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Our Say – The march of the ants

On April 12, 1963, the Second Vatican Council's first document – *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) – was published. Very quickly – more quickly in some places than others – changes were introduced into the celebration of Sunday Mass. It was in this context, perhaps more than anywhere else in the life of the Church, we realised just how psychologically significant were our symbols, rituals and customs. Our liturgical house was badly in need of repair, but very few would have predicted just how slow and fraught that process of renovation would be.

Of particular interest to us here is the Council's call to have the liturgy translated into local languages. To this end, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) was immediately established and charged with the work of developing English texts for the liturgy.

In a January 1969 document known as *Comme le Prévoit* – from the first words of the French translation of that document –

the Vatican gave guidelines for the translations. Pope Paul VI played a personal role in developing these guidelines. Among other things, this document instructed the translators that, where there is a conflict between fidelity to the Latin and cultural influences, the latter is to take precedence.

ICEL submitted translations to its 11-member bishops' conferences on the basis of these guidelines. Each of the bishops' conferences made further amendments and submitted their proposed texts to the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for approval. This initial process was completed in the 1970s.

Given both the nature of the task, the tenor of the times and the politics of the Church, this first attempt to produce liturgical texts in English was never going to be definitive. The history of the further attempts by ICEL to produce good English translations of liturgical texts over the next

30 years is a microcosm of the history of renewal since Vatican II.

It would be simplistic in the extreme to single out "goodies" and "baddies" in this story. Human systems are much more complex than that. Indeed, it would be hard to find a more complex human system than the Catholic Church.

However, it is possible to document a largely effective campaign by key figures in the Vatican to subvert the guidelines of *Comme le Prévoit*. Principal opponents of Paul VI's guidelines are Cardinals Ratzinger and Medina Estévez. In his 1997 autobiography, for example, Cardinal Ratzinger claimed that Paul VI's reforms of the Mass had done "extremely serious damage to the Church".

A draft of the new Missal was recently sent to the relevant bishops' conferences. Let us hope we can move forward with the renewal and reform. This is not a time for the heavy hand of centralism or destructive dissent, but for good conversation. □

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

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

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

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The
Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All
reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the
renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor
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We do not publish anonymous letters – names must
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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Jan Brady. My journey
began in the early hours of one Holy
Thursday morning when twin daughters,
Jan and Margaret, were born to Joan and
Harold Brady at War Memorial Hospital
Waverley. I have always felt privileged to
have been born on such a wonderful day in
the Christian calendar. Over the next eight
years, the Brady household in Randwick
increased with the birth of two more
children, Joan and Michael.

The story of one of the most important
influences on my faith journey and on my
decision to become a member of Catalyst
for Renewal, began long before I was born.
In the mid 1920s Dad, as a very young man,
had travelled overseas on business for his
father and on the ship met another
Australian, Frank Sheed.

His firm, Sheed and Ward, became one
of the leading Catholic publishers in London,
and it was through Frank that Dad was
introduced to the Catholic Evidence Guild
and to the cut and thrust of debate on a
Hyde Park corner.

While he was only a very junior
supporter of the group, he had the
opportunity to hear leading Catholic
thinkers of the times. When he returned to
Australia, he was naturally drawn to the
Waverley Debating Society, which was to
have a profound influence on his and
Mum's lives and, through them, on my life.

It was there that Mum and Dad met. In
particular, it was there that Dad and Mum
developed their talent for, and love of,
conversation among many fellow Catholics.
It was a love that continued for the rest of
their lives and one that they passed on to
me.

I have very vivid memories of
conversations around the dining room table
with family and friends on all sorts of
topics, but especially memorable were those
on the Trinity, on God and the wonder of
creation and on the spiritual journey of each
human being. (Dad died on Trinity Sunday,
a day that had great meaning for him). The
conversation would continue as we were
doing the washing and drying up.

Dad and Mum believed that, when you
were ready, you would always find a
teacher to help you on your journey towards
a closer relationship with God. I always felt
that Mum and Dad, who worked together to
overcome the very many difficulties in their
lives, wanted each of us to grow in wisdom
and understanding as human beings.

For example, when I was about seven
and a half, Dad got angry with me when I
was too busy playing to greet my great-
aunt, who had come to visit us. His
chastisement of me had a profound
influence on my life and helped me develop

a real respect for and appreciation of the
older members of our family and of the
community in general.

I am finding retirement a wonderful time
in my life after a long and varied career in
the Federal Public Service. There is more
time for reflection and for just "being". I
have derived great spiritual benefit from the
courses I have undertaken at the Aquinas
Academy.

The "Developing Your Spiritual"
program also reinforced my intuitive
understanding that many of the skills I had
learned during my working life are indeed
relevant to my spiritual journey, especially
to my understanding of myself and to my
relationships with other people.

During the months of Mum's last illness
I undertook an evening course on the
Spiritual Classics at the Aquinas Academy
and found that extraordinarily uplifting
spiritually; it was truly a life-changing
experience. I felt closer to God than I had
for a long time; in fact, the last time I can
remember feeling so close to Him was
when I was about eight years old and was
inspired to write some pieces on the Sacred
Heart.

I remember even at that young age
feeling something special was happening to
me.

I have been heavily involved with
Catalyst for Renewal for the past two years
after finding out about it at the Aquinas
Academy.

Joining Catalyst seemed a natural
progression on my hope-filled faith journey
which has been so bound up with the
practice of conversation within the Catholic
Church and with expanding my knowledge
and understanding of the richness of the
faith into which I was born.



Jan Brady

Your Say – Thoughts on *Humanae Vitae*

Teresa Pirola

John Bowie (*Mix*, Oct 2003) says that Paul VI ‘got it wrong’ on the matter of birth control. In one sense I agree: *Humanae Vitae* marked a tragic watershed in church history.

What was devastating was not the teaching, but the process. Basically, *Humanae Vitae* was imposed overnight on the faithful. In a matter that strikes at the heart of the lives of married Catholics, they were not consulted.

Sure, a few lay ‘experts’ were involved at the top, but the ordinary, faithful married couples of the grassroots were ignored. The message communicated was that married people could not be trusted.

Further, this was a difficult teaching for couples to put into practice on two counts. Firstly, in the 1960s reliable natural family planning methods were not available. Secondly, people had no preparation by way of a *marital* spirituality focused on the unity and communication of the couple — a spirituality that provides the necessary context for the teaching to be received and lived.

As a result, people heard the teaching not as a call to relationship and a mission in love, but as the policing of an intimate act with no real reference to the rest of their lives.

Of course this is not what the teaching ‘saw’, but it is the way it was heard.

Especially heartbreaking was the situation of those who honestly tried to live the teaching, but found that they could not. The fact that the encyclical acknowledged the difficulties and urged a response of compassion and patience (HV, 25, 29) did not always translate into pastoral practice.

Too many people found themselves in an either/or predicament: they were either faithful Catholics who practised ‘rhythm’, or they were ‘sinful’.

The effect of all this on the Church has been devastating. The hierarchy didn’t include married people in their decision-making, and now husbands and wives don’t include the church in their decision-making relating to their sexual love for one another.

There is distrust on both sides. Labelling people as ‘dissenters’ only compounds the pain, just as rejecting the magisterium only makes it more defensive.

To acknowledge the tragic consequences of the pastoral handling of *Humanae Vitae*, however, does not mean a rejection of its teaching. My own reflections and listening to people on this issue over twenty

years convinces me that there is another side to the *Humanae Vitae* story, a side which says Paul VI ‘got it right’. The process was regrettable, yet the essence of the teaching is profoundly true. How important it is to revisit this encyclical in a more open climate of dialogue!

In fact, given the current impasse, perhaps a good place to start is with the lives of the married faithful who, all those years ago, decided to (and were able to) work ‘with’ the encyclical. They did so at great cost to themselves, through trial and error, and with a heroic spirit of trust.

Thirty-five years since *Humanae Vitae* appeared, we find ourselves in a very different social, pastoral and theological landscape to the 1960s. A fresh conversation is called for. Dialogue calls for a response to the lives of real people, an informed grasp of the issues, a desire to seek out the deepest recesses of the truth, and a lot of loving each other along the way.

Over time, many say, they discovered a precious truth in this teaching; a truth which permeated the very fabric of their lives, which enhanced their sexual love and brought them closer to God. It is difficult for such couples to ‘speak up’ in a climate so hostile to *Humanae Vitae*. But they are worth listening to — not only for their position, but for the journey that got them there.

Listening to ‘the teaching of the Church’ means listening to people like this.

Nor can we ignore the witness of those lay people who devoted their professional talents to developing new, vastly improved methods of natural family planning. Not only was this a feat of science, it was a gift to the relationship of the couple.

Both the Billings and Sympto-Thermal methods are as much about assisting couples to deepen their communication as they are about learning to ‘read’ the woman’s bodily signs of fertility.

A fresh discussion of *Humanae Vitae* means correcting a great deal of misinformation. (Recently I noted that a high profile critic of *Humanae Vitae*,

writing in the ‘90s, was still equating natural family planning with the long outdated rhythm method!)

Many Catholics are still trapped in the trauma of the ‘60s, unaware that the Church has moved on. The teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is today supported by groundbreaking developments in NFP methods, in marriage enrichment programs, and in the theology and spirituality of marriage.

We often hear that Paul VI was unreasonable in not following the recommendations of the Majority Report. However, several prominent theologians — both supporters and critics of *Humanae Vitae* — have noted that the arguments of the Majority Report were hardly of a quality to overturn centuries of Church teaching. More sophisticated versions emerged only after *Humanae Vitae* appeared.

Another oft-heard criticism is that the Church is hung up about the physical act of sex. Not so! In fact, *Humanae Vitae* is part of a holistic view of the human person which says that the procreative meaning of sexuality is profoundly related to the way a person views and values life, enters into intimacy with others and cooperates with God.

It is a central reference point in one’s deepest attitudes to life and love. Our procreative powers cannot simply be ‘split off’ as a matter for science to deal with. Human responsibility and human ecology are at stake here.

Such an appreciation cannot be adopted overnight. We ‘grow’ into it as we live and learn, pray and love, question and listen, make mistakes and try again. As a Church we should present *Humanae Vitae* not as a big stick or a litmus test of orthodoxy, but as an invitation to a sacred, life-long adventure in love, with all the patience and compassion that such a journey requires.

Thirty-five years since *Humanae Vitae* appeared, we find ourselves in a very different social, pastoral and theological landscape to the 1960s. A fresh conversation is called for. Dialogue calls for a response to the lives of real people, an informed grasp of the issues, a desire to seek out the deepest recesses of the truth, and a lot of loving each other along the way.

Teresa Pirola coordinates The Story Source, providing parish resources. For a free sample pack of resources on *Humanae Vitae*, contact: storysource@ozemail.com.au.

– Catholics and Jews: What has changed?

by Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy

The following is about two thirds of the presentation given by Cardinal Cassidy, former President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, at the Catalyst Dinner of April 5, 2002. The complete text may be obtained from the Editor.

I begin my presentation by recalling two moments in the celebration of the Christian Jubilee Year 2000. On March 12, 2000, Pope John Paul II called for and presided over a special service in St Peter's Basilica during which, in the name of the Catholic Church throughout the world, the following prayer was offered:

God of our Fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your name to the nations: We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the covenant.

On March 26, 2000, just two weeks later, Pope John Paul II placed this prayer of pardon, with his signature on it, in the Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem. Three days earlier, His Holiness had laid a wreath on the tomb in the mausoleum of Yad Vashem and lit the flame that recalls the six million victims of the *Shoah*. In continuation, as it were, of the prayer offered in St Peter's, the Pope stated during that moving ceremony in Jerusalem:

Here as at Auschwitz and many other places in Europe, we are overcome by the echo of the heart-rending laments of so many. Men, women and children cry out to us from the depths of the horror that they knew. How can we fail to hear their cry? No one can forget or ignore what happened. No one can diminish its scale. We wish to remember. But we wish to remember for a purpose – namely, to ensure that never again will evil prevail, as it did for the millions of innocent victims of Nazism.

These events, I believe, symbolize the new relationship that has been forged over the past 36 years, since the Second Vatican Council, between Catholics and Jews. Pope John Paul II, looking back at the many outstanding events of the Holy Year, did not hesitate to judge the visit to Jerusalem as one of the most significant. For those of us who were privileged to stand with him at the Western Wall of the Temple, it seemed

that all the efforts made over the previous thirty odd years to mend the broken and bloodstained fences between Jews and Christians had received the seal of God's blessing and could never be again undone. A well-known Dominican biblical scholar and longtime resident of Jerusalem, Rev Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, commenting on the Pope's visit to the Western Wall of the Temple, stated:

By standing there (at the Western Wall), he transformed the relationship of Christianity towards Judaism. It is a complete reversal of history.

There is no need for me to dwell at any length this evening on the sad history of Christian-Jewish relations over a period of almost two thousand years. We are all well aware of the suffering endured by the Jewish people: the discrimination, the oppression, and the isolation. We know the consequences of the teaching of contempt and of the anti-Judaism of Christian communities and their leaders.

“After two millennia of estrangement and hostility, we have a sacred duty as Catholics and Jews to strive to create a genuine culture of mutual esteem and reciprocal caring.”

We are conscious of the role all this played in creating an atmosphere that allowed Hitler and the Nazis to conceive and carry out their extermination policy. Members of the Church, from the highest to the ordinary man or woman, were often guilty of expressing sentiments and taking actions that manifested a lack of human respect and tolerance for fellow human beings, simply because they were Jews – and this despite the clear teaching of the founder of the Christian faith, who instructed his followers to love all of God's children, even those who were their enemies or treated them badly. It was this that Pope John Paul II recalled in March 2000 and for which he asked forgiveness from God.

The turning point came of course with the Second Vatican Council, the highest form of decision-making within the Catholic Church. In calling the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, Pope John XXIII chal-

lenged Catholic bishops from all over the world to reflect among other important issues on this sad history, especially in view of the tragic events of the Second World War. In the document entitled *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*, which Pope Paul VI and the bishops signed on October 18, 1965, the Catholic Church solemnly declared that “the Jews remain very close to God ... since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made”. The Council recognized, moreover, the debt that the Church owed to the Jewish people:

The Church cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament by way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws nourishment from the good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (cf Rom 11:17-24).

Finally, the Church recalled officially that the apostles, the pillars on which she stands, were of Jewish descent, as were many of the early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world. St Paul had written to the early Christians in Rome about his fellow Jews: “they are Israeli and to them belongs the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race according to the flesh, is the Christ” (Rom 9:45).

The Council removed from the Church's teaching the old substitution theory and made it clear that “neither Jews indiscriminately”, nor “Jews today can be charged with the crimes committed during Christ's passion”. Jews should not, therefore, be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this follows from Holy Scripture.

Having experienced personally the commitment of Pope John Paul II to the task of promoting a new relationship with the Jewish people over the past thirteen years, I can claim that his contribution has been decisive on many occasions. In the twenty-three years since his election as bishop of Rome, he has constantly inspired and supported efforts to build and consolidate a new relationship between Christians and Jews.

Over all these activities, many of which have radically altered the state of Jewish-Christian relations, the experience of the

Shoah has continued to cast a shadow. This terrible tragedy has challenged both Jews and Christians. It has made us reflect not only on those short but horribly evil years of Nazi rule in Germany, but on almost 2000 years of Jewish-Christian relations.

This has been a particular challenge for the Church in Europe, since it was there "in countries of long-standing Christian civilization that the *Shoah* took place" (The Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews). Gradually the Catholic Church has sought to come to terms with this challenge. Official statements have been made by the Hungarian, German, Polish, Swiss and French Episcopal Conferences (from 1994 to 1997). The Italian bishops and some bishops in the United States of America have added their voice to these declarations.

As we recall these facts, I believe we can affirm that we have made real progress in moving away from "the past spirit of suspicion, resentment and distrust" to "a spirit which emphasizes co-operation, mutual understanding and reconciliation, goodwill and common goals" (*International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee*).

There must not be any standing still. To stand still could mean going backwards. We must press on, consolidating our progress and building for the future. Contrary to fears that linger on in some Jewish quarters, I feel absolutely certain that the Catholic Church will not go back on the official statements and decisions that have been made. At the same time, there remains the danger of a lessening of enthusiasm, a growing indifference, or perhaps even a renewed spirit of suspicion and mistrust among members of the Catholic community should the momentum slacken.

First on my agenda would be continuing work to consolidate and build further mutual trust between our two communities. Mutual trust is a basic element of all true dialogue. I believe we have succeeded in establishing such trust. In Prague, September 1990, we stated:

After two millennia of estrangement and hostility, we have a sacred duty as Catholics and Jews to strive to create a genuine culture of mutual esteem and reciprocal caring.

We have come to know the other as the other really is. At the same time, we have to admit that there are many in both our communities who still hesitate to give the other this trust. You cannot build trust unless you respect your partner and seek to understand the motives for actions that may

cause you some concern. Nothing destroys trust more than one-sided judgments and constant polemics. Mutual trust calls for a change of heart in relation to the other and is essential for future Catholic-Jewish dialogue.

Continued dialogue would be the second item on my agenda. It has been through dialogue that we have made progress in the past. Pope Paul VI, in an Encyclical Letter entitled *Ecclesiam Suam*, describes dialogue as "the simple exchange of gifts". Dialogue between Christians and Jews has not been easy and has been limited mostly to solving problems and removing obstacles to peaceful co-existence. There has been a notable reluctance on the part of the Jewish partner to discuss questions concerning our faith understanding. This is, of course, very understandable in view of the past experiences of the Jewish people.

"There is much that we can do together for ... a more human and fraternal world."

Recently, however, to my delight, I am hearing more and more Jewish voices making the request that we enter more into genuine dialogue or discussions on theological questions. Rabbi Eric H Yoffie, the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which unites 1.5 million Reform Jews in 895 Synagogues in North America, in a lecture given last year called for Catholics and Jews to reflect together on faith questions and has urged the Catholic Church and his organisation to undertake a joint campaign about the two religions. "This means", he said, "that the Catholics need to educate Catholics about Jews, and the Jews to educate Jews about Catholics". While the Holocaust remains for him, as for Catholics, a deep concern, he believes that "a dialogue of grievance can no longer dominate our relations".

On many occasions I have stressed the importance in this connection of education and formation. The late Geoffrey Wigoder reminded the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, at its meeting in Jerusalem in 1994, "of the abyss of ignorance in both our communities concerning the other, which includes dangerous myths and prejudices".

Speaking of the recent visit of Pope John Paul II to the holy places of Israel, Rabbi David Rosen of the *Anti-Defamation League* stated:

I think that the visit just concluded will provide

among other things a new opportunity for the Jews to be informed, educated and brought up to date with regard to the many steps which the Catholic Church has taken, especially under the direction of John XXIII and the present Pontiff.

We must – both Jews and Christians – bring the great news of Jewish-Christian reconciliation to the members of our communities if we wish to ensure that the edifice we are building is constructed on a solid foundation.

As we look to the future, it is well perhaps to repeat again that Catholics and Jews must not enter dialogue with the expectation that they will agree on everything. We are two distinct faith communities with common roots and a great deal in common, yet with essential differences that must be respected.

The process of dialogue requires both a clear understanding of one's own faith tradition and openness to the experience of others. We must not be surprised or disturbed when, on one or other matter that touches our faith or history, we have different opinions or understandings. Neither should sincere criticism upset us, provided that it is objective and framed in a way that does not offend our mutual esteem and respect for one another. Such criticism can be good for us. It helps us to reflect more deeply on our positions or initiatives. This is, of course, very different from certain aggressive criticism with its own agenda and from the activity of pressure groups.

At the conclusion of the historic meeting, on March 23rd, 2000, between the two Chief Rabbis of Israel and Pope John Paul II at the *Heichal Shlomo*, the Pope did not hesitate to affirm:

There is much that we have in common. There is much that we can do together for peace, for justice, for a more human and fraternal world. May the Lord of heaven and earth lead us to a new and fruitful era of mutual respect and co-operation, for the benefit of all.

Let me conclude with some words of the distinguished Rabbi Irving Greenberg which seem to sum up well what I have been trying to say:

If committed and believing Christians and Jews can discover the image of God in each other, if they can uncover and affirm each other's proper role in the overall divine strategy of redemption, surely the inspiration of this example would bring the Kingdom of God that much closer to everyone. □

Words for a Pilgrim People

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." (Luke 13:1-5)

□□□

The shell must be cracked apart if what is in it is to come out; for if you want the kernel you must break the shell. And therefore, if you want to discover nature's nakedness, you must destroy its symbols and the farther you get in, the nearer you come to its essence. When you come to the One that gathers all things up into himself, there you must stay. (Meister Eckhart in Raymond Blakney, trans. Meister Eckhart, Harper Torchbooks, 1941, 148.)

□□□

How wonderfully is human love transformed by the interior experience of this nothingness and this nowhere. Those who patiently abide in this darkness will be comforted and feel again a confidence about their destiny, for gradually they will see their past sins healed by grace. The pain continues yet they know it will end, for even now it grows less intense. Slowly they begin to realise that the suffering they endure is not hell at all but their purgatory. (Cloud of Unknowing, Image Books, 1973, Chapter 69, 137.)

□□□

On the Third Sunday of Lent in Cycle C, we read the parable of the barren fig tree from Luke's Gospel (13:6-9). Is this an alternative to the shocking story – found only in Matthew and Mark – of Jesus condemning the fruitless fig tree to wither? (See Matthew 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14) Maybe it is, maybe it is not. Luke's Gospel is sometimes referred to as "the Gospel of mercy". It is full of second chances, even when it does not make sense!

In Luke's presentation, it is not an action of Jesus that is recorded but the story of someone else's action: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none". Given the paucity of good soil in Palestine, it was not uncommon to have other plants, such as fig trees and apple trees, growing alongside the grapes. For the same reason, the farmer would not let fruitless trees occupy good space. The master's command to get rid of the tree, therefore, makes good sense. It is the vinedresser's plea for a second chance that does not make good sense: "... leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it; it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down". Has the vinedresser not been looking after the master's fig tree? What difference can we expect yet one more year to make? Maybe it is the vinedresser, not the fig tree, in trouble here? And maybe the fig tree has some symbolic value in the story?

.... maybe we have here a stern word of warning – for us and the Jews?

In the tradition of the prophets, symbolic actions and symbolic things abound. And the symbolism generally points to the relationship between God and the people. Thus Hosea is commanded to take a faithless wife (see Hosea 1-3); Isaiah walks about naked and barefoot (see Isaiah 20); Jeremiah goes to the potter (see Jeremiah 18:1-12). Perhaps the fig tree is God's chosen people, planted in precious soil and given every opportunity to bear fruit. And given the context in Luke's Gospel – the journey to Jerusalem and the call to repentance – maybe we have here a stern word of warning – for us and the Jews? □

The Tradition – Reconciliation

At the time of his excommunication in 1520, Luther maintained a strong belief in the place of confession in the Christian life. He wrote to a friend: "Yes I would rather bear the pope's tyranny of fasting, ceremony, vestments, serving trays, capes, and whatever else I could stand without doing violence to my faith, than have confession taken from Christians". Luther's intuition is sound. It implies at least three significant beliefs that have been maintained – albeit in varying forms – throughout the history of Christianity.

In the first instance, the tradition has always held that we all stand in need of redemption. It behooves us to acknowledge that radical indigence as a basic fact of our existence, but also as a recurring fact in our behaviour. Jesus challenged the men who brought the woman caught in adultery: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (see John 7:53). The Old Testament speaks a number of times of the need to confess sin (see for example, Leviticus 5:5; 2 Chronicles 29:6; Psalms 50 and 106:1; Proverbs 28:13; Sirach 2:26).

At its best, the tradition places the emphasis on God and God's longing to enfold us in the Eternal Mercy.

The Letter of James urges Christians to confess their sins to one another (see James 5:16). In the second instance, and implicit in all of the above, the tradition has always maintained the ecclesial or communal nature of sin and forgiveness. (Sadly, this communal dimension has been diminished by the emphasis within the Roman tradition of individual confession.) In the third instance – again implied in the foregoing – reconciliation is about the ongoing growth in intimacy with God. It is therefore, first and last, a graced process.

At its best, the tradition places the emphasis on God and God's longing to enfold us in the Eternal Mercy. One of the unfortunate effects of the emphasis on individual confession noted above was a shift in this emphasis. We tended to become self-absorbed about our own moral condition and, at times, neurotically scrupulous. When we maintain the focus on the infinite Mercy, a Mercy bestowed beyond measure and without question, we begin to move into an understanding of sin and forgiveness that no theology book can give us. This is a understanding and experience that lives in the community of the baptized. It grows in us every time we join our brothers and sisters in celebrating God's Mercy. □

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 (Info: Fr Glenn 6026 5333).

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie April 28 (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club March 10 "Interfaith dialogue after Dominus Jesus" Mehmet Saral & Fr Pat McInerney (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

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

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL March 17 "Spirituality of Conversation" Fr Greg Burke ofm & Marea Donovan (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St March 31 "We are one but we are many – Migration in Australia" Bishop David Cremin & Mary Karras (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

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

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel March 8 "The Road most Travelled" Michael McGirr & tba (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub March 24 (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel Date tba "Church: Hope or Hindrance?" Bishop Geoffrey Robinson & tba (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney March 15 "Opening up the Emmaus Story" Bede Heather (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington Theme "Walking the Edges"** The Bellevue Hotel April 7 "Companions at the Edge" Patrick Bishop & tba (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club April 21 "Virtual Relationships" Reg Murray & Fuzz Kitto (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd April 6 "Inner Journey: Moorings for the Human Spirit" Fr Michael Kelly & Janiene Wilson (Info: Maria 9680 2220)

° **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club March 9 "Search for the Sacred" Sr Trish

Madigan op & Mrs Hend Saab (Info: Kerry 9630 2704).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville March 24 "Street Stories" Fr Steve Sinn & tba (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel March 17 "Where is: the Life we have lost in living? the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? the knowledge we have lost in information?" Pauline Rae smsm & Zuleyha Keskin (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 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm March 16 "Sing a Rainbow: the challenges of being gay and Christian" Michael B Kelly (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** The Union Club Hotel March 17 "Landmines – Medicine Sans Frontier" Dr Brian Raleigh (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston, March 17 "Can truth persist in today's media?" Tim Lane & Virginia Trioli (Info: John 9478 3642).

° **Echuca** The Harvest Hotel (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm April 7 "The Changing face of Poverty" Fr Peter Nordern (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm March 29 "Lay people are leaders too!" Bill Armstrong & Philomena Billington (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm May 12 "The history of Catholic spiritual practices" Maria Forde & tba (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

° **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm, March 24 (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

° **Southern Finbar's** Irish Pub, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm April 28 "Sexuality & Identity: Born not Made" Jim Nickoloff & Pamela Bone (Info: Maria 9579 4255).

Other States

° **Devonport (TAS)** Molly Malone's Irish Pub, (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Hobart North** The Mustard Pot Hotel Moonah April 19 "Transforming Spirituality" Fr Jim Hickoloff & Fr Robert McCleary (Info: Gwaine 6228 2679).

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

° **Perth (WA)** 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 (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: Sandra on 02 9247 4651 or see the web site: www.aquinas-academy.com).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Eremos Institute** is looking for an Executive Director. If you would like to receive information about this challenging part-time opportunity, please contact Rob Brennan on 8765 1775.

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills April 3 "The Road to the Cross in Luke's Gospel" – A Lenten Reflection Day (Info: 9484 6208).

° 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.

ARCHIVIST NEEDED

On July 3 2004 it will be ten years since a group of us gathered for the first meeting out of which Catalyst for Renewal emerged. We have a number of documents and they need the professional care of a trained archivist. Not a huge job but an important one. **Is there anyone trained in this area able to volunteer his/her services?**

REFLECTION MORNINGS 2004

The first one will be on Saturday March 20, 2004, with **Fr Richard Lennan** 9.30am - 12.30pm Marist Centre, Hunters Hill

Recommended

Brian Doyle, *Leaping: Revelations and Epiphanies*, Loyola Press, 2003, 194 pages, pb, \$30.95 from John Garratt – Tel: 1300 650 878.

Chris Geraghty, *The Priest Factory: A Manly Vision of Triumph, 1958-1962 and Beyond*, Spectrum Publications, 2003, 376 pages, pb, \$27.95.

Alan E Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, William B Eerdmans, 2001, 477 pages, index, footnotes, hb.

Brian Doyle is a young writer based in Portland, Oregon. His pieces – of varying lengths – have been published in a wide variety of magazines, including *American Scholar*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Commonweal* and the *Melbourne Age*. This book is a gathering of some of those pieces. Doyle writes with an easy style that has depth. He is often quirky and sometimes genuinely funny. He can also be hard-hitting. He writes: "Every Catholic at some point sighs for the Church in which he lives, such a wonderful and cruel entity, such a brilliant and idiotic and lurching-gracelessly-toward-grace enterprise." *Leaping* is always personal: "In nine years I have been graced with three children and here is what I have learned about them. They are engines of incalculable joy and agonising despair. They are comedy machines. Their language is their own and the order of their new halting words has never been heard before in the whole history of the world. ... They are cruel, and move in herds and gaggles and mobs, and woe unto the silent one, the one who looks funny, the one who speaks awkwardly, the fat one, for she will be shouldered aside, he will never get the ball ... Yet they are endlessly kind ..." Doyle writes out of his experience and for that reason many will resonate with his words.

There is a lot wrong with this book. For starters, it needs a good edit. Secondly, the story it tells needs to be contextualised so the reader can get some perspective on the people and events of another time and another culture. Thirdly, some of the comments made about certain people seem a little insensitive. As Thomas Keneally remarked to this writer: "They were just men, and some of us forget that they were just men." That said, Geraghty provides a useful service in collating the material in this book. *The Priest Factory* tells of Geraghty's experience as a theology student at St Patrick's College, Manly in those years immediately prior to the Council. It is a sequel to an earlier book, *Cassocks in the Wilderness*, telling of the author's seven years at St Columba's Seminary, Springwood. Geraghty was ordained in 1962 and left the ministry in 1976. For the most part he speaks with both objectivity and compassion. His story reminds us of how much we have changed, how much we had to change and how much change awaits us. It is alarming to ponder the hold that the pre-Vatican II system had on us and how fragile history has shown it to be. St Patrick's College, where there was once nearly 200 men preparing for the priesthood, is an ambivalent symbol of our possibilities and limits. Read this book and ponder.

We have all heard much of Good Friday, and much of Easter Day. The Christian community, however, is largely silent about Holy Saturday. There was even a time in the history of the Church when the Easter Mass was celebrated on Holy Saturday morning, as if it was a sort of "non-day" in the liturgical calendar. Wonderful treasures can be there, right under our noses, without us seeing them. Alan Lewis insists that the central story of Christianity is a "three-day story". And the story must be told amidst tension, as a story "whose ending is known, and one whose ending is discovered only as it happens". The celebration of the resurrection is kept at bay, as it were, by the day "that he was buried" (1Cor 15:3-4). What is it like to enter that space? Where might we find ourselves if we travel with Him when "he descended into hell" (as the Apostles' Creed says)? Yes, there is a note of victory in this "descent", but Lewis reminds us there is also a note of humiliation and impotence. "What do we see" asks Lewis, "if we make the effort and muster the courage to examine the cross of Jesus Christ from the second-day frontier, looking back without knowledge of the future?" The first disciples knew what that looked like. This book is a powerful meditation for today's Christians who must begin again to make sense of Christ in the world.

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