



THE MIX



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Our Say – Vatican II as blueprint?

Much has been written about the content of Vatican II and the documents produced by it. Very little has been said about the process of that Council or the process implied in its documents. The eminent Church historian, John O'Malley SJ, suggests there is much to be gained by paying close attention to the process. He writes:

I think the council provided precisely that blueprint (we need in our present crisis). I also think that Vatican II intended to make some fundamental changes in the way the church operates. And that those changes, should they be put into practice, would do much to address our current situation and give us confidence for the future. Perhaps the main reason they have not been put into practice is that the radical nature of the council has never been accepted or understood. Vatican II, for all its continuity with previous councils, was unique in many ways but nowhere more so than in its call for an across-the-board change in church procedures or, better, in church style. Vatican II made a significant break with the past. ("The Style of Vatican II," *America*, February 24, 2003, 12. The Editor will

assist *Mix* readers to get a copy of this fine little essay on request.)

O'Malley suggests the Council asked a crucial question, one which set it on a radical path: "How is the church?". That is, "what kind of procedures does it use; what kind of relationships does it foster among its members; what is its *style* as an institution?" The Council Fathers surely did not spend 1,000 pages – twice as many as were written at Trent – simply to tell us it was business-as-usual. They did not leave us all those documents merely to endorse a series of external changes – such as moving the altar to face the people or getting the nuns into contemporary dress – or to encourage us to be more faithful and more generous. The Council was much more profound than that.

So what conclusions might we draw from the process by which the Council operated and wrote its documents? Among the conclusions we might draw, there are two in particular that suggest themselves to us at this time. The first and most obvious con-

clusion is that the new style introduced by the Council implies a new awareness of the Church and its place in the world – see, for example, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) and the Decree on Religious Liberty. We are yet to fully appropriate that new awareness.

Perhaps the second conclusion we might draw is that the Council invited us to be a people-in-dialogue. O'Malley observes:

For the first time in history, official ecclesiastical documents promoted respectful listening as the preferred mode of proceeding, as a new ecclesiastical "way," a new ecclesiastical style (14).

Catalyst for Renewal represents mainstream Catholicism in light of the Second Vatican Council. More specifically, the Council's vision is dependent on the processes of good conversation, without which there can be no collegiality and subsidiarity – two of the hallmarks of the Church's new style. The Council gave us a wonderful challenge. We must respond generously. □

This journal is one of the works of
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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

In an exception to our usual format, following is the story of an exceptional man, Charlie Cullen, presented in the form of a shortened and edited version of the eulogy prepared by the family.

Born in Bathurst, NSW, in 1931, Charlie Cullen died at his home in Manly on April 4, 2003. The second of seven children, Charlie had to assume a lot of responsibility, supporting his mother for the long periods while his father was absent at his work. He was the acknowledged leader of the kids in their wide-ranging and enjoyable life as a fairly self-contained family.

He was academically bright and involved at school. His love of the bush led him into accepting a scholarship to study forestry science at Sydney University and at Canberra. When he graduated, he worked his way around Australia for a year before joining the NSW Forestry Commission.

But Charlie was restless. He wanted to make a contribution to others, so he decided to study medicine, supporting himself financially by working at a range of jobs during the University vacations. He graduated with Honours. After graduation as a medical doctor, he worked in the hospital system in metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and general practice locums in rural NSW.

Charlie's restlessness led him to consider migrating to Canada. Rather than migrate to Canada, however, after travelling extensively, he obtained his specialist physician higher degree and then headed off to Brazil for two years. In Brazil Charlie led a Medical missionary team on the Amazon River.

He then spent a further year with OXFAM in war-torn Nigeria – the sole doctor in a hundred-bed hospital!

After the ceasefire, Charlie was involved in food distribution in what had formerly been Biafra.

He married Yvonne Taylor in 1970 in Rome, and in 1974 they adopted 3-week-old Tei, named after one of Charlie's great favourites, Teilhard de Chardin.

He felt restricted with organic medicine and thought he could more fully exercise his strong social justice convictions as a psychiatrist rather than a physician. Charlie therefore studied for and obtained his specialist qualifications as a psychiatrist in 1974.

He worked at Callan Park, Sydney Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, the Aboriginal Health Service at Redfern and even in the Bronx, New York.

A year after returning to Sydney, he was appointed State Director of Migrant Health Services for three years.

In 1984, while Charlie was broadening his educational base even further, by completing a Master of Science in Community Medicine in England, Yvonne died from the complications of a chronic illness.

In 1985, he met Karen "in jail" – as he always enjoyed telling people – while both were working part-time at Long Bay. They made a good (though turbulent) team.

In 1986, they were married and in 1987 their daughter, Claire Alexis, was born.

Karen and Charlie have both said that their 17 years of marriage were the happiest years of their lives. As a family, they worked hard, played hard and travelled widely in Australia and overseas.

Charlie was an intellectual man of wide interests and extensive knowledge, which he was willing to share with anyone who was interested. No question was too dumb, no opinion too ignorant, to trigger his desire to share his knowledge and use his great skill to explain things simply and methodically.

We admired the honesty, integrity, tolerance, independence and sense of responsibility he exercised in his professional and personal life. He didn't believe in wasting money, but he was generous where it counted – even to the Taxation Department.

The international aid agencies to whom he contributed have done many projects because of his regular contributions.

In his last years, he returned to his Catholic faith as he pursued the development of his spirituality in earnest, feeling very grateful for having had the opportunity to see things afresh.

We all looked to Charlie for information, guidance and inspiration, and love. We have received all of them.

We will miss you, Charlie.



Charlie Cullen

Your Say - Getting real about Eucharist

Frank Andersen, msc

This is a shortened version of a talk given at Spirituality in the Pub, Notting Hill Hotel, Clayton, Vic., on 12 November, 2002.

As the years pass, one's faith also changes. Life's events have their own way of teaching us. This is not always a comfortable experience. The simplicities of my childhood sacramental practice have been broadened and deepened. It has been the same experience with how I read the Gospel stories of Jesus.

He lived in a time and world as fraught with peril and violence as our own. The equivalents of September 11 and Bali were not unknown to Jesus. Swords instead of bombs, perhaps, but the turmoil and frantic searching for a world more manageable and a life more sensible permeate the four Gospels.

His country was in the grip of Roman military occupation; a taxation system was crippling the poor; movements of violent zealotry abounded; some (like the Essenes) were retreating into the deserts to there build their undisturbed lifestyles and little kingdoms; secret police, informers, intrigue, betrayal and violence were the order of the day.

In the midst of such social and political turmoil, Jesus fashioned a finely tuned response – a way of living from the heart – that alone would give life and nobility.

"Blessed are the peacemakers ... Blessed the gracious of heart ... Blessed are those who mourn over what is happening ..." and – let us note the words – *"Those who live by the sword ..."*

In my childhood, I would have imagined Jesus at the Last Supper using the bread and wine to *"leave himself behind"* for future generations. Eucharist was the sacrament of personal contact. It was the place (and the moment) in which his *Real Presence* was substantiated.

In those days, my Catholic imagination had no power to even consider that during the Last Supper, Jesus himself ate the bread and drank the wine (along with his disciples). That he *needed* to eat and drink himself into an experience with those disciples. That only such a solidarity would enable him to walk into the realism of his arrest.

It was a Supper in which they claimed their group identity. They would stand for something in the madness of those times. Together in solidarity, they would hold the line on their faith commitment.

Mark's Gospel is particularly emphatic on this Last Supper declaration. They would maintain – no matter the cost – the Covenant commitment that they bonded themselves into by drinking a common Cup of Blood.

For sure, we would want to be doing on Sundays, in the shared Eucharists of our parishes, no less than Jesus imagined he was doing at that final meal. We go to Eucharist with these our companions to make happen a sacrament (the Latin *sacramentum* means "the taking of a public oath, a public commitment"), one that expresses everything we want to be as *a Church in the World*.

We might think that the Mass has become participatory, but my observation (and experience of attending from the pews) is that the ritual is far from being so.

How beautifully the Church calls the Eucharist *"source and highest expression of Christian living"*! In a world increasingly terrorised, when the temptation has never in our lifetime been stronger to defend our lifestyle – even with violence – we gather to proclaim that our identity is *"for you"*, that we all are part of *"one Bread, one Body"* and that our blood is *"is poured out for you"*.

We gather to thank God for all we have been given and in that grateful awareness we covenant ourselves *"for all"*.

We all know that the ritual of Sunday Eucharist is no longer supporting the mass of Catholics in their endeavour to live meaningful lives. (Is it 12% who still attend regularly?). For too many centuries has the ritual been shaped by non-participation, for it all to change within a few years of Vatican II.

We might think the Mass has become participatory, but my observation (and experience of attending from the pews) is that the ritual is far from being so.

Let me share an image that comes to mind ...

Each Sunday the ritual rolls into the station platform where an ever-diminishing number of expectant passengers are assembling to board the train. The ritual is the vehicle designed to take us all to a location in our lives that is only visible via the ritual.

We would be put in touch with the transcendental capacities of all our hearts, to be carried home to that core of our common being from which Jesus lived: to find the courage he sought, be filled with the hope he tasted, gain access to the love he exercised. We are a people needing a ritual of total participation. We must, all of us, *do the drama of bread and wine* if we are to survive as faith-filled people in times like these.

As this ritual reaches the platform, each Sunday, the doors of the carriages fail to open. We cannot get onto the ritual. It is so difficult to get on board! Those driving the train do not experience this same loss of entry: they are always involved, always on the inside, always participating.

Many who hold to themselves the shaping of Eucharist, in the sense of what the people are allowed to do or not do, haven't stood on the platform (or sat in the pews) for a lifetime. As the Eucharist becomes less and less meaningful for more and more people, the numbers on the platform each Sunday diminish.

Vatican II called for a participation on the part of all that would be *"full, active and conscious"*. One thing we all need (priests and people) is a thorough and fundamental education in the mystery of the ritual.

- What is it *about*?
- What does the ritual attempt to *trigger in our lives*?
- What basic *meanings-for-living* lie underneath the time-worn wordings of the Eucharistic tradition?
- What hope for the world lies beneath the term *Real Presence*?
- At the Consecration, what is it that's actually changed into the reality of Christ?
- When the bread and wine are carried forward *out of the assembled people*, what is actually being carried up for transformation into Christ?
- Is the *Procession of Gifts* nothing more than a nice way of getting bread and wine onto the table?
- How can we render the Readings so they *impact with our real lives*, in this real world of today?
- How to make *our own* this crucially instructive Word of God?

Catholics gather for Covenant each weekend, yet the impact is negligible. I respectfully suggest that we have a crisis on our hands in terms of *the shape* of the Sunday ritual.

Essay – Different necessary conversations

by Paul Cashen

The following is an edited version of a much longer paper given by Paul Cashen MSC at a Conference for the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, in 2001.

This reflection emerges from a dilemma. In Australia, as in other western European societies there has been a massive loss of interest in religious practice in the last twenty years. On the other hand, the desire for authenticity and meaning has led more and more people to look for a “spiritual” dimension in their lives. The “conversation” at the heart of this paper considers this dilemma in the light of the mission of the church: more precisely, its influence in assisting people to find themselves in our world.

Such a conversation will assist us to make the link between faith and life today, and speak with others in a way that will bring relevance to the Christian relationship with God and to the world in which we live. The statistics show we have found it difficult to engage in this conversation to date.

For me, this dilemma poses three questions:

1. How do we converse with our world?
2. How do we converse with the world beyond?
3. How do we converse with the divine?

Our conversation with the world around us begins in many ways: from the practical interactions involved in the day-to-day doing of things, to those simple yet profound responses to beauty, fear, wonder, etc., that come our way. In the long term these are experiences that can lead us to reflect on the meaning of life and existence. The experiences that touch us immediately – a smile, a sunset, an experience of terror – first capture our attention, then they help us build a picture of our place in the world.

We begin to realise that the place in which we find ourselves is shaped and framed by many influences: the learning that comes from our background, our own experiences of a particular time and place.

An example is the artist. Artists show this in their painting, sculpture, and literature. These artistic forms show to us their response to their place in the world. They exemplify how each of us sees and describes the world – a world that reflects the interrelation of culture, beliefs and the ordinary and everyday.

Art is a conversation with the world. It expresses personal responses to the physical world, and suggest “other worlds” in such responses. Margaret Wertheim, in her book, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, uses

Dante’s *Divine Comedy* to show the influence of the medieval world on his artistic portrayal of one person’s journey through life. This journey is Dante’s conversation with his world: the culture of his time, the philosophical and theological descriptions of human experience that underlie it and his own experiences.

Artists suggest and show realities that go beyond the day-to-day or the immediate consequences of an encounter with the world. In essence Dante reaches beyond, to the images of other worlds – of “hell”, “purgatory” and “heaven”. He uses themes and graphic illustrations based on his conversation with the “real” world and produced in “virtual reality” that extends it.

The “real” world is encountered in the day-to-day, is taken at face value, is pragmatic and straightforward, and can be the starting point for further exploration. The “virtual reality” describes in words and pictures imagined world(s) as extensions of the “real” world.

In the day-to-day world many people share the experience of the “spirit”, or the “world beyond”.

The “real” world inspires a “conversation” that extends into another world. The initial experience, what is first encountered, becomes a “virtual reality” as the words, brush strokes, sketches and colours, seek to portray a deeper meaning and lead others to a clearer, sharper and deeper understanding and appreciation of what is first experienced.

The “conversation” Dante passes down to his readers was not passive, nor silent: nor restricted to imagination. Rather it engages his readers: they see and experience as real, the images of his experience, his vision of life’s journey. It takes them through “hell”, “purgatory” and into “heaven” in graphic detail. His pictures – in words and sketches – satisfied their curiosity and encouraged them to engage in their own conversation with the world(s) he portrayed.

In this way Dante created a “virtual reality” that brought a direction and focus to the medieval experience of living in the world – he brought a highly imagined and strongly visual reality to the cultural and religious beliefs and practices of the time, that went beyond the “real” world.

In modern times this experience of “virtual reality” has found expression in the myriad stories of science fiction. This began with *The Time Machine*, by H.G.Wells,

initially published in 1895. As with Dante, H.G.Wells sought to share a vision. But whereas Dante’s imagination was inspired by an all-embracing view of this and other worlds, the modern author worked within the restrictions of the scientific thought of the time and thus the boundaries of space and time. Even in the latest adventures of *Star Trek*, physical laws – or more correctly, the commitment to and preoccupation with the notion of ‘physical law’ – limit the imagination of science fiction into “other worlds” as replicas of our own.

This use of imagination expresses the “boundlessness” of a newly discovered scientific “infinite universe” which, not surprisingly, is essentially a continuation of the world, as it is known. The “virtual reality” in this case is an extension of the laws of physics into imaginary worlds that are developed from newfound insights of the physical sciences, from astronomy to biology.

The “virtual reality” of science fiction deliberately omits the medieval connection with other worlds of the “spirit” and any link between physical and spiritual experiences. In fact, it denies the existence of such experiences. This limits the modern conversation with the world around us to the physical perceptions of time and space. Any explanation of human behaviour that is dependent on the “spirit” is regarded as mere superstition.

Information technology changes, once again, our conversation with the world and develops its own form of “virtual reality”. The spatial dimensions that framed the “pictures” of virtual reality in previous times pale beside the experiences and imagination of the contemporary world. Where the discipline of science fiction was not inspired by the horror or surreal beauty of scenes of the hell or paradise of Dante, today technology and the media can transport people to a world beyond the traditional definitions of time and space. These new spatial dimensions allow conversations to take place that engage the mysteries of a fourth dimensional world.

The TV program of the 1990’s – *The X-Files* – gives permission for people to once more explore the world of the mysterious. The manner and style is different from the UFO investigations of earlier eras. An *X-Files* plot typically involves conflict between authorities, those who deny the possibility of other “worlds” of human experience, and those who seek to reveal them. This step embraces a “virtual reality” with a new language and vision that re-establishes a connection between the day-to-day and the “mysteries” encountered in living in this world. Wertheim describes this re-established connection in this way:

“The ‘spiritual’ appeal of cyberspace lies in precisely this paradox: It is a repackaging of the old idea of Heaven but in a secular, technologically

sanctioned format. The *perfect realm* awaits us, we are told, not behind the pearly gates, but beyond the network gateways, behind electronic doors labelled, ".com.", ".net.", and ".edu".

The advances of information technology – and their impact on our worldview – parallel another significant influence on people's lives, namely the growing interest in "spirituality": a "spirituality" that is distinct and separate from traditional religious belief and practice.

Our conversation with the world includes these two influences – a changed worldview and a new "spirituality". Our conversation with "mystery in the day-to-day" opens the opportunity for people to understand the mysteries at the heart of our Christian faith. Our conversation with God, if based on our everyday experiences, is described now as "spirituality". This acknowledges a fundamental human desire to be free to explore experiences of the world(s) beyond the restrictions of physical science or theological doctrines.

The perceived irrelevance of traditional Christian practice in the west at least, coincides with the changing worldview in western cultures on the one hand, and the interest in the "spiritual" on the other. In the past, those in the church wanting to convert "non-Christians" used not a "conversation" but insisted on a "conversion".

The response called for today is a "conversation" that passes on a religious heritage, at the same time respecting the worldview and experience of the people of today. As in any conversation the language used is crucial: insistence on the traditional or even ritual use of words will prove ineffective.

For example, as I have indicated above, "spirituality" is a personal experience that leads to the discovery and sharing of the day-to-day encounters with mystery. It can parallel information technology's notion of "virtual reality" and seek to engage the experiences of the world beyond, without the limitations previously adhered to in the formulations of religious doctrine.

The next step however is crucial for any society. Experiences of the "spiritual" can inspire a nation to be caring and accepting, and promote societies in which individuals, groups, communities accept each other in multi-racial communion. Equally, the "spiritual" can be used to inspire ethnic cleansing, genocide, a "holy war". Thus, any unchecked conversation with the "beyond" becomes problematic.

A process is required to assist people to recognise in a changing worldview, the value and validity of their "spiritual" experiences. A process of discerning the "spirits" that emerge from these "spiritual" experiences can lead people who are strug-

gling to appreciate their religious heritage even if they have rejected it in the past.

The "discernment of spirits" requires criteria other than one's personal experience. Put another way: conversation with the "beyond" can lead to self-deception. In the Catholic tradition the process that reveals the presence of the Divine is defined in the doctrine of Revelation.

In the past, the implementation of this doctrine often determined as "good or bad" those spirits that lead to unorthodox belief or religious practice. The challenge for the Church presented today's disillusion with traditional religion is that for most people the experience of the "spirit" does not inspire them to converse with God in traditional formulations. There is great diversity in the new conversations that people have with the "beyond".

In Christian experience, conversation with the Divine is not only one-way; nor is it a totally personal revelation; nor is it exclusively experienced in the terms of an unchanging tradition. The past practice of the church prescribed what were "good or bad spirits" for its members. The events of Vatican II suggested the need for a more considered and step-by-step appreciation of individual experiences if a two-way conversation with God is to be recognised.

Among the significant influences on one's faith are changing worldviews and cultural expressions modified by events and circumstances.

Peter Schineller brings theology to this tension between the "traditional formulation" and "the faith seeking understanding". The latter refers to personal day-to-day experiences in which we encounter the mystery of God's presence.

This gives rise to a conversation that challenges theology to engage in a "critical reflection on one's faith". Among the significant influences on one's faith are changing worldviews and cultural expressions modified by events and circumstances. In other words, the conversation theology undertakes through its processes will encourage the church to appreciate and understand the personal experiences of "mystery", of "spirituality".

Such a conversation will seek to create links between personal experience and the traditions and beliefs of the church, "so that the subjectivity of faith will be more clearly acknowledged and promoted".

The work of theology in a climate of censure and control makes this openness difficult. In considering the new experiences of the "spiritual", new conversations have to be given a chance to develop. As with all human experience, mistakes will be made until a body of experience can be studied and then advice and suggestions given as to the value and therefore authenticity of particular experiences.

As Gabriel Moran suggested twenty years ago, if we read again the documents of Vatican II with an ear to the movements of the "spirit" we will be more open to understand – and be understood – by the majority of people whose cultural experience of church is so poor.

Katherine Kizilos is an Australian of Greek parents. She traveled to the island of Patmos searching for answers to the dilemma she experiences between the changing circumstances of her life and the deep feelings that the mystery her Greek religion and culture gave her. The following passage records her interview with a monk of the monastery of St. John the Theologian:

It turned out that Father Simeon was also an icon painter, working in the Byzantine style. And here, perhaps, lay the difficulty, the gap, between the words he spoke and the faith from which it sprang. Today's icon painters are, essentially, copy-ists; and a copy, no matter how skilful, re-creates the appearance of an original, but not the vision that created it. If anything, the reverse is true; visual repetition has worked to reduce the images of the Byzantine masters to a kind of holy shorthand. In the same way, although the monk knew what he loved about his faith, he was only able to speak about it with old, worn-out words. His passion could not penetrate his language. (Katherine Kizilos, *The Olive Grove: Travels in Greece*, Lonely Planet Publications, 1997, 72.)

In the day-to-day world many people share the experience of the "spirit", or the "world beyond". This is a conversation that continues in human experience, albeit in a way that seems totally different from the developed traditions and beliefs of the religious experiences of the past.

"Spirituality" formalises the "spirit" in these experiences and begins the task of conversing with the "world beyond" by encouraging this to happen. It is the forerunner to theological reflection in so far as it offers a challenge to traditional values or beliefs. It offers the Church the opportunity to converse with the "spirit" revealed in the lives of the people who seek to believe. □

Paul Cashen is a Missionary of the Sacred Heart priest in the parish of Hindmarsh, SA, and is currently completing a doctoral thesis.

The Bible – The mission

Words for a Pilgrim People

‘That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.’ (Luke 12:22)

□□□

Our own times require of the laity no less zeal; in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a degree of departure from the ethical and religious order and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few, or in some instances deprived of due freedom for priestly work, the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity. (Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, (November 18, 1965), 1.

□□□

We are never satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten it on its way; or we recall the past as though to arrest its too rapid flight. So foolhardy we are that we go wandering about in periods of time which do not belong to us, and give no thought to the only one that does. So frivolous we are that we dream of those times, which are no more, and thoughtlessly overlook the only one that exists. The reason is that the present generally hurts us. (Blaise Pascal, Pensées, J M Dent & Sons, 1973, §84.)

□□□

On the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), we meditate on Mark’s account of Jesus sending the Twelve out: “Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs” (6:7). We find here echoes of an earlier summons: “‘Come after me and I will make you into fishers of people’” (1:17). There is a very definite logic to this: the disciples are not “sent” until they have answered His “call”.

In other words, the mission of the Twelve emerges from their “submission”. The English word “mission” comes from the Latin verb *mittere*, meaning “to send”. Add the Latin prefix – *sub* meaning “under” – and you begin to get some sense of what is happening here. The Twelve discover their mission in life by walking with Jesus. And we should not be romantic about it: this “submission” was still very incomplete and, in the case of at least one of them, very confused. It seems reasonable to surmise that they, in turn, learned much about walking with Jesus by going out to the world in their incompleteness.

Fundamentalists will find this text disconcerting. While Matthew and Luke have Jesus explicitly forbidding the disciples to take a “staff” or to wear “sandals”, Mark has Jesus explicitly instructing them to take a “staff” and to wear “sandals”. Jesus is sharing His mission with them: “proclaiming the gospel from God saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the gospel’” (1:14f). Whether they carry a “staff” or wear “sandals” is irrelevant. For “staff” and “sandals” read “distractions” and “anything that will make me think I can rely on myself rather than God”. The issue is “submission” – total “submission”. And that means availability, freedom to move and speak, clear focus on what matters without distraction or diversion. The disciples do what they must, trusting the grace of God; they remain utterly detached even from the outcome. It is as if the Gospel is saying to the Twelve and to those sent in subsequent generations: “This is God’s work, it is in good hands, plunge in – with or without your ‘staff’ and your ‘sandals’”. □

For “staff” and “sandals” read “distractions” and “anything that will make me think I can rely on myself rather than God”.

The Tradition – Focus on what matters

At the beginning of his *Rule*, St Benedict names a particular kind of person he wished to exclude from his monasteries. He called them “gyrovagues” and spoke of them as people who “are never stable throughout their whole lives but wanderers through diverse regions, receiving hospitality in the monastic cells of others for three or four days at a time. Always roving and never settling, they follow their own wills” The person genuinely seeking God, according to Benedict, has the ability to remain focused and committed. Without this focus and commitment, we too easily become caught up in things that do not matter.

In this regard the Desert Fathers spoke particularly of *akedia*, otherwise known from the reference in Psalm 91:6 as “the noonday devil”. They had seen a lot of the listlessness and boredom and general distaste for the struggle that can overtake one who has been at it for a time. Distractions and diversions are a critical part of this experience and are seen as doorways to evasion and flight from what must be faced – in God and self. Perhaps it is this “noonday devil” that overtakes many moderns – in marriage, work and other commitments – and causes them to seek something “new”? Persistence and commitment in the ordinary, humdrum business of living can take more heroism than might first be thought.

“All our unhappiness is due to the single fact that we cannot stay quietly in a room”.

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), better than most, knew the subtleties implied in this need to focus on what matters and the dreadful temptation to evade it. He writes: “The only thing that consoles us in our misery is distraction, and yet this is the greatest of our misfortunes. For it is distraction that chiefly hinders us from thinking about ourselves, and imperceptibly brings about our ruin. Without it we should be in a state of boredom which would drive us to seek surer means of escaping therefrom. But distraction diverts us and leads us, all unwitting, to death”. In another place Pascal writes: “All our unhappiness is due to the single fact that we cannot stay quietly in a room”. □

Recommended

William H Shannon et al, editors, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, Orbis Books, 2002, 556 pages, hb, \$99. (Available from Rainbow Book Agencies: 03 9481 6611.)

Thomas Merton was born in France in 1915. He became a Catholic in 1938 and lived just over half his brief life as a Trappist monk. He was accidentally electrocuted in Bangkok in 1968, a few weeks before his 54th birthday. According to this *Encyclopedia*, the books published under Merton's name now number more than 100. Over and above the books, there are hundreds of audio tapes of his lectures. Nobody seems to have counted the number of books about Merton written by others. Pope John XXIII was an admirer, Boris Pasternak corresponded with him, as did Dorothy Day, Evelyn Waugh, Jean Leclercq and some 1800 other people. The editors of this work – led by the well-known Merton scholar, Fr William Shannon – have rendered us an invaluable service. There are substantial essays on each of Merton's books and helpful summaries of topics relating to Merton – eg “monasticism”, “Cistercian”, “death”, “compassion”, “celibacy”. Of course it helps if you are an admirer of Merton and are already somewhat familiar with who he was and what he wrote. The Dalai Lama, who met Merton in India in November 1968, wrote in his own autobiography: “I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man. This was the first time I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality in anyone who professed Christianity.”

Edmund Campion, *Lines of My Life: Journal of a Year*, Penguin, 2003, 269 pages, pb, \$22.95.

Fr Ed Campion has retired from active ministry and lives – most of the time – in Paddington, one of Sydney's eastern suburbs. In 2001 he was reading the journals of Thomas Merton and felt compelled to seek out more resources on Merton in New York. He was scheduled to leave in mid-September – just after the 11th. Fr Campion did go to New York at that time, in the wake of the horrible tragedy of that day in September. And this little book began there – a sort of journal recording observations and reflections. Of course it covers much more than the aftermath of “9/11”, travelling down the days to September 2002, mostly being about people, events and places in Sydney. And the author knows a lot of each. His style is conversational. While it is frank and open, the journal never becomes maudlin or sentimental. *Lines* maintains kindness, compassion and friendliness when naming people, even if the naming includes a foible or two. Now and then the text suffers from a lack of leanness of language – eg “a proleptic champagne in the garden” sounds just a little out of step with most of the rest of the book. Various serious, whimsical, humorous, matter-of-fact and poignant, *Lines* is gently engaging. Fr Campion is a good raconteur who has not let either the world or the Church make him cynical. Many will find a hidden hopefulness on these pages.

Peter Steele SJ, *Bread for the Journey: Homilies*, David Lovell Publishing, 2003, 278 pages, index, pb, \$29.95.

Peter Steele SJ is a poet. He is also an academic, holding a Personal Chair in English at the University of Melbourne. Fr Steele takes inspiration from the words of the 17th century Anglican priest and poet, George Herbert: “Thy word is all, if we could spell”. The author writes: “The homilies that follow are indeed attempts to spell out some of what God is saying to us, whether in the world shared by all, or in the ‘book’, the Bible”. There are 86 homilies here, gathered loosely under six headings – Times, Seasons, People, Places, Stories, Creed. Subjects include mirrors and their relevance to Advent, the First Fleet and the Anzacs. Each homily is brief – as a homily ought to be. Fr Steele has a wonderful gift for language. But this collection is actually more about content than style. The true poet – as Fr Steele is – becomes a sacrament of the Mystery. As William Blake suggests, all good poetry is “dictated by angels”. The poet releases words from the burdens the rest of us place on them. In our day we sorely need to recover the power of words, to hear the Word once again through the babble of words disconnected from silence. Never did the Church need poets more. *Bread for the Journey* is a book of good words, spare words, words that rev and liberate. This collection is perhaps best read as a series of meditations, alone or in a group.

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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
<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePubNSWandACT> – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

- **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St August 13 “Mum, I’m not going to church anymore!” Danny Phegan & Sr Mary Hamilton (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).
- **Alstonville** Catalyst Dinner July 19 “Human Rights: Challenges we face in Australia now and in the immediate future” Chris Sidoti (Info: Anne 6628 6428)
- **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie (Info: Julian 4861 4649).
- **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club July 9 “The Role of the Laity: How can we make it happen?” Fr Chris de Souza & Peter Presdee (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).
- **Canberra** – **When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free** The Southern Cross Club Woden July 30 “Gender Justice – What Progress? What Chance?” Michelle Szanto & David Moffat (Info: Rita 6260 4737).
- **Engadine** – **Pathways to God** Engadine RSL July 16 “Marriage: Does it matter any more?” Vanda O'Donnell & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).
- **Five Dock** – **Challenges in a Changing Community** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St July 30 “A Just War?” Dr Simon Longstaff (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).
- **Jamberoo** – **Search for the Sacred** The Jamberoo Hotel July 14 “Acting on the Passion Within” Bernice Moore & Fr Vince Casey (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).
- **Kincumber** – **Out of the Chaos Came ...** – The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive August 5 “Meditative Merging” Gregory Holland & Swami Dayasagar Saraswati (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).
- **Lismore** – **I have Come that You may have Life** Mary Gilhooley's Pub August 27 “RCIA Personal Stories” Jill Shervington (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).
- **Newport** – **Newport Arms Hotel** August 7 “Spirituality and the Media” Tony Doherty Geraldine Doogue (Info: Terry 9973 192).
- **Northern Sydney** – **Prayer, Faith &**

God Relationship Union Hotel, Cnr Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney July 21 “Our Treasured Relationships” Michael Keeble & Ruth van Herk (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Paddington** – **Of Human Life** The Bellevue Hotel, August 6 “On being in love – the conflict of law & compassion” Mgr Tony Doherty & Claire Pirola-Henderson (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

◦ **Penrith** – **Making a Difference** Golf Club August 20 “Healing Childhood Hurts” Christine Burke & Graham English (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

◦ **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd August 5 “Prophets before Priests” Rev John Squires (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

◦ **Rydalmere** – **Responding to Change** – Rydalmere Bowling Club July 8 Phil Glendenning & Bernice Moore (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

◦ **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

◦ **Waitara** – **Act justly, Love tenderly and walk humbly with your God: How do we meet this challenge in our world today?** The Blue Gum Hotel July 16 Trevor Thomas & Rev Marjorie Roberts (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

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

◦ **Bendigo** Boundary Hotel (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

◦ **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm September 9 “Diocesan Councils: giving voice to the people of God” Fr Max Vidola (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

◦ **Colac** The Union Club Hotel August 1 “Spirituality of Youth” Mick McCrickard (Info: Winsome 5235 3203).

◦ **Collingwood** The Vine Hotel, Cnr Wellington & Derby Sts, 8pm-9.30pm June 4 tba (Info: April 9327 4433)

◦ **Echuca** – **The Power of my story through the window of...** The Harvest Hotel August 20 Denis Higgins & Brigid Arthur (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

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

◦ **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, 838 Heidelberg Rd, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm August 13 “Ecumenism – Has Anything really Changed?” Cardinal Cassidy & Bishop Curnow (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

◦ **Mordialloc** The Kingston Club, 7.30pm-9pm August 27 “Loyalty & Dissent - Reforming Parish and Society – the role of Obedience” Mary Williams & Barry Moran (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

◦ **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm July 23 “Dealing with mid-life: Crisis or Opportunity?” Terry Curtin & Catherine Brabender (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

Other States

◦ **Devonport (TAS)** – **Spirituality in the Workplace** Molly Malone's Irish Pub, “Hospitality” with a Publican & a Barman (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

◦ **Hobart North** The Mustard Pot Hotel Moonah August 4 “World Politics at a Glance: A New World Order” Gwynn MacCarrick & Peter Jones (Info: Gwayne 6228 2679).

◦ **Fortitude Valley (QLD)** Dooley's in Patrick's Bar First Monday of month – (Info: Madonna 3840 0524).

◦ **Perth (WA)** – **Towards Joy** The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm July 22 “Towards Joy – the journey from addiction” Geoff Dixon & Jade (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

◦ **Macclesfield (SA)** Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street August 5 “Mental & Emotional Health” Fiona O'Shea (Info: Michael 8388 9265).

◦ **The Talking MIX** is now available on tape. Annual subscription: \$40. For 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: Sue on 02 9247 4651).

◦ **Catalyst Dinners** July 25 (NSW) “Human Rights in Contemporary Australia” Chris Sidoti & Zita Antonios, Villa Maria Parish Hall, Cnr Mary St & Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill (Info: Pauline 9816 4262); August 29 (VIC) “Women & Authority in Australian Catholic Life” Xavier College, Barkers Rd, Kew (Info: Kevin 9776 2705)..

◦ **Catholic Institute of Sydney** 14-18 July “Australian Spirituality” with David Ranson (Info: 9752 9500).

◦ **Cardinal Walter Kasper** July 9 7pm, Sydney Adventist College, 159 Albert Rd, Strathfield (Info: Br Mark 0401 389 720).

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