



THE MIX



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Our Say – Exploring truth with reason

The Enlightenment of 18th century Europe opened up a whole new set of possibilities and challenges for the human family. Among other things, as Emmanuel Kant noted, it generated a new way of thinking about what it means for us to be in the world with other human beings:

Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! "Dare to think!" – that is the motto of the enlightenment. (Isaac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, Penguin Books, 1995, 1.)

The Catholic Church's response to the possibilities and challenges of the Enlightenment has been mixed. "Sapere aude!" has not always been encouraged. However, it is no longer an option for adults; we *must* open our minds to new possibilities and think intelligently and honestly about the issues that face us.

Pope John Paul II, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, encourages this kind of thoughtfulness:

On her part, the Church addresses people with full respect for their freedom. Her mission does not restrict freedom but rather promotes it. *The Church proposes; she imposes nothing.* She respects individuals and cultures, and she honours the sanctuary of conscience. (*Redemptoris missio*, 39 – emphasis in original.)

To men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists. (*Fides et Ratio*, 17)

Terrorism is often the outcome of that fanatic fundamentalism which springs from the conviction that one's own vision of the truth must be forced upon everyone else. Instead, even when the truth has been reached – and this can happen only in a limited and imperfect way – it can never be imposed. Respect for a person's conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf. Gen 1:26-27), means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are then responsible for accepting it. To try to impose on

others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity and ultimately an offence against God who image that person bears. (*Message for World Day of Peace 2002*, 6)

In this issue of *The Mix*, Catalyst is promoting a conversation on sexuality. The recent statement by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on homosexual unions calls for serious reflection on both the content of that document and its manner, well as other aspects of sexuality.

The issues are complex and often have grave social consequences hanging on the decisions we make and the behaviours we choose. Catalyst does not promote the conversation lightly. Nor do we espouse particular agenda, except the agenda of honest and open conversation for the sake of renewal, personal and communal.

In the spirit of the Holy Father's words above, we will hear "Sapere aude!" as promise, not a threat, a summons to join other men and women of good will in seeing out what is true and good.

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

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

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

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

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All original work in *The Mix*, unless otherwise indicated, is the work of the Editor.

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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Peter Donnelly. I was born the eldest of three children and grew up in Maroubra. My father was of Irish Catholic background, and my mother was the daughter of Methodist evangelists who arrived in Australia between 1914 and 1920.

I was taught by the Brigidine nuns at Maroubra and later by the Marist Brothers at Randwick. Mum remained a Methodist, despite premarital instruction in 'the one true faith'. My parents were married in the Archbishop's chapel at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. I was baptised there in 1936, so St Mary's has become a special place for me.

I grew up a faithful Catholic in the sense of fulfilling the religious observances of the 1940s-1960s, but in retrospect, I seemed never quite as 'fair dinkum' as my widowed Methodist grandmother, who lived periodically in our home. She knelt by her bedside morning and evening to pray for us all and read her Bible, and by day, she wandered around the house humming the wonderful Charles Wesley hymns.

Dad used to say, "If Grandma doesn't get to heaven, we've got Buckley's".

So there were other influences besides my religious observances that affected my life.

After school, I took a laboratory position at Sydney University. It was a stimulating place in which to work and mature. However, religious sectarianism was rife in those days, and I learnt to weather the anti-Catholic jibes. My simple faith looked a lot less clear-cut out in the real world.

In 1969 there came a turning point in my life. I went on a month's trekking holiday in the Nepalese Himalaya. I'd been to Europe, but this was my first exposure to Eastern cultures and religions. My expectations of Nepal were walking in magnificent scenery at high altitudes, but it was the culture and religions of Nepal that had the most effect on me.

Along the trails little shrines were numerous. In one Tibetan refugee camp, lamas in gold vestments and mitred head-dresses dispensed holy water over the heads of the faithful. Small pieces of bread were handed out to queuing Tibetans with clasped hands and bowed heads. What was going on? I needed to know.

On return home, I enrolled in a W.E.A. course on comparative religion taken by a retired Anglican minister (Rev Stuart Watts), a truly lovely man who, despite his designation, was objective in the way he taught his subject. Some class members tried to extract his opinion on this religion or that doctrine, but he remained firm: "I

want you to form your own opinions".

That course was a significant step along the way to understanding, but only one step. Vatican II changes were percolating through. I was confused. After a lot of pain, I decided to give it all away — now known as "taking some time out". Surprisingly, I felt a sense of relief!

Apart from attending Christmas carols and midnight masses at Christmas and Easter, the next 30 years I was virtually adrift. When I retired in 1994, I decided to research the history of my own tradition among other religions. A trip to the Holy Land in 1999 (peaceful then) was a revelation to me.

Seeing the Holy Places has made the gospels come alive. I joined an Anglican Bible study group that meets fortnightly, and I have gained much commitment and deeper knowledge about the Word.

My return to regular attendance at mass has been a pleasant surprise (Fr Pat Kenna has been instrumental in this). Without exception, experiences Australia-wide have been welcoming and inclusive.

One big issue facing the Church right now is the absence of young people in the life of the Church (95% of school leavers stop practising). We live in a secular society where 'seen to be Christian' is not "cool", and it's so important to be in fashion! Perhaps, if my experience is anything to go by, a return to a happier life of faith and meaning will come with increased knowledge and experience.

My hope for the future is inter-communion between the different Christian traditions. There is a fundamental yearning for this. Jesus surely meant the Eucharist to be food for the wayfarer, not a reward for the justified.



Peter Donnelly

Your Say – Two voices

John Bowie/Kevin Bates

THE WATERSHED

John Bowie

A recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (3/6/03) claimed to represent Archbishop Pell's thoughts regarding, inter alia, the Second Vatican Council and the role of conscience.

The "spread of confusion" following Vatican II, to which Archbishop Pell apparently referred, if it exists is, however, not the fault of Vatican II.

Rather, it was Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, banning artificial contraception, that brought into collision the teaching authority of the Church, the 'Magisterium', on the one hand, and the 'mind of the faithful', the 'sensus fidelium', on the other.

The vast majority of people of the Church, including clergy, clearly rejected and still reject Paul's ban. At the end of the day, the faithful will follow their consciences. The ban on artificial contraception was clearly at odds with the mind of the faithful who, after all, comprise the Church. Paul VI 'got it wrong' and, in so doing, alienated many faithful Catholics.

In reality, it is a moot point as to whether Paul VI's 'teaching' constitutes teaching in any meaningful sense, given its general lack of acceptance by Catholics.

Pope Paul, in making his decision to 'ban' artificial contraception, probably sought to bolster the authority of the Church. Paradoxically, he actually undermined it, the very opposite of what he intended.

This lack of 'cred' has spread to affect other aspects of the Church's ordinary teaching. In losing credibility on the issue of contraception, the Church now has difficulty in being seen as credible on other issues as well. Witness the recent Iraq conflict. Although the US Bishops condemned the pre-emptive strike of Bush, US Catholics were as supportive of their President as were any other Americans.

Even Archbishop Pell's reported position on Catholics re-marrying lacks 'cred' and contrasts with the gentle theology that admits that sacramental marriages can die in a way very similar to sacramental communion, which 'dies' in the body of the communicant some time after being received.

The declining church attendance, to which Archbishop Pell also apparently referred, is in strong contrast to the high levels of Catholic and wider community support for Catholic hospitals, charitable

and welfare agencies, and schools. Could it be that this support recognises a high 'cred' status of these ministries of the Church, which contrast with so many empty pews in the parishes?

As reported, Archbishop Pell also has difficulty with the concept of the primacy of informed conscience.

However, the Church is in God's business of liberating us from sin and superstition. The greatest freedom, and responsibility, is to follow one's informed conscience. Informing one's conscience is a duty and inevitably involves taking into due account the development of Christian thought and teachings over 2000 years.

As the Church itself stated at Vatican II: "Deep within their consciences men and women discover a law which ... they must obey.... Their dignity rests in observing this law, and by it they will be judged. Their conscience is people's most secret core, and their sanctuary. There they are alone with God...."

Obedience to conscience is not merely an 'option': faith-filled and faith-full Catholics are done a disservice by anyone seeking to have rejected the primacy of informed conscience.

This rejection is consistent with a hankering for the emergence of a kind of Catholic Taliban that will cleanse all before it in the name of orthodoxy. Fortunately, the Church survives such tendencies and, from time to time, coughs up leaders such as John XXIII, who so insightfully sought a renewal of the Church.

Humanae Vitae, not Vatican II, was the watershed experience for ordinary Catholics in the last century: perhaps this century will see the Church and its people reconciled with each other once more.

Until *Humanae Vitae* and the issue of contraception are revisited, however, the cred of the Church's teaching authority will continue to be compromised.

Pope John Paul II has shown sustained extraordinary leadership in seeking reconciliation with the Jewish and Muslim peoples and others who have been wronged by the Church over so many centuries. Now it is time for the Church to be reconciled with its own faithful and admit that, not least as in the case of *Humanae Vitae*, it 'got it wrong'.

John Bowie, of St Ives, NSW, says, "My thoughts are written as a personal contribution to reflection and debate".

THE VISION

Kevin Bates

The vision that called us together has faded for many of us, but every now and then, there is a glimmer of joy, of wonder. A memory that we hold is refreshed, and we glimpse the promise that God made: that life could have meaning, that happiness could be found in who we are, rather than in what we own, that life and love can indeed have the last word....

We could be distracted, and even consumed by the pain of the Church at this time. We could spend all our energy bemoaning the reduced numbers of priests, the re-emergence of the neo-conservative elements in prominent positions of authority, the bully-boy tactics that still mark many of our relationships within the Church....

We could be reduced to a timorous response to anyone outside the Church because of the pain of the past few years, as waves of sexual abuse stories have smeared the front pages of our papers. We could be scared to admit that we are part of this wounded messy family....

And then we hear voices that sound like the gospel, critiquing the aspects of a Federal budget that appear to be unjust and designed to impoverish the poor even further.

And we hear voices that sound like they were there the day the Beatitudes were announced, calling for a fair go for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

And we hear the voices of teachers gently telling their children that the dream of the gospel is something wonderful and a thing of great beauty, and a treasure to be lived all their lives....

We start to look beyond the dysfunctional ministers, the scandal-ridden sacristies, the doctrinaire pronouncements that cripple more than they liberate, and the homilies that seem to have no ending and no point. We start to glimpse that resurrection is a possibility. Something is afoot, something that is stirring not from above, but from within and beneath.

A Word is becoming flesh from among us and is speaking and touching in familiar, loving and gifting ways....

Let's build a tent or two and celebrate — even as we come to terms with our pain, our broken bits and our missed opportunities.

Kevin Bates is a Marist priest, liturgist and musician. The above excerpts are from his talk at Spirituality in the Pub, North Sydney, 15 May 2003. For full text: www.kevinfbates.com/reflections/church_treasure.htm

Special Issue – Sexuality: what are the questions?

by The Editor and Catalyst Members

In recent years there has been mounting pressure in Western societies to recognise homosexual unions. On July 31 2003 the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) gave its response: "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons." Both the issue of homosexual unions and the CDF response have attracted much comment, inside and outside the Catholic Church.

We at Catalyst believe the issues arising here are much broader than the single issue of homosexual unions. We believe it is necessary for the Catholic community to have an open and searching conversation on the general topic of sexuality. In particular, we suggest that the conversation begin with individuals seeking, on the basis of their personal experience and reflection, to discern the crucial questions we ought to be asking.

To this end we have put together a tiny sampling of some relevant readings – see below. (We know other reading – do you?) We have also set up a web site for those who wish to become part of the conversation via the internet – see web site address in the box on this page.

1. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons" (July 31 2003).

Summary: The document has four main parts – 1. 'The nature of marriage and its inalienable characteristics;' 2 'Positions on the problem of homosexual unions;' 3. 'Arguments from reason against legal recognition of homosexual unions;' 4. 'Positions of Catholic politicians with regard to legalisation in favor of homosexual unions.'

The statement contains no new doctrinal elements, it seeks rather 'to reiterate the essential points on this question and provide arguments drawn from reason which could be used by bishops in preparing more specific interventions appropriate to the specific situations throughout the world aimed at protecting and promoting the dignity of marriage, the foundation of the family and the stability of society, of which this institution is a constitutive element. The present considerations are also intended to give direction to Catholic politicians by indicating the approaches to proposed legislation in the area which could be consistent with Christian conscience.'

'Marriage is not just any relation between human beings. It was established by the Creator with its own nature, essential properties and purpose.' Three fundamental elements of the Creator's plan for marriage – 1 human beings, made in the image of God, were created 'male and female' (Gen 1:27); 2. 'Marriage is instituted by the Creator as a form of life in which a communion of persons is realized involving the use of the sexual faculty;' 3. 'God has willed to give the union of man and woman a special participation in his work of creation.' This union has the dignity of a sacrament. 'There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. ... Sacred Scripture condemns homosexual acts as a "serious depravity" (cf Rom 1:24-27; 1Cor 6:10; 1Tim 1:10). ... homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. ... Nevertheless ... men and women with homosexual tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. ... The homosexual inclination is objectively disordered.'

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

"SEXUALITY AND SOCIETY: WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS?"

We believe both the Catholic Church and society need to have a good conversation about sexuality. We would like that conversation to go beyond the one issue of homosexual unions or the CDF document. We invite you to:

- LISTEN attentively and honestly to your own experience: What is happening in your life?
- LISTEN carefully to the Church's teaching, the experience of others and the wisdom and knowledge available to us.
- DESIRE TRANSFORMATION in yourself through this encounter; conversation and conversion are inseparable.

Write to the Editor and/or go to:
[http://groups.msn.com/Catalyst
Issues](http://groups.msn.com/CatalystIssues)

Homosexual unions may be simply tolerated in a society or their legal recognition may be advocated. In the former case, 'discrete and prudent actions can be effective.'

However, people need to be reminded in the latter case that 'the approval or legalization of evil is something far different from the toleration of evil.'

The document offers four sets of arguments against the legalization of homosexual unions – 1. From the order of right reason; 2. From the biological and anthropological order; 'allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children ...' 3. From the social order; 4. From the legal order; 'in reality they can always make use of the provisions of the law – like all citizens from the standpoint of their private autonomy – to protect their rights in matters of common interest.'

'If it is true that all Catholics are obliged to oppose the legal recognition of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians are obliged to do so in a particular way, in keeping with their responsibilities as politicians.' (3 pages.)

This document draws on earlier Catholic Church documents such as:

- **Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*):** Chapter 1 – "Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and the Family."
- **Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education,** "Educational Guidance in Human Love" (1983).
- **Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,** "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" (*Persona Humana*) (1975); "On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" (1986); "Non-Discrimination Against Homosexual Persons" (1992).
- **Pontifical Council for the Family,** "Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality" (1995).
- **The Pontifical Council for the Family,** "Family, Marriage and "De Facto" Unions" (2000).
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church,** Part Three, Article 6, 2331-2400.

2. Archbishop George Pell, report in Catholic Weekly, 17/8/03.

Summary: The strange proposal to legalize homosexual unions should be opposed consistently. Homosexual acts are wrong, closed to the gift of life. Men and women are made for each other and express their love for each other sexually, give birth to children and nurture them. In marriage they

make a public and lifelong commitment to this, providing the foundation of the family, which is the basic unit, the source of stability and vitality for all societies.' (1 page.)

3. Transcript of interview with Frank Brennan SJ on Radio National, 6/8/03.

Summary: Perfectly proper for Church to engage in political agitation about issues to do with morality and the public good; need to distinguish between Church's concern for the well being of the faithful and its statements concerning the wider common good; problematic for celibates in making proclamations about sexuality; not helpful to direct politicians; conflicts between intention not to discriminate and opposition to laws protecting rights of homosexual persons; legal recognition of rights concerning people in same sex unions not inimical to marriage. (4 pages.)

4. Editorial from *The Irish Catholic*, 13/8/03.

Summary: CDF articulation of Church's teaching in accord with tradition; the manner of this proclamation is faulty; authority cannot be effectively exercised by imposition – it must tap the spiritual depths within. (2 pages.)

5. *The Tablet* Editorial, 2/8/03

Summary: Apropos July 31 CDF document on 'legalization of homosexual unions; language of the document can be brutally uncompromising (eg 'the legalization of evil'); the document refers to homosexuals in a way that no one should do today; no hint of dialogue; Vatican is prepared for a fight and expects Catholic politicians to join in; England moving towards recognition of same sex unions; questions concerning failure to give same recognition to heterosexual unions of people not legally married; Catholic Church in England and Wales has working party to monitor civil law movements in this matter. (1 page.)

6. Stephen Pope, "The Vatican's blunt instrument," *The Tablet*, 9/8/03, 4-5.

Summary: CDF document has some remarkable strengths and great clarity – eg appeals to reason, evidence and soundness of judgment and recognizes pedagogical purpose of law; but ambiguities arise – eg treatment of sexual identity simplistically; describing human being as 'intrinsically disordered' inherently stigmatizing and implicitly supportive of discrimination, which is condemned. 1. 'The document argues that not only are gay and lesbian sex self-indulgent – a description that could easily be applied to

heterosexual sex – but also (implies) that homosexuals are internally directed to a form of sexual love that will *always* be effectively sterile and to relationships that are irredeemably dysfunctional. The abstract affirmation of the *imago Dei* is undercut by this way of regarding the core of the person's sexuality – if not by logic, then by psychological experience.'

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS

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"*Sapere aude!*"

The document does not distinguish carefully enough, between same sex *marriage* and same sex *civil unions*. '... the document's greatest difficulty from the point of view of Christian ethics: it communicates no sense of love for those involved in "homosexual unions".' Where is the evidence that same-sex unions have 'a deleterious effect on the common good, including the institution of marriage and the moral formation of young people'? 'Methodologically, the CDF and its opponents speak past one another: the former argues a priori from a conception of the human good to the specific moral issue of homosexual unions, while the latter proceed from the experience of concrete human goods to the question of ethical principles.' (2 pages.)

The Tablet also carries the following:

- Jack Dominian, "Don't call it marriage" 9/8/03. (2 pages.)
- Libby Purves, "Revolt in Rome" 9/8/03. (1 page.)
- Letters to the Editor (6 pages.)
- Pastor Ignotus, "What justice for Valerie" 30/8/03. (1 Page.)

7. Bede Griffith, "On Homosexual Love" – previously unpublished reflection, recently published in *The Bede Griffiths Sangha*

Newsletter in England.

Summary: Love between people of the same sex is just as normal as love between people of the opposite sex; supreme example of loving friendship found in Jesus and the beloved disciple; St Aelred of Rievaulx writes much of the Christian friendship that should prevail between monks. (2 pages.)

8. (US) Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers" (1997).

Not a treatise on homosexuality nor a systematic presentation of the Church's moral teaching; recognizes the difficulties for parents; encourages acceptance; promotes commitment to chastity for both heterosexual and homosexual persons, understanding and respect for all; love is the greatest gift. (8 pages.)

9. Bishop Peter Carnley, Anglican Primate of Australia, "Why is there debate on gay and lesbian issues?"

Summary: Critique of fundamentalist approach; call to recognise that the Bible does not have a ready answer to everything; the 'exclusively homosexual person' a discovery of only 150 years ago; basic heterosexuality was assumed in the Bible and down through the ages; Bible not crystal clear about homosexual persons in long term relationships; perhaps this is why Roman Catholic Church appeals, not to the customary biblical texts on this matter, but natural law. (3 pages.)

10. Walter Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible" – obtained from the internet. You may contact Dr Wink on wwink@msn.com. (8 pages.)

Summary: The eminent biblical scholar, Dr Walter Wink – a United Methodist Minister who teaches in a Presbyterian Seminary – finds no basis in the Bible for the current teaching condemning homosexuality as such. Homosexuality – as distinct from homosexual acts – was not known to the Hebrew people, argues Wink. And the homosexual acts that are condemned – see eg Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 – are not "abominations" because they are homosexual as such, but because they violate other laws. For example, they believed the male planted the child inside the female, so to "plant the child" elsewhere was an "abomination." Just as medical science has brought about changes in our moral and social perceptions, so a better understanding of the Bible will assist us to develop moral principles in accord with revelation. □

The Bible – The Song of Songs

Words for a Pilgrim People

The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding around to listen to him, and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' (Luke 15:1-2)

□□□

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human persons in the unity of their body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2332)

□□□

The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986)")

□□□

It is not impossible, however, that an individual may fully accept the teaching authority of the Pope in general, may be aware of his teaching in this matter, and yet reach a position after honest study and prayer that is at variance with papal teaching. Such a person could be without blame; he would certainly not have cut himself off from the Church; and in acting in accordance with his conscience he could be without subjective fault. (Australian Catholic Bishops, "Pastoral Letter on the Application of *Humanae Vitae*", 1974)

Perhaps the most enigmatic book in the library of the Bible is the Song of Songs. It was not accepted in the Jewish canon until the end of the 1st century AD. Eventually the Song was incorporated into the Passover celebrations. No one knows for sure who wrote it or where and when it was written. The best scholarly suggestions point to a long oral tradition, perhaps finding its way into written form about the middle of the 5th century BC. One scholar says: "The intense style of poetry belongs to the genre of love lyrics found in ancient Egyptian collections. Lush, extravagant imagery appealing to the senses of sight, taste and touch, detailed descriptions of the human body, male and female, and highly stylised terms of endearment like dove, sister, and king link the Song to other ancient Near Eastern cultures" (James M Reese OSFS). The Song was divided arbitrarily into eight chapters in the Middle Ages.

In the Song of Songs we find almost fifty words that are not used anywhere else in the Old Testament – including words like *ra'yati*, meaning "my darling" or "my love". No other book in the Bible is so concerned with human love. The Song is an outpouring of passion, at once tender and wild, the words are charged. Thus the Beloved says: "I sleep, but my heart is awake. I hear my love knocking. 'Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my hair with the drops of night.' I have taken off my tunic, am I to put it on again? I have washed my feet, am I to dirty them again? My love thrust his hand through the hole in the door; I trembled to the core of my being" This is the Word of the Lord.

No other book in the Bible is so concerned with human love.

The Song of Songs is probably best read, not as a didactic text – though, indirectly it may teach the reader much – but simply as an extended poem that pleases and delights through its descriptions of loving relationships. It seems entirely appropriate that the Church through the ages should consistently apply these erotic songs to the relationship between Christ and the Church and between Christ and the individual Christian. □

The Tradition – Bernard and the Song

By the Middle Ages, it had become common to read the Song of Songs in an allegorical way. Some of these readings were better than others. Perhaps the most famous – and deservedly so – is that of St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). We have eighty-six of Bernard's Sermons on the first two chapters of the Song of Songs. They are probably best read more as an exposition of Christian mysticism than an exegesis of the Song. Sermon 74, "The Visit of the Word", is typical of the style and intent of the rest of these Sermons:

"I confess to you that I have received the visit of the Word and indeed not once but many times; but although he has often come to my soul I have never been able to ascertain the exact moment of his entrance. I have been conscious of his presence within me. I can afterward recall that he has been present, sometimes I have even a presentiment of his coming; yet I have never perceived him either in the act of entering or in the act of retiring. Certainly he does not enter through the eyes for he has no colour, nor through the ears since he has no sound, nor through the organ of smell.

"Then I realised the truth of what I read that 'In him we live, we move, and have our being.' Blessed is the soul in whom he is, who lives for him and is moved by him."

For his mingling is with the mind, not with the atmosphere. Neither does he gain admission through the avenue of the mouth, because he is not anything that can be eaten or drunk. The sense of touch is especially powerless to attain him since he is altogether intangible. By what then does he enter? Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he does not enter at all, in as much as he is not any of the things that exist outside of us? But neither can he be said to come from within me. I have ascended to what is highest in me and behold I have found the Word to be higher still! I have descended to explore the lowest depths of my being only to find that he was deeper still. I looked to the exterior, I perceived him beyond what is outermost; and if I turned my gaze inward, I saw him more interior than what is inmost. Then I realised the truth of what I read that 'In him we live, we move, and have our being.' Blessed is the soul in whom he is, who lives for him and is moved by him." □

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Fr Terry: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com
<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePub>
NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

• **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St October 8 “Sexuality and Christianity: Mutually Exclusive?” Clare Grogan & David Leary (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

• **Alstonville** Ballina Paddy McGinty's Irish Pub October 14 “The Church's Watershed Moment” Rosemary Breen (Info: Anne 5628 6428)

• **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

• **Campbelltown – Recommence 2004** Campbelltown Catholic Club (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

• **Canberra** The Southern Cross Club Woden October 29 “Positive Modelling – local level church that works!” Fr David Ranson & tba (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

• **Engadine – Pathways to God** Engadine RSL October 15 “Looking forward: Let us go forward in hope...” Anne Maree Fagan & Fr John Rate (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

• **Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St October 29 “Refugees: A Chance to Live in Peace” Sr Patty Falkiner (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

• **Goulburn** Soldiers Club November 25 “To thine own self be true” Michael McGirr & Geraldine Doogue AO (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

• **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel, November 10, “Unlocking Religious Imagination,” Fr Pat Kenna and Grahame English. (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

• **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive November 11 Celebration Dinner for 2003 Speakers tba (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

• **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

• **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel October 30. “Catholic school enrolments up but church attendance down. What's going on?” Sr Libbey Byrne & Fr Tony Smith (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

• **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney October 20 “Creativity as Treasure” Faye Brauer (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

• **Paddington – Recommence 2004** The Bellevue Hotel (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

• **Penrith** Golf Club October 22 “The Environment: Are we Rubbishing our Children's Heritage?” Br Graham Neist (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

• **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd November 11 “Celebrating Peace & Hope” Speakers tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H)).

• **Rydalmere – Responding to Change** – Rydalmere Bowling Club October 14 John Finneran & Laurie Woods (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

• **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville October 22 “Seeing Jesus in those around me” Paul O'Shea & Jenny Gribble (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

• **Waitara – Act justly, Love tenderly and walk humbly with your God** The Blue Gum Hotel October 15 Sr Carmel Pilcher & Fr David Ranson (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 November 19 “Being an Editor!” Marcelle Mogg (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

• **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm November 11 Topic & Speakers tba (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

• **Colac** The Union Club Hotel November 7 “Catholic Earthcare Australia” Tom Kingston (Info: Winsome 5235 3203).

• **Collingwood** The Vine Hotel, Wellington St, 8pm-9.30pm (Info: April 9327 4433)

• **Echuca – The Power of my story** The Harvest Hotel November 25 Morag Fraser & Fred Schultz (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

• **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm October 15 “Revelation” Speakers: tba (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

• **Mordialloc** The Kingston Club, 7.30pm-9pm October 22 “The Role of the Media in our Lives” Marcelle Mogg & Martin Flanagan (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

• **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm November 26 “Wisdom of the Elders” Speakers 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) –Recommence 2004** The

Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

• **Macclesfield (SA)** Three Brothers Arms, Venables Street November 5 “Rhyming with the Spirit” Bob Magor (Info: Michael 8388 9265).

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

Other Matters and Events

• **“Thomas Merton: Exploring his Spirit”** Lectures by Michael Whelan, October 16-November 20, at Aquinas Academy, The Rocks. (Info: Sue on 02 9247 4651).

• **Eremos Institute** Bishop Spong Lecture October 15 7.30pm, UTS, Lindfield (Info: Kate 9683 5096).

• **Stephanie Dowrick – Day of Spiritual Encouragement & Renewal** October 19 9.30-5, Naamaroo Conference Centre, Chatswood West (Info: Alexandra 9958 4402).

• **St. Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park Oct 31-Nov 6 guided retreat “Receiving God's Gifts”; Nov 7-9 Taize retreat; Nov 14-20 guided retreat “A Star is born”; Nov 21-23 Advent prayer weekend; Nov 26-Dec 4 directed retreats (Info: 02 4630 9159).

• **Bishop's Forum** – Bishop Justin Bianchini November 28th St Patrick's Crypt, The Rocks, 6-8pm.

SPECIAL THANKS

For the outgoing Executive:
 Marea Donovan, Maryellen McLeay,
 Paul Durkin, Michael Whelan –
 We appreciate the generous and professional way you served Catalyst.

WELCOME

To the new Executive:
 Jan Brady – President
 Denys Goggin – Vice President
 Maria George – Vice President
 Richard McLachlan – Secretary
 Roy Rigotti – Treasurer
 Committee members: Rosalie Carroll,
 Margaret Goggin, Margaret O'Hearn,
 Tim O'Hearn, Margaret Rigotti.
 Michael Whelan sm continues as
 Executive Director.

Forum tapes for sale – “Vatican II: Unfinished Business?” with Archbishop George Pell and “Easter Faith” with Rev Gerald O'Collins sj.
 Cost: \$10 including postage

Recommended

Evelyn and James Whitehead, *Wisdom of the Body: Making Sense of Our Sexuality*, Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001, 188 pages, bibliography, pb. (Available from John Garratt Publishing – 1300 650 878.)

More than ten years ago, the Whiteheads published a book entitled, *A Sense of Sexuality*. Parts of this earlier book are incorporated in *Wisdom of the Body*, but there is much that is new. Three new chapters expand on the earlier material on gender by considering femininity, masculinity and the differences – real and imagined – between men and women. There is a new chapter on homosexuality. Each chapter contains a listing of additional resources and a reflection exercise. The authors write: “The Christian vision expands the scope of love. The Gospel brings good news for the body, rescuing sexuality from narrow understandings that limit *eros* to genital activity. And the robust virtue of intimacy equips us for the wider challenges of love and work.” *Wisdom of the Body* situates the discussion within the context of the traditional metaphor of the Body of Christ. This reader found “Sex is mysterious” and “Sex makes promises” to be particularly rewarding. The authors do not hold out false promises; they offer wisdom, not answers, to help the reader negotiate the realm of sexual experience with integrity. The Whiteheads also remind us to walk with hope and respect into this territory, mindful of the presence and intent of God, who made us sexual beings.

Antony F Campbell SJ, *God First Loved Us: The Challenge of Accepting Unconditional Love*, Paulist Press, 2000, 112 pages, pb. (Available from Pauline Books and Media at \$27.95.)

In the spiritual life, where we begin is where we will end. If we begin with ourselves and what we must do, that is precisely where we will end. If, on the other hand, we begin with God’s Love and God’s action in and through Jesus Christ, we will find ourselves endlessly caught up in the infinite horizon of God’s gracious Mercy and Love. The first approach – one that tends to generate moralism – has afflicted Catholic pastoral life and spirituality for too long. There is nothing we can do that will make God love us more or less. We strive to live a moral life, not to earn God’s love, but to develop our humanity and contribute well to the society and world in which we find ourselves. Campbell, an Old Testament scholar, helps restore the balance with this fine little set of reflections. *God First Loved Us* has a depth of scholarship underpinning it and an easy, almost colloquial style, expressing it. At this time in the Church and society, when we are struggling hard to come to terms with new truths about life and living, this most fundamental of all messages is more necessary than ever. We might even dare to think that, if we taste this unconditional love of God for us, we too might find ourselves caught up in God’s unconditional love for others – in all their joys and sadnesses.

Robert McClory, *Faithful Dissenters: Stories of Men and Women Who Loved and Changed the Church*, Orbis Books, 2000, 180 pages, index, endnotes, pb. (Available from Rainbow Book Agencies for \$39.95 03 9481 6611.)

Strange as it might seem at first blush, there is probably no other institution in history that has shown itself more consistently able to tolerate diversity and innovation like the Catholic Church. More than that, the Catholic Church has a remarkable genius for not only tolerating but actually incorporating the new and diverse. McClory says he was inspired to write this book by John Henry Newman’s idea that “the creation of church doctrine is not the exclusive preserve of the hierarchy and that consultation with the laity is, in fact, a necessity for authentic doctrine”. McClory’s subjects include John Courtney Murray SJ, Mar. Ward, Hildegard of Bingen, Yves Congar and Mary MacKillop, and they “represent but the tip of the iceberg”. McClory recalls Mary MacKillop’s remarkable words when she was excommunicated: “I do not know how to describe the feeling but ... I was intensely happy and felt nearer to God than I had ever felt before ... I cannot describe the calm beautiful something that was near.” The term “faithful dissent” is not an oxymoron. This is a very readable, balanced and well informed book. It will give heart and inspiration to many who may feel frustrated at the slowness or even lack of the change they desire in the Church.

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