



# THE MIX



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## Our Say – Canonization is part of the tragicomedy

John Paul II recently canonized the Spanish priest, Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei. The swiftness with which the Pope moved to canonize Monsignor Escriva – just 27 years after his death – caused many to wonder what the real agenda was. Some Catholics – including some former Opus Dei members – have argued that Monsignor Escriva was an ill-tempered and arrogant man, unworthy of canonization. (See, eg, [www.odan.org](http://www.odan.org).)

Monsignor Escriva is the 468<sup>th</sup> person to be declared a saint by John Paul II. John Paul II has declared more saints than all of his predecessors combined over the past four-hundred years.

Over the centuries, about 10,000 people have been formally identified as saints, though most popular listings will stop well short of that number, at around 1500. Until John Paul's pontificate, 75% of those canonized were male celibates – mostly clerics and/or members of religious congregations. John Paul's 468 new saints probably do little to change that statistic

What is the purpose of canonization? Why do it? If canonization still has some validity – like encouraging holiness among the baptised – the current practice seems anomalous. We could be forgiven for thinking that canonization sometimes has more to do with politics than theology.

When politics overtakes theology in the life of the Church, some peculiar difficulties might arise. Once completed, the act of canonization is irrevocable. St Thomas Aquinas expresses the traditional belief as follows:

Honour we show the saints is a certain profession of faith by which we believe in their glory, and it is to be piously believed that even in this the judgement of the Church is not able to err. (*Quodl. 9:8,16.*)

So where does that leave us? Put simply, it leaves us living with an anomaly. Part of the genius of Catholicism is its ability to think "both/and" rather than "either/or". Despite appearances to the contrary, Catholicism – as the name implies – has a uni-

versality about it. It is, in fact, very inclusive. As Pope John Paul declared:

The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. (See *Words for a Pilgrim People*, page 6 of this issue of *The Mix*.)

The conversation then shifts to our understanding of "legitimate diversities". Historically, we have been at our worst when we have been too severe in our understanding of "legitimate diversities". Many lost their lives as a result of that severity.

Again, we can find a way forward by appealing to the genius of Catholicism. It contains in its very essence an ability – indeed a necessity – to embrace diversity – even anomalies – in service of unity.

At its best, Catholicism is like the Bible – it tells the story of God trying to love us and all of creation into freedom. The story is variously edifying and disgusting, beautiful and ugly, logical and illogical. The very human process of canonization does not look out of place in that tragicomic story. □

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  
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## THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Patrick Kirkwood. I was  
born in Beamish Street, Campsie, the  
last of six children. The house is still there  
— a doctor's surgery. Recently I went in  
and told the receptionist that I was born in  
this house, but the look on her face didn't  
encourage me to go further!

However as I looked up at the fancy  
moulded-plaster ceiling, back came the  
memory of it! Baby Patrick must have lain  
on the floor and looked at that ceiling. We  
left Campsie when I was three or four years  
old, so it was a primal memory!

In those rooms I would have first heard  
the murmur of the family rosary, which was  
recited each night kneeling at my parents'  
bedside, always ending with the Memorare  
of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

My father, Victor, was a Presbyterian  
Irishman from Belfast. He came to  
Australia and boarded with my grandmother  
at Kirribili. She led him into the Catholic  
Church.

He also fell in love with Catherine, one of  
the Higgins daughters, and that sealed his  
fate! He was a gentle man of deep  
convictions and faith.

We moved to the eastern suburbs to be  
nearer to the MSC priests. They came to St  
Mel's, Campsie, to help out with Masses at  
the weekend, and my eldest brother's  
contact with them caused him to join them.  
He had been studying law, but gave it all up  
to be an MSC priest.

Our family had a strong bond to that  
Order and to the Sacred Heart, and this was  
strengthened by our living in Randwick  
parish for many years. I became an altar  
boy at the Chapel of the Little Sisters of the  
Poor.

Sadly, my brother was never to be a  
priest. He fell ill and died just after his  
classmates had been ordained. My father  
had died two years earlier, aged only 60.

And so the flag was passed to me. There  
was an expectation that I would take it up.

I did my schooling with the MSCs at  
Douglas Park and developed a great love of  
literature, languages, physics and chemistry.  
I also loved music and singing.

I went to Melbourne to study philosophy  
and theology. It was one of the best  
theology faculties in Australia, and I fell in  
love with scripture and the writings of  
Bernard Lonergan, two of several passions  
which have never left me!

I led the choir and we relished singing  
Gregorian chant and polyphony.

I also matured slowly as a person, and my  
mentor, Fr Jim Cuskelly, helped me realise  
that I was not in the right place for my life's  
work.

The Provincial Superior said, "Why don't  
you try teaching? It will give you a chance

to get out and meet people, and we'll have  
you as a teacher for a while ..."

So I taught for a year at a secondary  
boarding college.

But I decided not to go on, and returned  
to Sydney and my family's welcome home.  
It was a big decision after 13 years in a  
close-knit community.

I joined the ABC as a producer of  
religious programs back in Melbour  
This time I fell in love with the wonders of  
radio and TV and relished the ecumenical  
atmosphere in which we worked.

It was exciting to be working with many  
churches and other faiths at this time, when  
Vatican II was just beginning.

I joined a choir and met a beautiful  
soprano, Mary Clements, and we have six  
wonderful children. She is also a member of  
Catalyst.

One of my pleasures in the ABC was to  
present the "Sacred Music" program every  
week for about 15 years.

For the last eight years, I was the Head of  
the Religious Department and learned some  
of the more devious politics and practices of  
broadcasting management!

After 25 years, I moved into the world of  
Catholic Education as a communications  
consultant and facilitator. I had an interest  
in "group" media to be used in group  
education. These were produced at the  
Catholic Audio Visual Centre at Homebush.

Last year I "retired", but I still work in  
spirituality, and Catalyst has been an  
inspiration for me.

Long may its spirituality of conversat  
continue and may the kindness of the heart  
of God be with you.



Patrick Kirkwood

# Your Say – ‘Open-the-Windows’ Reflection Competition for young people

Paul Durkin

In opening the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII called for a “new Pentecost” in the Church. He used the image of “opening the windows” of the Church to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Catalyst for Renewal used this image in flyers and on its website ([www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au](http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au)) to promote its “Reflection Competition” for young adults.

This competition was a key part of Catalyst for Renewal’s commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council.

While hoping to promote greater awareness of this significant event in the recent history of the Church, Catalyst also wished to offer young adults an opportunity to present what they consider to be the hopes, dreams and challenges for their Church.

The judges were impressed by the diversity of presentations, the passion, confidence and maturity reflected in the works, and the willingness of entrants to name and tackle the difficult issues facing the Church.

Consistent issues addressed were those around ordained priesthood and meaningful liturgy, while common concerns were ecumenism and social justice.

The judges noted that the entries reflected much hope for the future, based on conviction that Jesus’ message is still “Good News” for the world.

**The entrants were willing to name and tackle the difficult issues facing the Church, particularly ordained priesthood and meaningful liturgy.**

For the young adults who presented their ideas, it was clear that the Church is much more than buildings, that they are engaged in a living faith which calls them to be involved with the concerns of the world.

The winning entries, in particular, reflected a strong awareness that Vatican II has called the Church to an active commitment to renewal.

Entrants for the competition were divided into two categories: senior school students (Years 10-12) and post-school young adults up to 30 years of age.

Entries were received from across

Australia. Entrants had four choices: they could submit an article up to 1,000 words, an artwork accompanied by a 200-word reflection, an ICT (Information & Communication Technology) presentation or a video production.

Members of the organizing committee were: Ann-Maree Fagan (Young Adults Ministry, Parramatta), John Robinson (Assistant Principal, Marist College, Eastwood), Paul O’Shea (Religious Education Coordinator, St Patrick’s College, Strathfield), Louise Robinson (Religious Education Coordinator, Holy Cross College, Ryde) and Paul Durkin (Religious Education Adviser, Catholic Education Office, Sydney).

**The judges were impressed by the passion, confidence and maturity reflected in the works.**

Judges for the competition were Patrick Kirkwood (Audio Visual, Website and Publications Manager, Catholic Education Office, Sydney) and Robyn Kirby (Manager and Presenter, Catholic Adult Education Centre, Sydney).

It is a pleasure to announce the names of all those who won in their category or achieved runner-up status.

## First Category Senior Students (Years 10-12)

### Written Pieces:

#### Winning entries

Matthew Bentley and Andrew Gooley.

#### Runners-up

Christopher Gentile, Nicholas Allen, Douglas Hume, Julia Ker and Patrick Boidin.

### ICT Presentations:

#### Winning entry

Alex Reuter-Town.

#### Runners-up

Teresa Simonetti, Salvatore Cavallaro and Tim Short.

### Artwork:

#### Winning entry

Annaliese Ebejer.

#### Runners-up

Chris Polchleb and Daniel Ronchetti.

### Video production:

#### Winning entries

Selfianus Rumbewas and Raymond Raad.

**Schools deserving of a special commendation because of the significant number of entries they submitted:**

Holy Cross College, Ryde, NSW  
Mercedes College, Perth, WA  
Santa Sabina College, Strathfield, NSW  
St Patrick’s College, Strathfield, NSW

## Second Category Young Adults (Post-school)

### Written Pieces:

#### Winning entry

Greg Smitheram.

#### Runner-up

Michael Romeo.

□ □ □

The ‘Open-the-Windows’ Reflection Competition for Young People was part of Catalyst for Renewal’s year-long commemoration of the Second Vatican Council. The idea was to give the young adults of our Church an opportunity not only to reflect but also to express themselves creatively on related issues and concerns.

At the Vatican II week-end conference that Catalyst for Renewal ran in July at St. Joseph’s College, Hunters Hill, Sydney, many participants expressed their reactions in very positive terms: ‘Absolutely a renewing experience!’ ‘A re-focus on the personal responsibility of our faith commitment’, ‘A very wonderful faith experience!’ ‘I have been re-energised’, ‘Inspiring!’ Let us hope that the young participants in the Reflection Competition experienced something similar, and that it will stay with all of them.

Our congratulations to the winners and thanks to all participants!

# Essay – Vatican II: the journey from here

by Michael Whelan

**On October 11, 2002, Catalyst held a dinner to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. What follows is the text from the presentation by Michael Whelan.**

In his speech at the Opening Session of the Second Vatican Council on this day in 1962, Pope John XXIII chided the “prophets of doom”, people who “behave as if they had learned nothing from history ... and as if in the time of the preceding ecumenical Councils everything represented a complete triumph for Christian ideas and for Christian life and for rightful religious liberty”.

Pope John clearly envisaged a Council like no other in the history of the Church. In an exhortation – *Sacrae laudes* – he had referred to the Church “crossing the line into a new age”. The Church could not simply go on, business as usual. Archbishop Capovilla – John’s secretary in Venice and Rome – recalls the words of Pope John to him on the eve of the announcement of the Council in January 1959:

The world is starving for peace. If the Church responds to its Founder and rediscovers its authentic identity, the world will gain. I have never had any doubts against faith. But one thing causes me consternation. Christ has been there on the cross with his arms outstretched for two thousand years. Where have we got to in proclaiming the Good News? How can we present his authentic doctrine to our contemporaries?

*Aggiornamento* (ie “updating”) was needed. And a new attitude was also needed: “Nowadays”, the Pope said in that same Opening Speech,

the Spouse of Christ prefers to use the medicine of mercy rather than severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations ... (We must, therefore) earnestly and fearlessly ... dedicate ourselves to the work our age demands of us.

Thus the first “pastoral” Ecumenical Council in the history of the Church came into being – a new style of Council for a new time. The Council documents – both in content and style – reflect this pastoral intent, this new mood. Words and concepts such as “people of God”, “pilgrim Church”, “the universal call to holiness”, “collegiality”, “co-responsibility” and “communion”, became common currency. The privilege and responsibility of all the baptized was beginning to re-emerge as the

primary determinant of the Church and the way it would function in the coming generations.

If you are looking for dogmatic definitions or the resolution of issues, it would be disconcerting to read the documents of the Council. Those documents, like the Council itself, are an invitation to explore new and more fruitful ways of being Church.

The Second Vatican Council marked the end of a certain way of being Church – an imperial form that had emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries. This form of Church had been consolidated through subsequent centuries by such events as the Gregorian Reform of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Council of Trent of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Counter Reformation that was set in train there, and the First Vatican Council of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the definition of papal infallibility that emerged there.

The Catholic Church entering the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was more of a sanctuary from the world than a sign in it. John XXIII – and many others – saw that this situation could not continue. What they did not see – and perhaps could not have seen – was that the Catholic population and particularly the bishops and clergy were utterly unprepared for what was about to happen.

## The Second Vatican Council marked the end of a certain way of being Church – an imperial form that had emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries.

John XXIII died on June 3, 1963 – a matter of a few months after the Council had begun. The Council Fathers – for the most part – had welcomed Pope John’s invitation to seek out a new way of being Church. The clearest manifestation of this – and a sign of things to come – was their wholesale rejection of the schemas presented by the preparatory commissions as not corresponding with the spirit of *aggiornamento* requested by Pope John. Would the next Pope have the courage to continue the journey?

Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan, was elected as John’s successor on June 21 – eighteen days after John’s death. He took the name of Pope Paul VI. In a speech broadcast to the whole world on the following day, Saturday June 22, 1963, he gave an unhesitating and unambiguous “Yes” to the Council. He went on to say that his entire pontificate would be devoted to the Coun-

cil. The Second Session of the Council opened three months later on September 29, 1963.

Just before the Third Session of the Council opened on September 14, 1964, Paul VI published his first encyclical – *Ecclesiam suam*. In this encyclical the Pope formally introduced the word “colloquium” – meaning “conversation” or “dialogue” – into the Church’s vocabulary, and with it one of the critical mechanisms for moving forward towards a whole new way of being Church.

Paul VI was pointing to a Church that finds its very existence in and through the “colloquium salutis” – “the conversation of salvation” (ie God’s conversation of liberating love). In this encyclical we read:

“We need to keep ever present this ineffable, yet real relationship of the dialogue, which God the Father, through Christ in the Holy Spirit, has offered to us and established with us, if we are to understand the relationship which we, i.e., the Church, should strive to establish and to foster with the human race” (71).

The Church was beginning to rediscover its *raison d’être* – to be a sign of the liberating love of God in and for the world – and thus the journey from an imperial model of Church towards a Gospel model of Church was beginning to take shape.

The practical implications of Paul’s dialogical vision are considerable. In *Ecclesiam suam* we hear him say, for example:

- “The Church should enter into dialogue with the world in which it exists and labors” (65);
- “The dialogue ought to characterize our Apostolic Office (ie the papacy)” (67);
- “The child is invited to it; the mystic finds a full outlet in it” (70);
- “This type of relationship indicates a proposal of courteous esteem, of understanding and of goodness on the part of the one who inaugurates the dialogue; it excludes the *a priori* condemnation, the offensive and time-worn polemic and emptiness of useless conversation” (79);
- “The dialectic of this exercise of thought and of patience will make us discover elements of truth also in the opinions of others, ... The dialogue will make us wise; it will make us teachers” (83);
- “And before speaking, it is necessary to listen, not only to a person’s voice, but to the person’s heart. People must first be understood – and, where they merit it, agreed with” (87).

The ongoing “colloquium”, says Pope Paul VI, must be fostered in four “circles of dialogue” – with the whole of humanity with those of other religious traditions; with those Christians who are not Catholics and

with other Catholics. Of the last "circle" he says: "It is our ardent desire that this conversation with our own children should be full of faith, of charity, of good works, should be intimate and familiar" (113).

One of the most immediate, practical and significant challenges we face, if we are to move forward according to this vision of John XXIII, the Council and Pope Paul VI, is that of facilitating discontinuity amidst continuity and maintaining continuity amidst discontinuity. This will require a new kind of thinking – the kind of thinking that John Henry Newman seems to be implying in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* when he writes:

"(An idea's) vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom which become more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope. At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise in and around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms. It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (cf Chapter 1, Section

We could put the challenge of this kind of thinking in the form of different questions, such as:

- How can we develop a consciousness that is at once imbued with and utterly faithful to the tradition, yet open to new possibilities for the expression of the Gospel today?
- How do we admit that we have been wrong without losing faith in the teaching role of the Church or eroding our conviction that God is with us until the end of days?

This is neither the time nor the place to attempt a thorough treatment of this most complex and difficult issue. However, I raise it here because I believe there is a deep-seated fear, in the minds of many – implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously – that the discontinuity is sabotaging or will sabotage the continuity. As a result of this fear the continuity we are stuck with is not serving us well. Or, to put it more bluntly, our inability to incorporate into our thinking and deal well with the fact that we are able to make mistakes is imprisoning us.

That said, there are some very significant signs of hope in this regard. Consider

the quantum leap that we have found it possible to make with respect to our relations with other Christian Churches. Implicit in that is an admission that we did get it badly wrong – at least in some respects. Of course, it goes without saying that the journey towards greater understanding of and more cooperation with our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths has barely begun.

Consider further, the enormous changes we have made in the liturgy, despite the 16<sup>th</sup> century proclamation by Pius V that the Tridentine Missal was to remain the norm forever. Again, the journey has barely begun.

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### **How can we develop a consciousness that is at once imbued with and utterly faithful to the tradition, yet open to new possibilities for the expression of the Gospel today?**

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I believe there are also substantial signs in the writings of John Paul II that suggest he is not as fearful as some members of the Curia about opening up new possibilities and moving beyond old ways of thinking and acting. See, for example, his December 1990 encyclical, *Redemptoris missio*, (eg paragraph 28 where he speaks of the universality of the Holy Spirit), his May 1995 encyclical, *Ut unum sint* (eg paragraph 95 where he calls for a reform of the papacy), and his January 2001 ecclesial pronouncement, *Novo millennio ineunte* (eg paragraph 44 where he urges the development of different structures to safeguard communion).

The International Theological Commission's March 2000 "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past" is also a promising sign.

However, much more change is needed. And the biggest change of all will be a change of consciousness, a new way of thinking about ourselves – especially our vocation to be the earthen vessels that carry the great treasure of God's liberating love for the world (cf 2Corinthians 4:7). And we find an interesting ally in an unlikely place.

In the September 2, 2000, issue of *The Tablet*, the emeritus professor of history at the University of Nottingham, Robert Markus, reviewed Garry Will's book, *Papal Sins: Structures of Deceit*. In that review, Markus quoted a statement of Pope Pelagius II from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century:

Dear brethren, do you think that when Peter was reversing his position, one should have replied: We refuse to hear what you are saying because you previously taught the opposite? In the mat-

ter (now under discussion) one position was held while truth was being sought, and a different position was adopted after truth had been found: why should a change of position be thought a crime by this See which is humbly venerated by all in the person of its founder? For what is reprehensible is not changing one's mind, but being fickle in one's views. Now if the mind remains unwavering in seeking to know what is right, why should you object when it abandons its ignorance and reformulates its views?

Markus goes on to note that, significant as the point of view expressed here is, even more significant is the fact that the words were actually penned for Pelagius by a certain deacon who was to succeed him within a few years as Pope Gregory the Great.

For some people, the issue of change suggested above might present absolutely no anguish at all. I suggest that might indicate they have no grasp of the depths and significance, the complexity and subtlety of what is at stake. And I am thinking of such issues as the role of the papacy – raised by the Pope himself – new forms of ministry, especially ordained priesthood, attitudes and teachings pertaining to sexuality, marriage laws, the centrality of freedom and the primacy of conscience, and regulations concerning participation in the Eucharist.

It would be dangerously naïve to think these issues could be dealt with by doing simply this or simply that. It would be equally naïve to think that these issues do not call for urgent and radical attention.

Pope John XXIII issued the challenge, the Second Vatican Council took it up,

Pope Paul VI carried it forward. Pope Paul VI also gave us a wise and practical description of how we might proceed – through good conversation anchored in and manifesting God's conversation with the world. The privilege and the responsibility are ours to continue the journey.

By way of conclusion, let me suggest three ultimate principles and three practical rules we might bear in mind if we are to thrive in and contribute creatively to the Church of the coming years. The three principles are:

- firstly, the world belongs to God – it is in good hands;
- secondly, the Church belongs to God – it is in good hands;
- thirdly, we belong to God – we are in good hands.

The three rules are:

- firstly, listen with the ears of your heart that you might discern what you must do;
- secondly, give yourself intelligently and generously to what you must do;
- thirdly, be utterly detached from the outcome!

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*Michael Whelan is a Marist priest and is Director of Aquinas Academy in Sydney, a founding Member of Catalyst for Renewal and Editor of The Mix.*

### Words for a Pilgrim People

*'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me'. (John 14:1)*

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*Such a vision of communion is closely linked to the Christian community's ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit. The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life. (John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001), 46.)*

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*Please note that once the symbol-mongering organism has a world, he must place himself in this world. He has no choice. He cannot not do it. If he refuses to make a choice, then he will experience himself placed in this world as one who has not made a choice. He is not like a dog or a cat who, when deprived of all stimuli, goes to sleep. Unlike an organism in an environment, a man in a world has a unique capacity for being delighted with the world and with himself and his place in the world, or being bored with it, anxious about it, or depressed about it. He can exploit it, celebrate it, be a stranger in it, or be at home in it. He has, moreover, the perverse capacity for getting things backwards and upside down. He, of all creatures, is capable of feeling good during hurricanes and sad on ordinary Wednesday afternoons. (Walker Percy, "Is a Theory of Man Possible?" in Patrick Samway, editor, *Signposts in a Strange Land*, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1991, 127.)*

□□□

*The heart has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing; we feel it in many things. I say that the soul naturally loves universal being, and naturally loves itself according as it devotes itself thereto; and it hardens itself against one or the other as it pleases. (Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, J.M.Dent & Sons, 59.)*

□□□

On the Second Sunday of Advent (Year B) we meditate on Mark 1:1-8: "A voice cries out in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The whole being of the baptiser is a pointing: "Someone is following me ..." His vocation is to be a sacrament, a person in whom and through whom God enters the world. This mood is struck by all the great men and women of the Bible. It is unmistakably present in Mary's words: "You see before you the Lord's servant. Let it happen as you have said" (Luke 1:38).

The disciple is not here to do his or her own will. The disciple is a disciple precisely because she or he does the will of the Lord. Discipleship is constituted by this surrender. The disciple is in the world on behalf of the Lord and therefore the Lord is in the world.

**The disciple is a disciple precisely because she or he does the will of the Lord.**

John the Baptist reminds us that the disciple is always a precursor. The disciple prepares the way of the Lord. And there is a stunning paradox in this process of preparation: The disciple disappears so that the Lord may appear. The disciple is there so that the Lord – not the disciple – may be present. And the disciple finds his or her presence and identity and deepest fulfilment in that.

The disciple is always waiting. Living is creative anticipation. Because the disciple thinks of his or her life as preparing the way of the Lord, every person event or thing is promise, every moment is full of possibilities. Each instance on the journey is a sacrament. There are no interruptions, only interventions. □

## The Tradition – Let God be God in you

The great guides of the Tradition are very conscious that we who would be disciples of Jesus Christ must make the Father's will the source of all our living. If you were to ask any of those guides, "Why do I live?", the answer would be, "To do the will of God". This demands self-transcendence, detachment, letting go, abandonment to the Great Mystery of God.

One of those guides who has placed particular emphasis on this is the Dominican known as Meister Eckhart (1260-1328). His sermons come to us via those who listened and took notes. They are sometimes difficult to follow, both because of their rich content and because of this method of transmission. However, we can generally find good insight there. In one of his sermons we read:

"Where creature stops, God begins to be. Now all God wants of you is for you to go out of yourself in the way of creatureliness and let God be within you. The least creaturely image that takes shape in you is as big as God. How is that? It deprives you of the whole of God. As soon as this image comes in, God has to leave with all His Godhead. But when the image goes out, God comes in. God desires you to go out of yourself (as creature) as much as if all His blessedness depended on it.

**Where creature stops, God begins to be.**

"My dear friend, what harm can it do you to do God the favour of letting Him be God in you? Go right out of yourself for God's sake, and God will go right out of *Himself* for your sake! When these two have gone out, what is left is one and simple. In this One the Father bears His Son in the inmost source. Out of that the Holy Ghost blossoms forth, and then there arises in God a will which belongs to the soul. As long as this will stands untouched by all creatures and all that is created, this will is free. Christ says, "No man comes to heaven but he who came from heaven" (John 3:13). All things are created out of nothing, therefore their true source is nothing, and as far as this noble will inclines to creatures, it is dissipated with creatures in their nothing. The question arises, whether this noble will can be so dissipated that it can never return. The masters generally declare that it can never return in so far as it is dispersed in time. But I say: whenever this will turns back from itself, and from all creation for a moment into its primal source, then the will has its true birthright of freedom and is free, and in this moment all time lost is recovered." □

# Bulletin Board

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

### SIP Meetings

**SIP Promoter** – Terry O’Loughlin on (02) 16 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

Email: [terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com)  
<http://communities.ninemsn.com.au/SpiritualityinthePub>

**NSW and ACT** – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** – New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St **Recommence 2003** (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

° **Alstonville** – 4-6pm, The Pickled Palm at Wollongbar Tavern **Recommence 2003** (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

° **Bowral** - The Grand Bar and Brasserie **Recommence 2003** (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** – Campbelltown Catholic Club **Recommence 2003** (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Canberra** - The Southern Cross Club Woden **Recommence 2003** (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

° **Engadine** – NEW – Engadine RSL, Old Princes Highway, **Recommence 2003** (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 75).

° **Five Dock** – The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **Recommence 2003** (Info: Noeline 9797 8862).

° **Jamberoo** – The Jamberoo Hotel **Recommence 2003** (Info Anne 4232 1062 or Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** – Out of the Chaos Came ... – The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive March 4 “Keeping our Collective Hopes Alive” Francois Kunc & Fr Frank Brennan (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** – Mary Gilhooley’s Pub Club **Recommence 2003** (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Northern Sydney** – Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney **Recommence 2003** (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** – Of Human Life The Bellevue Hotel, 159 Hargrave Street, **Recommence March 5 2003** “Human being – being human” (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** - Golf Club **Recommence 2003** (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Purse Hill** - The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd **Recommence 2003** (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **Rydalmere** – The Family Inn Hotel, Cnr Park & Victoria Rds **Recommence 2003** (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel on the Pacific Hwy **Recommence 2003** (Info: Carol 9869 1036).

**VIC:**

° **Ballarat North** – North Star Hotel, Lydiard St, Second Wednesday each month 12.30-2pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Kevin 5332 1697).

° **Clayton** – The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Yvonne 9700 7340 or Joyce 9700 1250).

° **Colac** – The Union Club Hotel **Recommence 2003** (Info: Winsome 5235 3203).

° **Collingwood** – The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: April 9327 4433).

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

° **Heidelberg** – Tower Hotel, 838 Heidelberg Rd, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

° **Mordialloc** – The Kingston Club, 7.30pm-9pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

° **Mornington** – The Royal Hotel, Victorianna Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Ange 9787 8178 or Carole 5976 1024).

### Other States

° **Devonport (TAS)** - Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, 7.30pm-9pm December 4 “Vatican II: Unfinished Business” SIP Committee Panel (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Hobart North (NEW)** – The Mustard Pot Hotel Moonah 7.30-9pm **Recommence 2003** (Info: Gwayne 6228 2679).

° **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 & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of month (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

° **Macclesfield (SA)** – Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street **Recommence 2003** (Info: Michael 8388 9265).

° **The Talking MIX** is now available on tape. Annual subscription: \$40. For further information contact Pauline on 02 9816 4262.

### Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney has just published its programs for 2003. Included

in the program are special short courses on Islam, Judaism and Thomas Merton. There will also be two special seminars – one with Terry O’Connell – renowned both here and internationally for his outstanding work in restorative justice – and Michael Leunig – renowned for his incisive and insightful cartoons. Michael Whelan SM is the Director. Inquiries welcome. (Info: Patricia on 02 9247 4651).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre**, Pennant Hills, “Preparing for the Christmas Feast” December 13-15 (Info: 9484 6208).

° **St Mary’s Towers Retreat Centre** Douglas Park December 28-January 5 Spirituality for Intimacy retreat; January 7-15 Life’s Healing Journey; January 17-25 Directed retreat; March 7-9 Prayer weekend; March 14-20 Guided retreat (Info: Sr Joan 4630 9159).

° **Catholic Institute of Sydney** two summer schools, January 15-21 “Faith, Marriage & Divorce” Professor Michael Lawler; January 15-17 (plus 2 weekends) “Spirituality in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” Fr David Ranson – closing date 6 December (Info: 9752 9500).

° **Remembering John Main** Mon Dec 30<sup>th</sup>, 5.30pm-8pm, St James Crypt, King St, Sydney. Bring contribution for shared supper. (Info: Janet O’Sullivan 9314 6386).

## CATALYST ANNUAL APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We have launched our Fourth Annual Appeal by writing to our *Friends* to help us in our mission of raising the level of good conversation in the Australian Catholic Church.

Thank you for your generous response in the past. We are hoping to raise a similar amount through this Fourth Appeal.

As of November 13, this Appeal had raised \$25,280.

We continue to ask for your generous support.

## CONGRATULATIONS TOM UREN AO

Tom Uren, long time friend of Catalyst, was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Sydney University. Well done Tom!

# Recommended

Robert Barron, *The Strangest Way: Walking the Christian Path*, Orbis Books, 2002, 175 pages, endnotes, pb, \$34.95. (Available from Rainbow Books Agency - 03 9481 6611.)

Christianity always stands in danger of becoming too comfortable, too much identified with the ways of the world in which it finds itself. The person and teaching of Jesus bring a radical message that is at once the very message for which the world longs and at the same time a message the world will always resist. Robert Barron reminds us of some of the simple truths of our Catholic tradition, truths that have, in many instances, faded from the modern consciousness. *The Strangest Way* speaks of the Cross – “how awful and strange it is” and how contrary to much modern Christianity that is “bland and domesticated, easy to grasp and unthreatening” – and of the call “to be holy with the very holiness of God”, to foster a “giving of self that mirror(s) the radicality of God’s own gift of self in Christ”, so contrary to the subjectivism and ego-focussed living that characterises much of modern Western living. Barron draws on a range of authors, from Aristotle and St Thomas to Flannery O’Connor and Bob Dylan. This book offers no formulae or answers, but a well-reasoned call to look again at the wisdom of the Christian centuries, to a spiritual tradition that we are in grave danger of forgetting. And our remembering at this time, Barron reminds us, will include the recognition of strangeness, that we are all misfits who belong.

Jim Forest, *Confession: Doorway to Forgiveness*, Orbis Books, 2002, 174 pages endnotes, pb, \$35.95. (Available from Rainbow Books Agency - 03 9481 6611.)

The Gospel of Matthew records that when people came to John for baptism they also confessed their sins (3:6). The early Christians maintained this connection between baptism and confession of sins (see Acts 2:38). Down the centuries, the various ways of arranging for the confession of sins has varied. So too, the community’s understanding of sin and how forgiveness might be sought and given, has changed. However, the need for the confession of sin has never changed and the community’s responsibility to provide structures within which God’s mercy can be received has never changed. *Confession* is a very thoughtful and thought-provoking book. Forest avoids trite calls to “come back” to the practice of confession – he believes there is evidence people are actually doing that anyway – or silly criticisms of “liberals” and their requests for a “third rite”. He does present good reasons for taking this matter very seriously. He also gives a short history of confession, practical tools for examining one’s conscience and suggestions for finding a confessor. Forest calls on the wisdom found in the Gospels and such writers as Dostoevsky and Walker Percy as well as the ordinary wisdom of individuals who speak of their experience of confession. Approach this book with an open mind – it will almost certainly surprise you. It may even heal you.

Edward C Sellner, *The Celtic Soul Friend: A Trusted Guide for Today*, Ave Maria Press, 2002, 254 pages, endnotes, pb \$44.95. (Available from John Garratt Publishing – 03 9545 3111.)

St Brigit of Kildare said: “Anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head”. Sellner says: “This book is about the origins, history and meaning of soul friendship as expressed in various pre-Christian and Christian writings.” *The Celtic Soul Friend* begins with an exploration of the historical origins of the soul friend. Chapter two discusses the influence of the desert fathers and mothers; chapter three relates the coming of Christianity and the leadership given by the Celtic soul friends. Also discussed are the physical landscapes and the spiritual topographies of the outstanding soul friends. Sellner stresses the importance of memory and the spiritual traditions of the ages – we lose our way if we become forgetful. In the Celtic tradition, the spirituality and kinship provided a profound ecclesial unity for many centuries, long before there was any administrative structure binding the various churches together. Modern Western culture is a strange mix of connections and disconnections. There is undoubtedly a cry for spiritual connectedness in our culture. Many simply do not find the structures of community, ritual, symbol and sound instruction that can guide their spiritual quest well. The Celtic tradition much to offer the soul-starved citizens of contemporary Australia. This is a good book for group study and reflection.

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