



THE MIX



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Many men and women in Germany during the thirties and forties actively opposed Hitler and the evil of Nazism. Of these, one of the better known is the Lutheran Pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a founding member of the Confessing Church, the centre of German Protestant resistance to Hitler. He also participated in a plot to assassinate Hitler, was arrested on April 5, 1943 and hanged on April 9, 1945.

Bonhoeffer criticised the leaders of the Christian Churches for their inaction in the face of Nazi atrocities. He wrote:

The Church was silent when it should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenseless brothers of Jesus Christ.

Bonhoeffer believed that the Christian Churches made too many accommodations and compromises with Nazism which, far from supporting the Church in her mission, actually prevented the Church from pursu-

ing her mission. In short, their focus was survival rather than proclamation of the Kingdom. Proclaiming the Kingdom would have included acting on behalf of those who were the victims of injustice.

The focus on survival, Bonhoeffer argued, led the Christian Churches into confusion and, eventually, impotence.

It is easy to be wise in hindsight. It is also easy to say what should have been done sixty or seventy years ago. Neither is the point here. The point here is to reflect on our situation and the decisions and actions we should take as disciples of Jesus Christ at this time in this place.

Thomas Merton makes a useful comment in the light of Bonhoeffer's critique and actions:

The last thing in the world that should concern a Christian or the Church is *survival* in a temporal and worldly sense: to be concerned with this is an implicit denial of the Victory of Christ and of the Resurrection.

Perhaps it is not unfair to suggest that some Catholic Church leaders in recent years have acted in a way that would indicate that their priority is survival, rather than proclamation of the Kingdom. The way the sexual abuse issue has been dealt with in some quarters, for example, would certainly encourage us to think this way. We will no doubt be dealing with the confusion and impotence generated by that behaviour for years to come.

It might also be argued that the gross mishandling of the sexual abuse issue on certain occasions occurred because of a culture within the Catholic Church that places too much emphasis on survival and not enough on proclaiming the Kingdom.

There is, of course, no point in promoting one's own demise. Nor is there any point in saying we are Christian if we do not proclaim the Kingdom, no matter what. Survival and maintenance of a certain system are not our concern. We just might need to lose our life in order to save it. □

This journal is one of the works of Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated.

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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 Editorial Committee is:

Michael Whelan SM, Geraldine Doogue, Catherine Hammond, Tim O'Hearn and consultants

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Address all correspondence to:
PO Box 139, Gladesville, NSW 1675, Australia
Tel/Fax: +61 2 9816 4262

Web site: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au
catalyst-for-renewal@tpg.com.au



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 Gabrielle Fogarty and I was born in 1944 and raised in the idyllic setting of country Kiama, two hours drive south of Sydney. It was a modest, happy, carefree childhood with my parents and one brother. Many hours were spent playing on the golden beaches and in the pounding surf, and roaming the paddocks and creeks of the beautiful Saddleback mountain range.

My family were not church-goers, and with a public school education in Kiama, my earliest encounter with Our Mighty God was whilst attending Anglican Sunday School and listening to the awesome Old Testament stories of Moses, Samson and Jonah and then, as a teenager, making an Anglican confirmation.

A 12-month working holiday in New Zealand at the age of 17 gave me my first step into adventure. Our God of surprises entered my life again with marriage to my husband Peter in our local Catholic Church and my first conversion a few days before that marriage at age 21.

Still not knowing much about this God, and after a two-hour Catholic instruction before the conversion in a dark Presbytery office, His Presence remained at a comfortable distance.

The following years provided many experiences to heighten my growing awareness: the birth of our children, three girls and a boy, and their enrolment in the local Catholic primary school; my own growth through their sacramental programs, and a Marriage Encounter weekend.

After those hectic years, and often lonely days raising little children, I was drawn into Parish and community life by a voluntary role as parish Secretary, for eight years.

Parish involvement continued to support my unquenchable thirst for knowledge and understanding of God with frequent trips to Wollongong for Adult Faith Development, Charismatic Renewal and then taking on the role of Antioch Oldies for eight years.

The entry of my own children into tertiary education and my interest in young adults led me to resume my career, as a TAFE teacher in Business Services, in Wollongong. This meant being catapulted into a new technological age and involved a very steep learning curve.

Five years ago, Our Loving God once again made his Presence very strongly felt. He allowed me to experience the longing he alone can provide. He prompted me to flutter my wings once again, and join the "Glory of Carmel" pilgrimage in 1997.

Not knowing a thing about Carmel at the time, I was led to see for myself the wonders of Israel, to learn about the depth of John of the Cross and Teresa in Spain, and the simplicity of Therese in Lisieux.

These saints have become old friends and have helped guide me to a deeper relationship with Jesus in the Family of Carmel. I made a reception into the Third Order of Carmel at the Benedictine Abbey at Jamberoo and, two years later, my First Profession as a Lay Carmelite on my 58th Birthday in 2002.

The nuns at the Abbey have been most generous in their support and encouragement, as has also their Chaplain, Fr Paul Gurr. The Abbey and its surrounds have become an essential part of my busy life of family, work and parish activity; a place of solitude and prayer, a place of refreshment. Carmel has provided a map for my journey and a formula for living as I continue my search, amongst the other facets of church life.

My commitment to, and love of parish life is still as fresh as it was 25 years ago, although it has taken many different paths.

I was inspired by the first hermits on Mt Carmel in Israel in the early 1200s, who distanced themselves from the violence of the Crusades, and from the established religious structures of the time. They followed the strengths of their lived experience and attempted to incorporate them into the movement of renewal with service in the midst of the people.

So, too, am I inspired by the ethos of Catalyst for Renewal. It has fostered my desire to work towards being part of a Church which is constantly searching for the living God, being constantly renewed, and treating all the baptised as equals.

By being part of the conversation within our Church about issues of which I am passionate — women in the church, social justice, ecumenism, aboriginal reconciliation — Catalyst has given me hope that in some small way, we can all make a difference.



Gabrielle Fogarty

Your Say – On the sexuality question

Science has demonstrated that whilst 'sexuality' is a vital ingredient of procreation, 'sex', per se, is not. Denied this insight, it is understandable that faithful and theologians should coalesce means and end. What is essentially a mundane function then assumes a 'sacred' aura.

'Legitimate' sex must be differentiated from laughing, singing, and dancing as a pleasurable experience, or even fun. We must indulge in regressive rationalising.

The traditional Catholic 'hang up' about sex led to abstinence and virginity being promoted as the gold standard. In this milieu the envisaged 'freedom' afforded by contraception can become a vision of licentiousness to the entrenched.

It is interesting that the cumulative mind of Vatican II was able to appreciate the distinction when it elevated mutual love and support as a primary purpose of marriage.

The ease with which the respectful faithful absorbed this pronouncement (and rejected the utterances on contraception) would suggest that it gelled readily with the human conscience.

I don't feel we should be unduly dismayed by the procrastination of the Magisterium; better sure than rash — consider Galileo.

Norman Rogers
Ballina NSW

I am heartened to see *The Mix* article, 'Sexuality and society, what are the questions?' For far too long, the Church has influenced society on its teachings on moral behaviour. This has brought much unhappiness to the people, because of the Church's theory that one size fits all, and that what the Church says is the only way.

All of us are different from each other, and we are individuals just as our generous God intended it to be. What is right and natural for one, may not be for another.

The antics we have witnessed at the consecration as a bishop of an openly gay priest in the USA by 'the good Bible-carrying Christians who are on God's side' leaves me very disappointed and discouraged. The role of a bishop, as I see it, is the shepherd with his crook, who not only helps the sheep home to a safe place, but goes out to find the lost and lame ones.

The good shepherd carries the lost ones on his shoulders, as we see in the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd with a sheep around his neck.

It is time the Church followed the example of the good shepherd and showed more compassion and less judgementalism.

The Church should be something like the old woollen jumper we look for on a cold winter's night. Even though it is frayed at the sleeves and worn at the elbows, the Church should be a comfort and a warm place to be, in a personal relationship with our Creator.

One of God's great gifts to all of us is the gift of love. I don't think there is a greater joy than to know and love someone, and to know you are loved in return. No-one has the right to tell us who we can and can't fall in love with.

Jesus never spoke against homosexuality, and I was always taught that we didn't have to take the Old Testament literally. There is no word in the Aramaic language of Jesus time that represents what homosexuality is today in our culture.

If the Church is basing its teachings on the Sodom and Gomorrah story, then we have to believe that incest is acceptable, because Lot slept with his daughters after they were saved from the destruction of Sodom.

It is very hard to make 21st-century people believe in pre-first-century law.

Hugh Joseph McMahon
East Sydney, NSW

To seek to legislate too sharply and severely in matters of gender, relationships and their ethics screams of fear and not the faith that gives hope and shows itself in loving others as Christ loves us all.

As a long-time supporter of the aims of Catalyst for Renewal and subscriber to *The Mix*, I would like to take up your invitation (*The Mix* Vol 8, No 8) to enter into a conversation on the important matter of human sexuality.

Let me begin by saying that, while commonly used, I do not like the word 'sexuality'. To be human is to be in relationship, as you said in *The Mix* Vol 8, No 4. The labels *sex* and *sexuality* are too overloaded with diverse meanings to really be helpful to a constructive dialogue. I prefer the terms *relationship*, *relationship ethics* and *gender* over *sexuality*, *sexual ethics* and *sex*.

These latter belong in the context of the former, which contains them and gives them greater wholeness.

Our separate genders and the unique manifestations of our sexual orientation and

genitality within our genders, like the myriad relationships that we form and which in turn form us, are, by their very nature, often mysterious and ambiguous. Why is it then, when this is patently so, that we rush to hem them around with rules and regulations?

Or is the answer to this question to be found in the mysteriousness and ambiguity of our relational life itself? If so, and I suspect it is so, then we are reacting out of fear rather than out of love, since 'In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love.' (1 John 4: 18)

To seek to legislate too sharply and severely in matters of gender, relationships and their ethics screams of fear and not the faith that gives hope and shows itself in loving others as Christ loves us all.

After some 2000 years we, as the Church, should be experts in the art of communication. Sadly and too often, this is not the case. It seems that frequently we still do not know how to effectively communicate the best that we have to offer in a manner that can be understood by the vast majority of people and in a way that invites them to 'Dare to think'!

I have no special personal investment in 'same sex' (I prefer the term 'same-gender') unions. What I do believe is that equal civil, legal and financial rights and responsibilities are extended to all persons in committed relationships, without fear or favour, regardless of the gender(s) involved. Once such a possibility exists, then a couple could simply register their joint interests with a nominated person or office.

Whatever way this conversation flows, it is crucial that amongst believers we begin with what we all have in common, namely, our Baptism in Christ and hence into His body, the Church. It is our common son- and daughtership of God in Christ, our shared sister- and brotherhood with one another and with the Lord that must be the starting point for our dialogue, rather than things that distinguish and hence potentially divide us.

'All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ and so there no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:27-28).

If we begin with this goal in mind and keep it before us, the success of your invitation to converse honestly and openly for the sake of personal and communal renewal is assured.

Rev Mark Percival PP
Cannon Hill Catholic Parish, Queensland

Essay – The hearth of the matter

by Margaret Paton

The following is the text of a presentation given by Margaret Paton at Spirituality in the Pub, Kincumber NSW, in October 1999.

Ten years ago, my hearth was in Scotland, where I belonged. Since the death of my Mother on Advent Sunday, 1982, I had shared my hearth with my dog and whoever came round for a meal. If anyone had asked me to tell my story, I would have scratched my head and wondered what to say. It was not that I didn't have a story; it was that I had no idea of honouring it. But it is also the case that my story, as I shall tell it tonight, was waiting to happen and I am telling it around a different hearth – a "SIP" hearth – where we have heard a collection of wonderful stories during the year, each one bigger than the person telling it.

Our first storyteller, Father Tony Doherty, spoke about, 'a power bringing a person's life together'. I can resonate with that very well. But all I had in 1983 was a line of Scripture which really fell upon me from a starry, early morning sky, as I was leaving church after an Advent Eucharist, 'Make straight in the desert a highway for your God' (Isaiah 40:3). It felt like a personal directive. I had no idea what it meant, or why it had, as it were, descended upon me, but for the next ten or so years, it was constantly with me.

My story tonight begins in Scotland. My working life of twenty-nine years was spent in the Philosophy Department at Edinburgh University. Not many philosophy departments had a Christian on their staff, probably because those who believe in God would prefer to become theologians rather than philosophers. But I had become interested in philosophy before my faith meant very much to me. In 1960, when I joined the Department at Edinburgh, there were few women philosophers in Britain or, indeed, women academics, for that matter.

The attitude of my male colleagues towards me as a Christian was one of tolerance. I did not parade my faith, but neither did I conceal it. No one challenged me about it but, if they had, I would have argued that any system has to start with an unproven premise. The premise I chose to start with was that there is a personal God 'in charge' of the universe. True, I could not prove it, but neither could they prove that the ground under their feet existed or that 2+2=4. They just could not see the relevance of believing in God when reason and common sense were good enough

guides. So, there was a kind of no-man's land between us. For my part, I endeavoured to be a good colleague and to help students to pass their examinations. As I saw it, that was mainly my job.

In the 1980s things began to change. In 1982, my Mother died – my Father had died in 1968. As an only child, I was, at the age of fifty, on my own. In 1987, a colleague with whom I had worked closely, and who was also a Christian, was tragically killed in a cycling accident. These were personal losses.

In addition, the Conservative Government was operating a policy of retrenchment in universities. Philosophy departments in some universities were closed down. Staff in all departments were urged to take early retirement. It was a very unsettling and unhappy time for many academics. In 1989, I decided to apply for early retirement and to see where God would lead me. It was a big step to take and, without my faith, I doubt if I would have had the courage. To begin with, I experienced terrible feelings of guilt that I had let my colleagues down – quite irrational and very distressing.

At that time I was an Anglican. Through the church, I became involved in helping people who were suffering from HIV and AIDS. Edinburgh was known at that time as the AIDS capital of Europe.

In retirement I became more active in the church. At that time I was an Anglican. Through the church, I became involved in helping people who were suffering from HIV and AIDS. Edinburgh was known at that time as the AIDS capital of Europe. The disease had been introduced through drug users who shared needles. Public opinion was very judgmental; and many of these people, who were mainly young and living with a death sentence, were being given a hard time by neighbours. In the space of two or three years, several of those I knew had died.

In 1993, I applied to go on a ten-week course at St. George's College, Jerusalem, 'The Bible in the Holy Land'. The peace accord between the Jews and Palestinians had just been signed. The previously banned Palestinian flag was flying from many buildings in the city and there was an

air of hope and optimism and a sense that a step had been taken that was irreversible.

My sympathy was all for the Palestinians, who were unjustly treated by being restricted in their movements around the city and prevented from selling their beautiful craft work and other produce.

The time at St. George's College, apart from being a rich experience of culture, different churches and different religions, the Bible, and archaeology, was a time of desperately needed personal healing after a prolonged period of loss.

It was some weeks into the Course when I met Sister Joan Goodwin, who was the only nun on the Course. I caught up with her as we were walking back to the bus after visiting Herod's summer palace near Jericho. I discovered that she was a Sister of St. Joseph, an Australian Order, whose founder, Mary MacKillop, was of Scottish descent. All this was new to me. As we explored sites and holy places in the weeks ahead, there were other opportunities to learn more about the 'Brown Joeys' and their remarkable founder, who was soon to be beatified.

It was as I was standing at the entrance to St. Anthony's Cave, in the desert south of Cairo, after climbing over a thousand steps to reach it, that the words of Scripture, 'Make straight in the desert a highway for your God' came vividly into my mind again. Below me, I could see a straight road that went right across the desert to the horizon, as far as the eye could see. Here, I felt, was a connection to the mysterious something or Someone that was directing me to a future I could never find on my own.

Back at St George's College in Jerusalem, I recognised that I was at a crossroads in my life. I could either return to Edinburgh and continue my quiet life as a retired university teacher, or I could go to Australia for a year and experience Josephite life for myself. By the end of the Course, after much prayer and consultation with the Chaplain at St. George's College, Bishop Alfred Holland, retired Anglican Bishop of Newcastle (Australia), I had booked my flight from Edinburgh to Sydney for 8th January 1994.

I had a hectic month in Edinburgh between my return from Jerusalem and my departure for Australia. A friend had just had an operation and needed a few weeks' care. I had to let my house and deal with other necessary matters. But when 8th January came, I was ready to fly out, although I had several phone calls from

friends urging me not to go because of the terrible bushfires around Sydney. But I knew the plane was leaving and that I was going with it!

My first year with the 'Joey' Sisters at Kincumber was a spiritually enriching and exciting time, in the lead-up to the Beatification of their founder. I became an Associate of the Sisters. At the same time, I encountered another wonderful group of people, the Central Coast catechists, who went into State Schools as volunteers and presented the Gospel to children. Nothing like this happened in Britain, and I was filled with admiration for their enthusiasm and commitment. On 28th July 1994, I was received into the Catholic Church in the Convent chapel at Kincumber.

I returned to Scotland on 24th January 1995, a few days before my visa was due to expire. But before that, I was able to be present at the Beatification ceremony at Randwick, and so it was that I heard Pope John Paul speaking on the very text that had become so significant for me, 'Make straight in the desert a highway for your God'. As I heard the Pope speak, I had an overwhelming sense of homecoming and confirmation that a road was opening up here in Australia; yet I had to return to Scotland almost at once. But I knew in my heart that my association with Kincumber and the Josephites was not at an end.

Three months later, I returned, having sold my house in Scotland and disposed of all my possessions, to continue my life with the Kincumber community, to which I now felt I belonged, and to become more involved with the Catechists, especially with the challenge of communicating with today's teenagers. I loved this involvement, to which I felt I had been called by a generous and loving God.

Now that I reflect on my story, I can see that it is indeed part of a larger story. In the early 1920s, my Grandmother came to Sydney in her sixties and lived there for about ten years. My parents, both Scottish, met in Sydney and were married there in 1930. When my Mother was pregnant with me, she and my Father made the journey from Australia back to Britain. I was brought up on *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie* in a London suburb. This connection with my family's story gives my own something of its power.

But there is another way in which my story comes to have power and that is through tradition. It used to be the custom when a person became a convert to Catholicism that he or she would tell their story. I don't think it is done so much nowadays, but I recognise that my story this evening is one of conversion.

Going back to Father Doherty's remark about 'a power bringing a person's life together', before my life could be brought together, it had to be turned upside down. So my story is about God of the 'upside down' and how much wisdom there is in the upside-downness of life. I often laugh when I think that from being philosopher, one of my jobs now is goatherd – looking after four Cashmere goats, Billy, Willy, Golly and Wally!

If anyone were to ask me now if I missed my Scottish hearth, I would reply in the words of the Cardinal from Chile in Morris West's novel, *Eminence*. When he was asked if he regretted his exile from his homeland, he replied: 'No, I carry the coals from my hearth-fire with me. I have only to blow on them and they will blaze again.'

Like the Cardinal, I have carried the coals of my hearth with me. They burn in an Australian hearth.

WHERE DO WE ENCOUNTER THE CHRIST-CHILD TODAY?

Joy Ryan-Bloore

Prior to the celebration of the Christmas Story this year, the final Advent liturgy invites us to reflect on the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. Psychologically, their meeting symbolises a stage in a process of growth that happens when we dare to entrust our souls to another. It involves great courage and trust. But in this vulnerable place of sharing and receiving, something else happens. What we felt confused or fearful about is recognised by another for what it is – the beginning of new life.

Both Elizabeth and Mary were burdened with an unexpected pregnancy. Each needed to meet and be with the other. Elizabeth is a model of the prophetic voice that recognises and welcomes the divine presence. Mary models the need to hear the affirmation of another person in order to identify more clearly the amazing journey to which she is called. So, when Elizabeth calls Mary the 'Mother of my Lord', she is expressing an eternal truth that is replicated in the psyche or soul of every human person.

"This is the message, the great symbolic teaching – the conscious psyche of each person becomes the divine cradle, the womb, the sacred vase in which the deity itself will be locked in, carried and born. This really is an evangelion (good news)." (G Jung, Seminar 3 June 1936).

Today, many people are called on a similar journey. They struggle to give birth to who they are, and to the place they occupy in an increasingly complex and evolving universe. The old explanations and earlier religious beliefs no longer seem to

provide support and meaning.

Often, we are blind to what is evolving. We don't recognise the 'Word made flesh' in these fearful, pregnant states, but try to work things out rationally. Prior to the 'Visitation' the Angel of the Lord had visited Zechariah in the Holy of Holies, and tried to speak to him about Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy – but he refused to listen. For his disbelief he was struck dumb.

The dominant, masculine energy in both men and women is often not the means by which we encounter, or understand a new incarnation of the divine presence. It needs to be 'struck dumb' – so that the soul's voice can be heard.

But in our prevailing climate of economic rationalism, the soul, and the feminine dimension in both men and women, is barely heard. Its life-giving qualities are in constant danger of being excluded from leadership at all levels of society, including the Church. Such one-sided blindness has devastating consequences for our spiritual and psychological health, and for the overall wellbeing of our society.

As far back as 1950, Jung warned of the dire consequences of pursuing a philosophy that ignores the reality of the soul and the inner life: *"...a predominantly scientific and technological education, such as is the usual thing these days, can bring about a spiritual regression and a considerable increase of psychic dissociation. Loss of roots and lack of tradition neurotize the masses and prepare them for collective hysteria. Collective hysteria calls for collective therapy, which consists in abolition of liberty and terrorization. Where rationalistic materialism holds sway, States tend to develop less into prisons than into asylums."* (CG Jung, CW9ii:282)

Therefore, if we are to evolve out of this current, soul-destroying philosophy, it is crucial for all men and women, especially those who are the Guardians of the present dispensation, to listen to the still, small voice of the soul in which the seed of the divine is continually being conceived.

This means putting aside the rational, logical structures of the mind; being open to the 'signs of the times' and the ways in which the Spirit of God is calling us to recognise a further manifestation of Christ in our time and culture; questioning the outer values which society currently parades before us; daring to share our deepest selves; reaching out and risking our souls.

If we are open, this encounter takes place with those we love and with whom we live. The divine presence is recognised and the Spirit bursts forth, calling us to a different level of living and loving. And once more Christ is born.

Joy Ryan-Bloore is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Christchurch NZ.

The Bible – Welcome!

Words for a Pilgrim People

I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you to bear now. (John 16:12)

□□□

*Our earlier words are bound to lose their force and cease, and our being Christians today will be limited to two things: prayer and action by the just person on behalf of people.... It is not for us to prophesy the day (though the day will come) when people will once more be called so to utter the word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite nonreligious, but liberating and redeeming – as was Jesus' language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God's peace with people and the coming of his Kingdom. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, **A Testament of Hope** ed. Geoffrey B Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, Harper-Collins, 1990)*

□□□

*The message of God's mercy to man must be preached. The word of truth must be proclaimed. No one can deny this. But there are not a few who are beginning to feel the futility of adding more words to the constant flood of language that pours meaninglessly over everybody, everywhere, from morning to night. For language to have meaning, there must be intervals of silence somewhere, to divide word from word and utterance from utterance. He who retires into silence does not necessarily hate language. Perhaps it is love and respect for language which impose silence upon him. For the mercy of God is not heard in words unless it is heard, both before and after the words are spoken, in silence. (Thomas Merton, **Disputed Questions**, A Harvest Book, 1985, 194-95.)*

□□□

Jesus' entry into this world was inauspicious. He was born amidst filth. It is a wonder either he or his mother survived. During Advent we read of his entry into public life as an adult. On the Second Sunday of Advent Luke gives us a very detailed description of this, suggesting that it is about as auspicious as his birth (see Luke 3:1-6). "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar": The date – about AD28-29 – is determined by a foreign power and the reign of an emperor living in a foreign city. Palestine is not at the centre, it is on the margins of the world. Luke takes the trouble to give us five other dates to mark the advent of the public proclamation of the Kingdom. One of those dates is given according to the reign of Pontius Pilate. This man is not only a further reminder of Caesar, but of the wicked man he replaced – Herod's son Archelaus. For too long the Palestinians suffered at the hands of their governors and rulers.

This was not a good situation in which to proclaim the Kingdom. Not if you wanted to survive. But survival is not the question for Jesus – he is here to proclaim the Kingdom.

Jesus' entry is announced by a messenger: John. In this Luke is echoing a standard practice in the ancient world. When the king was to visit a certain place, a messenger was sent ahead to announce this and see that the roads were prepared. The ultimate place of the Messiah and his Kingdom is, however, beyond the geography and sociology and culture and politics of the time and place. These will ultimately be affected by the advent of the Kingdom because the Kingdom will transform people. John proclaimed a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". Hence John is called the baptiser – the one who initiates people and helps them prepare the highways and byways of their hearts so they recognise the Kingdom and its Messiah.

Advent is a time to take inventory. The proclamation of the Gospel urges us to put the Kingdom of God first in our thinking and acting. Which paths in my life need attention? Am I familiar enough with those inner paths and at home enough there to welcome the Lord, to throw the door of my life open and say, "Welcome!" □

The Tradition – Gnosticism

It is well nigh impossible to give any clear and concise definition of Gnosticism. Roughly, however, the term generally refers to a religious philosophy that emerged in the early years of Christianity – it was well and truly established by the middle of the 2nd century, as the writings of the first Christian apologists attest. That philosophy was distinguished by the belief that human beings attain their salvation by special "knowledge". This "knowledge" – *gnosis* – was made up of an eclectic gathering of myths and images which purported to explain reality. Gnosticism tended to be dualistic and – perhaps most inimical to Christianity – it tended to be ahistorical. Gnosticism – *de facto* at least – denied the incarnation, the enfleshing of God in time and place.

It is probably fair to say that some of the basic dynamics that were expressed in Gnosticism in those early centuries keep on re-emerging in the human family. For example, in that period coming into the middle of the 20th century, the Catholic Church's clericalism bore some of the marks of Gnosticism. This clericalism is a culture in which the clerics have special knowledge which is guarded in a special language (Latin) and is taught in special schools (Seminaries) which are generally not available to those who are not clerics. A certain dualism and inadequate attention to the historical facts pertaining to the ongoing Incarnation of God in the human family might also be noted in this clerical culture.

Gnosticism was vigorously opposed by St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (140-202). Irenaeus has no doubts about the entry of God into time and place and the factuality of God's actions in Christ. Nor does he have any doubts about the trans-historical implications of this historical event which continues today. His view of the Christian story may be summed up in his own words: "When he became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of man, summing up and giving us salvation in order that we might receive again in Christ Jesus what we had lost in Adam, that is, the image and likeness of God". (*Against the Heresies*, 3, 18, 1) □

But survival is not the question for Jesus – he is here to proclaim the Kingdom.

.... the Catholic Church's clericalism bore some of the marks of Gnosticism.

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>

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 2004** (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Clair 4333 7117 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 – **Recommence 2004** (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 – **Recommence 2004** (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** The Union Club Hotel - **Recommence 2004** (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 - **Recommence 2004** (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) – **Recommence 2004** (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 – **Recommence 2004** (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” Bishop Michael Putney & Rev Val Graydon (Info: Gwaine 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 – **Recommence 2004** (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 Dec 28–Jan 5 Spirituality for Intimacy retreat; Jan 6–14 Life’s Healing Journey; Jan 16–24 directed retreat (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° 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.

° **Reading the Classics:** A series of courses given at CIS, Strathfield, 2004, beginning with “Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France,” with Andrew Murray SM. (Info: 9752 9500)

REFLECTION MORNINGS 2004

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

Other presenters and dates:

Kevin Bates SM

April 17

Fr David Ranson

May 15

Michael Whelan SM

August 21

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

September 25

Margaret & Tim O’Hearn

October 23

CATALYST ANNUAL APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We have launched our Fifth Annual Appeal by writing to our *Friends* to help us in our mission of raising the level of good conversation in the Australian Catholic Church as one way to promote renewal.

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

As of November 10, this Appeal had raised \$25,446.

We continue to ask for your generous support.

Recommended

Anselm Grün, *A Path Through the Desert: Forty Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, translated from the German by Katherine Mistry-Tulloch and Andrew Tulloch, St Pauls, 2003, 108 pages, pb, \$22.95.

Anselm Grün – also spelled Gruen – is a German Benedictine monk. At least three of his books have been translated into English – eg *Heaven Begins Within You: Wisdom from the Desert Fathers*, *Taste the Joy of Easter* and *Angels of Grace*. Grün speaks with the gentle wisdom of one who has faced his own impotence in the presence of God's unending mercy. The easy and very accessible style of his writings draws the reader into the ancient wisdom of our rich tradition. *A Path Through the Desert* is a delightful introduction to the wisdom of the desert. The author takes forty different sayings from the Desert Fathers and gives a brief and simple commentary on each. For more than 150 years from the latter part of the 3rd century, people – mostly men – gathered in the deserts of northern Egypt to better live out the radical demands of the Gospel. The neophytes and visitors went to the more experienced dwellers in the desert and sought "a word". These "words" were often little stories, generally very concrete and sometimes quite blunt personal advice. It is as well to read them with a wise companion to guide you. Fr Grün is such. This is an excellent book to buy someone else in the family for Christmas and pray that they leave it lying around – all the time!

John XXIII, *Simple Words*, St Pauls, 2003, 190 pages, index, pb, \$39.95.

Pius XII died on October 9, 1958. Cardinal Roncalli from Venice joined 50 other cardinals – 17 of whom were Italian – in conclave on October 25 and, three days later, he was elected Pope, choosing the title, John XXIII. Within three months he had summoned the Council. His speech to open that Council on October 11, 1962, remains a point of inspiration for us today. John XXIII died on June 3, 1963. In his less than five years as Pope, John XXIII changed the course of history. He was a peasant with a deep Christian faith, both shrewd and wise, wonderfully compassionate and gentle, a courageous man with a sparkling sense of humour. The 786 little sayings, drawn from the speeches, sermons and the like, of the last ten years of his life, is a fine memento of someone we should not forget in these troubled times. Loris Francesco Capovilla, who had been John's private secretary in Venice and remained his private secretary at the Vatican, has written an introduction to this book. The sayings are arranged under eight different headings: "God", "Mary", "The Church", "The Human Person", "God and the Human Person", "The Human Person and Life", "The Human Person and Other People" and "In the Light of God". In one place John says, "grace is never wanting at the right moment" (#757). Leave this book somewhere handy, pick it up and open it randomly, you will typically find something right for the moment.

Vivienne Keely, *Dixon of Botany Bay: The Convict Priest from Wexford*, St Pauls, 2003, 96 pages, index, pb \$19.95.

In 1798 there was a rebellion in Ireland, organised by a group calling itself United Irishmen. The group was non-sectarian and pressed for representation in parliament for the Irish. Both these things were denied them by their English overlords at the time. Interestingly enough, the Catholic hierarchy – under pressure from the Congregation for the propagation of the Faith in Rome – opposed the United Irishman and exhorted Catholics to remain loyal to the King. Father James Dixon of County Wexford was opposed to the United Irishmen. You will have to read Sr Vivienne's well-researched and delightfully told story to discover how it was that Dixon came to be sent to Australia as a convict and the first Catholic priest, commissioned by Governor King, to minister to the Catholics in the colony in 1803 and what happened to him after that. The facts about Father Dixon are sparse and Sr Vivienne resists the temptation – happily – to fill in the gaps. She brings a scholar's mind to this work, clearly a labour of love. We are reminded that our times are not the only ones in which there have been tensions between Rome and the local churches. We are also reminded that there were, in Dixon's time in Ireland, good relationships between many Catholics and Protestants and not always so between Catholics and Catholics. An informative and evocative read. Highly recommended.

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