



THE MIX



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Our Say – Accountability

We are rightly upset, even outraged, when people we have entrusted with authority misuse that authority. We assume the principle of accountability where authority is concerned. That principle may be applied informally – say, by moral pressure – or more formally – say, by structural or legal means. Thus, we expect parents to act responsibly in regard to their children and we expect executives of companies that handle our investments to do their job honestly and well. When such people fail to carry out their responsibilities, we call them to account by resort to laws and courts.

In a democracy, another process of accountability is brought into play. Those with either the authority of government or the authority of opposition, are usually held accountable by the electorate. The law and its courts may be brought to bear, but typically the voters enact the principle of accountability in a democratic society. As Aristotle said, democracy is the form of government in which the free are rulers.

Whether it is the laws of the land or the voters of that land, no system is guaranteed to hold everyone fully accountable for his or her decisions and actions. The law can be defeated by the law, and clever politicians can dupe the voters.

Sir Winston Churchill, in a speech to the House of Commons in November 1947, observed: “It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms which have been tried from time to time”. Among other things, Churchill is claiming that democracy is the best way to ensure accountability. Maybe he is right, maybe he is wrong. Whatever the case may be, he does raise a question for us Catholics: What is the best way of enacting the principle of accountability in the Catholic Church?

This is a conversation we are yet to have within the Catholic Church. How do we, in fact, hold people in authority accountable? It may be more or less clear in systems such

as Catholic hospitals and Catholic schools. It is not so clear elsewhere in our Church.

Consider some hypothetical examples. Suppose a parish priest decides to spend \$400,000 of parish funds to make his presbytery very plush or he refuses to work with a parish/pastoral council? Or a bishop spends an inordinate amount of the people’s money on a crozier or demands that RE teachers use a text and method of religious education that is patently at odds with the principles of good education and good theology? Or a local ordinary is appointed without genuine regard for the processes of consultation laid down in Canon Law?

At the moment the Catholic Church is perhaps the only major institution within the Western world that still allows people in authority to remain largely unaccountable for their behaviour. This may have been acceptable in another era, it is no longer acceptable. It would be good to have a conversation about this. ■

THE HUMAN FACE

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 Editorial Committee is:

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

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

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



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

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor reserves the right not to publish a submitted text. 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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My name is Margaret Goggin, wife, mother, grandmother and retired teacher. My childhood was spent in the majestic Blue Mountains as the second eldest of a large family of ten children.

Growing up in this Catholic family was a formative experience, where the roots of my faith were deeply planted. They have permeated all the significant stages of my life: my education and my marriage to Denys; our family life with three wonderful children; my career in education; my retirement and life as proud grandmother of four special grandsons.

My parents had a strong, simple and traditional faith. As we grew up, their life was a constant struggle with few material resources. However, though the times were often tough and the discipline strict, the values of generosity, compassion, honesty and goodness permeated the struggles.

My Catholic primary school in Springwood was staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Looking back, I appreciate their wonderful commitment and in particular, the dedication of Sr. Michael, an Irish nun who helped shaped my path in life.

She fostered my love of learning and ensured my success in gaining access to the quality education I received at O.L.M.C. Parramatta and, later on, at Sydney University, where I completed an Arts Degree and Dip.Ed.

After graduation, I set out with youthful optimism and naivety to begin my teaching career at Penrith High School.

Our Irish parish priest, Fr. Thomas Leen, was a charismatic and imaginative priest, one who excelled in liturgy and ritual. Vivid images recall his strong influence on my childhood: his close involvement with children; his skill and poetry as an orator; the blazing fire, smoke, water and choreography of the Easter ceremonies. These experiences imbued me with a sense of the deep power of symbol and ritual.

My married life was reasonably itinerant because of my husband's career. However, this proved to be the source of experiences of diverse social and religious contexts. I remember the heady and optimistic days of early Vatican 2 in a progressive Holland.

The Dutch moved with rapidity: communion in the hand, no altar rails and lobbying to vote for their own Bishops. There were education-in-faith classes before mass on Sunday and the experience of a multicultural international community.

Later, there was life in Geelong in another vibrant parish, where the laity was prominent in diverse leadership roles. I have vivid memories of the powerful liturgies of the Easter triduum and the sense of vitality.

Then, a contrast in Karratha, in the remote Pilbara of West Australia: the sense of isolation and the challenges for the parish priest trying to sustain community in an itinerant and hedonistic town, where a sense of tradition and commitment were lacking.

It was in Pilbara that many of the factors underlying my identity, such as family, friends and career, were challenged by the isolation and tough physical environment. I was involved in a pioneering experience with a gifted team of people in establishing a new Catholic Secondary school.

Yet here also, I had the freedom to begin the many years of formal study of my faith: a journey begun in trust from humble beginnings in correspondence with Curtin University, to graduations later at CTU Hunters Hill and summer schools in Boston College in USA.

Finally, on return to Sydney, I completed my career as a Secondary Religious Education Advisor for the Sydney CEO.

The many years spent in study have rewarded me with deeper insights into the riches of my faith, but also the tragic errors and false turns in our history. I have been both challenged and enriched by working with wonderful young people in education and young teachers struggling to communicate their faith.

In the community, my past work was with those affected by HIV Aids at its time of crisis, and at present, my visits to the Villawood Detention centre have taught me greater tolerance, respect for the dignity of others and recognition of our common humanity.

For the past few years, I have been a member of Catalyst for Renewal and Spirituality in the Pub. This has provided a lens for viewing the present challenges within the Catholic Church. Moreover, it has sustained my hope and been an impetus for active involvement in the work of renewal.



Margaret Goggin

Your Say – Does prayer make a difference?

David Ranson

This is a shortened version of the talk given by David Ranson at Spirituality in the Pub, Rouse Hill, NSW, on 7 September 2004. The full text is available from the Catalyst office on receipt of a SSA envelope.

How often did I witness people struggling with the question of whether prayer makes a difference during my time as a hospital chaplain in Melbourne! Let me share with you a story that had a hundred and one variations, but all of which carry the same theme.

A young girl of sixteen, on her way to work, suffers a freak car accident and is brought into intensive care with little chance of survival. As her anguished family arrives, it becomes apparent that she is medically dead. The medical technology keeps her breathing and her heart pumping but her brain activity has ceased.

In their anguish, her distraught family prays with all their heart for the girl to recover. To the observer it is clear that she won't. It is only a matter of time before the family will be asked to agree to turn off life support. And the time comes.

What had happened to this family's prayer? Had it made a difference? This is the question that many of them struggled with. For some of them, it made no difference to the situation, though it made a huge difference to them.

“If God is as vulnerable as me, what hope do I have? I am just left where I am.”

Some of them could no longer believe in a God who might allow such an innocent person to suffer. Other family members continued to believe, but the silence of God was interpreted as God being non-caring or even as punishing.

In this situation, and in the hundreds of others I witnessed, people's painful experience of life was outstripping their understanding of God. And as our images of God are tested, so is our understanding of prayer. For our practice of prayer flows directly from our imagination about God.

If we imagine God, even subtly, in mechanistic terms, as the divine operator, presiding in control over the universe and its laws, and who, by persuasion, can manipulate creation, then our prayer becomes one of continuous intercession and

expectation, with either delight at the achieved results or resignation at the failure to achieve what we so desperately need.

Even after years of Christian catechesis, many of us can nostalgically hanker for this kind of God, and moments of crisis hurl us back to entertain this conception of God.

But the God who is revealed to us in Jesus is not like this. The God whom we see revealed in Jesus is not powerful, but powerless and vulnerable. We believe in a crucified God, not a God who is above us in our suffering and in our anguish, but a God who is with us in our pain and torment.

In sharing this once with a woman in the hospital, she replied, “Well, what good is that to me? I feel so powerless and helpless. I need someone who has more power than me, who can deliver me from my helplessness. If God is as vulnerable as me, what hope do I have? I am just left where I am.”

The one to whom we so ardently express our hope remains the One who is with us in our pain, and not above it.

To be honest, I would have to answer yes; with this reply to our prayer, we are left where we are in some ways. What has changed, though, is that in this extraordinary reply to our prayer, we are no longer alone. An Other is with us in our suffering, with us in companionship and compassion. And it is this that makes all the difference.

When we know we are not alone, when we know an Other is with us, for us, we experience our deepest dignity. In this dignity, we are given the courage to make those decisions *we ourselves* need to make. We are given the hope to realise that there is always another horizon, a new beginning even in death. We are given the inspiration to continue to go out in love.

Having said this, do I pray for anything? Of course I do! Prayer becomes the space in which I give voice to my hope and to my desires. This has never changed. It is the ‘to whom’ I express my deepest needs that has changed.

But what of miracles? What of the situation in which we have prayed so earnestly – and beyond reason something has actually changed positively for us?

I would like to make two comments about this:

Firstly, I would not want to deny either this possibility or its reality. The relationships which interpenetrate us and our world are not all open to rational reflection, and many remain intuited, but not able to be analysed. Yes, prayer can bring about what first seemed impossible.

Yet, secondly, here I would like to be somewhat controversial, for I wonder if there has more to do with the power of our solidarity with each other than with a God who has the strings of creation at his disposal in a mechanistic kind of way.

When someone falls sick or is in need there is within us an instinctive need to pray for this person. This is to be deeply respected and engaged. We ask others to pray for us when we are in need or other ask us to pray for them.

I fully believe there is power in community's prayer – and that community need not simply be one we see, but also involve the communion of saints. There is strength in our solidarity with one another living and dead.

When we come together in our hope, believe the strength of our bonds does have an effect in ways that are not open to rational reflection.

When we come together in this way, we do so, however, always before the Crucified One. The One to whom we so ardently express our hope remains the One who is with us in our pain, and not above it. Prayer makes a difference because it grounds us in a Mystery that overturns all we ever thought of God and of ourselves and opens up for us a possibility that we never dared imagine.

Fr David Ranson is a well-known lecturer on spirituality and a faculty member of the Catholic Institute of Sydney.

From our readers:

“I find the MIX to be a real source of life and hope. What particularly appeals to me are the human stories. You touch real life and this is such a gift. Keep up the good work.

Sr Pat Smedden rsj, Ashfield, NSW

“Thank you very much for the opportunities you offer us.

Barbara Lewis, Greenwich, NSW

“I would deeply miss the MIX and its addendums — I value so much all I hear and read about the ‘inroads’ of Catalyst and love your approach and strategies, which have obviously been blessed abundantly.”

Sr Pat Murphy, op, Croydon, Vic.

Essay – Toward an understanding of sexuality

by Peter Sheehan

The following is the full text of the presentation given by Professor Peter Sheehan at the Catalyst Dinner, July 23, 2004. Professor Sheehan is the Vice Chancellor of Australian Catholic University.

The issues raised by this talk are profound. I believe currently prevailing concepts and definitions of human sexuality are far from adequate. This is so for many reasons.

First, sexuality is an area of primary need for all persons. It is a core part of our human-ness. Sexual expression or the absence of it is a major determinant of much (although certainly not all) of what we do. It encompasses both sexual activity as such, but also our conception of what sex means to us as persons; it characterises also our expressions of affection to others.

Second, it is an area necessarily subject to personal and societal control. Because of its extraordinary capacity both for creating life and harming it, every society must necessarily have some limit to what sexual expression it permits. Sexual communication and expression are consequently dictated by appropriate ethical and moral values. These are values which society promulgates publicly in order to be coherent and ordered in the way that it operates, and we must adopt such values as individuals in order to be moral, responsible and pro-social persons.

While accepting these general principles, there are of course obvious personal and societal conflicts about sexuality and its appropriate expressions.

Third, the concept of sexuality presupposes an appropriate object for sexual expression. For good or for ill, sexuality is always relational, and in that I do not only mean physically. The object of our affection may vary, in ways that are appropriate or not to how others think or behave. Psychological and relational aspects of human experience always relate integrally to sexuality, how we express it, and how that expression is received.

Sexuality has profound positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, it is a wondrous way of relating to fellow human beings with whom we wish to be intimately involved. A desire for intimacy is a spiritual, psychological and physical force. Sexual intimacy is not just physical; sexual expression necessarily conveys an important component of relational experience which can be expressed in a variety of ways, spiritually, physically and/or psychologically. Again on the positive side, sexual

expression needs to illustrate or acknowledge basic respect for morality, the rights of others, but also demonstrate tolerance of and respect for the freedom of others. Denial or rejection of these ways of relating positively to other persons establishes the negative side of inappropriate sexual expression.

Conceptually, I express the positive side of sexuality by the notion of “love,” and the negative side of sexuality by the notion of “abuse.” One is mutual, respectful, trusting and free. The other is not.

In this talk, I want to briefly examine the link between sexuality and the sacred. Does that connection exist? Is it a valid link, and does it need better understanding? My answer to those questions is unequivocally affirmative. In arguing the link between sexuality and the sacred, I think there must be some cautionary remarks and I will attempt to outline them. I would want to ask the question, does the term “sacred” serve to adequately warn us about the negative aspects of sexual expression that may appear in ourselves and others, and also does the connection help us to appreciate the essential humanity that lies underneath even negative expressions of sexuality? Finally, I want to offer some comment on how we might maintain ethical and moral values that can lead us in a sensitive way to be more morally responsible members of an inclusive Church and society.

To cope with the sexual life of people in an administrative way is to damage the inner lives of the people who are the Church, both the powerful and the broken.

There is the firmest of connections between sexuality and the sacred. Although it needs much better understanding, the connection does exist and it is valid. If we wish to envisage a whole Catholic sacramental life, sexuality must be a part of it. The denial of our human intimacy, our human identity and our human sexuality represents a rejection of Incarnation, a rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, and a rejection of the Triune God. The Trinity is itself the template for intimate, mutual, unitive and free relationship. Consequently, our responses to the denial of sexuality and to negative expressions of sexuality must also

be sacramental in their outreach. The violation of intimacy and appropriate sexual relationships is not an administrative or disciplinary problem to solve. The Church tries to respond responsibly in ways that protect the dignity, safety and reputations of all concerned. To cope with the sexual life of people in an administrative way is to damage the inner lives of the people who are the Church, both the powerful and the broken.

We are all persons who sense and exult in our remarkable humanness, just as the Creator exults in us, as Genesis tells us: “and God saw that it was very good”. All expressions of sexuality are expressions of humanity in some form, humanity in its wholeness, or its brokenness, or most often, somewhere in between. Our moral code and our values may not agree with certain expressions, but healthy and passionate sexual celebration of intimacy signifies our loving others. The moment of expression viewed in terms of love and relationship is richly human. Given the existence of the fundamental link between sexuality and the sacred, sexual expression is necessarily spiritual, sensual and sacramental all at the same time.

When Incarnation and Christ are spurned in sexual expression, there is an estrangement of our bodies from sacramental life and living. This separation can express itself as a violation of intimacy, an assault on trust, or anxiety that may lead to physical and psychological hurt. The Church, at times, does not make it easy for its people to handle such a process of estrangement.

To illustrate this, let me quote from an article titled “Healing the Wound”, published in the *National Catholic Reporter* in October 2003.

...disaffection from the fullness of humanity prompts the patrons of a literal, official church to disdain and to draw blushing back from the body, defending themselves against its sexual dew and damps through an obsession, with negative sexuality, with a conviction that no sex is better than any sex, that, if sex is necessary to continue the race, it remains so unnatural and undignified that it must be eliminated from the Incarnation that is thus de-humanised by being rendered sexless.

In such a context, the connection between the sacred and sexuality is lost. Too often in the Church, sexuality comes with warning labels about the risks involved in its every impulse. Let me continue with another quote:

.... Such a firebreak of virginity and virtue was built around (the notion of Body) that, instead of being understood as food for healthy human hungers, the sacraments were reserved under glass for the Untouched rather than served freely to the Untouchables.

In these terms sexuality is abandoned far often to its own fate; and if this happens the Church is engaging in hierarchical disdain for the humanity of its people. The human person has to be fully understood to fully understand the nature of the sacred. If we do not, we do not get the sacrament right. The sacraments and the sacred are addressed to us as whole human persons in ways as fundamentally and utterly human as we are, "given not as antidotes for being human but to nourish us.... in the human conditions".

Sexuality necessarily reflects, therefore, the characteristics of the human person in whose image the sacraments are molded, whose likeness it bears, and whose needs it meets.

The Eucharist, to me, is at the core of sacred existence. It is the paradigm for the total bodily self-giving of which healthy, loving sexual expression is but one dimension. It can only be celebrated to the full by the participation of a believing, trusting, and trusted community.

This brief talk, I have defined sexuality and tried to come to grips with the complexity and morality of its various expressions.

There is an essential connection between sexuality and the sacred, but I fear that we don't really understand that connection or get it right, and we are distracted, I believe, by the seeming conflict of our morality with the variety of ways in which sexuality can be expressed. There are personal conflicts, societal conflicts and even Church conflicts about the notion of sexuality and what it means.

I would argue that the term "sacred" serves often to throw a wall between what we are told is meant by it and the negative aspects of sexual expression that appear all too frequently in ourselves and in others. Sacred becomes equated with the numinous, with the incorporeal, rather than the corporate whole and the holy. As our Holy Father said almost 25 years ago, "The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible, the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial, and thus to be a sign of it." For me, the integral connection between sexuality and the sacred must always be invoked to understand and appreciate the essential humanity that lies

behind all expressions of sexuality, positive and negative. This is not to endorse the negative in any way; rather, my argument appeals to the need for us all to understand what makes us human. We must strive and pray that negative expressions of sexuality (ones that violate trust and injure others) can be turned into positive ones (that express genuine love and intimacy).

Sexual abuse represents a crisis in the Church. I agree with Fr Donald Cozzens in his foreword to L. Sperry's book, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*. As he says, it is no exaggeration to claim that the clergy sexual abuse scandal of the past three decades has rocked the foundations of the Catholic Church. The Church, like society, has to understand sexual abuse in the terms just discussed, and reach out compassionately both to the victims of abuse and to the perpetrators of abuse to try to prevent abuse ever happening again.

... it is no exaggeration to claim that the clergy sex abuse scandal of the last three decades has rocked the foundations of the Catholic Church.

It needs to inquire into the meaning of sexuality, institutional factors that can relate to its expression, and to the causes of its possible manifestations. My point has essential relevance to the person as human, and to society as a whole. Ironically for the Church that has to try to manage this crisis, it must be deeply conscious that the very process of 'managing' the crisis may at times wound the Church further. In Sperry's terms, the Church may be impairing some of its members through its culture, its policies and its norms.

We need to maintain our ethical and moral values and be certain of what is right so that our behaviour and attitudes can be used to help and influence others. The Church guides us in this difficult task and must inspire us imaginatively. With a firm commitment to the morality of positive intimacy, and working with the teachings of Christ and committed to the richness of His word, we all must attempt to renew the sacramental life of the Church, to instill it with vital energy and to promulgate the participation of a fully alive human believing community. From all of us (the person, the society or the Church) this requires collegiality, trust, affection, tolerance and inclusivity.

"In all mothers conception does not take place without sin." (Pope Leo I, *Sermon* 22, c 450.)

"Husbands and wives are to be admonished to remember that they are joined together for the sake of producing offspring, and, when giving themselves to immoderate intercourse they transfer the occasion of procreation to the service of pleasure ... Though they do not go outside wedlock they do exceed what is permitted by wedlock." (Pope Gregory I, *Pastoral Rule*, c 600.)

"If anyone holds that the married state is better than the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is better and happier to be united in matrimony than to remain in virginity and celibacy, let him be anathema." (Council of Trent, 1563.)

"The Creator who in His goodness and wisdom has willed to conserve and propagate the human race through the instrumentality of man and woman by uniting them in marriage has also ordained that, in performing this function, husband and wife should experience pleasure and happiness in body and spirit." (Pope Pius XII, *Address to Italian Catholic Midwives*, 1951.)

"A man and a woman who by their compact of conjugal love 'are no longer two, but one flesh' (Mt 19:6ff.), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48.)

"... the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination toward the human person's most high calling to parenthood. We believe that the men and women of our day are particularly capable of seizing the deeply reasonable and human character of this fundamental principle." (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 12.)

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Words for a Pilgrim People

"I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26.)

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"When Abba Zacharias was on the point of dying, Abba Moses asked him: 'What do you see?' And Abba Zacharias replied, 'Is it not better to say nothing, father?' 'Yes, my child,' said Abba Moses, 'it is better to say nothing'." (From **The Sayings of the Desert Fathers.**)

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"Where God's presence is no longer a tenable supposition and where God's absence is no longer a felt, indeed overwhelming, weight, certain dimensions of thought and creativity are no longer attainable." (George Steiner, **Real Presences**, University of Chicago Press, 1989.)

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"The Christian good news, iconoclastic, unprecedented, sui generis, is all-too-often reduced in the Church's theology and preaching, hymnology and liturgy ... to the innate capacity of the cosmos for resumption and regeneration as nature's rhythmic cycles turn day by day, season by season, from dark to light, from death to rebirth, from barrenness to fecundity. This domesticates Holy Saturday's horror, and naturalizes Easter morning's surprise, as instances each of purely natural phenomena, universally conjoined as winter precedes and then concedes to spring. This does not do justice to either the dark or the light side of the Christian narrative, but falsely renders predictable and necessary the story's wholly unguaranteed passage from the former to the latter. Such a naturalistic hermeneutic quite suppresses the novelty, unexpectedness, and inconceivability of hope grounded in the raising of the crucified and buried God." (Alan E Lewis, **Between Cross and Resurrection**, William B Eerdmans, 2001, 292.)

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In Chapter 20 of Luke's Gospel, we find Jesus in Jerusalem, at the end of his journey. The drama is coming to a climax. A series of confrontations is described, confrontations in which Jesus' teaching authority is challenged. (We should note that Matthew and Luke each contain the same reports.) One of these confrontations is particularly instructive. In Chapter 20:27-38 of Luke's Gospel we find one of the few references in the Gospel of Jesus giving an explicit teaching on resurrection. (You will find the same story in Matthew 22:23-33 and Mark 12:18-27.) The teaching is provoked by a trick question. That question comes from the representatives of a sect called Sadducees. We know almost nothing about them, except that they do not believe in resurrection. The Sadducees seem to have been committed to a fundamentalist reading of the Torah (the Pentateuch). More than a question about resurrection, their question is about the Mosaic tradition, the Covenant and Jesus' fidelity as a Jew. Thus, according to Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 25:5-6), when a man dies without a son, the deceased man's brother must marry the widow. Whose wife shall she be after the resurrection?

Jesus' response takes the Sadducees back to the Torah, Exodus:3:6: "Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". But Jesus' reference to the Torah is not a fundamentalist one. He is evoking a memory, the central memory of the Jewish consciousness, in fact. This is where the name is revealed: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*. Literally: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). In the third person ("He is") it becomes *Yahweh*. This is a revelation of the incomprehensible, the unnameable. And this revelation must be received in the context of the great promise: "I shall be with you" (Exodus 3:12). Combining the promise and the name, we might read: "I shall be there with you and for you. You may experience my mystery presence as absence, but you must trust me. I am with you, you are mine, I am yours, forever". A conviction about resurrection is a belief in this promise, a promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is a statement of trust in the Presence that might be most immediately and concretely experienced as absence. ■

"I shall be there with you and for you. You may experience my mystery presence as absence, but you must trust me. I am with you, you are mine, I am yours, forever."

The Tradition – Resurrection

We do not know what happens beyond death. Death always remains an utterly incomprehensible fact of life. Each one of us is faced with a choice of belief in the face of this incomprehensible event which we shall certainly face one day. We must either believe in termination or continuity. We make an act of faith in termination and live with the consequences of that faith, or we make an act of faith in continuity and we live with the consequences of that faith. In neither instance can we rationally prove our faith nor are we closer to understanding what happens simply by claiming that faith. (The adult does not have the option of sitting on the fence. You will die and, if you are to die as an adult person, you must choose. Choosing is what constitutes your adulthood.)

**"I am not dying,
I am beginning to live."**

The Christian tradition has, since the beginning, believed in continuity. We would call it passover. The two foundational symbols of Christianity are the cross and the empty tomb. They speak of Jesus' passover. In the Odes of Solomon (early 2nd century) we read: "And they have sought me who set their hope on me, because I live: And I rose and am with them; and I will speak by their mouths". Ireneus links our resurrection with the Eucharist: "Just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground bears fruit in season ... so also our bodies, being nourished by (the Body of Christ), and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time". Thérèse of Lisieux, as she approached the hour of her death, remarked, "I am not dying, I am beginning to live".

We Christians believe that just as the Father raised Jesus up, so too shall the Father raise us up. We must wait to know what that means. ■

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

SIP Promoter – Terry O'Loughlin on (02) 9816 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

E-mail: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

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

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St December 14 "Power and the Prevalence of Fear" Judy Brewer & Michael McGirr (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

° **Ballina** Paddy McGinty's Pub **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Anne anne@ballinacatholicchurch.org.au)

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

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

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

° **Ilburn** Soldiers Club November 9 "Restorative/Real Justice" Anne Burton & Barry Bell (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel November 8 "Intersecting Roads – Jewish/Christian Journeys" Susan Bures & Dr Marianne Dacy (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive November 9 Catalyst Dinner "What are our kids looking for?" Prof Charles Burford (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** Bellevue Hotel **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Pine Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd November 9 "Creative Connections" tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Janice 9684

4109).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

° **Ballarat North Midlands Golf Club**, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Kevin 5332 1697).

° **Bendigo** Boundary Hotel **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm November 16 "Mixing Politics & Spirituality" Anna Burke & Bob Stensholt (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel November 17 "Spirituality through music and story" Suzette Heft (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston November 17 "From Shadows to Light – Living with Depression/Mental Illness" Bernadette Doyle & Cate & Sean (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9374 1844).

° **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... PW Bar at the Star Hotel November 23 (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

° **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm, **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

° **Southern Finbar's** Irish Pub, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

° **Western Victoria** on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Anne 9312 3595).

° **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel, November 16 "Spirituality and Religion – Where do they meet? Who needs them?" Marion De Sousa & RoseMarie Prosser (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

° **Devonport (TAS)** Molly Malone's Irish Pub, **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Hobart** North Moonah Café Bar & Bis-

tro November 11 "Spiritual Poetry & Music" tba (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 4th Tuesday of month 7.30-9.10pm **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

° **Adelaide (SA)** Criterion Hotel, 137 King William Street **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Michelle 8278 6353).

° **Mylor (SA)** Warramong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd **Recommencing 2005** (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, programs day and evening, special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM Director (Info: Sue on 02 9247 4651).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Nov 15-21 guided retreat; Nov 24-Dec 2 directed retreat; Dec 28-Jan 26 sabbatical retreat program 'Life's Journey Experience'; Dec 29-Jan 6 'Spirituality for Intimacy' retreat; Jan 7-15 Life's Healing Journey; directed retreats Dec 29-Jan 6, Jan 7-15, Jan 17-25 (Info: 02 4630 9159).



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Recommended

John Hosie, *Eileen: The Life of Eileen O'Connor, Foundress of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor*, St Pauls, 2004, 348 pages, endnotes, index, photographs, pb, \$29.95.

In September 1915 Pope Benedict XV met one of Australia's most extraordinary citizens. She was 23 years old and was carried into the audience by another woman, as she was unable to walk, and introduced to the Pope as "la Signorina Helena O'Connor". Due to a bad fall as a young child, and perhaps prior tuberculous osteomyelitis, Eileen O'Connor never grew beyond about 115 centimetres. Throughout her life she suffered continual pain. She was renowned for "her warm smile, laughter and her playful sense of fun". She had gone to Rome to speak with the Pope about the possibility of her little group of women, who began in 1913 to nurse the poor in Sydney, becoming a religious congregation. In fact Eileen died on January 10 1920. Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor was recognised by Rome as a religious congregation in 1953. This story needed the sure hand of a professional historian, one who also understands Catholicism. John Hosie, one of Australia's leading Church historians, writes with clarity and precision. This story would lend itself to pious exaggerations and sentimentality. Hosie rises above that and speaks matter-of-factly about a woman of extraordinary courage and faith. Like all prophets and pioneers, she encountered her share of nonsense from various quarters, including Church officials. John Hosie has done justice to a remarkable woman.

James J Spigelman, *Becket & Henry: The Becket Lectures*, The St Thomas More Society, 2004, endnotes, bibliography, index, 309 pages, hb, available from the St Thomas More Society, GPO Box 282, Sydney NSW, 1043 for \$45 + \$6.50 post/pack.)

Jim Spigelman confesses to a "little obsession" with medieval Church history and, in particular, the life and times of St Thomas Becket. For this we can be most grateful. The NSW Chief Justice has brought the keenness of intellect for which he is renowned in legal circles, and the energy and joy of a personal interest to a fascinating topic. Anyone who has done the least bit of history will know that the twelfth century is critical to our own times. This is the era in which the universities are born, the papacy struggles to find its legitimate authority, the monk Bernard of Clairvaux is arguably the most powerful man in Europe, Muslim mathematicians introduce "zero" to the West, gothic cathedrals are built and Christians and Muslims engage in murderous wars. Spigelman sees this century as seminal to the development of law as we know it in the West. And it has much to do with the story of Henry II and St Thomas Becket. Henry II of England forced the monks and bishops to appoint his old friend Thomas as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. Thomas takes his role seriously, refusing to deliver the Church into Henry's hands, thus giving birth to one of history's great tragic stories. Spigelman is a splendid guide to this drama, its roots and its implications for us.

Thomas H Groome, *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*, Harper Collins, 2002, 314 pages, endnotes, index, pb, c \$30.

This book "is intended for Catholics who span the spectrum: from the devout to the alienated; from radical reformers to defenders of the status quo; from tired cradle members to curious catechumens and enthusiastic neophytes; from baby boomers who feel that Vatican II has been betrayed to GenXers who wonder what the boomers are whining about; from returners who are happier the second time around to those who will never return but could bring with them a rich spiritual legacy". Groome proposes that Catholic identity is primarily "a spiritual matter". *What Makes us Catholic* is built around eight questions: How do we understand the possibilities and limits of the human condition? What is our attitude towards our life in the world? How do we view relationships? What is our attitude to time, history and tradition? Is the risk of faith worth it? What values should guide our lives as citizens? What are the horizons of social concern? What is our heart's deepest desire? Groome reminds us that the Greek roots of our word "catholic" are *katha holos*, literally meaning "gathering in the whole". He brings a lot of experience and wisdom to his reflection here. The book is practical, eminently readable and thoroughly Catholic. Old hands will find *What Makes Us Catholic* enlightening and those expressing an initial interest in Catholicism will find it a solid, common-sense introduction.

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ABOUT FACE: UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO: 1964-2004

On the feast of All Saints in 1964, at the end of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Bishops of the world approved the Decree on Ecumenism – *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Forty years on, it is difficult for us to appreciate the significance of this document. Those of us who are old enough to remember mixed marriages in the sacristy, the general ban on participating in worship within any church of the Reformed Tradition and the widespread sectarianism and religious prejudice might, however, have some sense of what an about-face this teaching represented. Pope Pius IX had taught one hundred years previously: "The state must recognise [the Catholic Church] as supreme and submit to its influence. . . . The power of the state must be at its disposal and all who do not conform to its requirements must be compelled or punished. . . . Freedom of conscience and cult is madness." *Unitatis Redintegratio* taught: "... very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit; and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ" (#3). Catholics are now encouraged to reach out to their brothers and sisters who share the one faith in Jesus Christ and seek common ground in conversation and joint efforts.

Michael Whelan SM