



THE MIX



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In February this year, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* became the biggest one-year seller in the history of publishing in the United States, with 6.6 million hardcover copies in print. It is a formulaic book, a cleverly constructed whodunit, with twists and turns on every other page. The plot is built around the thesis that Jesus escapes crucifixion, marries Mary Magdalene and goes on to beget a lineage that persists to this day. The Catholic Church for centuries has lied about this and is willing to have Opus Dei send out an albino-giant-simpleton to kill the remaining people who know the truth so that no one will discover that truth. And so the story goes.

As a piece of literature the book is, at best, B-grade. As a piece of history, it is a nonsense. And there is the rub. *The Da Vinci Code* is superficially plausible, especially if the reader knows little or nothing of history. It will almost certainly be read – and quoted – by many as if it is historically accurate. It will appeal especially to those

who believe that Catholicism is a conspiracy and those who want to believe the worst about Catholics. But it will also appeal to many who are naïve or simply jaded by their experience with the Catholic Church.

We Catholics have brought much of this silliness on our own heads. To begin with, the sexual abuse scandal has severely undermined our ability to command trust within our own ranks, let alone in the wider community. Furthermore, our profile in the community, today and through history, is profoundly ambiguous. We are a sign, more or less, of God's love through the fidelity of so many who conscientiously live the Gospel according to their particular possibilities and limits, and we are also guilty of arrogance, dishonesty and injustice.

In the introduction to the International Theological Commission's *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, Pope John Paul II is quoted:

Because of the bond which unites us to one another in the Mystical Body, all of us ... bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us.

Renewal, among other things, must include honesty and compassion. Catholics, from whatever point on the political spectrum, must be willing to face and compassionately embrace the Church as a thoroughly human reality. Nothing takes away our brokenness in time. We can no longer indulge the illusion that we have the answers and the problem is simply that "they" will not listen to us.

We are a very earthen vessel that carries the great Mystery. Like every human system, we are in need of redemption. The more we focus on the Mystery, the less we will feel compelled to invent fig leaves for our shame, and the less we invent fig leaves the less likely we will be to offend our brothers and sisters who genuinely seek an encounter with the True and the Real. □

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor reserves the right not to publish a submitted text. Names must be supplied though, for good reason, the Editor may publish a submitted text without the writer's name being made public. Not all the opinions expressed in *The Mix* are those of Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated.

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THE HUMAN FACE

Greetings! My name is Vin Underwood. When friends in Melbourne used to ask me where I was born, I would reply that I was born in exile, because I first saw the light of day in Hillston NSW in November of 1934. My father had been granted some virgin land about 25 miles from Hillston by the NSW government in 1925.

Through some friendly neighbours, William Underwood was put in touch with Esther Gilders, and they married in July of 1933 at St Theresa's, Essendon. My sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth, were born while we lived on the farm. An early memory is of going with my father round the house, which he had built, while he hammered nails through the doors and into the door jams. Having done this, we left the property in 1938, never to return, and made our way back to Melbourne.

Apparently, a number of bad seasons forced this decision on my parents. Ironically, seven consecutive bumper seasons followed! I have sometimes wondered what life for me would have been like if we had remained on the farm. However, such is the pattern of life, full of twists and turns and chance meetings.

Upon our return to Melbourne in 1939, Dad took up taxi driving and purchased a new weatherboard house in Oakleigh. According to my mother, Dad claimed that the American soldiers whom he transported helped pay for the house. They must have been generous tippers! Two more siblings arrived, a brother, Leo, and a sister, Helen.

Primary education at the local parish school began for me almost as soon as we settled in Oakleigh. From there I went to De La Salle College, Malvern, for my secondary education. A close school friend of mine went off to join the De La Salle Brothers, and this set me thinking about what I ought to do.

However, I left school after completing my Leaving Certificate and found work in an office. At this time I was playing cricket and football with local teams and became involved with the parish YCW (Young Christian Workers). With the help of the priest who supervised our meetings, I made a decision to join the De la Salle Brothers in 1952.

After initial training I began my teaching career in 1956. Over the years I became familiar with the layout of Sydney, with postings at Kingsgrove, Cronulla, Revesby, Castle Hill and Ashfield. While at Kingsgrove I completed an Arts degree through external studies at New England University and later, when at Cronulla, an MA in mathematics at Macquarie.

My time at Kingsgrove was a highlight. We were mostly young, but all vital and

filled with enthusiasm for teaching. Religious education was a particular concern, and we kept ourselves informed about the catechetical and liturgical movements that were abroad at the time.

I considered pursuing a theology degree, but in Australia this was only available to seminarians. The second Vatican Council, rather than being the disjunction that it was for some, was for a confirmation that the lines of enquiry we were exploring were true to our tradition.

After 22 years with the De La Salle Brothers, I made the painful decision to leave them in 1974. I found work at the Kings School in Parramatta and then returned to Melbourne, where I had been lucky enough to meet a lovely lady, Margaret, whom I married early in 1976. We settled in the beachside suburb of Mordialloc, and I continued my teaching career at St Bede's College.

Although teaching can be challenging, I never found it boring because there is always an element of the unexpected when interacting with young people — as well as those not so young. As I was teaching Religious Education to year 12 students, I took the opportunity to study for a theology degree at Clayton, as the seminaries had now opened their doors to others of the baptised.

At the end of 1996, Margaret and I decided to retire. Since then I have become involved in our parish, and it was through the parish priest, Frank Martin, that I became associated with Spirituality in a Pub and subsequently with Catalyst for Renewal. From time to time I do some work with Towards Healing, the Church organisation that endeavours to bring some healing to those who have been abused.

With these and various other activities that fill my day, life in retirement remains vital and good.



Vin Underwood

Your Say – Different points of view

Peter Kaukas, Maryse Usher and Terry Monagle

I have read the March 2004 edition of *The Mix* with interest, especially the article by Cardinal Cassidy.

As a matter of personal interest and to prompt and promote conversation and reflection on the topic of compassion and understanding of those 'on the edges', I wish to remind our readers that nearly a million, mostly male, homosexuals throughout Europe perished in Hitler's death camps. The pink triangle, which marked us in the camps, today we wear with pride, reminding us of that time. To wear both the Star of David and the pink triangle was to receive particular attention from Hitler's thugs.

With this in mind and as an exercise, I would like to ask readers and Catalyst for Renewal to transpose/replace where applicable throughout Cardinal Cassidy's address, the words "Jew", "Jewish and Judaism", with "Gay/s", "homosexual/s and homosexuality".

Having done this, read the article thus and reflected upon it, I believe that they will find it, as did I, quite odd, uncaring, uncompassionate and breathtakingly incredible that the 'Church' has not approached the gay 'community' with the same compassion and understanding.

Yours in the love of God and the Christ and bound by the Holy Spirit.

Peter Kaukas

After listening to Brian Doyle and Marcelle Mogg at the Celtic Club, I feel urged to share a few thoughts with you. Having taken a break from my pro-life work, I have had much time to ponder about some things within our beloved Catholic Church.

On gay clergy and religious: to me, the gay Catholic represents Simon of Cyrene. He (or she) is forced to carry the Cross (no real option other than celibacy). The gay priest represents Christ on the Cross — he should neither be villified nor 'rescued' (told to go off and pray).

What is needed is for everyone, from the top down, to recognise how his (her) nature is especially well adapted to religious calling. As for chastity, we are *all* called to it. The present and future Church must study John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, in order to be liberated from the world's lie, i.e., that we all need, deserve and have a 'right' to sexual intercourse.

This great lie leads me into my second concern: the great silent holocaust that is causing cracks and crumbling of our community: abortion.

As counsellors on a 24/7 crisis line run by Pregnancy Counselling Australia, we deal with women, girls and men who are facing the truth that it is impossible to separate sex from procreation. Thanks to the efforts of Family Planning Australia (a subsidiary of Planned Parenthood), these poor people believed they had a right to sex as long as they kept the 'commandment of contraception'.

They discover they are pregnant (this is the mortal sin of the anti-life mentality). So they must do 'the right thing' and seek an abortion. They are in great conflict. Good communication, compassion and understanding, and especially the love of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — all come into play to reconcile completely opposite points of view. We need to help our callers to see the truth.

Our saddest calls are from women and men suffering agonies of guilt, grief and confusion resulting from abortions — a week to 40 years after the event.

Maryse Usher

(Unfortunately, space did not allow the complete letter to be printed, but if any reader would like the full text, kindly address your request to the Editor and include a SSA envelope.)

Following is a little yarn about cosmic risk-taking and earthly caution:

Brendan is our financial adviser. We've known him since he was a kid in shorts. We sit there, in the Big Bank's glass tower, amazed at his transformation. Expertly, he chats about the markets: shuffles plans, figures and targets. He knows us well enough to match our plans with what he calls, 'your lifestyle'.

My wife understands what he is saying; I pretend.

"It's all in the spread of risk: property, shares, cash — here and overseas."

"Everything can fail," I mutter, thinking of Enron, Ansett, Henry Kaye, corporate crooks, insider trading, and lax regulation. I can think of a doomsday scenario to sink any of their schemes.

They bend towards me with kindness in their eyes. "Yes, everything has risk, Terry, the idea is to minimise it. To do nothing is also a risk."

Part of this attempt to eliminate uncertainty is to insure our income streams since they are needed to fund the proposed investments. Such insurance, however, is very expensive.

Why the visit? We will be finishing work soon. We would like to be able to afford airfares to go and see our children and to pass some assets on to them. And somehow, death is hovering, a ghostly digit in all the equations. We have to get our finances in order.

Brendan gets out a calculator, saying something about Superannuation. My wife doesn't need a calculator, her brain whirrs. Mine goofs off.

I see myself at the betting ring at Flemington racecourse: tents, electric boards with the odds, bags, laptops and still one or two pork-pie hats. I am looking for a horse and a bookie with an Irish name to lay out my pusillanimous \$5 each way. I hate risk. I would never have the courage to be a small businessman. So often you see the shop open, money spent on refurbishment, the place empty, the closing down sign. It only takes 12 months.

The spiritual life, too, in which I dabble, is extremely risky. There is no insurance and you can't claim the investment back from the taxman as a claimable expense. It's like emptying your pockets — even the train fare home — on a get-out bet on the last race. There's no way back. The idea is that you embrace the risk of selling everything you own and buy that field where there may or may not be a great pearl.

You have seen a glimmer, a seductive glimmer of something precious in the dark tangle of your prayer. This invitation is so attractive you are tempted to give up all for it, to bungee-jump after it.

Blaise Pascal, legendary French poet and mathematician, argued that it is worth risking the existence of God because if it proves to be an illusion, you have lost really nothing by living as if it were true. That's too cognitive for me. I am seduced by light reflected from a mirror into a dark room, by bird sounds half heard on waking, by real presences in space and matter.

Then I hear them again; they're still rabbiting on. Apparently we have certain amounts in Super that attract a favourable tax rate because we accrued the payments before '83. It's sure labyrinthine.

Good luck to them, to us. My head is confused between the needs of cosmic risk and earthly caution.

"I'd better get back to work," I say. "Sure," they say, momentarily lifting their eyes from their calculations. "I may as well punt on them," I think as I leave. "Their wisdom reduces the risk. I'm lucky to have them busy there on my behalf."

Terry Monagle

Essay – To act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God

by Chris Sidoti

This is the text of a talk given by Chris Sidoti at Spirituality in the Pub, Waitara, 19 March 2003.

I prepared my comments for tonight yesterday afternoon while listening to the parliamentary debate on the start of the War against Iraq. I thought about the theme for Spirituality in the Pub here in Waitara this year, the text from Micah:

This is what God asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

The world this week could not be further from that. There is too little justice, too little tenderness and no sign whatsoever of humility. The adverbs in the text are most compelling: justly, tenderly, humbly. They pose values that are the total opposite of the contemporary world's experience of injustice, rigidity and arrogance.

The text opens up many issues for comment, but tonight I want to speak about only one, extremism.

For many years, but especially since the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002, public discussion has focused concern on fundamentalists in the context of terrorism and violence more generally. But are the perpetrators of these outrages properly called fundamentalists?

The Macquarie Dictionary defines fundamentalism as belief in fundamentals. It defines a fundamental as an essential, essence, base, key, original. Calling religious and political fanatics "fundamentalists" is a corruption of language and a betrayal of those who adhere to the fundamentals among which, for Christians, are justice, tenderness and humility.

So let's call these religious and political fanatics what they are, not fundamentalists but extremists.

In an age and world denounced by some religious leaders as secular, there is irony in the increasing, spreading practice of marriage between religious and political extremism. Mary Robinson, when United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, described this well in an address on 27 February 2002:

For most people in the world, religion, spirituality and belief contribute to enhancing the inherent dignity and worth of every human person. Religion, however, is sometimes used and abused to fuel hatred, superiority and dominance. The politicisation of culture and religion

creates an intolerable environment. The rise of religious intolerance, especially Islamophobia, is a cause of serious concern.

The media and Western leaders speak often about this phenomenon in relation to Islam. We know about the extremists in Iran and Saudi Arabia and about the Taliban and Al Qaida. But it is also the experience in all the other great faiths. Hindu extremists run the Government of India and Jewish extremists run the government of Israel and in both cases they've definitely got nuclear weapons already. Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka have prevented reconciliation with the Tamil minority for decades and in Burma they support the military dictatorship.

There are Christian extremists too. In the United States, for example, they are numerous and powerful. The United States has a secular constitution, but at times it comes close to being a theocratic state. God is invoked to underpin political and ideological positions in everyday discourse far more than in any other Western country. All the currency proclaims "In God we trust". The president regularly calls for God's blessings on his enterprises, no matter how contrary to the Christian scriptures they might be, and he calls on the American people to pray for him and his endeavours.

So there are different ways of looking at things. Is that glass half full or half empty? ... Do you have no truth because you do not have the full truth?

The United States is not only approaching a theocracy. It is increasingly an extremist theocracy. Some 100 million Americans describe themselves as "born again Christians", although of course not all "born again Christians" are extremists. According to a recent study of beliefs concerning creationism and evolution, around half the American population believe literally in the Genesis account of creation (no doubt oblivious to the fact that there are two quite inconsistent accounts of creation in Genesis) and another fifth of the population say they "don't know" but tend towards creationist belief.

The United States seems entrenched in policies based on "righteous vengeance", evident in the highest rates of imprisonment in the world and in the widespread practice

of capital punishment, alone among Western nations. Texas, the president's home state, of which he was governor, has had over 300 executions since the Supreme Court lifted the ban on the death penalty almost 20 years ago. There is now an execution in Texas almost every week.

The Christian extremism in the United States leadership is evident in the language and policy of the last two years. After the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, President Bush proclaimed not merely a war on terrorism but a crusade against terrorism. Now "crusade" has only one meaning for Muslims. It recalls the concerted, persistent Christian attempts over several centuries to destroy Islam. In this context the Western concern with the Islamic word "jihad" is strange. The word, according to Islamic scholars, has many meanings and, in fact, it refers most accurately to personal struggle against sin. Nonetheless, in the West there is panic whenever an Islamic leader, religious or political, uses the word "jihad". But the president of the United States feels quite free to call the response to terrorism a "crusade".

This usage can be no accident. It is consistent with an apocalyptic Christian vision that seems to permeate the current US administration. Those who embrace this vision treat not only Genesis literally, but also the Book of Revelation. That Book of Revelation is the vision of the last days and the Second Coming of Christ and is truly the stuff of vision, not a text for literal interpretation, let alone for literal implementation. Yet that seems to be the self-appointed mission of many of these crusaders. A couple of days ago I received an e-mail about "Iraq in Biblical Prophecy". It told me that, according to scripture,

Iraq will reign (sic) mass destruction on the human race. The Revelation says that death will rise from Iraq's Euphrates to rain death on one third of the world's population in 60 minutes of human history. Neither inspectors nor armies can prevent this – they only delay it.

This vision, of course, is connected with Jewish apocalyptic literature that envisions *eretz Israel*, the land of Israel, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. Many Jewish extremists hold literally to this vision. Now the Americans and their Coalition of the Willing are about to take the Euphrates.

When he spoke about the new crusade, president Bush said that in this war "those who are not with us are against us". That again is an allusion to the Christian scripture, to Matthew (Mt 12:30), but to a particular view of scripture. There are many

ways of looking at things.

Religious values affect and are affected by ideological perspectives. Religion and ideology live in a dialectical relationship. They influence what we see, how we see and interpret events and how we respond.

Matthew presents Jesus saying, "Those who are not with us are against us" (Mt 12:30). But in Mark it is "Anyone who is not against us is for us" (Mk 9:40) and in Luke "Anyone who is not against you is for you" (Lk 9:50). These are two diametrically opposed ways of looking at things. Which approach is right? Do we act democratically and accept the one that has two supporters out of the three? We have to choose.

This is where true fundamentalism is important. Some would choose from within the framework of their ideology, their politics. We should choose on the basis of fundamentals. Which perspective is consistent with the essence, the essentials, the base, the key of our beliefs?

Justice, tenderness and humility require acceptance, respect, love and peace.

We in Sydney saw a recent example of this very act of choosing in comments made by the Rev Phillip Jensen, at his installation as the new Anglican dean of Sydney. He spoke about truth and religious belief, affirming that Christianity has and is the truth. He's a Christian, so fair enough. But he went on to describe the status of other beliefs, calling them "monstrous lies and deceits of Satan". He said they were traps of Satan that caught believers. Was he right?

From within the Christian tradition there are two ways of looking at things. Non-Christian religions may be "monstrous lies and deceits of Satan" or they may be partial revelations of truth. Non-Christian believers may be entrapped by Satan or they may be aspirants to truth, pilgrims moving towards God, divinely guided, even if not yet quite there.

We Christians believe that we have the fullness of truth and revelation in Jesus Christ, but does that mean that others have no truth at all? The God of Christians is also the God of Muslims and Jews. The way of peace of the Christian Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther King is also the way of peace of the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, the Buddhist Dalai Lama and the Baha'i Bahá'u'lláh.

While I have spoken of extremism in non-Christian faiths and in non-Catholic traditions within Christianity, I should add that we Catholic Christians have our extremists too. Fortunately these days we do not have the same aggressive, violent extremism that is seen elsewhere, although we have had more than our fair share of violent extremists during our long history.

Perhaps that reflects the universalism that "catholic" means. We are forced to be more pluralistic and therefore more tolerant because of our claims to universality. But we do have the present Pope and the present Archbishop of Sydney. One of the ironies about contemporary Catholic extremism is that it is predominantly directed internally, towards other Catholics, rather than externally, towards non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians. But within the Church we still have inquisitions, purges and dogmatic thought police.

So there are different ways of looking at things. Is that glass half full or half empty? Are you with me or against me? Do you have no truth because you do not have the full truth? There are different perspectives, different ways of looking at things, and we have to choose. This is where fundamentals come in. If we are to avoid extremism, then we must let our fundamentals be the judge of what is right. We must let the fundamentals guide our choice.

But first we must re-claim fundamentalism. I announce tonight that I am a fundamentalist Christian. It's well past time for the New Fundamentalists to speak up.

Our fundamental values are expressed throughout scripture, rarely better than in Micah: *"This is what God asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).*

Justice, tenderness and humility require acceptance, respect, love and peace. The challenge of Micah is to proclaim and live these values in a world increasingly controlled by extremists, religious and ideological extremists, between faiths, between denominations or traditions within faiths and within faith communities.

This week the world is at the precipice as the extremists contend, at the cost of ordinary people, as always, who struggle to survive amid the turmoil. No matter what happens, the only winners will be the extremists, Christian, Muslim and Jewish. Tonight more than ever we are challenged to proclaim our choice, our alternative perspective, our fundamentals.

May the God of our common parents Abraham and Sarah, the God of Jacob, Moses and David, the God of Mary, Peter and Paul, the God of the prophet Mohammad — blessings be upon him, and his

his followers — the God revealed in fullness and truth in Jesus Christ, look on us all with compassion.

Chris Sidoti is a long-time human rights activist in non-government and official human rights organisations. He now works as a human rights consultant nationally and internationally, undertaking projects principally in the Asia Pacific region but also in Europe and North America. He is presently visiting professor at the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University, Queensland, visiting professor at the School of Applied Social and Human Sciences at the University of Western Sydney, New South Wales, senior fellow at the Asia Australia Institute at the University of New South Wales and professional associate at the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law at Monash University, Victoria. As well, he is National Spokesman for the Human Rights Council of Australia. Mr Sidoti is also a part-time Judicial Member of the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal. He was Australian Human Rights Commissioner from 14 August 1995 to 13 August 2000.

LISTEN

"I know, I know," they say, "I know"
But listen will they? Never.
It must be hard to be so wrong
But be so bloody clever!

"We've always done"
"Tradition says ..."
"I used to do it that way, but I found ..."
"Look back, research and grasp,
Then add your inspiration."
The ears are blocked
There's none so blind
As those who will not see.

"Though blind from birth, my sight's restored.
"The guy who did it's special"
"You scum, you fool," the knowers said,
"We see. You don't. You're simple."

Our friends around us guide our lives
Our quiet listening lifts our minds so high.
While teacups, cards and stars
Distract the deaf.

For all of us
The Spirit works. The land speaks.
And love in all its forms inspires.
Be still awhile. Go gently.
Be a most relaxed, beautiful and fitting part
Of our great ongoing creation,
Created by, and continued by,
An unimaginable Love
For whom we are the managing heirs.

-- Russell Ebbs, 22nd March '04

Words for a Pilgrim People

'I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learned from Abba God'. (John 15:15)



*"As history abundantly proves, it is true that on account of changed conditions many things which were done by small associations in former times cannot be done now save by large associations. Still, that most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them. "The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly. Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of "subsidiary function," the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State." (Pius XI, **Quadragesimo Anno** ("On Social Reconstruction"), May 15, 1931, 79-80. (Note: This is the Church's earliest formal espousal of the principle of subsidiarity. It is applied here to the civil order. What are the implications for the Church as a society of people called to be in the world as foot washers?))*



On the Fifth Sunday of Easter we will meditate on John 13:31-35 (Cycle C). That little passage contains a statement that is one of the most frequently quoted pieces from the Gospels and one of the most frequently misrepresented. In verse 34 we read: "I give you a new commandment: You must love one another." A new commandment? Surely love is the primary command of the moral visions emerging from the great religious traditions? Indeed, is not the desire to love and be loved the deepest desire of the human heart?

Although John does not record it, the Synoptic Gospels do record an incident in which Jesus calls on the Jewish tradition for this same commandment. In Mark (12:28-34), for example, a Scribe, having heard the way Jesus debated with the authorities, asks him which is the first of all the commandments. Jesus quotes from the beginning of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) which both he and the questioner would have said several times each day throughout their lives, and Leviticus 19:18: The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and soul and love your neighbour as yourself. (see also Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28.)

'Do you understand what I have done to you?'

John's Gospel adds a crucial rider: "You must love one another, *just as I have loved you.*" This last phrase adds two critical distinguishing characteristics to Jesus' call to love. First and foremost, this life of love is an expression of our communion in the life of God. The command to love is not so much a command to do as it is a command, first and foremost, to *be*. Later Jesus is to pray "that the love with which you loved me may be in them" (John 17:26). In an extended reflection in 1John 4:7-5:4, John makes it clear the source of love is God: "Let us love each other since love is from God" (v 7). If we remember this we may avoid the "cold charity" and "Velcro love" that undermines our efforts when they are centred on us rather than God.

Secondly, this command to love will manifest itself concretely in a certain way of being in the world. For example, chapter 13 of John's Gospel, where the "new commandment" is situated, begins with the washing of the feet. Jesus takes off His outer garment and washes the disciples' feet – this is the manner and work of a slave. "Do you understand," he said, 'what I have done to you?' ... 'You must wash each other's feet. ... I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you'" (John 13:12-15). □

The Tradition – Foot washing

John's Gospel is the only one of the four that records Jesus washing the feet of His disciples (John 13: 1-15). John has left us a powerful symbol of the Christian life in this record. The image of Jesus, taking on the form of a slave, is very confronting. If we are one with Him, we will find ourselves in the place of foot washing too as we move out into the world. The same theme is found in other places in the Gospels. "The leader must be the one who serves. ... Yet here am I among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:26). (See also Matthew 20:25-27 and Mark 10:42-45.) "The greatest among you must be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). St Paul picks up the same theme: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female – for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). And this is a manifestation of the Kingdom for which we pray with urgency, "Your Kingdom come!" (Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2). The disciple of Jesus Christ does not simply *allow* this state of affairs, he or she actively promotes it.

Each and every Christian washes someone's feet each day.

As early as the 4th century the Church incorporated foot washing into the liturgy, though it was a foot washing of the catechumens at the Easter Vigil. By the end of the 11th century it was a widespread liturgical practice on Holy Thursday, much as we know it today. More importantly it is a radical metaphor for the Christian life itself, one that is incarnated in every act of fidelity, service, care, compassion and reconciliation. Each and every Christian washes someone's feet each day. It is the most obvious sign of the Resurrection. □

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>

W and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St June 8 “Stewardship and Natural Resources” Lucinda Corrigan & David Mitchell (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

° **Ballina** Paddy McGinty's Pub August 24 “The Church and Politics” Marlette Black pbvm (Info: Anne anne@ballinacatholicchurch.org.au).

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

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club May 12 “If I were Pope...” Anne Nugent & Sr Jeannie Heininger (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

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

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL May 19 “Healing the wounded heart: issues around abortion” Fr Peter Maher & Julie Kelly (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St May 26 “Marriage – does it matter any more?” Vanda O'Donnell & Rev Chris Albany (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club May 11 “The vulnerable person as prophet” Eileen Glass & “The Church: Future” Paul Collins (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 June 1 “Embracing the consciousness of our own death” Dr Michael & Ann Barbata (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Margaret 4382 2753).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub May 9 “Being Catholic today in a Changing Church” Fr Michael Fallon (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel May 27 “Truth & Conscience” Dr Gerard Goldman & Sr Libby Rogerson (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney May 17 “Journey of Life Providence” Mark Strom & Marie Harris (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** Theme “Walking the

Edges” The Bellevue Hotel June 2 “Choices at the Edge” Jasmine Dedic & tba (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club June 16 “Being with others, being with me and being with God” Geraldine Doogue & Fr Gerry Iverson (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd June 1 “Care of Body/Care of Soul” Rod Pattendon & tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H)).

° **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club May 11 “Search for the Sacred” Sr June Peck op & Sr Pauline Rae smsm (Info: Janice 9684 4109).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville May 26 “W(h)ither Liturgy?” Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon & Fr David Orr (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel May 19 “Where is: the Life we have lost in living? the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? the knowledge we have lost in information?” Geraldine Doogue & Michael Elphick (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

° **Ballarat** North Midlands Golf Club, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm (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 & Sr Ann Haplin (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, May 19 “Jesus Greatest Leader” Governor General (Info: John 9478 3642).

° **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... The Dock Hotel May 19 Fr Bob Drake & Glen & John Avard (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 31 “Conscience – A modern context” Cecilia Merri-gan & John Stuart (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm May 12 “Spiritual Journeying – the individual and the Church” Maria Forde & William Johnston (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 June 23 “Primacy of Conscience: Whose Voice do we Listen to?” Terry Monagle & Eileen Hodgins (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

Other States

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

° **Hobart** North Moonah Café Bar & Bistro (Info: Gwaine 6228 2679).

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

° **Perth (WA)** The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm May 25 “Embracing Hope” Robert Spicer & tba (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

° **Mylor (SA)** Warramong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd June 1 “The John Roffey Lecture” Rev Frank Brennan (Info:).

Other Matters and Events

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, May 10-18 Life's Healing Journey; May 20-28 directed retreat; June 4-7 Life's Healing Journey; June 11-13 prayer weekend; June 18-20 prayer weekend; June 25-27 men's 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).

° **Mary at Pentecost** A guided retreat St Joseph's Spirituality Centre, Baulkham Hills, May 29/30 (Info: Cathy 9677 2123).

° **Eremos Forum** with John Cleary, ABC, & Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, June 19 7.30-9.30pm, ACU Auditorium, Strathfield (Info: 9683 5096).

° **Seminar – Finding the Catholic Social Conscience for Today** – Towards a New Pentecost in Australia, Ryan Auditorium, MacKillop campus, ACU with Stefan Gigacz & Fr Frank Brennan sj (Info: ACMICA mnguyen@acmica.org).

° **Catholic Institute of Sydney** May 26 – June 23 Five Wednesdays 7-9pm, “Guigo the Carthusian, The Ladder of Monks” with David Ranson (Info: 9752 9500).

REFLECTION MORNINGS

Saturday May 15, 2004

Fr David Ranson

The Trinity: The Source of our Identity

9.30am – 12.30pm

Marist Centre, Hunters Hill

Recommended

Esther de Waal, *Lost in Wonder: Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of Attentiveness*, John Garratt Publishing, 2003, 181 pages, endnotes, hb, \$24.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878)

Esther de Waal begins this little book: "To take time to be apart, which I consciously give to myself as something positive, creative, is not a luxury, it is essential." And so say all of us! *Lost in Wonder* is intended to provide "the space", says De Waal. Whether we use this book for that purpose or according to some other schedule of our own choosing, the author hopes it will awaken us "from drift and drowsiness into a fuller and deeper sense of attentiveness to the world around and to the presence of God in the world". The book is divided into eight "days" or sections, each with an introductory essay, followed by prayers and reflections from the tradition. Themes include "Seeing with the inner eye", "Silence", "Change", "Dark Night" and "Mystery". Esther de Waal has gained a considerable reputation internationally as a spiritual guide through her writings and retreats. She draws particularly on the Benedictine tradition. *Lost in Wonder* is a rich treasury of spiritual wisdom. Tastefully bound in hardcover, it is the kind of book you could happily leave on a bedside shelf or a coffee table and return to repeatedly. Esther de Waal is not only steeped in the riches of the Christian tradition herself, she introduces us to many wise guides from that tradition. Buy this book for yourself and buy some copies as gifts for your friends.

Terry Monagle, *Fragments: Moments of Intimacy*, John Garratt Publishing, 2003, 176 pages, pb, \$29.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878)

John O'Grady was dead right: We're a weird mob. At a glance, you would have to say there is not much that is "religious" or "spiritual" about our lifestyle; we do not have obvious manifestations of "belief" as you find, for example, in the United States. We are your quintessential post-religious, post-modern society. Or are we? Terry Monagle would probably not agree. He finds traces of the Transcendent when, amid "the red plastic wicker basket" and "the square tomatoes", "someone will step aside and let a mother and a toddler go ahead", or in the landscape which bears "the scars of struggle, votes, money, pressure-groups and water wars ... We increasingly find here the mysterious and the divine". Monagle makes us aware of the subtle and nuanced fulfilment of the great promise: "I am with you ... right under your nose, in the stuff of daily living." *Fragments* is paradoxically named as it restores lost connections. This is the stuff of good spirituality. Ironically, organised religion can disconnect us from the ordinary moments that are bursting with God's presence. In a time when we are being forced to abandon, re-define or perhaps re-engage in a new way so much that we would never have questioned before, this little book of forty-five reflections will be a good catalyst. It is very much in the sacramental tradition and should be a source of renewed awareness and hope.

Adrian Lyons, *Imagine Believing: Explorations in Contemporary Faith*, David Lovell Publishing, 2003, endnotes, bibliography, 218 pages, pb, \$24.95.

This is a report from the market place. Adrian Lyons is an Australian Jesuit with a wide pastoral experience. He writes of what he has observed. Like many others, he speaks, for example, of dialogue. Unlike many others, he recognises that it is "one of life's most taxing experiences" because it involves "reckoning with the infuriating otherness and apparent contrariness of conversation partners". And it is critical to recognise this because encounter with the "other" is the nub of faith. Lyons writes: "Throughout the Jewish Scriptures, a meeting with a mysterious Other serves as the best analogy for a faith encounter. Those who entertain strangers sometimes discover they have unwittingly entertained angels, human look-alikes who turn out to be messengers of God, their identity recognised only in retrospect." Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas are two important references for the explication of this thesis. Faith will not grow outside genuine human encounter; faith will flourish where people come together in ways that recognise that communion is a gift to be discovered in the encounter each with the other. *Imagine Believing* gathers momentum as it proceeds. The reader is drawn into a gentle but deep affirmation of what it means to be a person of faith. This is a fine book for personal reflection or group study.

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