's edition of the "Documents of Vatican II" bears witness to these.

In many ways, we have only begun to plumb the possibilities of the Council.

At a distance of almost forty years, some impressions remain strong. Pope John XXIII's image of throwing open the windows to allow the Holy Spirit to blow through the Church is probably the strongest — and one that gave hope to many, but was threatening to others.

This wind of change blew strongly through the convents and monasteries of our country. The lectures and workshops associated with the outcomes of the Council whetted our appetite for study of Church history, theology, biblical studies and spirituality. It freed many women religious to undertake studies and ministries that they would not have contemplated before.

Many were subsequently able to take the decision to leave Religious life. Often they continue to serve the Church in magnificent ways as single or married lay Catholics, using the education and skills they had gained as religious.

This exodus and the decrease in numbers of young men and women entering

Religious Life have changed it, in our country at least. The image of Religious as the Church's "workforce" is no longer tenable.

This is not necessarily a negative outcome, as many of the roles formerly played by Religious were opened to other lay members of the Church.

Many Religious are now free to minister in ways that are more life-giving for them and for the Church, and more in keeping with the place of religious life in the Church and society.

The image, "Where there is salvation, there is the Church," filled (and still fills) me with excitement.

The other image that was of enormous appeal to me came from a source I cannot remember, after all this time, but for which I remain grateful. The lecturer reversed a static and negative image that had always disturbed me: "Outside the Church, there is no salvation" to the vibrantly positive one, "Where there is salvation, there is the Church".

The former image was one I had seen or imagined portrayed as a ship peopled with self-satisfied Catholics sailing through a sea of drowning people of other faiths or none. The picture, or my childish imagination, also illustrated these Catholics wielding poles — to rescue or to fend off others trying to be saved?

My wonderful father is a faith-filled Anglican. I could never reconcile the old statement of the relationship between Church and salvation with the God I had always believed to be all-loving or the Jesus whose mission was to all people.

The image: "Where there is salvation, there is the Church" filled (and still fills) me with excitement. I visualise God recognising every person who acts in a way that is good as part of salvation, so part of the Church. The Church thus grows and acts in all sorts of people, ways and places where it would not have been present under the old image.

However, this image is not without its warning: where saving acts are resisted, the Church is negated.

Our Church will never be the same as it was before Vatican II. Biblical studies, liturgy, theology, Church History and

spirituality were opened up to all the baptised. The dignity and mission of the baptised was proclaimed as never before — except possibly in the time of the Apostles. As for Religious Life, it is, I believe, still struggling to find its rightful role in the post-Vatican II Church.

In many ways, we have only begun to plumb the possibilities of the Council, and, in some ways, those whose position is threatened have resisted its message. I am prompted to ask myself,

- "What have I missed from the riches of the Council?"
- "How can I/we revive the excitement of the time immediately after it?"
- "How can I/we remain open to the wind of the Spirit, so much needed in our troubled times?"

At the same time I also thank God for the Council — for the changes that the Spirit has already prompted, and for the involvement of so many more of the baptised in the Mission that Jesus gave to us all.

Sister Annette Cunliffe is Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity. She is former President of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW)

FROM OUR READERS

Thank you to all contributors to *The Mix* over the years. The threads of society have been drawn together and into words in an effort to see and hear the voices since the Second Vatican Council. While pain and disappointment have been strong factors on our journeying experience, other factors give me great hope: the love of scripture, solidarity, social justice and generosity of heart. These are the ballast, and three cheers for our Bishops, who have to travel the uncharted waters. So all aboard the Barque of Peter and let us put out into the deep with the Holy Spirit at the helm. Let's raise our cup to a happy landing

Jean Clare, Ulverstone, Tas

It encourages my faith to read *The Mix*. As a Uniting Church minister, I often feel your voice not only adds perspectives of the Spirit which the U.C. needs to hear: it also reveals how deep and wide the common issues are. I know it is a long way off, but I pray God restores the unity of the Churches, leads our communions into a common prayer, feeds us together on the broken bread that makes us whole, and leads and nurtures the energy and faith of reformers such as yourselves.

Rev Terry Trewavas, Heidelberg, Vic

Essay – Vatican II: The Word in the Catholic tradition

by Francis J Moloney SDB

Those of us, now into our 60s, who had lived contented Roman Catholic lives in Australia across the 40s and 50s of last century, had no idea of what is nowadays meant by “the Word of God”. We lived by the words of the Church: the rare but important Encyclicals that came from the Holy Father, the instructions of our Australian Bishops, and especially of our local Bishop. This was particularly the case if, like me, you lived in Melbourne, and the local Bishop was the much-revered Daniel Mannix. However, our day-to-day Catholic lives were ultimately determined by local authorities: our teachers, almost always Religious women and men, and our local Priest. We learnt our Catechism by heart, and I do not think there was a serious citation from the Scriptures anywhere in the so-called “Penny Catechism”. The Mass was in Latin, all the readings were in Latin, and the same cycle of readings was read year in and year out.

There were some major difficulties in our time, of course, most importantly the split in the Australian Labour Party, which divided the Australian Church, especially along lines which either supported Dr Mannix and B. A. Santamaria, or the softer position taken by other Australian Bishops, especially Cardinal Gilroy in Sydney. But living in the Catholic enclave of Moonee Ponds, Melbourne, Victoria, there were no doubts about where we stood!

Just these few references to that not-too-distant past begin to make us aware of how our Catholic life, and that which nourishes this life, have changed. The agent of such change was the Second Vatican Council. This Council did not “creep up” on us gradually. It fell upon us like a thunderbolt, called by a charismatic Pope, John XXIII, in a moment of extraordinary insight. As the sessions unfolded from 1962-65, it gathered energy of its own. It was a heady experience to live in Rome as the Council concluded, listening to all the famous theologians, gathered there as experts. Vatican II left all concerned, from Paul VI and the Fathers of the Council itself, down to the simplest practising Catholic, somewhat breathless in its aftermath. In my experience and understanding, we are still struggling with that breathlessness. But more of that below!

This is not the place to examine all the good and bad results of the experience of being a Catholic in the 60s and 70s. But allow me to reflect briefly on the remarkable rebirth of interest in the Bible as a Word of God, directed to the whole Church

at Vatican II. One of the most subversive documents to come out of the Council was the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). The pre-conciliar Church was a deeply eucharistic Church, but an Ecumenical Council, the supreme teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, now told us that there was a new player on the block:

Just as from constant attendance at the eucharistic mystery the life of the Church draws increase, so a new impulse of spiritual life may be expected from increased veneration of the word of God, which “stands forever (Isa 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25) (*Dei Verbum* 26).

Inevitably, the emerging Catholic interest in the restoration of the Liturgy joined hands with an emerging Catholic biblical movement, commissioned by Pius XII, to restore the Word of God to its rightful place at the heart of the life of the Church.

Like most major achievements of Vatican II, this rebirth of interest in the biblical Word did not miraculously emerge at the Council itself. Its long pre-history goes back to the renewal of critical study of the Bible that began in Germany in the 19th century.

The new age of post-Enlightenment reason rejected a religion based upon a book full of so many *non-sequiturs* and contradictions. Committed Christian scholars began to work hard to show that the Bible was the presence of the Word of God, transmitted in the fragile and limited words of men and women.

As some of the Christian scholars accepted the rationalist critique too easily, the Roman Catholic Church initially rejected critical biblical scholarship. However, its agenda was finally and unconditionally accepted by the remarkable and surprising appearance, toward the end of World War II, of Pope Pius XII’s Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943). Pius XII asked Catholics to prepare themselves for a fuller understanding of the true meaning of the original texts, so that the treasures of the Bible, in all their richness, could be communicated to the Church.

Nowhere have the principles guiding critical biblical scholarship been better stated than in *Dei Verbum* 13:

Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men.

Catholic biblical scholarship had been working quietly up to that time, especially in the great European Catholic centres of biblical learning: Louvain, Paris, the Biblical Institute in Rome and the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. This had been accompanied by an intense interest in the renewal of the liturgical life, also going on in Europe for several decades before the Council, especially in Germany, Belgium and France.

Inevitably, the emerging Catholic interest in the restoration of the Liturgy joined hands with an emerging Catholic biblical movement, commissioned by Pius XII, to restore the Word of God to its rightful place at the heart of the life of the Church. The very life-blood of the Catholic Tradition, the Eucharist, was seen to be inextricably associated with the living presence of the Word of God in the community. These sentiments were succinctly articulated in *Dei Verbum* 21:

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ.

Bishops and Major Superiors of Religious Orders sent men and woman to study the Bible. Holiday courses in the Bible, visiting lecturers, especially from the USA, and even our local experts, drew large crowds. The Mass was celebrated in English, and we found that so much of our eucharistic celebration was “biblical”. The new Lectionary appeared. We were exposed to a rich cross-section of biblical passages, with special focus on the reading of Matthew, Mark and Luke across a three-year cycle, and the allocation of the Gospel of John to the great feasts of Christmas, and especially Easter. Priests were told that the proclamation of the Word, and preaching the Word, was an integral part of the liturgical life of the Church. Everyone was excited to find how life-giving an understanding of the Word of God, as a living presence of the voice of God, could be (see *Dei Verbum* 8).

Of course, it was not all “plain-sailing”. Shock descended on some circles when original intentions of the various authors of Genesis 1-11 were uncovered. Even more

serious was the problem of the historicity of the events reported in the infancy narratives of Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. The shock moved into action as some of these conclusions began to surface in post-conciliar catechetical texts. Bishops and their Religious Education personnel were placed under great pressure by small, but vocal groups who "united for the faith". But, in the light of Vatican II, one had to ask: which faith?

No doubt there was a great deal of naivety in those early decades after the Council, and many mistakes were made. We knew what we no longer wished to say and do within our believing community, but we were unsure of how to articulate what we did want to say and do! There was a moment of "stumbling in the dark", often not recognised as we were so buoyed up by the excitement of those days. Thus, of course, there was the occasional abuse of the new freedom that we had been given, and these exceptional cases stood in the limelight, and added fuel to a growing "slowing down" of the original enthusiasm.

As a professional biblical scholar of more than 30 years' experience, I have had the mixed blessing of living through the pre-conciliar experience to our present moment in the life of the Church when, in my experience, the "slowing down" mentioned above has almost become a full stop.

I suspect there are several reasons for this situation. In the first place, we must wait a period after the Council when the communication of the faith to a newer generation lost its way. A generation of young people emerged from that period – now the parents of a newer generation – who "fell between the cracks".

My experience as the Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University (1994-1998) taught me a great deal about the profundity of content and the pedagogical skills that are nowadays used in the process of communicating the faith. However, we have lost a generation, and they are not to be found working at their Bibles, or attending the seminars and sessions that are now increasingly difficult to run successfully. The task of recapturing the interest and enthusiasm of the present generation of young people demands extraordinary dedication and considerable skill.

Secondly, there is an increasing lack of confidence in a critical reading of the Bible. Many, including important Church leaders and Catholic lay leaders, see biblical scholarship as a danger to the simple faith of the ordinary people. These people can be exposed to every subtlety of their particular

profession or trade, but they are not to be challenged to look seriously at the very source that nourishes their faith. We are

facing a moment when the Word of God is once more seen as expressed only in the word of the teaching Church.

In 1943 Pius XII asked that the Catholic Church rediscover the fullness of its biblical heritage by returning to original sources, rather than simply accepting St Jerome's Latin *Vulgate*. These sentiments were repeated at Vatican II (*Dei Verbum* 12). In 2001 the Roman document, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, insists - for the sake of uniformity - that all liturgical readings of the Bible must use a recent Latin translation (the *Neo Vulgate*) as their basic point of reference.

In 1973, the outstanding biblical scholar, Raymond Brown, could write a caricature of a phenomenon that he regarded as a thing of the past:

If the biblical scholar was going to insist on the freedom to play with his new-fangled toys of language and literary form, he was to be kept in a playpen and not let out to disturb the good order of the theological household (R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973], 6).

It is my sense that this desire to curb the role of the Catholic exegete is not a thing of the past. Indeed, there is every indication that the golden era of biblical enthusiasm in the Catholic Church is on the wane.

The esteem for Catholic biblical scholarship among non-Catholics remains high, but its function within the life of the Church no longer occupies the place it had in the decades following the Council. Here at the Catholic University of America, where we run an internationally significant Department of Biblical Studies, non-Catholic students outnumber the Catholics.

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This is not the time to be discouraged, but to develop our sense of history, and a proper understanding of the significance of an Ecumenical Council. Most major events in world history are followed by a desire to restore the security of a time prior to those events. Only a few brief years after

the French Revolution (1789), the Bourbon family was back on the royal throne of France. But they did not last long. The principles of the Revolution had been let loose, and could not be stopped by restoration. After fighting a long and drawn-out revolutionary war, there were many in the new United States of America who wished to make George Washington their King in 1812. This also had no future, as it idealised the past.

A similar historical experience is evident in our post-conciliar period. This can be painful and confusing, especially for those of us who have been part of the authentic Catholic tradition before, during and after the experience of the Council, and who have given our lives to its agenda.

However, in a moment of its supreme teaching authority, the Church has stated:

But the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Christ. *Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it* (*Dei Verbum* 10. Stress mine)

The restoration of the biblical Word of God, authentically interpreted by a teaching authority, under the word and exercising its ministry in the name of Christ, forms part of the teaching of an Ecumenical Council.

I have mentioned only a few major places and themes from Vatican II where the Word in the Catholic Tradition appears, but it permeates almost every document that came from that remarkable ecclesial moment. It is understandable that many would prefer to "restore" the situation that I described in my earlier paragraphs, but one cannot write history backward, no matter how hard one may try.

These are not easy times for the Catholic Church – neither its leadership nor its faithful. Indeed, we have come a long way from my days in Moonee Ponds. But I believe it is a time of painful growth that cannot be denied by the "restoration" of an idealised past. The growth unleashed by Vatican II let loose a hunger for things unseen, and this hope will not be thwarted. "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom 8:24-25).

Fr Francis J. Moloney, SDB is an internationally renowned scripture scholar, author of many books and articles, currently Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic University of America, Washington DC, USA. Fr Moloney is also a Patron of Catalyst for Renewal.

The Bible – A new creation

Words for a Pilgrim People

'But you know the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you.' (John 14:7)

□□□

*"Without repeating everything that we have already mentioned, it is appropriate first of all to emphasize the following point: for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, 'Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.' St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the Word. It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus—the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity." (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41.)*

□□□

*"You will have to live with these memories and make them into something new. Only by acceptance of the past will you alter its meaning." (T S Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*, Act III, Faber and Faber, 1950, 177)*

□□□

*"Lord, who hast formed me out of mud,/ And hast redeemed me through thy blood,/ And sanctified me to do god;/ Purge all my sins done heretofore:/ For I confess my heavy score,/ And I will strive to sin no more.? Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,/ With faith, with hope, with charity;/ That I may run, rise, rest with thee." (George Herbert, *Trinity Sunday*.)*

□□□

For the man or woman of the Covenant, the Eternal Mystery of Love is the centre of their world, the source of their power to participate, their origin and their end. For such a person, living means growing in intimacy, or, more precisely, being drawn into the life of that Eternal Mystery of Love. For the man or woman of the Covenant, to be is to be in Love.

In John's Gospel we read of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus: "Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (3:16). The Mystery of Love that expressed itself in creation seeks to express itself in a New Creation. Life is creation; being is always be-coming. I find my identity in that Eternal Mystery of Love and my identity – my true identity – is a unique and communal expression of that Love.

Through the action of God as described in John's Gospel – the enfleshing of God in Jesus – the Mystery of Love is revealed as Persons-in-Love: Father, Son and (later in the same Gospel – eg 16:5-15) Spirit. The gift on offer, in and through Jesus, is participation in this Trinitarian Life, this Eternal Love Affair. The more we taste that gift, the more we are drawn into the intimacy and the more our lives are transformed and transforming.

The gift on offer in and through Jesus is participation in this Trinitarian Life.

No wonder Jesus saved some of his harshest condemnations for those who reduced the Covenant life to laws and regulations and rituals and duties. This reductionism has, in the end, only one thing in view: power and control – despite its fine rhetoric to the contrary. The Covenant offers us freedom from this egocentric, anxious and ultimately destructive lust for power and control – whether that lust comes from ourselves or others. □

The Tradition – A question of focus

One of the great truths of the Christian tradition is the affirmation of the indwelling Trinity – the Three-in-Love. The Eternal Love Affair of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is already within. Most of us are simply not daring enough to believe it. And that might be why we are so vulnerable to pointless and destructive power struggles – we become captivated by the things that do not matter because we are not captivated by the one thing that does matter.

Listen to the beautiful words of Isaac of Nineveh (7th-century Syrian bishop) – his reflections represent the best of the tradition: "Purify yourself and you will see heaven in yourself. In yourself you will see angels and their brightness, and you will see their Master with them and in them. ... The spiritual homeland of the person who has been purified is within. The sun that shines there is the light of the Trinity. The air breathed by the entering thoughts is the Holy Spirit the Comforter. With the person dwells the angels. Their life, their joy, their cause for celebration is Christ the light of the Father's light. Such a person rejoices every hour in the contemplation of his soul, and marvels at the beauty that appears, a hundred times brighter than the brightness of the sun. ... That is the kingdom of God hidden within us, according to the words of the Lord."

"Purify yourself and you will see heaven in yourself."

True knowledge of God liberates. When we are being liberated in this way, we see things in perspective, as never before. Everything is

relative to the Absolute. Not only is there freedom in this knowledge – which is also love – there is delight. Such a one is drawn by delight, moved to this and that by the power of love. Such a one is also more likely to attract people – or at least not repel them.

The great Basil of Caesarea (4th-century bishop) summed it up even more concisely, suggesting the transformative possibilities of one in whom the reality of the indwelling Trinity has emerged with some force: "The Spirit is the place of the saints and the saint is the place of the Spirit." Basil is here writing of the place and power of the Holy Spirit, not the triumph of wilful striving. In other words, the Holy Spirit is given, it is already within and because of the presence of the Spirit, we are "saints". Again, we might say the problem for most of us is that we do not dare to be "saints". Christianity is not about what I do for God but what God is seeking to do through me, with me and in me. All that remains is for me to say "Yes!" – every moment of every day. □

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com
www.communities.ninemsn.com.au/SpiritualityinthePub

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** – New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St June 12 “The Church has no place in Social Justice” Speakers tba (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

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

° **Bowral** – The Grand Bar and Brasserie April 24 “Religious Art & Spirituality” Ellen Waugh & Robert Curtis (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club May 8 “Remembering Vatican II” Paul Power & Robert Fitzgerald (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Canberra** – Whatever happened to Vatican II? The Southern Cross Club May 29 “Valuing other faiths – How far can we go?” Kevin Walcot & Kerri Hashmi (Info: Fran 6260 6737).

° **Five Dock** – Pathways to God The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St May 29 Athena Sheehan & Ashleigh Sheehan (Info: Noeline 9797 8862).

° **Jamberoo** – Vatican II The Jamberoo Hotel May 13 “Can the Church help the World?” Trish Hindmarsh & Phil Glendenning (Info: Anne 4232 1062 or Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** – Rekindling the Light – The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive May 7 “Celebrating the Diversity of Charisms” Moy Hitchen cfc & Cassandra Gibbs; June 4 “Reconciling & Integrating Body, Mind & Spirit” Kim Hill & Maggie Sands (Info: Robbie 4390 0370 or Clair 4344 6608).

° **Lismore** – Lismore Workers Club May 22 “Does Religion Matter Any More?” Geraldine Doogue & Br Neville Solomon (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

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

° **Northern Sydney** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney May 27 “Our Cities and Towns: The great divide” Margaret McMahon & Fr Glenn Boyd (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** – Unfinished Business for

the People of God The Bellevue Hotel May 1 “Marriage – does it matter any more?” Rebecca Gorman & Richard White; June 5 “Religious Life – does it matter any more?” Sr Maureen Flood & John Hill (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** – Golf Club June 19 “Spirituality and Welfare” Brian Murnane & tba (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** – The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd May 7 “Who is my Neighbour?” Jacquie Everett & Magsood Alshams (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **Rydalmere** – Responding to Change – The Family Inn Hotel, Cnr Park & Victoria Rds May 14 “..with boundless plains to share...” Margaret Moore rsm & “Vatican II – what we have missed out on” John Buggy (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

° **Waitara** – Put Out Into Deep Water The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy May 15 Fr Tom Rouse ssc & Sr Monica Sparks sgs (Info: Kathryn 9402 7842).

VIC:

° **Ballarat North** – North Star Hotel, Lydiard St, Second Wednesday each month 12.30-2pm (Info: Kevin 5332 1697).

° **Clayton** – Vatican II: Vision & Reality 40 Years On - The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 14 “Eucharist: Sacrament for sinners” (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).

° **Collingwood** – The Church of the Future – Where are we Going? – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm June 6 (Info: April 9391 0787).

° **Geelong** – (Info: Denis 5275 4120).

° **Heidelberg** – Tower Hotel, 838 Heidelberg Rd, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm June 12 “Fundamentalism” Speakers tba (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

° **Mordialloc** – Vatican II – Unfinished Business – The Kingston Club Hotel, 7.30pm-9pm June 26 “Spirituality in Different Faiths” John Dupuche & Swami Shankarananda (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

Other States

° **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).

° **Macclesfield (SA)** – Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street May 7 “Radical Christianity & Weaving Spirituality” Mary Cassini & Dean Nicholas Rundle (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. Aquinas also offers an accredited Certificate in Religious Studies for those wishing to teach in Catholic Schools. Michael Whelan SM is the Director (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, May 18 “Pentecost Vigil” (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Halifax-Portal lectures** – May 7 “Speaking the Truth in Love” Archbishop Peter Jensen; May 14 “Changing Alliances” Archbishop George Pell; May 21 “A Safe Place for Unsafe Ideas” Ms Geraldine Hawkes; May 28 “Defining a Role for the Churches in Australia’s Political Life” Ms Karin Sowada, Lidcombe Catholic Club 7.30pm (Info: Sr Trish 9390 5168)

° **Eremos events** – May 8, All Saints Anglican Church, Hunters Hill, 7.30pm “What can we learn from the poor?”; June 1 “Voices from the Margins” 10am-4pm, Chevalier Centre, Kensington (Info: Kate 9674 1216).

° **Catholic Adult Education Service Adelaide** – 40th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, CTC, Brooklyn Park, May 16 “The Holy Spirit & the Church” Fr Denis Edwards (Info: Sr Liz Morris (08) 8210 8162).

° **Public Lecture Melbourne University**, June 2 7.30pm “Growing in Faith: Born of and Celebrated by Communion” Fr Michael Whelan sm (Info: Nancy 03 9725 8333).

“VATICAN II: UNFINISHED BUSINESS”

NATIONAL FORUM
July 12, 13 & 14, 2002
at

St Joseph’s College,
Hunters Hill, NSW

Live in or commute

For further information and
Brochures, contact Patricia on
02 9247 4651

Recommended

Rabbit Proof Fence, Australian film, 2002, dir: Phil Noyce, with Ningali Lawford, David Gulpilil, Jason Clarke, Deborah Mailman and Kenneth Branagh

It is a bit dangerous to say to anyone, "You must see this film" – especially one that is unfortunate enough to earn the title "worthy". But *Rabbit Proof Fence* overcomes its own innate worthiness because of the strength of the story itself. On one level, it is a purely human drama with which anyone can identify: a story of three young girls facing incredible odds, and succeeding. On another level, it is a different film altogether, an indictment of Australia's treatment of our indigenous people. Given the ongoing debate on reconciliation, it is timely. The film is also a timely reminder of the danger of self-righteousness. The white people in the film are not particularly bad people; they are "just doing their jobs" – albeit, some with a zeal bordering on fanaticism. Kenneth Branagh, as Mr Neville – whom the Aboriginal people call Mr Devil – was chilling. We are reminded of Hannah Arendt's descriptive phrase when she reported on the trial of Adolf Eichmann: the banality of evil. The film makes us wonder how many similar stories are untold, of heroic resistance, of people with the courage to refuse to be "helped" when the "help" is so fraught with the twisted agenda of the "helper". The viewer is forced to reflect on his or her motivations and those actions that we perhaps too easily call "virtue". A challenging and rich film.

John L Allen, Jr, *Cardinal Ratzinger: The Vatican's Enforcer of Faith*, Continuum, 2000, 340 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index, pb, \$19.95US (amazon.com).

This review is being written on April 16, 2002 – Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's 75th birthday. John Allen's fine study of one of the Catholic Church's most controversial figures – a man on the verge of retirement? – is well worth reading. While he offers his own interpretations throughout the book, he does so after having presented substantial evidence. Allen is balanced and credible in his assessment of Ratzinger. He believes his subject is a man of honesty and intellectual coherence, and says, "in the unlikely event that I ever had access to Ratzinger as a confessor, I would not hesitate to open my soul to him, so convinced am I of the clarity of his insight, his integrity and his commitment to the priesthood." But Allen also makes another observation: "Having seen Fascism in action, Ratzinger today believes that the best antidote to political totalitarianism is ecclesial totalitarianism. In other words, he believes the Catholic Church serves the cause of human freedom by restricting freedom in its internal life, thereby remaining clear about what it teaches and believes." Ratzinger's intellectual roots are in the Church's greatest polemicist, St Augustine. Maybe it is not surprising, therefore, that he has moved from being a pioneering thinker of the Council to the leader of conservatism in the Church. This is a fascinating study.

Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God*, 341 pages, footnotes, index, pb, \$27.96US (amazon.com).

In 1986 Father Lohfink resigned his position as Professor of New Testament Studies in the University of Tübingen to live and work as a Catholic theologian in a movement for Christian community living in Germany – the Catholic Integrated Community. This experience of community has given him a whole new and enriched understanding of the ways of God as revealed in the Bible. Lohfink observes: "The Bible does not concern itself anywhere with pastoral plans and strategies. Instead, on almost every page it reveals that God does not act anywhere and everywhere, but in a concrete place. God does not act at any and every moment, but at a particular time. God does not act through anyone and everyone, but through people God chooses. If we do not come to recognise that again there will be no renewal of the Church in our time, for this principle of salvation history is true today as well." *Does God Need the Church?* is one of those rare books that is both scholarly and eminently readable. Those who have made a serious study of the Bible will have a head start, but any adult capable of serious reading will find this book immensely enriching. Lohfink answers the question he poses in the title with a resounding "Yes!". His reasons for that response are both enlightening and exciting. This is a wonderful book.

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