



THE MIX



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Our Say – The passion, the movie and the Jews

It is hard to remember a film ever attracting as much attention as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, released in Australia on Ash Wednesday of this year. Gibson, ex-student of St Leo's, Wahroonga, directed, produced and co-wrote the script. He also appears in one scene – or part of him appears. It is Gibson's hands that are seen to drive the nails into the hands of Jesus on the cross. This is clearly a very personal experience for Gibson, one in which he accepts his part in the crucifixion.

Why would a film about the last twelve hours of Jesus' life provoke so much interest? There seem to be different reasons for this. To begin with, many Christians, it seems, have been deeply moved by the portrayal of this central event of the Gospels. And it seems to be prompting some significant conversations about that event, not just a film.

Interest has been provoked in other quarters as well. Biblical scholars, for example, have spoken out. They point out

that, using the four Gospels together in this way, as if they painted a coherent portrait of Jesus' passion and death, is fraught with problems. At the very least, such a conflation will be unfaithful to the individuality and specificity of each of the four texts. Further, the details of Jesus' life and death, thus removed from the peculiar context of the specific Gospels, will almost certainly communicate something other than the Gospel writer intended.

Some viewers have been provoked by the unrelenting portrayal of violence and brutality. In this context, a number of people have expressed concern that the film will once again ignite anti-Semitism amongst Christians. It is this latter concern that bears some closer scrutiny.

We human beings have a tendency to shift the responsibility and accountability in our lives. We like to be able to blame someone. Then we like to punish them, and punish them hard. These are pri-

primeval forces, and they are to be greatly feared. They are in my heart and your heart. They not only prompt us to think we can escape from our lives, they make us feel noble and even righteous as we do so. The best counter is the truth, facing what must be faced.

The history of Christianity has let loose these primeval forces too frequently. One group that has suffered is the Jews. They have been blamed for the death of Jesus. On that basis they have been persecuted and treated most cruelly at different times in our history. Any hint or suggestion that this reprehensible behaviour might re-emerge must be countered directly, concretely and unambiguously.

Some people may, in fact, choose to see Gibson's film as an incitement to anti-Semitism. Others, already afire with this demonic prejudice, might use the film to stoke the flames. Catholics ought to be on the lookout for this in the conversations they have apropos this film. □

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We are believers who are attempting to establish
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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
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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Joan Curtin. I am a
Queenslander, and Queenslanders are
different. It is like being Catholic: it is to
be 'different' — or it should be...

My mother was Catholic, my father
wasn't. I was happily attending primary
school in Ipswich, a State school, when
there was a change of parish priests, and
who should it be but the priest who had
married my parents! — and he was suitably
shocked to find that my sister and I were
going to the State school.

Over night we were walking the mile
and a half (or so it seemed!) over the hill to
the Convent school. There Sr Sebastian
surveyed this twelve-year-old who had not
been confirmed, knew no catechism, and
had not made her first Holy Communion; so
she put me in First Class with five-year-
olds!

At home, there was never any family
prayer, unless the three Hail Marys my
mother said before giving us a dose of
castor oil could fall into that category.

I have no memory of any religious
instruction in preparation for any of the
sacraments, but I have recollections of the
party after my first confession: the sense of
joy I felt as I handed around the scones and
cake. This joy I experienced is something
that has never left me. Although at times it
has receded, it has never deserted me.

The young priest in the parish came to
teach the senior girls once a week. I have
no memory of his presence, or of any words
he may have said.

I continued in this state of 'unknowing'
until I was married and we went to live in
the Franciscan parish of Mary Immaculate
in Waverley, NSW. There you joined the
Third Order, read the lives of Franciscan
saints and came to realise that they were
inspired by the life and love of a Person.

So I picked up an RSV copy of the New
Testament. At the foot of each page were
copious references, which I followed. Then
I would read all that went before and all that
followed. Back into the Old Testament,
forward into the New.

If you do this for many hours over
weeks, months and years, you gain a very
comprehensive knowledge of scripture,
especially the Old Testament, which I came
to love.

When Australian Church Women asked
our Commission for Ecumenism for a
Catholic representative, I was asked
because I was a member of the Lane Cove
(NSW) Interchurch Fellowship. Thus I
became an 'observer', with my only
credentials being a knowledge and love of
scripture. I walked on 'eggshells', having
to win their trust.

For four years I participated in a Bible

Study group whose approach was quite
different from the Catholic, and I loved it.

After being introduced to the
Jewish/Christian Luncheon Study held bi-
monthly at the Great Synagogue (Sydney), I
moved into a study group with Rabbi
Apple. I was never out of my depth as we
worked through the Psalms, Hosea, Ruth
Ecclesiastes — to name a few.

My great interest in and love of
scripture led me to become secretary of the
Lane Cove Bible Society, which entailed
giving a short address at the meetings.

I was totally unfitted to do any of these
activities, but my Catholic faith grew and,
in retrospect, I realised that at Mass every
Sunday I felt I was in the presence of God:
on the altar, the bread became the Body of
Christ, and the wine in the chalice became
the Blood of Christ. I was penetrated by the
power emanating from that altar; still today
I know it formed and transformed me.

It was at St Francis Xavier parish,
Lavender Bay (North Sydney), that I
became immersed in the Liturgy. The
changes were enormous, but I embraced
Vatican II as though I had waited for it!

Understanding and knowledge were
filling the vacuum of those first Protestant
years. I seem to have skirted on the
margins of Catholicism, never belonging to
any organisation within.

The watershed of my faith was in the
Waverley days, when I formed a
relationship with Jesus Christ, a Person I
love. And I owe a lot to the Passionist
scholar, Barnabas Ahern, who liberated my
prayer when he wrote about the humanity of
Christ.

And now, here I am, at eighty-five,
having had two hip replacements, and I still
find it exciting to think what the Church has
meant to me.



Joan Curtin

Your Say – Taking another look

Peter Devenish-Meares

I am a psycho-therapist, youngish theological student and erstwhile PhD student who recently had unexpected and rich inter-faith and inter-church dialogues over a 24-hour period when I travelled to Sydney in early February 2004, for a religion conference.

These ecclesial encounters went far beyond prescriptive exchanges. They actively led me to conclude that Australia is seeing the continued growth of a rich tapestry of inter-connections. People are seeking to work out and work through challenges of oft-undiscovered unity. At the same time, there is genuine acceptance of healthy difference, if my recent experiences are in some small way a measure of contemporary action.

We should be encouraged by the level of often unknown ecclesial encounters taking place. There is deep respect for difference.

Before I left for Sydney, I had a Friday night dinner with an older, well-to-do Methodist friend, who shared his journey and recent overseas development experiences. This yarn left me in wonder of unexpected faith-sharing, active encouragement of my embryonic ministry and a rich fellowship all round. I was even invited to a Ministry to the Sick convention, all expenses paid!

Early on Saturday morning, I had an expected dialogue with a fundamental Christian pastor seated next to me on the plane. He described himself as a biblical fundamentalist, yet our conversation was anything but. It ranged from challenges to make liturgy relevant to his informed views of the Catholic episcopate that arose from close friendships with some bishops.

The reverend gentleman was greatly interested in my theological formation and was encouraging and compassionate. Beyond this, he even challenged my so-called “progressive thinking”, which can so easily rail against reactive ecclesial leadership that, to my mind, tries to reassert dogmatic prescriptions or “clarify” ecclesial issues in a way that may have worked in less complex times.

He did this by asking me not to dismiss such people or actions out of hand. They do have a voice in the development of the Church, however problematic it may seem to younger minds.

Finally, I encountered a Tibetan Lama, recognised within his School as reincarnated Tulku. This experience spurred me to continue to use story and *the Journey* motif. With rich metaphor he encouraged me to look beyond what is apparent.

Amongst other things, he made two profound comments about “the journey”. The first was that the clouds are not the sky – much more lies behind the clouds, yet we get hooked into believing that what we see at first glance is all that there is.

The second comment was on how we seek after spiritual things (within our traditions, perhaps?); he said we often have an elephant at home (in the living room), and yet we go *looking for its footprints in the forest!* Enough said.

Some of my take-outs include:

- We can be encouraged by the levels of earnest goodwill and joy to be shared – sometimes, when we least expect it!
- I should exercise great care before using certain pre-existing cultural or ecclesial lenses or prescriptions. These can lead to unhelpful categorisations, or even adverse commentary, about certain aspects of Church that I can too easily dismiss or rail against for the sake of “justice”.
- We should be encouraged by the level of often unknown ecclesial encounters taking place. There is deep respect for difference.
- In these brief examples over 24 hours, no one was trying to “convert” anyone to anything new, except perhaps to heightened awareness and friendship. For me, *non-prescriptive dialogue is key.*
- How wide-ranging is the search? Our pluralistic society demands serious engagement, not reactivity — other views can lead us to growth. How often we can be tempted to reach for seemingly easy answers that lie within ecclesial reach and miss the richness that lies just beyond!

Peter Devenish-Meares, Mlit(History), Mcom(Hons), is a business leader, social researcher and historian by academic training.

READERS' RESPONSES

Greetings!

The article [on the language of *maintenance* as compared to the language of *mission*, in the Nov '03 issue] by Ted Mason (hello Ada!) was stimulating because we

have been kicking the same problem around at our Parish Council meetings in Zillmere (Brisbane).

A couple of suggestions might help:

- The language of maintenance for this pair of 65++s has long been dead and buried. Papa Angleo made sure of that. Like yourself and us, there are a lot of “old grey mares, and stallions” still kicking on.
- Dialogue with the missing 85% of the parish has to start with the 15% listening to them and trying to bridge the generation gap. It also means that we have to change ourselves, to renew and refresh our approach to Jesus, whom we call the Christ.

“The trouble with many people is that they are committed to an institution, not to Jesus.”

It was also encouraging to read the article by Michael Whelan “Ideologue or Mystic” in the same Nov '03 issue. About the time we were involved in the Charismatic Renewal (late 1970s), Lois came up with one of her awkward statements: “The trouble with many people is that they are committed to an institution, not to Jesus”.

We decided it was a good idea to take up, and in our own fashion, we stumbled along that line.

Michael's article discussing ideologies helps put this whole problem in perspective. It also helps us to feel that we are not on our own.

The quotation from Tom Merton goes directly to the heart of the matter: “...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”.

It also offers a step in solving the problem Ted Mason outlines in his article.

Thank you both for stimulating our flagging energies. This Papacy is proving a very long, dry, uninspiring haul. Shalom.

*Patrick & Lois O'Shea, Virginia, Qld
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Essay – Leadership in the Church

by John Heaps

True leadership is never oppressive, but always enabling. Leadership contains the ability to inspire others, to fill them with enthusiasm and give them a personal example to want to use their gifts with others for the good of all. It does not take away responsibility but encourages all concerned to take responsibility. In this way all are co-responsible with the leader for making decisions and for carrying them through.

The 2nd Vatican Council itself was an exercise in shared responsibility and consensus. Pope John XXIII had to insist that the free flow of ideas would not be regulated by the Roman Curia. The bishops of the Council did not participate in isolation but were influenced and informed by theologians who had wrestled with contentious matters for years. (This is not true of all bishops. But even those from isolated places like Australia were eventually influenced to change attitudes in the presence of representatives of the Universal Church).

Pope John XXIII exercised, through the Council, a new style of leadership. Unlike other Ecumenical Councils, this Council was not a reaction to perceived error but a response to the needs of the Church and the world. Pope John did not give answers until the right questions had been asked and pondered and prayed over.

While the Council was an exercise in collegiality, it gave guidelines for the Church in the future to act in the same way on every level. Parish priests, through parish pastoral councils, bishops, through diocesan pastoral councils and councils of priests, popes through synods were all to call on the wisdom and gifts of the whole Church in an effort to apply the Gospel to every place and time in the way appropriate to each place and time.

Shared responsibility does not mean the opportunity to shift responsibility onto the shoulders of others, or a ritual process to satisfy a demand to be heard or consulting with a select group of like-minded people with the assumption of their support. True leadership has a quality of openness and a quality of being able to create a climate of unity among people with diverse ideas, so that all will be heard. The true leader has the courage to take the decisions that have been made after reasonable consultation.

A quality of leadership is the ability to see things as they should be or, at least, to see that they are not what they should be and to work for change. It is a prophetic quality which makes a person restless while unjust situations prevail.

When we think of leadership in the Church perhaps we direct our attention too readily to the hierarchy. It is true that the Pope and the bishops have the role of overseeing the Church universal and local. But the 2nd Vatican Council speaks of the Church endowed with gifts both hierarchical and charismatic. The Council merely emphasised a reality already revealed in the life of the Church from the beginning: the Holy Spirit breathes where he wills.

As the Church developed, it was ever more the role of the hierarchy to keep order. Only rarely after Constantine do we see hierarchical and charismatic gifts together in an outstanding way. Pope John XXIII is an exception.

This leadership into new ways of understanding the scriptures, the Church, of living the Gospel, came from outside the hierarchy. The Popes and bishops became overseers and custodians of orthodoxy and order, while others thought outside the given structures, laws and customs.

The Church of our time is in desperate need of leaders.

There are many examples of this. An obvious one is Francis of Assisi, who saw a Church in ruins. A way of life had developed for the privileged, including pope and bishops, that Francis was not willing to accept. He saw what was and what Gospel living should be. To emphasise his conviction, Francis expressed it through a life of radical poverty and service to outcasts and those rejected by society. He suffered as an outcast himself before being accepted and venerated as a saint.

St John of the Cross was rejected and imprisoned for his attempts to put things right. He too was vindicated and subsequently venerated.

The vision of Mary Ward, of taking the Gospel message out to the people of Reformation England, was curtailed as her followers were made to live like nuns should live according to the narrow hierarchical mind.

In a time and place where education was the prerogative of the rich, another lay member of the Church, Edmund Rice, saw the injustice of this. He did not wait for attitudes or teachings on the matter to change, he brought about change by action. Edmund Rice was ridiculed by the English establishment of the time. Now his belief is taken for granted and enshrined in law.

In our own country Mary MacKillop

stepped out of the mould to show the way. The threat of excommunication failed to put her back in the mould designed by an unfortunate bishop and his advisers.

Many leaders in theological development and in the understanding of sacred scripture suffered because they saw that what was commonly accepted was untenable in the light of new knowledge. Eventually their teaching was accepted and became the basis of hierarchical teaching.

The Church of our time is in desperate need of leaders. As it ever was, their voices are being stifled.

The hierarchical power of the Church has become so centralised that it is even difficult for bishops who do possess qualities of leadership and genuine charismatic gifts to exercise these qualities. The enlightened bishops of dioceses in South America have in many places been replaced by bishops who stifle the progress achieved by their predecessors. In North America Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle was sidelined because his compassionate pastoral initiatives were seen as dangerous. Cardinal Joseph Bernadin received a cool reception from confreres when he attempted to bring together those with opposite views to seek consensus.

Pope John Paul II gives double messages. On the one hand, he has shown great leadership to the world. On the other hand, he and the Roman Curia have adopted the most oppressive and centralised government in the history of the Church.

The double message is evident again in his invitations to other Church leaders to let him know the type of Pope he should be. While this message goes out, the central authority issues more directives to the world's bishops – including even on the building of a diocesan Cathedral to Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee (now retired).

The frequent synods on specific topics and of specific geographical regions send out the message of collegiality. Yet the documents issued by the Pope give little hope that these exercises will ever bear fruit. I can't think of anything significant that has changed from any one of them.

The Pope's response to the Synod of the American Churches was excellent. The needs were reflected and well expressed. What was lacking was the invitation by the Pope to the individual Churches and Episcopal conferences to bring about the changes necessary to address the needs, in ways appropriate to the diverse areas and cultures. For example, Pope John Paul re-

flects on the difficulty of making the Eucharist available to all, yet there is no invitation to the Churches to effect the changes to make this possible. The Pope reflects that the variety of cultures have so much to offer, yet the smallest change in the liturgy has to be approved by the central authority, which mostly presumes to know better than the local Churches.

I know something of the prayer, thought and effort that went into the submissions to the Synod of the Church in Oceania. I know something of the concerns that the bishops brought to the Synod. With those in mind I read Pope John Paul II's response to the Synod. While it is a reasonable document, I don't believe it reflects the concerns of the bishops. It could have been written without a Synod ever taking place. It could be taken as an insult to the participants, although I am absolutely sure this was not the Pope's intention.

So I see that things are as they have been for centuries. If we look for leadership, it is to the charismatic arm of the Church that we should look.

Those who work, preach, march, meet for peace, reconciliation, the rights of the oppressed and underprivileged, indigenous people, refugees and the just use of natural and human resources, are leaders in the Church and in the world.

Leaders too are those who work away to change Church structures and laws that seem to inhibit the spread of the Gospel and the flow of grace through greater access to the sacraments. Such people in our World and in our Church need an abundance of hope and loving and caring support from each other. Movements such as Catalyst for Renewal, "The Mix" and Spirituality in the Pub can give this mutual support while we work, pray and hope.

John Heaps is former Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Sydney, where he now lives in retirement.

WEARING A TEACUP, FOLLOWING A DUCK: REFLECTIONS ON A DAY WITH MICHAEL LEUNIG

Celestine Pooley RSM

Michael Leunig came with no planned agenda, no particular topics to cover, no tools (except a whiteboard and pen), and certainly no notes. He stood before a packed hall of over 100 people in a casual, relaxed way. As the day unfolded I had a sense that this was how he approached the events of his life. What he said he *hoped* would happen was to engage with the group

in a conversation about the important things of life, and how we see our place in the world today. He believed that philosophizing in this way sets up conviviality within a group. We certainly learned a little about this deeply sensitive person, about his own philosophy of life, what inspired him and how he engaged with the world

Leunig shared something of his life - as a cartoonist, a husband, a father, a lover of nature and, it seemed, a gentle dreamer. One of the most frequently expressed comments about his cartoons was a failure to understand their meaning. His reply, "I often don't understand them myself! They just *are*. Why do we always have to understand meaning?"

There's something good and even enjoyable about what he called a "negative capability" - living with the not knowing, the mystery. He believes there is an aversion to negativity in this country - the fear of not knowing. This is particularly so in the political climate of our time.

We certainly learned a little about this deeply sensitive person, about his own philosophy of life, what inspired him and how he engaged with the world

Asked once why he favoured *wobbly* lines in his work, he replied, "I hadn't noticed!" - later discovering he did have something wrong with one of his eyes. "But I thought, what's wrong with creating a *wobbly universe*? My cartoons are created in all kinds of moods - happy, sad, mild, disturbed, sometimes angry. I'm not out to make a punch line. Much of life is inconclusive, so there's no need to find meaning in everything. I may like what I end up drawing without a need to understand it. It's what poets, artists, musicians do. Why not just be stupid before it for a while! It's not that it's random: it comes from somewhere, but I can't always identify it."

He was asked to make some observations about the creative process as he experiences it. In copying from that thing in the mind (even with the punch line) onto the paper, it loses something in the doing. Its impact fades. But, he said, a lot is revealed in the failure - in being less than what you thought you were. "How do I react to that failed result? Walk away, or stay in the mess, in the disillusionment. Why not use the brush or the pencil and make more mess - after all, you can't ruin it any further! Maybe, as you crush the paper and are about to throw it in the bin, you

unfold it and behold, you see something interesting you haven't seen before."

"A picture is primal, it bypasses the intellect. Whereas words can be dealt with - by law, if necessary - drawing involves a primal language. This is why some people don't understand them." Asked about the teapot on the head of some of his figures, he said it just happened - like an adornment. What about the duck? It, too, just appeared! But it had a purpose. It put Mr Curly into a relationship and that's necessary. He later learned that in German mythology the duck often appears at a moment when you're 'blocked' in some way. The duck frees you up, unlocks the blockage and you're able to continue, refreshed on your journey - it's something like a moment of transcendence. ...

Michael has received a deal of 'hate' mail, and phone messages from people who have been outraged at some of his work. Yes, it was distressing for him and his family. "But some people react to a cartoon as if it's a piece of legislation!" Terry Lane, a columnist who wrote an article in September called "All hail the troublemakers! But where are they?" bemoaned our lack of rebels in this country. He said, "Leunig comes about as close as we get". I quoted this to Michael, and he seemed comfortable with the label!

He lives in the bush outside of Melbourne, and much of his inspiration comes from nature and the environment, but also from buildings and people. He spoke about his need for *quiet spaces* in his life. Cartooning, he said, was like a religious commitment for him. He spoke of the momentum of life today, and asked, "Is love possible at speed?"

One of the deepest experiences for Leunig was living for a time in Arnhem Land with the Aborigines. Here he learned about the real meaning in the landscape - about the right/wrong ways to move through the land, and about the spirit of the land being alive and speaking to you. He enjoyed these people who knew how to *be with others, in a comfortable silence*. The elders were deeply philosophical.

He related in an amusing way, how having no television in the home happened without any real intent. He and his wife were having a domestic argument about some trivial thing he had or hadn't done. He was deliberately not engaging with her, but looking ahead at the small black-and-white TV screen that sat on a table in front of him. In anger and frustration, she pushed the TV onto the floor. It broke. "It was just never replaced!" he said.

What a wonderful day we had! □

Sr Celestine is a Monte Mercy sister who lives in Sydney. She was a participant in the Leunig Seminar at Hunters Hill, arranged by Aquinas Academy in October 2003.

Words for a Pilgrim People

'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?'. (Luke 24:25-27)

□□□

*Among the central mysteries of Christian and Church life we proclaim in the Lord's Supper the death of the Lord until he comes again. We Christians, then, are really the only people who can forgo an "opiate" in our existence or an analgesic for our lives. Christianity forbids us to reach for an analgesic in such a way that we are no longer willing to drink the chalice of the death of this existence with Jesus Christ. And to this extent there is no doubt that in living out its Christian existence Christianity is required to say in an absolute and sober realism: yes, this existence is incomprehensible, for it passes through something incomprehensible in which all of our comprehending is taken from us. It passes through death. And it is only when this is not only said in pious platitudes, but rather is accepted in the hardness of real life - for we do not die at the end, but we die throughout the whole of life, and, as Seneca knew, our death begins at our birth - and it is only when we live out this pessimistic realism and renounce every ideology which absolutizes a particular sector of human existence and makes it an idol, it is only then that it is possible for us to allow God to give us the hope which really makes us free". (Karl Rahner's "Remarks on the Christian Life" in his **Foundations of Christian Faith**, Crossroad Book, 1978, 404).*

□□□

*Who am I? ... I am one loved by Christ. (Thomas Merton, "Conference on Prayer", **Sisters Today**, XLI (1970), 5.)*

□□□

At the Easter Vigil (in Year C) Catholics throughout the world meditate on Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus (24:1-12). The story is dramatic. Like all good stories, this one is much better at conveying the truth than any factual report could do. And so it opens: "On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn" A week has ended and another is beginning. On the face of it, this moment carries all the possibilities of the dawning of a new day. In fact, we are drawn into the mood of this lonely group of women, full of tragic sadness and dashed hopes, wending their silent way towards the tomb, the place of death. They carry spices to anoint a corpse.

The women find the stone covering the place of death has been moved. The corpse is not there. The place of death has not been able to hold Him. Death is exposed. Through the doorway to the empty tomb the women gaze back towards the horror of Calvary and see it afresh: That was a good Friday. The failure was a triumph. Something happened on the Cross that leaves their worldly perceptions turned upside, their spices looking just a little irrelevant. This is indeed "the first day of the week ... the first sign of dawn". In the light of Jesus Christ everything is different for these women and us, the perception of what is real and what is unreal, the sense of tragedy and sadness, the reason for hope.

Every and any moment is a moment in the unfolding of God's love, even if we might approach it with tragic sadness and dashed hopes.

Our experience of the Risen Lord permeates through even to our understanding of ordinary language. Words take on deeper and more paradoxical dimensions. For example, the Christian can never use the words "ending" or "beginning" in quite the same way as those who do not know Christ Jesus and the power of His resurrection (see Philippians 3:10). Life is teeming with "endings" that are in fact "beginnings". Every apparent "ending" is pregnant with life and possibility. The victory of the Cross is present in every and any moment. Every and any moment is a moment in the unfolding of God's love, even if we might approach it with tragic sadness and dashed hopes. The place of death is empty. □

The Tradition – Faith in resurrection

Human speculation is prone to become quite silly when it attempts to tell us what happens after we die. When some Sadducees tried to draw Jesus into such speculation he fended them off (see Mark 12:18-27; Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40). And no amount of testimony from those who have had "near-death experiences" and "out-of-body experiences" helps us to understand what happens beyond death. Death draws the curtain. It is an incomprehensible event.

As adult human beings we are condemned, however, to make an act of faith as we look towards that inevitable event. We have only two realistic options as thoughtful people who make choices about what we do and what happens to us: Either we believe in termination or we believe in continuity, however we understand that. This is not the place to explore the faith of those who believe in termination. From a purely rational point of view, they must face the obvious implication of their faith, that if the end is mere termination, what possible meaning or value could the movement towards that end have? For better or worse, however, very few people actually follow the logic of their stated beliefs in this or any other matter.

Death draws the curtain. It is an incomprehensible event.

As Christians we make a proclamation of faith: "We believe in the resurrection of the dead!" We believe that our "ending" – our dying – is a "beginning". We believe that dying is part living, that we are dying into the risen Lord in every moment of our lives, that our literal dying is a total passing over into the fullness of life in Him. The paschal rhythm of life, when we respond to it generously in faith, gathers momentum and prepares us for the final Passover or Exodus in Him. We trust that we shall be raised up by the Father, like Him.

Concretely, in detail, what form will all this take? We simply do not know and the authentic tradition has never professed to know such details, despite the visions of certain saints and the speculations of theologians. □

Recommended

Paul Glynn SM, *The Wayside Stream: Reconciliation*, Marist Fathers books, 2003, 155 pages, \$11.50 (including postage). (Available from Marist Fathers Books, 14 Rocher Avenue, Hunters Hill, 2110.)

We read in Psalm 110:7: "He will drink from the wayside stream; therefore high he will hold his head." Paul Glynn explains: "The gesture of the king, kneeling and bending low to drink from the stream, symbolized the total allegiance he must give to YHWH." This is the pivotal point of Glynn's presentation on 'reconciliation'. He draws on scripture and his experiences of dealing with people wounded beyond compare through injustice and yet, able to forgive. The book is comprised of series of short stories, with subjects including: Terrorists, WWII POWs and Sex Slaves, Lourdes and Cardinal Francis Nguyen Van Thuan. Movement from "the Closed Fist" to "the Open Hand" allows one to go forward. Reconciliation, most importantly, brings the heart and mind to the place where God dwells. The stories in this book bring us a message of healing and Grace. Paul Glynn is the author of several books, including *A Song for Nagasaki*. All profits from the sales go to the production of school books in Tetun, the East Timor Language. This is a work of the Sisters of St Joseph. *The Wayside Stream* is not a theological treatise on reconciliation, but more a personal reflection, easy to absorb, especially during Lent. This book could be used for personal or group reflection.

Kate Englebrecht, Editor, *Why I Am Still a Catholic: Stories of Faith and Belief*, David Lovell Publishing, 2003, 136 pages, pb, \$19.95.

Fifty years ago we were reading books about why people became Catholics. It is a sign of the times that we now find ourselves reading books about why Catholics don't quit and become something else. Kate Englebrecht has collected statements from 13 Catholics. Among these are Ed Campion and Geraldine Doogue, Veronica Brady and John Menadue, Marea Donovan and Lionel Bowen. Between them, the thirteen represent quite a slice of Australian Catholicism. Kate herself introduces the collection with her own story of growing up within the Anglican tradition and becoming a Catholic as an adult. Each of the statements is brief and personal. The reader is drawn to ponder his or her own belief and commitment. Cultural Catholicism does not measure up any more. We are forced to question ourselves, and what we think matters in the end. The raw winds of secularism, the seductions of affluence and materialism, and the remarkable tolerance of Australian society at this time will, ironically, probably either prompt us to drift through life without religious focus or commitment or dig in our heels and rebel. Perhaps the future of Catholicism lies with these rebels, women and men sickened equally by a plastic existence passed off as "the good life" and an uncritical conformity passed off as fidelity to Catholic tradition.

Kevin Treston, *Walk Lightly upon the Earth: Creation Spirituality for Ordinary Living*, Creation Enterprises, 2003, 128 pages, bibliography, pb. (Available at \$19 from Creation Enterprises, 66 Antill Street, Wilston, Q 4051.)

Is environmentalism the new moral frontier? The Church of the 19th century saw the emergence of many groups whose stated purpose was to bring education and health care to the poor. In the Western world at least, that need is largely met by government agencies. The frontier has shifted. Would it be drawing too long a bow to suggest that the needs of the environment are comparable to those of the poor in a bygone age? Should we, as believers in the message of Jesus, be doing more to protect the environment from the ravages of unbridled consumerism and materialism? Kevin Treston offers a useful little book here. Chapter headings include, "The wonder of creation", "Peace and Justice in creation", "Work and Sabbath in creation". At the end of each chapter the reader is invited to take up particular points for discussion or study. Quotations are offered to promote further reflection. Some might find the theoretical references distracting. Those references can, be passed over without losing anything of substance. This little book provides an imaginative and attractive introduction to a conversation that the secular world seems to be taking much more seriously than us believers. *Walk Lightly* might be particularly suitable for a home study group.

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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 "Seeking the Light: A Journey with Quakers" Don Baker & David Hanson-Levering (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club April 14 "The Church's Future: Fidelity or dissent?" John Flader & Richard Lennan (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Canberra** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry as above.

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL April 21 "Living Spirituality" Bishop David Cremin & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Paramatta Rd & Arlington St April 28 "What democracy?" Eva Cox & tba (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club May 11 Paul Lins & Eileen Glass (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel May 10 "Every choice is a stepping stone on the road ahead" Br Graham Neist & Maria Pineda (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive May 4 "Seeking/finding common ground" Sr Libby Rogerson & Faikah Bernhardian (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub April 28 "Bioethical Issues we face Today" Ray Campbell (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 April 19 "The Mystery of Encounter" Michael Whelan sm & Anne Jordan pbvm (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington Theme "Walking the Edges"** The Bellevue Hotel May 5 "Laugh at the Edge" Melina Marchetta & JP Lail (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 May 4 "Connected to the Cosmos" Col Brown & tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club April 13 "Search for the Sacred" Sr Germaine Donovan & Rev Rae Trenerry (Info: Janice 9684 4109).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville April 28 "An Eye for an Eye – Redemption or Retribution" Neil Ormerod & Sr Audette Mansour Fr Steve Sinn & tba (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel April 21 "Where is: the Life we have lost in living? the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? the knowledge we have lost in information?" Robert Fitzgerald & Trish Madigan op (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 May 18 "Assylum Seekers – Current Issues" Kate Durham (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** The Union Club Hotel May 19 "Art and Spirituality" Pauline Clayton (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston, Info: John 9478 3642).

° **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... The Dock Hotel May 18 (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm May 17 "Catholics don't have a monopoly on guilt, we're just the No 1-manufacturers of it" tba (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, (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).

° **Brisbane (QLD)** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry as above.

° **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

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, April 13-19 guided retreat; 13-21 directed retreat; 23-26 Life's Healing Journey; Apr 30-May 29 sabbatical retreat "Life's Journey Experience"; Apr 30-May 8 "Spirituality for Intimacy" retreat/directed retreat; May 10-18 Life's Healing Journey/directed retreat; 20-28 directed retreat (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills May 8-14 "With Burning Hearts - conversations and questions along the road" (Info: 9484 6208).

° Visit www.cathnews.com.au.

° **NSW Ecumenical Council** Fund Raising Dinner with The Most Rev Dr Peter Carnley AO & The Most Rev John Bathersby, Canterbury Park Events Centre, King St, Canterbury, April 29, 2004, 7pm for 7.30pm, \$70 per place (Info: Kathy 9299 2215).

GERALD GLEESON AC: THANK YOU!

We express our deep gratitude to Gerry Gleeson for his generous support of Catalyst. Gerry was one of the founding Patrons.

He finds it necessary to reduce his commitments at this time and is therefore retiring as Catalyst Patron. Our thanks also to Frances, Gerry's wife, who is also a great supporter of Catalyst. Our prayers and best wishes go with you both and we look forward to meeting you at future Catalyst functions.