



# THE MIX



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## **Our Say – If Jesus turned up**

The Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, has a fascinating little piece in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. One of the brothers, Ivan – a self-confessed atheist – tells his younger brother, Alyosha – a devout and innocent seminarian – of a dream he had. The dream is set in fifteenth-century Spain, in the time of the Inquisition. Jesus returns and is immediately arrested and berated by the Grand Inquisitor. He charges Jesus with creating chaos by bringing freedom; the Church, says the Grand Inquisitor, has put things back in good shape by taking away that freedom. In the face of the Grand Inquisitor's attack, Jesus remains silent.

The Dominican theologian, Yves Congar, is supposed to have said that every preacher and teacher of the faith should meditate on that story at least once every year. Perhaps one of the advantages of such a meditation is that it forces us to ask some critical questions, like: What would Jesus do and say if he returned to visit the Catho-

lic Church in Australia today? Where would He feel most at home, where most ill at ease? How would I respond?

Our questions might even become more concrete and specific. For example, we might ask whether Jesus would be pleased or annoyed with the way we celebrate the Last Supper or the way we celebrate the gift of reconciliation. Would He applaud, be indifferent to or appalled by the forbidding of the Third Rite?

Would He appreciate the way we embody His priesthood in the community? What words might he utter to those priests struggling with their loneliness, their emotional and physical exhaustion, their dark moments of doubt and their desire to do the best for their people? Would He be happy with the law of compulsory celibacy for His priests?

What might He say to those men and women who, in fidelity to their marriage vows, lay down their lives for one another

and for their children? Would he have anything to say to those who are married, divorced and re-married? What would he say to those gay and lesbian people trying to live out a loving commitment to one another person?

What would he say to those who have been hurt or abused by people representing His Church? Might He visit the paedophiles and other sex-abusers in gaol, and if he did, what might he say to them?

Would He be happy with the way our bishops are appointed? And if He went to the Vatican, how might He feel? What might He do or say while He was there? Would He applaud, be indifferent to or appalled by the exercise of authority in Rome?

And what about you and me? What would we want to say to Him? What might he want to say to you and me? And so our questioning might go on to a final question: What sort of advice might Jesus give us all, in the end, having spoken with all sorts of people and visited all sorts of places? □

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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

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

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My name is Carmel Vanny. I am the mother of two adult sons, I work fulltime in pastoral ministry and co-convene SIP Waitara. I have been a member of Catalyst for two years.

I was born the second child to Jack and Jean Pye of Glebe and was much loved by them and their network of family and friends. We lived life simply, with connectedness and relationships being at the core of how we found meaning in life. I have two brothers and together we have become fine companions.

My parents were faithful Catholics, active in the local parish and involved in the communities of inner city Sydney. My spirituality developed within the context of family, a sense of belonging and parish life. It was in the small experiences of everyday that I came to know the Presence.

I first knew of prayer at the age of seven when my small brother contracted polio and was gravely ill. The outpouring of prayer for him was deeply felt and provided balm for our hearts.

At Primary School I was in the Legion of Mary and undertook ministry to those who were elderly and isolated. My Dad was active in the St Vincent de Paul Society and was very much my mentor. In my young ministry I came to know the experience of mutuality, wherein those whom I visited shared their wisdom and love with me.

I was educated by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan at Glebe and was formed by much of their charisma, especially that of hospitality and welcome to the stranger. I continue to be renewed by the spirit of their ministry when I visit the *House of Sacred Space* at Dee Why.

A constant throughout my life has been my uncle, an MSC brother who has worked and lived with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory for 65 years. He gifted his family with story about Aboriginal people and the mutuality of his life with theirs. His living of Gospel has influenced my own spiritual journey.

On leaving school I went to a Catholic Children's Home to train as a Mothercraft Nurse. It was there that I observed the pain of human separation. Small children separated from families, because of poverty and poor social resources. Young single mothers separated from their newborn babies, not because they didn't love them, but because church and societal attitudes shamed them into relinquishment.

I still call to mind those mothers and their babies and pray that somehow they

I went on to complete two years general nursing before marrying and having a family of my own. I took delight in the ordinariness of life and the exuberance of my children! I was active in school and parish life and the broader community. The Presence was in all of that for me.

As a young mum I attended the Aquinas Academy *Christian Maturity Program* experienced spiritual and personal renewal. In particular I embraced two words, 'compassionate realism'. I went on to study at Macquarie University and found my oasis – friendship, fine teachers and vibrant faith communities. Through learning I matured.

While at university, I was invited to participate in the pilot project *Women and the Australian Church (WATAC)* and am still involved today, after 18 years. I was on their Executive for 5 years. WATAC has been church for me.

I have been refreshed by the intellectual energy and by the prayer life of rituals, reflection and sacred song. My hope is that one day our church will embrace the feminine more fully: in its personnel, language and imagery.

The desert journey came to me in my middle years. The deaths of my Dad and loved ones and the increasing frailty of family elders, my own need to make painful decisions — all this resulted in many losses to grieve and dislocation to manage.

In the barren place I find a God who in the process of confusion and sadness. I find, too, that my own narrative and blessings from the past come to sustain me.

I believe in the Presence who is there in relationships and in the ordinariness of life. My constant 'companion' in recent years has been a book by Noel Davis: *Heart Gone Walkabout*. It has been a source of strength and prayer. I find comfort and hope in his line: 'It's the little things we do for each other that make life sublime'.



Carmel Vanny

# Your Say – The language of mission

Ted Mason

The week of parish renewal was going well; attendances were excellent, the sessions well received and discussions enthusiastic. But something was missing — to be truthful, 85% of the parish was missing.

This week of renewal held no interest for the young, the separated and divorced, the single parents, the disillusioned, the sceptical — those hundreds found in every parish who, for one reason or another, feel spiritually disenfranchised. Where does one begin to establish a safe environment for genuine and meaningful dialogue with the 85%?

I was sitting in the local mall waiting for Ada (my wife) and observing the passing parade, when four young adults arrived, unpacked a set of bongo drums and a guitar, laid out a small cloth, salted it with a few coins, and commenced to sing and dance. I was fascinated and enthralled by their beauty, rhythm, grace and expertise. But their use of the English language in their singing was foreign to me.

Apart from placing some loose change on the cloth, and offering a smile of appreciation at their skill, how could I possibly begin a dialogue with these young people? What language about Jesus and faith and renewal could I use to interest them?

At the end of the renewal week, an 84-year-old woman came to me to say thankyou and goodbye. She had attended every session, day and night, and was seated up the front at our final Mass. I'll never forget her words:

"I feel I have been zipped up in a bag all my life. This week has unzipped the bag, and I have been set free. Thank you."

Grateful on the outside, internally I was horrified. What had this lovely person been hearing all these years that had caused her to feel enclosed and unfree?

Back home at Shalom, I was called to assist a group in the House with a sound system problem. Having fixed that, I casually remarked (tongue in cheek, I thought) that I had left behind a nice scotch to come to their aid. One of the women in the group eyeballed me and said in a kind but firm tone,

"Do you not see this as your opportunity to be saved?" The look of horror on my face, and half-strangled gasp of, "What!" encouraged the same exhortation: "This is our opportunity to be saved."

I made some light-hearted reply like, "I don't want to be saved, if I can't have my

scotch", and left the group to its work. I'm sure she wasn't impressed.

Three different situations; three different uses of language; three different examples of alienation or isolation: what had I learned?

The language of my evangelical friend at Shalom did nothing for me theologically, but she's the one who got me thinking about the language we use to promote the Good News, and tell people about Jesus. Sadly no one size fits all.

The language of maintenance may be fine for the faithful 65+ age group who form the bulk of most of our congregations, as long as we keep in mind that their religious teachers were formed theologically in the 1930s. My experience is that Vatican II has had a minimal effect on the majority of this group.

But what language(s) do we use for the 85% of our parish populations who do not feel welcomed by the faithful above, who do not attend Mass, except on special occasions like Easter, Christmas and maybe Baptism, Confirmations, weddings, etc?

I refer to the bright and smart 30+ age group with a tertiary education and a deep interest in ecology and social justice; our divorced and separated couples; those in second and third marriages; single parents; gay Catholics and inter-church couples. Nor can we exclude those who feel sinned against by the Church, and who have lost their personal faith in God.

I am very good at using the *language of maintenance*; I am making a sincere effort to learn the *languages of mission*.

For parishes there are great risks involved when engaging in mission. The faithful 15% who form our congregations provide the money for both maintenance and mission. The theology of this 15% makes it very difficult for them to understand why mission to the other 85% is even necessary. Any plans for mission, and personnel to run them are bound to involve members of our faithful 15%! Catch 22? Surely not!

Opportunities for dialogue with the 85% are difficult to find. Preparation for Marriage, Baptism, Confirmation and maybe even funerals are probably the main occasions when our priests, pastoral associates and sacramental teams can engage in meaningful dialogue with this larger group — without, of course, detracting from the original purpose of the gathering.

Given that the occasions mentioned

above are probably the only times when most will cross the church threshold, perhaps here we have a few opportunities to mould our language to the audience, and involve them in a life-giving experience.

There are no easy solutions to the problems I have highlighted above. Each parish is going to have to work out its own strategies for engaging the different groups in some form of meaningful dialogue. Pope John Paul II sees this dialogue as "the great challenge" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*). It is a sensitive issue and a risky one but, if we are to break the bonds of maintenance, we need to face this great challenge.

*Ted Mason is a residential member of Shalom, the Bathurst Diocesan House of Prayer at Carcoar.*

## LETTERS

I remember as a young Anglican Priest, ordained 30 years ago, slowly reading each morning after the Morning Office, the Documents of Vatican II. My Abbott copy of the Documents is a bit dog-eared by now, but I seem to return again and again to it.

Only two or so years ago, a retreatant from Sydney sent me a year's subscription of *The Mix*, and it has become my most anticipated journal. I cannot remember an issue which has not, in one way or another, informed, challenged or excited me.

I am really grateful for the constant 're-working' (that seems a bit crass to describe the thoughtful and prayerful process of what in a way amounts to *lectio divina*) of the Documents of Vatican II and Encyclicals. In particular, I appreciate the emphasis on the spirituality of communion, the essential nature of dialogue not as an exchange of ideas, but as an exchange of gifts, and in the last issue, the 'significant break with the past' in *style* — a 'respectful listening as the preferred mode of proceeding'.

I write to say thank you and to say just how much someone from another Communion really appreciates what you are doing, and how encouraging and hopeful I find it.

*Phillip Carter, Director, Julian Centre (a place for spiritual direction, healing and reconciliation), Mile End, SA*

Congratulations on your superb publication! The articles I read certainly help me to think and to see the truth rather than go by what many of us just accept because 'they say'.

*Sr Joan Guiry, RSJ, Williamstown, VIC*

# Essay – Integrity in ministry and the synod

by Pat Power

The following is a paper Bishop Patrick Power wrote in view of the Synod for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, to be held in May 2004. The Synod's theme is to be "One in Christ Jesus".

Those who respond to God's call to religious life, the priesthood or diaconate invariably do so out of a desire to love God in the people they are privileged to serve. The exercise of their ministry is one involving deep trust on the part of their people, who rightly see them as God's representatives. They are called upon, in the words of the prophet Micah, "to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with their God".

From the viewpoint of the clergy, *Integrity in Ministry* offers clear guidelines enabling pastors to form healthy relationships with each other and with their people. Based on the theology of communion, it acknowledges that the very essence of our life of faith is relational – grounded in the Trinitarian life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in which we are all called to share through our baptism. Clearly the vocation of all Christians is to be "One in Christ Jesus".

Experience teaches us that we best discover our real selves in our relationships with others and that we find our deepest moments of happiness in our union with God, family members and dear friends. But we also know that relationships can be fraught with danger. Witness the break-up of a marriage or another significant relationship or the betrayal of trust involved in sexual abuse of children or other vulnerable people.

*Integrity in Ministry* seeks to enable the relationship of clergy and religious with their people to be healthy, life-giving and God-centred. Rather than have pastors "go into their shell" by withdrawing from relating to their people, they are helped to bring the love of Jesus to their people through the exercise of their pastoral love and care.

*Integrity in Ministry* makes it very clear that there need to be boundaries surrounding the ways they relate to their people. This will mean wisdom, integrity, a spirit of openness and a willingness to be accountable.

Religious and clergy, including their leaders, are called to a spirit of service. Because of the trust they are given and the visibility of their witness and leadership,

they need to be conscious of the unique power they have in pastoral relationships.

*Integrity in Ministry* offers the standards which flow from this premise:

- ◆ Relating to all people in a spirit of humility, reverence and respect, with a commitment to the deepest wellbeing of the other;
- ◆ Creating cooperative and harmonious relationships in the communities in which one lives and works;
- ◆ Respecting the call to collaborative effort between men and women for the sake of the kingdom;
- ◆ Encouraging and supporting all members of the community in the fulfilment of their vocations;
- ◆ Consulting widely and seeking consensus, where possible, before taking important decisions;
- ◆ Exercising caution in the use of one's status or institutional power; never using these for one's own advantage;
- ◆ Taking up leadership and service in a community with respect for the life, customs, history and vision of the persons who already make up that community;
- ◆ Sharing decision-making responsibilities when appropriately possible;
- ◆ Discouraging the development of personality cults centred on oneself;
- ◆ Creating environments where others feel confident to offer constructive criticism.

**I would suggest that one of the most important hallmarks of leadership is the ability to bring out the best in others. Jesus gives a wonderful example of such leadership.**

On a personal and a communal level, religious and clergy need to be "One in Christ Jesus" in their prayer life, in their celebration of the Sacraments. "In those moments they are one at the service of a community of active and equal persons, seeking to enable the best and fullest expression of the community's prayer, praise and communion with the life of God".

At a time when the people of our world are hungering for a deeper spirituality, we Catholics have a wonderful opportunity to share the richness of our spiritual heritage. The more we aspire to being "One in

Christ Jesus", the more effectively we will witness to Gospel values.

There is no doubt that these are challenging times for the whole Catholic Church. Bishops, priests and deacons in their varying leadership roles are at times carrying heavy burdens. They need to experience mutuality in the love and service of their people. At times they need to "let go" and be willing to share duties and responsibilities, enabling the gifts of all the people of God to come to the fore. I would suggest that one of the most important hallmarks of leadership is the ability to bring out the best in others. Jesus gives a wonderful example of such leadership.

Our Archdiocesan Synod presents us all with many opportunities, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to live, pray and work together in such a way that our Church will become a more credible witness to Jesus' great commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you".

*Bishop Patrick Power is Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.*

## IDEOLOGUE OR MYSTIC?

Michael Whelan SM

In the year 379, Gregory, the bishop of Nazianzen, spoke at the funeral of his dear friend Basil, former bishop of Caesarea. He quoted Basil himself in the funeral oration: "The human being is an animal who has received the vocation to become God".

Gregory is giving voice to a grand vision: To become human is to "become God"; humanisation is divinisation.

St Paul speaks in the same vein. Writing to the Christians at Galatia, he says: "It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). At his conversion Paul had heard words that seared themselves on his soul: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:5).

So we can begin to understand Paul's words about baptism – we are "baptised into Christ" (cf Romans 6:3) and enjoy "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (cf Romans 8:21).

Within the Catholic Church we have not always kept this grand vision alive in our teaching and preaching. In fact, we have frequently supplanted that vision with another vision – one that Jesus found and condemned in the Pharisees of his time.

We have too often, down the centuries,

tended to shift the focus from God to us. Instead of focusing on what God has done and intends to do for us, we focus on what we have done or intend to do or must do for God. Thus the Christian life tends to be reduced to the implementation and maintenance of a system, with its particular rules, regulations, dogmas moral injunctions and so on.

Of course we must necessarily develop a system within which our life as a community of believers is lived out. That system will necessarily have institutional structures, roles, laws, dogmas, moral frameworks, symbols, rituals and so on. However, the system is the means, not the end.

Jesus presents us with the possibility of an experience of God's infinite Love. This possibility of being in Love represents the heart and soul of what is on offer in Him.

Our life in Christ is, first and last, a communion of relationships. The primary relationship is with God, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The gift of faith is our experiential knowledge of this fact. Passing on the faith is passing on that experience by the power of God's Holy Spirit at work within the human reality. Growing in the faith is growing more deeply into that primary relationship with God and the subsequent relationships – with self, others and events and things of our world.

When we focus on the system rather than relationships, we reduce the Good News to an ideology. An ideology is any more or less coherent system of ideas whose purpose is to shape the world of people, events and things in a particular way. Ideologies, by their very nature, tend to pre-empt reality. Ideologies are about control.

Marxism, in its various expressions, is perhaps the most extreme form of ideology in recent history. It is presented by its ideologues as a more or less coherent system of ideas whose purpose is to shape the social world, and eventually history itself. Because it pre-empts reality, it can only persist if more or less violence is done to reality, especially human beings.

But we all have our pet ideologies, templates we impose on the world, with their sets of expectations and assumptions of the way things "should" be. Mostly these are pretty harmless – in fact, they can actually help us to get on with the business of living. But at times our ideologies lead us into unreal expectations and prejudices.

Ideologies stand or fall on the strengths of their human resources and arguments, and perhaps the accidents of history. Ideologies tend to be closed and self-centred because they deal with "answers" and "solutions", and their agents – the ideologues –

are those who have the "answers" and "solutions".

For ideologies, life is not dialogue but monologue. No ideology, for example, would ever accept Gamaliel's principle as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (cf Acts 5:34-39). Ideologies cannot afford to let things be and allow the truth to simply emerge in the honest give and take of life.

Ideologies have no room for grace, except maybe as an abstraction, since they believe the world is divided into two types: those who are "right" and those who are "wrong".

Ideologues may in fact deny that any of these characteristics apply to them; they may even deny that they are ideologues. The facts should be allowed to speak for themselves.

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**For ideologies, life is not dialogue but monologue. ... Ideologies cannot afford to let things be and allow the truth to simply emerge in the honest give and take of life.**

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People who are ideological about their faith will, for example, tend to give primary focus to the system. Their stock in trade is the dogmatic statement that ends all debate; they will tend to be emphatic about what "should be" and "the right thing"; they will also tend to deal more in "answers" than "questions". A tragic irony may be found in the fact that "Christian" ideologues tend to place great store by "orthodoxy" – as they define it – even at the expense of love: being "right" is more important than being in right relationship.

This faith-as-ideology dominated Catholicism as we came into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It may have made Catholics feel secure in their certitudes, but it also had some tragic consequences. For example, it provided impetus for a terrible bigotry against Protestants – consider, for example, the "mixed marriage" that frequently took place almost surreptitiously, and the rule against Catholics attending the funeral service of a Protestant and the threat of excommunication for those parents who would send their children to the State school. It also tended to foster an infantile sense of moral responsibility in adults, who were simply told to accept the moral discernments passed on by their clergy.

Genuine Christian faith, in contrast to an ideology, is a gift of relationships in Christ. Born of communion, Christian faith deepens communion. This faith is the experiential knowledge of love, first and foremost, the love of God for us, a love which

embraces us, frees us, overwhelms us and draws us into the communion of the Trinity.

The divine love that uniquely forms the mystical heart of our Christian faith is pre-eminently evident in the Paschal Mystery. In the death of Jesus we have the liberating action of God's love manifest. And it is not just a display or example, but an effective event. Hans Kung sums it up well:

The cross is not only example and model, but ground, power and norm of the Christian faith. (*On Being a Christian*, Doubleday, 1976, 410).

To live the Christian life? As you have been loved into freedom (eg Philippians 3:12), go into the world in such a way that God may love others into freedom through you. In this we find the fullness of our humanity and the very reason of our existence. Each of us is to be the place where God finds access to this world at this time.

If we are to understand the grand vision of our life in Christ, it is necessary to say something about mysticism. Mysticism, put most simply, is the experience of being one with the One. In that primary experience of oneness with the One, a life of expanding and deepening communion is born, a communion with oneself, with other people and with the physical world. This communion with all that is, in turn, draws us more deeply into communion with the One.

In this sense, all human beings are called to be mystics. To be a mystic is to be radically human. Thomas Merton describes this ordinary mysticism well:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. .... My solitude ... is not my own, for I see now how much it belongs to them – and that I have a responsibility for it in their regard, not just in my own. It is because I am one with them that I owe it to them to be alone, and when I am alone they are not "they" but my own self. There are no strangers! (Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Doubleday, 1989, 156-158.)

Specifically Christian mysticism is the fulfilment of our deepest human possibilities. Christian mysticism is a communion with the Father, in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This communion is manifest in the way we relate with ourselves, with other people, events and things of our world. To be a Christian – in the fullest sense of the term – is to be radically human, a mystic. It is to be in Love.

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## Words for a Pilgrim People

*Do not use harmful words in talking. Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. (Ephesians 4:29)*

□□□

*Dear Lord, give me the truths which are veiled by the doctrines and articles of faith, which are masked by the pious words, sermons and books. Let my eyes penetrate the veil and tear off the mask, that I can see your truth face to face. (St John of the Cross cited in **The Glenstal Book of Prayer**, John Garratt Publishing, 113.)*

□□□

*The capacity for "dialogue" is rooted in the nature of human beings and their dignity. As seen by philosophy, this approach is linked to the Christian truth concerning humanity as expressed by the Council: human beings are in fact "the only creatures on earth which God willed for themselves"; thus they cannot "fully find themselves except through a sincere gift of themselves" (cf Gaudium et Spes, 24). Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community. (Pope John Paul II, **Ut Unum Sint** (1995), 28.)*

□□□

*It is difficult in any relationship to accept the loved one as a fallible person who also has needs, and to avoid projecting one's own needs on to the other. (Jean Vanier, **Man and Woman He Made Them**, St. Paul Publications, 1984/1985, 16)*

□□□

Luke is the only one of the Gospels to tell the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35). It is a delightful story, full of pathos, gentleness and compassion, joy and surprise. The two disciples are not only on their way to Emmaus, they are – more significantly – on their way *out of Jerusalem*. They are "downcast" (v.17) because their expectations have been dashed (v.21). And we should not miss the fact that these two have been told the Good News, they know that the tomb is empty. They simply do not believe. Luke says "their eyes were opened and they recognised him" when he broke the bread and handed it to them (vv.30-31).

The two disciples are initially in the depths, deeply despondent. Their world has fallen apart. *Their* world has fallen apart! The presence of Jesus, when they finally recognise him, enables them to see that *their* world needs to fall apart. They have been living in unreality. Their world is shaped by a particular set of expectations. They expected that Jesus would "set Israel free" (v.21), that the new Kingdom, about which Jesus said much, would be ushered in. It did not happen as they expected. In other words, Jesus was expected to be someone who would act effectively on a merely structural plane, his task was to introduce a better human system. The cross was definitely not part of their expectations. In the breaking of the bread, they learn something about the Kingdom

Earlier in Luke's Gospel we read: "Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, he gave them this answer, 'The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, "Look, it is here! Look, it is there!" For look, the kingdom of God is among you' " (17:20-21). The Kingdom of God is not essentially about structures of any kind, though it will tend to transform structures of all kinds. The Kingdom is constituted by the presence of the risen Lord. The kingdom "comes" among us when we awaken to His presence in our journey. The ultimate issue, therefore, is not whether the Kingdom has "come" or whether Jesus is among us, but whether we can recognise Jesus among us. □

## The Tradition – Making room

Where we begin in the search for our humanity, our best possibilities, is where we will finish up. If we begin with ourselves and what we must do and achieve and control and master, etc, that is where we will tend to be years down the track. If, on the other hand, we begin with the great mystery of God and what God has done and what God has on offer every day, that is where we will be in years to come – in the gracious and infinite Mercy of God's Life and Love. The first approach – egocentric as it inevitably is, whether we admit it or not – has us engaged in a mastery project, one of gathering and acquiring and possessing and building moral edifices and giving primary emphasis to dogmas and rules and structures. The second approach – Mystery-centred as it inevitably is – has us engaged in an emptying project, one of letting go and detachment and relinquishment and submission and attentive waiting and giving primary emphasis to relationships.

Ultimately, each human life can be understood as a process of making room for the advent of God.

There is a very simple and powerful story in the Bible: God wants to love us into freedom – receive the gift! It is one of the most difficult lessons for Westerners, so shaped by rationalism and functionalism, to let go of the way of mastery and control and embrace the way of abandonment and detachment. We want fullness, not emptiness! And the awful paradox that we fail to recognise is that the fullness of ego mastery, even if it is rationalised under the rhetoric of "Christian spirituality", is a terrible emptiness.

And so we seek to awaken in our depths the mind of Christ who "did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself" (Philippians 2:6-7). At the end of our lives it will be more important to confidently bring our emptiness into the mystery of our dying than the fullness of any ego projects we may have cherished. □

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**The ultimate issue, therefore, is not whether the kingdom has "come" or whether Jesus is among us, but whether we can recognise Jesus in the ordinary stuff of our days.**

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**Ultimately, each human life can be understood as a process of making room for the advent of God.**

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# 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.

Mail: [terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com)

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

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

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St December 10 “Sacrament of Ordination: Last Bastion of Male Domination?” Therese Vassarotti & Rev Vicki Cullen (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

° **Alstonville** Ballina Paddy McGinty's Irish Pub – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Anne 6628 6428)

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

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

° **Canberra** The Southern Cross Club Woden – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Rita 6260 6737).

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St – **Recommence 04** (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 “Search for the Sacred: Unlocking Religious Imagination” Fr Pat Kenna & Grahame English (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive November 11 Catalyst Dinner “Out of the Chaos Came” Fr Frank Brennan sj AO (Info: Carmen 4367 2743 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** – **Recommence 2004** – **Theme “Walking the Edges”** The Bellevue Hotel (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club – **Recommence 2004** (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** – Rydalmere Bowling Club - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

° **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Ken 9580 1183 ).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel - **Recommence 2004** (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: Clair 5236 2091).

° **Collingwood** The Vine Hotel, Wellington St, 8pm-9.30pm - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

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

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton), November 24 “What on earth has the pub got to do with Spirituality?” Andrew Hamilton & Anne Halpin (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

° **Mordialloc** The Kingston Club, 7.30pm-9pm – **Recommence 2004** (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 December 10 “Ecumenism” Michael Putney & Val Graydon (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

° **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).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park Nov 21-23 Advent prayer weekend; Nov 26-Dec 4 directed retreats; Dec 28-Jan 25 sabbatical retreat program “Life's Journey Experience”; Dec 28-Jan 5 Spirituality of Journey retreat; Jan 6-14 Life's Healing Journey; Jan 16-24 directed retreats (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Discovering Thomas Merton** Nov 7-9 St Clement's, Galong – Cost \$120 (Info: 6386 7214).

° Join the thousands of Catholics receiving the **Free Daily Catholic News & Prayer Service**. See for yourself why this is Australia's No 1 Religious website. Visit [www.cathnews.com.au](http://www.cathnews.com.au).

### EUCCHARISTIC REFLECTION

with

**Fr Anthony Kelly CSsR**  
**Marist Centre, Hunters Hill,**  
**November 15, 10am – 5pm**  
**[BYO Lunch]**  
**(Info: 9816 4262).**

### Audio Tapes for sale

“Vatican II: Unfinished Business?”  
+  
Bishops Forum with  
Archbishop George Pell  
+  
“Easter Faith” with  
Rev Gerald O'Collins sj.  
Cost: \$10 including postage – send to  
CFR office.

### REFLECTION MORNINGS 2004

The first one will be on  
Saturday March 20, 2004, with  
**Fr Richard Lennan**  
9.30am at  
Marist Centre, Hunters Hill

# Recommended

Patrick F O'Connell, editor, *The Vision of Thomas Merton*, Ave Maria Press, 2003, 253 pages, endnotes, original photographs by Thomas Merton, pb, \$37.95. (Available from John Garratt Publishing – 1300 650 878.)

Each of us who loves Merton and his writings will have his or her own theory about why he continues to attract attention from such a wide and diverse audience. My own theory – at the moment – is that he was ruthlessly honest with himself. He applied his considerable intellectual gifts and talents as a writer to the business of unmasking life. Very few of us dare to do what he did, but we wish we could do it. *The Vision of Thomas Merton* is a welcome addition to the growing list of fine books about this extraordinary man. It includes twelve essays, plus a lengthy introduction from the editor. The essays are presented in honour of Robert E Daggy, who has probably done more than anyone else to physically gather the Merton papers and notes, guide researchers and generally oversee the Merton literary legacy in the most practical ways. Some of the best writers on Merton can be found here, including William Shannon and Lawrence Cunningham. Topics include "Thomas Merton and the Search for Owen Merton", "The Changing Quality of Thomas Merton's Later Journals", "Thomas Merton's Evolving View of Nature", "Some Mature Poems of Thomas Merton" and "Thomas Merton in Dialogue with Eastern Religions". Highly recommended.

Lindsay Tanner, *Crowded Lives*, Pluto Press, 2003, 124 pages, endnotes, index, pb, \$22.95.

It does the heart good to find a politician writing a book like this in our times. Lindsay Tanner strikes the right note with *Crowded Lives*. The opening sentence of the Introduction tells us of the author's intent: "This book is about human relationships". Tanner goes on: "It's about the central role relationships play in our society, and how we consistently undervalue the importance of relationships in our decision-making processes. ... The time is ripe for a new focus on the responsibilities we owe to each other. ... By living crowded lives we are slowly eating away at the bonds which connect us with our fellow human beings." This wonderfully readable little book touches on a number of issues and themes – parenting, crime and punishment, work, government, personal responsibility, individualism, materialism — to name a few. There is nothing cute or unctuous about Tanner's approach. He is hard-headed and intelligent enough to know that re-instating relationships to top priority in the social political agenda is not a simple task. In a sense, it is not even a "task". It is rather a question of a new consciousness, a new awareness that will bring with it new patterns of behaving. Tanner does not explicitly speak of religion, but that is where his thinking must logically tend. The decision-makers within the Catholic Church should read this book and take it to heart.

William Madges and Michael J Daley, editors, *Vatican II: Forty Personal Stories*, Twenty Third Publications, 2003, 231 pages, endnotes, pb, \$49.95. (Available from John Garratt Publishing – 1300 650 878.)

There still are many of us alive who remember not only the Second Vatican Council but the Church before that Council. It will not be long before we, like the Council itself, will have passed into history, and any access to what happened in those most extraordinary days will be available only through the texts and multimedia presentations our generation might have left behind us. It may take a generation or two or three ... before those post-Vatican II children realise how important it is to know what happened then. The editors have successfully taken a storytelling approach to maintain a sense of vitality and personal interest. The "story of Vatican II" is part of the "story of God's loving intervention in and through human history". The "storytellers" are grouped under six headings: The Context, Liturgy, Church, Scripture and Tradition, Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, World Issues and Social Justice. The "storytellers" include Richard Rohr, Joseph Komonchak, Lawrence Cunningham, Richard McBrien, Roger of Taize, Elizabeth Johnson, Mary Luke Tobin, Monika Hellwig and Joan Chittister. There is a good mix of light-hearted and serious writing here. It is all readable and informative. This book will help to keep the story alive.

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