



THE MIX



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Alex Wilson

The human face 2

Catherine Hammond

Run by the housekeepers? 3

Andrew Hamilton

Spirituality in the pub – a reflection 4

The bible

The mystery of grace 6

The tradition

Made for delight 6

Our Say – The gaps between the words

At a time when we are all seeking to make some sense of our lives – individually and communally – and develop some shared vision for the Church, Thomas Merton offers some wisdom. Writing in his journal in December 1962 – shortly after Pope John had opened the Second Vatican Council with his famous speech on October 11 – Merton speaks with the voice of hard-won experience. The style is clipped, typical of much of his journal:

The primary duty: To seek coherence, clarity, awareness, in so far as these are possible. Not only human coherence and clarity but those that are born of silence, emptiness and grace ...

Merton is actually speaking about his own vocation here. He was in the midst of a significant struggle concerning his participation in the life of the Catholic community.

However, his words apply to each of us who would want to be part of the necessary conversations that are going to promote renewal within the Church.

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, observed something about modern culture that we would do well to reflect on:

We are well aware that modern people are sated by talk; they are obviously often tired of listening and, what is worse, impervious to words. We are also aware that many psychologists and sociologists express the view that modern people have passed beyond the civilization of the word, which is now ineffective and useless, and that today we live in the civilization of the image.

.... The fatigue produced these days by so much empty talk and the relevance of many other forms of communication must not however diminish the permanent power of the word, or cause a loss of confidence in it. The word remains ever relevant, especially when it is the bearer of the power of God (cf 1Cor 2:1-5). This is why St. Paul's axiom, "Faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10:17), also retains its relevance: it is the Word that is heard which leads to belief (42).

Given the intimate relationship language has with experience, and given that we are ex-

periencing rapid and profound change, it is not surprising that our ability to speak coherently to one another has been affected. Yet, if we become indifferent or lazy about our ability to converse well with one another, our future is indeed grim.

Merton's suggestion is paradoxical. In healthy and rich conversation, our words come out of silence and lead back to silence. Speech that is full of the noise of unresolved personal conflicts or self-absorption or thoughtless point-scoring is at best pointless and at worst destructive.

We who promote conversation ought to be familiar with "silence, emptiness and grace". The words we bring to conversation will have their own freight, drawn from that silence.

Perhaps Merton was also right when he said modern people are afraid of silence. In the depths of each of us are wells of silence waiting to give birth to words – good, life-bearing words. Good conversation demands that we all drink from those wells of silence. □

This journal is one of the works of
the Australian group
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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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

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

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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Alexandra Bree Wilson and I was born in 1980 in Sydney. At the age of 22, I have experienced turmoil and hardships, love and laughter.

Born to Lyn Wilkes and Laurie Wilson, I was the second of two daughters in their marriage. I was very young when their marriage ended. My mother married John Wilkes five days prior to my third birthday.

Religion has always been an influential part of my upbringing. I was baptised at Our Lady of the Rosary, Kellyville and spent my primary school years there. Like almost every child, I complained bitterly at being forced to go to church. I attended Gilroy College Castle Hill for my junior High School years and then Oakhill College.

It was at this time in my life that I became heavily involved with the church. I was in the parish of St. Bernadette, which has an excellent program for youth. Through Keystones, Meridian, the Year 11 and 12 Youth Group and the Music Ministry, I made friendships that I will always treasure.

My health is an issue that has caused me immense struggle. In 1995 I was diagnosed with Epilepsy. At the age of fourteen this news was crushing. My diagnosis changed the way I lived my life and to date still dictates the way in which I live.

I have Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy. It is a type of Epilepsy that appears after the onset of puberty. I experience absence seizures, in which I lose time; myoclonic seizures, which cause short jerking sensations in my extremities; and Grand Mal seizures, which involve whole body convulsions.

The reality of my condition could seem the end of existence but, with the help of an excellent Neurologist, my epilepsy was and is fully controlled. I live a normal, healthy existence and have learnt to live with my condition though I am conscious that my triggers are ever-present.

Music is another important element of my life. Under the guidance of a gifted piano teacher, I studied the AMEB Piano Course and by 1997 had completed my 8th Grade. To date I have been teaching piano for 7 years and because that brought me great pleasure, I made the decision to become a teacher.

I have never looked back. From 1999 – 2002 I was enrolled at Macquarie University and gained a BADipEd with a History Major and an English Minor.

Throughout my tertiary years I experienced more ill health that I found very difficult to cope with. It was during this time that I started to question my faith. How could God inflict me with so many health crises at such a young age? My

mother continued to remind me that 'everything happens for a reason' and 'there are people in this world far worse off than you'.

And that was true. I had a mother and a father who showed me love and compassion, and two beautiful sisters who gave me so much of their time, love and support. My mother's strength and determination helped me through my harder times, and she suggested that I attend Healing Mass. From this I gained a sense of inner peace and knew that everything would be all right.

Not long after this I met my boyfriend Daniel. Daniel has been in my life for 2 years now and our relationship has gone from strength to strength. We are opposites in almost every aspect (he is a Telecommunications Engineer; I am an English/History teacher!), but we share a common faith and respect for the Catholic Church which has shaped our lives, morally and spiritually. Daniel has been my strength, my conscience and my companion and I hope will always remain that way.

My life has completed almost a full circle at the ripe age of 22. In my search for employment, Gilroy College, which I had attended, offered the challenge of teaching in subject areas that were my strengths, a Christian value system that appreciated and taught the Catholic faith and a collegial atmosphere of intelligent, motivated and supportive staff.

There is more involved in teaching than I ever thought there would be, and Term 2 has proven to be a killer for a beginner teacher. Yet, with the support of my fellow staff, my family and my boyfriend, I have lived through the experience and hope to see many more!



Alex Wilson

Your Say — Run by the housekeepers?

Catherine Hammond

It's an old saying in parishes that if you want to know what's going on, or what will happen, in the day-to-day running of the parish, don't ask the parish priest — ask the housekeeper.

It seems to me that a big problem in the Catholic Church today is that it is being run — in practice if not in theory — by the efficient 'housekeepers' at the highest echelons. Not by the people at the peak of the various pyramids called Sacred Congregations, but by their secretariats, and probably not actually by the Most Reverend Secretaries themselves, but by the experienced bureaucrats under them...

That may explain why instead of presenting a compassionate, understanding face to a weary, questing world, the Church often comes across as 'officious', 'picky', 'small-minded', despite being founded by the God of Love and despite voicing the most profound and beautiful thoughts about love.

Are the big men with that big message (surely a good number of holy wise people ARE still there?...) being inhibited by organisational wizards who run everything — even the Bishops' Synods, which were meant to be a working vehicle of subsidiarity — and seem hell-bent on maintaining the status quo, fearful of what see as a threat to all they cherish.

As far back as the time of Pope Pius IX, we read in his social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*:

'That most weighty principle [subsidiarity], which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time, a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.' (No. 79)

Fear seems to be the operative word to characterise our present-day situation: fear of the unpredictable, of what pastoral-minded bishops might come out with if not held back by officialdom, fear of what havoc the primacy of conscience doctrine might produce, fear of the unknown if the agenda is not nailed down before any gathering opens.

I've had firsthand experience of this which is so incongruous in a Church that proclaims its faith in the everlasting guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In an overseas province of a religious order, a council meeting would be scheduled for a given day; the night before, the superior would secretly gather those council members over whom she could exercise control and tell them what outcomes she expected from the meeting.

The following day, the meeting would be held, after due prayer for the guidance of the Spirit 'for our important deliberations'.

The superior's 'yes crowd' voted as they'd been instructed, while the others voted as they felt inspired in conscience, but they didn't have the numbers (the election process having been rigged as well). And this occurred in an institute that constantly urged us to live by faith.

I think these acts on the part of people who have devoted their lives to the Church can only be explained by their conviction that they know beyond doubt what is truly best, and have to make sure this 'good' prevails.

God needs their help, in other words.

They can't bear to think that the systems they have put in place, the traditions they have established or strengthened, the people they have promoted — always, for 'the greater good' — might be jeopardised by 'them' (meaning, anyone or anything beyond their control).

Are the big men with the big message being inhibited by the organisational wizards who run everything?

Only fear can explain this phenomenon on the part of intelligent, hard-working Church leaders. They have struggled all their lives, they say, to get things right, to put things in place, to set up enduring structures, so they can't even entertain the thought that perhaps there are other ways of viewing doctrinal applications or Church practice.

After all, as good housekeepers, they feel they know what you need to keep things running smoothly...

* * *

Letters to the editor:

Because the reaction in *The Mix* to Andrew Murray's letter (April 3) was so negative, I felt I should voice my opinion

As a fifth-generation Australian, I am proud of the freedom I have to agree or disagree with the policies of my

government. Also, in disagreement with Coleman, I believe the Church should be involved in the secular domain and make judgements about such things as war.

I actually wrote to Andrew and congratulated him on his position.

I was pleased also to hear the former Governor General, Sir William Deane, recently speak out against what he viewed to be a number of injustices carried out in the name of politics in our country.

Thank heavens there are still some Australian Catholics prepared to witness publicly to the Church's teaching on social justice.

Fr Bill Moore
toonytykes@atu.com.au

I am a recent "friend" of Catalyst For Renewal after attending a number of SIP evenings, am particularly appreciative of *The Mix* and would like to commend the editorial committee for the range of topics covered. To add to the conversation on the letter from Andrew Murray (April 2003) I would like to support the views he expressed regarding our recent unjustified war on Iraq, and disagree strongly with the criticism levelled at him by Peter Coleman and Jim Brown (June 2003).

Peter Coleman considered *The Mix* "not a suitable forum for the expression of opinion on political issues ..."

I find the latter statement astonishing and would refer both gentlemen and readers of *The Mix* to an excellent publication by Fr Bruce Duncan in the Catholic Social Justice Series (No. 47 *War on Iraq: Is it just?* 2003)... He discusses in depth the sequence of events leading to the Church's opposition to a war on Iraq, "the swelling chorus of criticism from the bishops' conferences around the world" and specifically the position of the Vatican and Pope John Paul II, who said "No to war - war is not always inevitable and is always a defeat for humanity".

Fr Duncan examined the Iraq situation in respect of each of the accepted criteria for a just war and found that in virtually every case they were not met and war could not be justified... Issues such as the obscenity of war transcend the political and are highly appropriate for conversation within the Church and in *The Mix*.

George King, Sandringham Victoria

The Mix regrets that it must close this particular topic at this time and expresses appreciation for our readers' response.

Essay – Spirituality in the pub – a reflection

by Andrew Hamilton

The following is the text of a presentation given by Andrew Hamilton SJ at Notting Hill Pub, Melbourne, on March 4, 2003.

You have asked me today to help you reflect on the large questions which you address in Spirituality in the Pub: the issues, topics, reasons, and contexts. Let me begin with an uncontroversial statement: Spirituality in the Pub is a voluntary activity. It is not like Sunday Mass. In traditional language, it is not a sin to fail to attend. If you are urged to go, it will be in the notices and not in the sermon. And if it is an optional extra, you go along because you want to.

If that is the case, two questions naturally arise. First, what gives you life in your association with Spirituality in the Pub? And, second, what encouragement do you find there for your day-to-day life?

These questions are natural because, if you found no life in the enterprise, you would not stay with it. And in the same way, if it did not make some small difference to the way you live, you would soon drop it.

So those are the questions I would like to explore with you. My own thoughts have no benefit of expertise. I have had little experience of Spirituality in the Pub: I have spoken at three or four venues, have attended a couple of other sessions, and have come to know and value many of the organisers. But you know it more intimately than I do. So, I hope you will listen critically, and for my part, I shall tell you how I see it, and you must ask yourselves, if it is not like what I describe, what then is it like?

In my talk, too, I would like to focus less on what you say in your sessions in Spirituality in the Pub, and more on what you do. I find the symbols involved in what you do, where you do it and how you do it, to be quite illuminating.

Let us begin with the first question: What gives you life in your association with Spirituality in the Pub?

The most striking thing about Spirituality in the Pub is the place in which it is held. Why does meeting in an Australian pub give you life? For there are other, very different places where you could meet. A pub is not a church, for example. For most, it is not a home. Nor is it a school. It is neither a church hall nor a town hall. Nor is it a cafe. But the Australian pub is also different from an English pub, and certainly from a New York bar. But, I suspect, for you the pub's greatest attraction is that it is

not a church. Why is this attractive?

First of all, a pub is not hierarchical. In a pub the lord of the manor is served no more quickly than the servant. It is a democratic place, where you use first names and not titles.

It is also local, and so distant from the hierarchies located in Parliament House or the Cathedral. The pub belongs to its suburb, to its street, to its surroundings, and no pub is the same as other pubs (except the execrable franchised Irish pubs)!

A pub, too, is a slightly bolshie place in which to meet, and one to which in earlier life it would have been a little adventurous to go. It marked the transition from childhood to adulthood. When we meet for Spirituality in the Pub, most of us would feel with some satisfaction that this is not a place in which our parents' generation would have approved us meeting.

I would expect that you will also find in Spirituality in the Pub encouragement in maintaining your faith and hope in the Church. The sessions do this not principally by what is said about the Church, but by what you find embodied there.

Second, pubs blur boundaries. I have mentioned the boundaries of class and of authority. The pub is inherently a worldly place where one person's opinion is as good as another's. But to hold spirituality in the pub also blurs the boundaries between sacred and secular, and the boundaries between religious language and the common public language, the staple of pubs. That democratic character of pubs, I would imagine, is integral to what gives you life.

Third, a pub speaks of community more than it does of institution. In the pub, the test of activities is enjoyment and not efficiency. In a pub, you look for affirmation and hope for convivial conversation and easy relationships. So pub cricket teams are always companionable and convivial, but rarely win too many games. Winning takes planning, and requires a strong institution. And is Spirituality in the Pub life-giving because of the tone of the conversation even more than because of its logic?

Spirituality also has its own symbolic value. You can catch it if you change spirituality for other words. Try Theology in the Pub, for instance, or Magisterium in

the Pub, Eschatology in the Pub, Pastoral Planning in the Pub or Gender Study in the Pub. Each title has a different feel. And equally, the pub will colour each, making some sound ridiculous. So, what is it about spirituality in this context that gives life?

The way you shape your sessions suggests that you respond to a spirituality based in experience. You invite speakers who can talk out of their lives, and not confine themselves to ideas. Furthermore, you often invite two speakers, not for the sake of debate but to guarantee different perspectives based on different experience. Furthermore, the talks are ordinarily not followed by questions, as they might be if you offered theology in the pub, but by shared conversation. In this kind of conversation, because experience is an authority, although not the only one, everybody has some authority.

The spirituality that gives you life is also Catholic. While you are open to people from all churches, and the choice of the pub as a venue shows your desire to be inclusive, you speak out of a Catholic centre. You are very happy when priests and religious attend, you try to gather people from different parishes, and you would be offended if you were accused of being disloyal. So, if you see yourselves as a bit bolshie, it is the respectful irreverence of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition that you emulate, not the revolutionary zeal of the Bolsheviks.

Third, your spirituality is that of a particular group in the Catholic Church. For most of you, Vatican II was a time of discovery, of freedom, and of the discovery of a richer way of being church than you had previously imagined. So the spiritual themes which animate your conversations are the great ideas of Vatican II. They include questions of conscience, of accommodation to culture, of participation in the church and of social justice. These issues map the changes which Vatican II brought into Catholic life.

We turn now to the second question: What encouragement do you find there for your day-to-day life?

On the basis of this exploration of the symbols of Spirituality in the Pub, I would guess that it would be important for you as a result of your meetings to find your experience and personal spirituality affirmed.

This affirmation is given at different levels. It comes out of the style of conversation, where no-one is put down, and personal experience is valued. It also comes through the gathering of people with a simi-

lar take on being Catholic. At times, when confronted with the vagaries of life in world or Church, we all find ourselves asking whether we are mad, or whether the others are. Here, we can find friends who can reassure us that we have not lost our senses.

We have the reassurance of knowing that there are many good and intelligent people who share our perspective. This helps us live through times of discouragement and times when views opposite to our own are popular.

I would expect that you will also find in Spirituality in the Pub encouragement in maintaining your faith and hope in the Church. The sessions do this not principally by what is said about the Church, but by what you find embodied there.

Spirituality in the Pub enacts some of the qualities we would like the Church always to show. It represents a convivial, respectful, confident and imaginative church that can laugh at itself. It is also, of course, human and imperfect, but it represents human ways of being a virtuous community.

And finally, the talks given in Spirituality in the Pub, and the conversation that follows them, offer us the opportunity to reflect on issues that nag away at us. It can also encourage us to engage actively in important public issues. I do not believe that this is what you look for most centrally, but it is an important fruit for daily living.

Let me summarise what I see as central within Spirituality in the Pub. You have found it helpful to move beyond authority relationships, formal teaching relationships, institutional claims. You want to relate your Catholicism to your life, and to move beyond churchy language. You see yourselves as just a little bit maverick: Your enterprise, if not wicked, is just a little naughty.

These preferences express a reverence for the way God speaks in personal experience, and consequently for good conversation. They also reflect your commitment to a participatory church inspired by the great ideals of Vatican II. In meeting, you find encouragement in discerning your personal path and in your longing for a modest and trusting church. What follows from these emphases, which are your strengths?

First, you are one group among many in the Church, with a coherent agenda. There are other groups with quite different agendas, and some of them would like to take the Church in directions you would oppose. So, you will not always be flavour of the month for everyone, and the more popular your venture becomes, the more criticism you should expect to receive from those who disagree with your agenda.

Apart from paying your critics the usual courtesies of listening and being polite, I would not worry about this kind of criticism. You cannot be all things to all human beings, and it would be a mistake to censor what you are doing to win the approval of your critics. And anyway, you are invulnerable to the kinds of pressure that can be brought against groups that associate in churches.

Second, because the things that give you life are about community and conversation rather than institution, I would resist any pressure or inclination to have a formal institutional role in the Church. This would be inconsistent with all that Spirituality in the Pub stands for.

... a pub speaks of community more than it does of institution. In the pub, the test of activities is enjoyment and not efficiency. In a pub, you look for affirmation and hope for convivial conversation and easy relationships.

That means, of course, that you will not be able as Spirituality in the Pub to influence the policies and practices of the Church by taking part in enquiries, having formal connections to Bishops' Committees, etc. But I presume that your friendships and association there might lead to other initiatives and the formation of other groups that are political in this very broad and proper sense.

Third, because your agenda is so bound to Vatican II, I wonder how you will draw other, younger people into your events, or encourage them to follow your lead in similar forms of conversation. The participants at the meetings in which I have been involved are mostly from the Vatican II generations. Younger Catholics simply take for granted what was given through Vatican II, and their agenda commonly has little to do with its themes. But their need for places of free and deep conversation is no less great.

I have no suggestions to make on this point. But I suspect that the way to address the question is to explore the nature of your symbols and of the symbols that speak to other groups.

THE NECESSITY FOR DIALOGUE

Paolo Freire

If it is in speaking their word that human beings, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which people achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential neces-

sity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants.

Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between individuals who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. Because dialogue is an encounter among people who name the world, it must not be a situation where some people name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of people.

Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love.

Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination.

.... Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other people. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical.

As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love.

Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue.

On the other hand, dialogue cannot exist without humility. Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue. People who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world. Those who cannot acknowledge themselves to be as mortal as everyone else still have a long way to go before they can reach the point of encounter. At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramus nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know.

(Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, The Seabury Press, 1968, 77-81.)

The Bible – The mystery of grace

Words for a Pilgrim People

'None of those who drink the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give them, will become in them a spring of water welling up for eternal life.' (John 4:14)

□□□

To say I am made in the image and likeness of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. ... Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name. (Thomas Merton, **New Seeds of Contemplation**, New Directions, 1972, 60.)

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Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. (A. van Kaam, **Religion and Personality**, Dimension Books, 1980, p.13.)

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God's love for us is not the reason for which we should love him. God's love for us is the reason for us to love ourselves. How could we love ourselves without this motive? (Simone Weil, **The Simone Weil Reader**, ed. George A. Panichas, David McKay, 1977, 351.)

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... have you thought that He stained Himself, soiled Himself, being not only with men, but Himself a man ... And it wasn't that He put on man like a jacket to take off at night, or to bathe ... But man He was, as man is man, the maker made Himself the made; God was un-Godded by His own hand ... He was God from before the beginning, and now never to be clean God again. Never again. Alas! ... Hosanna!" (H.F.M. Prescott, **The Man on a Donkey**, Vol. 2, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952, 510-511.)

□□□

Let me read with open eyes the book my days are writing — and learn. (Dag Hammarskjöld, **Markings**, Trans. Leif Sjöberg and W. H. Auden, Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, 131.)

□□□

In the Gospel text of the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), we find a beautiful and succinct summary of the Christ life: “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise that person up on the last day” (John 6:44). And, lest we be tempted to interpret this “no one” as exclusive, John quickly adds “everyone” and “anyone” – “everyone who believes has eternal life” (v47) and “anyone who eats this bread will live forever” (v51). The emphasis is on the gracious and loving Father drawing all to Himself.

There is a tension here we must be careful to maintain. On the one hand, what is on offer is an entirely unmerited and unexacted gift. Nothing we can do or fail to do can make God love us more or less. God so loved the world that He gave his only Son (John 3:16). God, moved by love, seeks us out and wishes to draw us into Love. To be in love – that is our vocation, that is what we are made for, that is what God is freely giving. On the other hand, we must “come”. There is movement, journey, effort, work involved in this. We must respond and receive the gift.

The Christian life is a matter of being “drawn” before it is a matter of “coming”. It is first and last the initiative and the action of God – of grace. And what “draws” us? Whatever delights or pleases us draws us. John’s Gospel is clearly implying that the experience of God is pleasing and delightful, an experience that will leave us hungering and thirsting for more. The more we taste God, the more we will be drawn to be with God. The metaphors of food – eating and drinking – are used repeatedly by John and they are very powerful expressions of this experience of being drawn by delight. We could say that the Christian life is – at its best – the result and manifestation of being overwhelmed by Love. □

The Tradition – Made for delight

Christian history gives ample evidence that we have an extraordinary capacity to miss the point. In the Christian life, we have repeatedly missed the point by putting the emphasis on ourselves and what we must do rather than emphasising God and what God has done. As a result we have too often tended to foster a death-dealing moralism rather than the life-giving mysticism of the Gospels. The best of the tradition is otherwise.

The 5th century writer, Dyonisius the Areopagite, expresses one of the major themes of the Christian tradition, that we are created for the good and find our delight and fulfillment in that: “And like as Goodness draws all things to Itself, and is the great Attractive Power that unites things that are sundered (being as It is: the Godhead and the Supreme Fount and Producer of Unity); and like as all things desire It as their beginning, their cohesive power and end; and like as It is the Good (as the Scriptures say) from which all things were made and are and like as after the Good all things do yearn – those that have mind and reason seeking It by knowledge, those who have perception seeking It by perception, those that have no perception seeking It by the natural movement of their vital instinct, and those that are without life and have mere existence seeking It by their aptitude for that bare participation whence this mere existence is theirs – even so does the light (being as it were Its visible image) draw together all things and attract them unto Itself: those that can see, those that have motion, those that receive Its light and warmth, those that are merely held in being by its rays.” (IV, 4) Later in the same work, Dyonisius writes: “In God the eros desire is outgoing, ecstatic. Because of it lovers no longer belong to themselves but to those whom they love. God also goes out of himself ... when he captivates all creatures by the spell of his love and his desire.”

Maximus the Confessor (580-662) writes similarly of the prime motivation for our lives as Christians: “In so far as God is himself the true object of the love, he is the moving force in others who look to him and possess according to their own nature the capacity for desire.”

Finally, John Climacus (579-649) sums up: “Blessed is the person whose desire for God has become like the lover’s passion for the beloved.” □

We could say that the Christian life is – at its best – the result and manifestation of being overwhelmed by Love.

“Blessed is the person whose desire for God has become like the lover’s passion for the beloved.”

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePub>

SW and ACT – 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** September 9 “Finding Meaning in the Here and Now” Anne Graham (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie August 27 “What is the Human Spirit?” Neil Ormerod & Rev Susanne Tain (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club August 13 “The Spirit in the Environment – Greed or Stewardship, Our Choice” Charles Rue ssc & Allen Powell (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Canberra** The Southern Cross Club Woden August 27 “Church – Multicultural or Monocultural?” Andrew Hamilton sj & Lulu Turner (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

° **Engadine – Pathways to God** Engadine RSL August 20 “Multi-Faith Australia – an Impossible Dream?” Sr Pauline Rae & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 75).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St August 27 “Housing – No Room in the Inn” Vera Randall (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club September 9 “Aussie Justice, Fair Dinkum, Fair Go” Bishop Pat Power & Betty Dixon (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel September 8 “A Search for the Sacred: A Story to be shared” Michael Whelan sm & Debra Way (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive September 2 “Healing of the Human Spirit – Soul Work” John Bosman & Sr Patricia Donovan (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley’s Pub August 27 “RCIA Personal Stories” Jill Shervington (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney August 18 Career as Treasure – It’s not what you’re doing that’s important, it’s who you are

becoming” James Rodgers & Anne Austin (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington – Of Human Life** The Bellevue Hotel September 3 “Being Beautiful” Geraldine Doogue & David Leary (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

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

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd September 2 (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **Rydalmere – Responding to Change** – Rydalmere Bowling Club August 12 Fr Claude Mostowik & Marie Harris (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville August 27 “Life’s Transitions II: Aging” Bishop David Cremin & Francis Mansour lcn (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara – Act justly, Love tenderly and walk humbly with your God** The Blue Gum Hotel August 20 Francis Sullivan & Michael Stoney sj (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

° **Ballarat North Midlands** Golf Club, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.30-2pm (Info: Kevin 5332 1697).

° **Bendigo** Boundary Hotel September 3 “Spirituality – Resilience” Prof Raymond Gaita (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 September 5 “Our Song, Our Story, Our Spirit” Maria Forde (Info: Winsome 5235 3203).

° **Collingwood** The Vine Hotel, Wellington St, 8pm-9.30pm September 3 “Aboriginal Reconciliation: What is the Christian Response” Pat Dobson (Info: April 9327 4433)

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

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

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, 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 September 24 “Dealing with Grief: What

happens when we are confronted with death of loved ones and other losses?” tba (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

Other States

° **Devonport (TAS) – Spirituality in the Workplace** Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Hobart North** The Mustard Pot Hotel Moonah (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 August 26 “Towards Joy? – Sustainability” Ian Barnes & Rosemary Miller (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

° **Macclesfield (SA)** Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street September 2 “Atheism as a Christian Responsibility” Rev Dr Alan Cadwallader (Info: Michael 8388 9265).

° **The Talking MIX** on tape. Annual subscription \$40 (Info: 02 9816 4262).

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, programs day and evening, special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM Director (Info: Sue on 02 9247 4651).

° **Reflective afternoon with Thomas Merton** led by Colleen O’Sullivan August 23 12.30-5.30pm, Drummoyn Community Centre (Info: Kate 9683 5096).

° **Stephanie Dowrick – Day of Spiritual Encouragement & Renewal** August 24 9.30-5, Naamaroo Conference Centre, Chatswood West (Info: Alexandra 9958 4402).

° **St Mary’s Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Aug 11-19, 20-28 directed retreats (Info: 02 4630 9159).

Victoria Catalyst Dinner August 29, Xavier College, 6.30pm “Not servants but friends: Women and authority in Australian Catholic life” Mary Williams & Louise Crowe (Info: 9776 2705).

Eureka Street

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Congratulations to Bishop John Heaps whose book “A Love that Dares to Question” was awarded honourable mention at the USA Catholic Press Awards.

Recommended

Maureen Sullivan, *101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II*, Paulist Press, 2002, 133 pages, index, glossary, pb.

Siba Shakib, *Afghanistan, Where God Only Comes to Weep: A Woman's Story of Courage, Struggle and Determination*, Century, 2002, 311 pages, pb, \$24.95.

N T Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*, InterVarsity Press, 1999, 204 pages, index, endnotes, hb, \$US11.20 plus postage from amazon.com.

History will tell an interesting story of Vatican II, how it was and was not understood, interpreted and received. This story will share much in common with the stories of the other Councils down the centuries. One aspect of the Vatican II story is not shared by any of these other Councils: The Council's instructions, reflections and exhortations were given to a much more educated and critical Catholic audience than any other Council had to address. We have not come to terms with all the complex implications of this yet. Books such as Sullivan's *101 Questions* will help. She simply and competently gives clear responses to questions like: The Church is not a democracy, is it? What did John XXIII mean by "the signs of the times"? What's collegiality? Did Vatican II really resolve the Catholic Church's view of other religions once and for all? What justified the Church's new involvement in justice and peace? What took the place of the catechism? Maureen Sullivan is assistant professor of theology at St Anselm College, New Hampshire. She has a good grasp of the issues and at all times maintains an objective tone, never slipping into the tendentious or the ironic. This book can be easily read by those who have not had the opportunity to do any serious theological studies. It might well be used as a group study book or simply left on the coffee table for reference.

This is the true story of Shirin-Gol. Shirin-Gol means 'Sweet Flower'. Shirin-Gol is an Afghani and a Muslim, the fourth daughter and ninth child in her family. Every one of us Westerners should get to know Shirin-Gol and what she represents – our salvation might depend on it. Or more precisely, our response to Shirin-Gol – and all she represents – will have much to say about the future of the world as we know it. You cannot read this story and remain unmoved – it is a frightening story, a tragedy unfolding in our midst, an inspiration and a haunting record of the inhumanity and the beauty of human beings. Siba Shakib's understated, matter-of-fact style enhances the impact which must, however, remain far short of the actuality of Shirin-Gol's experiences. We hear of the Russian invasion, the tyrannical Taleban regime, the imported mercenaries "paid by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA", the knife-edged existence of the refugee in Pakistan and Iran, the simple Islamic faith and culture that seem to be tragically related to both cause and effect here. At the very least *Afghanistan* will remind you to thank God for the opportunities you have because you happened not to be born in Afghanistan – or the many other places similarly subject to violence. The book might also help you to think more clearly about people fleeing such places.

Tom Wright has recently been installed as the Anglican Bishop of Durham, Engl. He is one of the leading New Testament scholars in the world today. He writes for other scholars as well as those who have little or no scholarship and has an extraordinary gift to make the person and teaching of Jesus come alive. However, readers should be warned: While this book is not weighed down with jargon and obtuse references, it is a demanding read. *The Challenge of Jesus* picks up Wright's primary interest: What can history tell us about Jesus? Does history in fact put the lie to standard Christian beliefs about Jesus? Wright observes: "Whenever the church forgets its call to engage in the task of understanding more and more fully who Jesus actually was, idolatry and ideology lie close at hand. To renounce the quest because you do not like what historians have so far come up with is no solution." Wright addresses five questions in particular: Where does Jesus belong within the Jewish world of his day? What was his preaching of the Kingdom all about? Why did Jesus die? Why did the early church begin and why did it take the shape it did? How does all this relate to the Christian task and vision today? This book is inspiring and enlightening, worth every ounce of effort it asks of the reader.

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