



THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

Circulation of approximately 2500 in Australia and overseas

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 10

DECEMBER 2004

Debra Way

The human face 2

Fred & Laurel Leslie

A letter 3

Charlie Cullen

Notes for my children 3

John Carmody

Walking the edges, fraying around the edges 4

Some feedback on the survey

Thanks to those who have responded 5

Our Say – Conscience: a conversation is needed

There is no definitive teaching on conscience within the Catholic Church. Consider the following opinions:

Pope Gregory XVI (1832): "The false ... and mad principle that we must secure and guarantee to each one liberty of conscience: This is one of the most contagious of errors".

Pius IX (1864): "Freedom of conscience ... is madness".

Pius XII (1952): "Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a human being. There we are alone with God, whose voice echoes in our depths".

John Paul II (1993): "The importance of this interior dialogue of persons with themselves can never be adequately appreciated. But it is also a dialogue of the person with God, the author of our law, the primordial image and final end of every human person. St. Bonaventure teaches that 'conscience is like God's herald and messenger; it does not command things on its own authority, but commands them as coming from God's authority ... This is why conscience has binding

force.' Thus it can be said that conscience bears witness to our own rectitude or iniquity to ourselves; together with this, and even beforehand, conscience is the witness of God himself ...".

Pius XII and John Paul II faithfully reflect the Second Vatican Council's teaching in "Dignitatis Humanae":

"In all our activities we are bound to follow our consciences in order that we may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that we are not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to our conscience" (3).

St Thomas Aquinas, long regarded as a safe teacher, speaks unambiguously:

"Every conscience, whether it is right or wrong, whether it concerns things evil in themselves or things morally indifferent, obliges us to act in such a way that he who acts against his conscience sins" (*Quodlibetum*, 3:27).

Catholics can safely align themselves with Aquinas, Bonaventure, "Dignitatis Humanae", John Paul II and Pius XII on the

primacy of conscience. For these teachers, as for adult Catholics today, primacy of conscience implies accountability. It demands much more maturity – and tends to beget much more maturity – than its denial.

Coming into the middle of the 20th century, Catholics were expected to simply conform to whatever was presented as "Church teaching". This attitude, supported by a simplistic understanding of infallibility and a heavy emphasis on fear and punishment, not only tended to breed moral immaturity, it allowed silly and even destructive decisions to go unchecked and it protected clerical authoritarianism.

Vatican II stopped this – for a brief moment. But it seems there is now increasing pressure from some to return to those days of authoritarianism and conformity.

The role of conscience is a pivotal issue in that struggle. A very public, vigorous and well-informed conversation on this subject is urgently needed. ■

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

These are the current Members: Maria Baden, Marie Biddle RSJ, Glenn Boyd, Jan Brady, Kevin Burges, Kevin Burke, Rosalie Carroll, Aidan Carvill SM, Mary Conlan, Maria Contempree, Margaret Costigan RSC, Susanna Davis, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Paul Durkin, Peter Dwight, Maria George, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Stephen Hackett, Andy Hamilton, SJ, Catherine Hammond, Andrew Howie, Michelle Kamper, George King, Helen Kingsley, Mary Kirkwood, Patrick Kirkwood, Francois Kunc, Richard McLachlan, Katharine Massam, Marcelle Mogg, Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Tim O'Hearn, Denise Playoust, Margaret Rigotti, Roy Rigotti, William Roberts, John Robinson, Louise Robinson, John Stuart, Vin Underwood, Ruth van Herk, Carmel Vanny, Michael Whelan SM, Carole Wilson, Sue Winkworth, Jane Wood

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)

The Patrons are:

Sr Maryanne Confoy, RSC
Mr Robert Fitzgerald, AM
Br Julian McDonald, CFC, AO
Prof Francis J Moloney SDB, AM
Dr Richard J Mulhearn OAM
Most Rev Geoffrey Robinson

This journal is published ten times each year,
March to December. It is sent to all Friends of
Catalyst for Renewal.

(See coupon on back page for Friend's Application)

The Editorial Committee is:

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

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No: 255003/02125

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.

All items submitted for publication in *The Mix* should reach the Editor no later than the 12th of the month previous to publication.
All original work in *The Mix*, unless otherwise indicated, is the work of the Editor.

Printed by Serge Martich-Osterman Printing and Publishing Pty Ltd, Annandale.

THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Debra Way. I'm the Communications Officer for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. I'm also doing a Theology Degree part time and planning a wedding to the world's most wonderful man. He's a widower with two great kids, who have welcomed me into their family with warmth and love. I am blessed.

I grew up in the NSW Hunter Valley, in the small coal mining town of Kurri Kurri. From quite a young age—I think about 11 or 12—I knew I wanted to be a journalist. While doing an Arts degree, in my spare time, I worked for free at the local paper, *The Cessnock Advertiser*, and after nearly a year of doing that, I was offered a cadetship.

I learned that the difference between a good story and a great one is to find that area of shared humanity—some might call it the sacred. Not sacred as in churchy or religious, but sacred as in a glimpse of what it is to be human.

My early career was spent dreaming about one day working in the parliamentary press gallery in Canberra. After spending a few years with Australian Associated Press (the national news wire service) in Sydney, I was offered a place in AAP's Parliament House Canberra bureau.

I was in seventh heaven. I covered parliament, welfare, immigration and education for a couple of years before being made chief of staff.

So, if I had the job of my dreams, why did I give it all away to work for the Catholic Bishops?

Well, when I was 11, my parents sent me to the local Catholic High School, run by the Dominican sisters. I'd grown up in the Uniting Church, but I can still remember sitting in my first school Mass and being deeply touched by it.

For me, there was an authenticity about the Mass which I hadn't encountered before.. This stayed with me, but I never imagined that one could change one's religion.

After I left school, I didn't engage in any formal religion until I was about 24 and living away from home in Richmond. I found myself thinking more and more about the world and my place in it. Every time I drove past St Monica's at Richmond while Mass was on, I would feel a physical pull to go inside. This went on for some months before I finally gave in to it and went to Mass one Saturday night.

I sat in the very back row, near the door, so I could escape if I wanted to. Just when I had nearly talked myself into getting up and leaving, the opening hymn started, and I

heard the words: "Here I am, Lord...I will go, Lord, if you lead me."

Needless to say, I stayed and, when Mass was over, I committed myself to those words: "I will go Lord, if you lead me". That's been the rule by which I've lived my life ever since, even though it was another few years before I became a Catholic. In particular, I thought if ever a job came along which I could use my professional skills for the Church, I would do it.

In 2002 I was offered the job as communications officer for the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. I felt very strongly that the Holy Spirit was at work and I continue to feel it in my daily work.

There are a few key branches to the work I do. One is to get the Church's agenda onto the national media agenda when that's seen as appropriate. The second is to keep people within the Church feeling informed and connected. The third area is to keep Catholics in Australia connected to news from the Church Universal.

By using the media to engage with society, the Church is reaching out beyond the pews with a witness to Christ.

On a bad day—and we have our fair share of those—we'll just do our best to keep our head above water in the media. On an ordinary day, we might contribute to promoting in our society some understanding of the Christian life.

But on a good day, we might just touch someone's heart – someone who might never have set foot in a church, but sees Christ in the way we act publicly towards refugees or street kids or the unborn.

It is for this reason that the Pope urges us to be fearless in using the media for sharing our story. We're not going to have a win every time. But each win we have, no matter how small, is a win for the greater enterprise on which we are embarked – a win for God's Kingdom on earth.



Debra Way

Your Say – Notes for my children

Charlie Cullen

A few months before he died of cancer, in April 2003, Charlie Cullen penned the following to his children, Claire and Tei.

1. God has created us in his own image and likeness, by giving us consciousness, intelligence, and ability to love, topping this up with some degree of free will. How much control or free will we have depends on many complex circumstances.
2. In recent centuries, Christianity has partly promoted the view of a stern God, one who concentrates on duties, rules and punishes—a God to be feared. This is sometimes known as ‘moralism’.
3. The true picture is that of a God who loves us deeply and passionately, as shown in the parable of the prodigal son, and who seeks a ‘covenant’ with us.
4. This agreement or ‘covenant’ is about us having a co-responsibility with God for the development of the history of the world. God wants us to do this with love, and gives us the freedom to do it our own way. This agreement requires us to have morals, but the emphasis is on the purpose of morals being a guide to acting lovingly to ourselves, other people, our environment, and to God. In using our free will to help God create the world, we earn the ‘right’ (more or less) of looking God straight in the eye when the time comes.
5. Some information was revealed to us during God’s bodily existence on earth ... 2000 years ago. Jesus’s teachings were written down as understood by men of the day, and were documented in scriptures. Revelation didn’t come ready-made in final form. Our understanding of it is only gradually unfolding in history, and in the life of the church. Apart from that, God is generally silent and unknowable. This is partly out of respect for his gift to us of free will. If God were in regular visible or verbal contact with us, there would be no point in free will (freedom). We would feel obligated to believe and obey, and life would be boring, pointless, and we would be robots.
6. The basis of revelation, or guidance from God, is that we are called to —
 - freedom: from over-emphasis on wealth and materialism, from over-indulgence in personal pleasure, and especially from fear of death;
 - a love partnership with God (a covenant);
 - a community spirit in the family, in our neighbourhoods and workplaces, in the parish and church, within our country, and among nations of the world;
 - co-responsibility with God in spreading

love and justice to all in the small patch of history which is within our power to influence.

7. As part of our covenant with God, our role is to spread love widely in our relationships with other human beings, who are made in God’s image, including, to some degree, our free will. It is not possible to have real loving relationships with robots. So we are given the gift of free will to enable us to accept or reject the love partnerships with God and humanity.
8. Apart from revelation, grace and the Holy Spirit’s guiding presence, humanity is largely left ‘to get on with it’—which is why things in the world and the church frequently get into such a mess. From time to time, prophets appear and persuade the church to change direction. I think the most evident recent prophets were Pope John XXIII (who started a major reform called Vatican II), and theologians like Karl Rahner, Andrew Greeley, and Yves Congar. They radically altered the Catholic Church, forcing it to return to some of the better practices of the first few centuries, but in the context of the 21st century.
9. In practice, the covenant requires us to develop good relationships between ourselves and God, between ourselves and our neighbours, between ourselves and the world, and a good relationship with ourselves.
10. Good relationships:
 - *With God:* Regular commemoration of the Last Supper and Christ’s death. Communion is a commemoration of the covenant we have with God to be co-creators. Conversation with God (saying what’s on your mind). Contemplation: listening, opening your mind to God, switching off problems, to feel and act more loving, etc. God is a silent God out of reverence for human freedom, so faith is needed here. Should try it for 5 minutes a day (before sleep?)
 - *With our neighbours:* Raising social conscience, seeking to reduce injustice. Honest open dialogue. Awareness that Christ is present in every one of our neighbours. Acting in love to our neighbours and helping meet their needs.
 - *With the world:* Raise awareness of the need to act responsibly towards our world; love and appreciate it; act to minimise the damage we cause.
 - *With ourselves:* Be kind to ourselves. If we have felt or acted in unloving ways, if we have acted unjustly, the important thing is to acknowledge it and forgive ourselves, as God does. For problems we can’t seem to solve, for people we find it hard to get along with, for things we cannot change, we can hand the problem to God, to let him help us deal with it or let him deal with it.

Don’t brood on it. Try to be aware of why we feel what we feel, why we do what we do, so that gradually we become more free, less dominated by urges and defenses.

11. *The role of grace:* we need God’s grace to assist us in acting. This is part of the partnership between God and us in ‘co-creation’.
12. *The present moment:* We need to appraise life’s situations in an ongoing way (one ‘present moment’ after another) to decide what is our most appropriate action.
13. *Conscience* is our own experience of making moral decisions, with God’s help:
 - Every living human being has a conscience that is used to decide between good and evil actions (love being the key), whether Christian or not.
 - In most situations, people know what is the right or wrong thing to do.
 - For more difficult decisions, there is a need to inform our consciences by thinking through our experiences, discussing issues with those we trust, reading about the issues (Christians would make themselves aware of official church teaching, opinions of theologians, relevant scriptures).
 - We won’t always get it right. Conscience is not infallible. We also need to be careful not to kid ourselves into decisions that just serve our own needs.

Love to you in making sense of all of this in your own way. Dad

A LETTER

Thank you for a very interesting article which has raised a very important issue (*The Mix* – Nov 2004 – Our Say – “Accountability”). The hierarchical system of the Catholic priesthood has never allowed itself to be accountable to anyone outside of its own ranks. The laity (whom the priests are supposed to serve) are meant to be servile to the whole priesthood! In our lifetime experiences the hypothetical examples you set out are very true. Thank God these experiences have been offset by some very highly educated, good and humble clergy. These good men seem to have disappeared. In recent times we have been shocked at the lack of justice, love and compassion in our bishops and priests. A conversation with senior members of the church is a wonderful idea. It may make members of the hierarchy think seriously about the system and their attitudes. Unfortunately it won’t change the system. Very small steps can eventually lead to massive changes and it would be wonderful if this change could commence with SIP conversations.

Fred & Laurel Leslie, Umina Beach.

Essay – Walking the edges, fraying around the edge

by John Carmody

The following is the presentation given by John Carmody, at Spirituality in the Pub at the Bellevue Hotel in Paddington recently.

When I was recently asked by a *Spirituality in the Pub* group to speak on the topic, *Fraying around the edge*, an aspect of their general theme for 2004 (*Walking the edges*), I was simultaneously intrigued and intimidated. Ever since childhood, I have had a great determination to escape physical danger, so I try to avoid mountainous edges and chasms. On the other hand, friends and university colleagues insist that, in different contexts, I regularly act without the slightest sense of self-preservation. So perhaps the invitation revealed more than I realised?

The notion of “fraying at the edges” immediately suggested fabrics to me and fabrics are carefully woven threads. A moment’s further thought convinced me that the image of the thread is deep in our thinking and I reflected a little upon why that may be so and why what we make of those threads can be so important. Whether in artistic creativity or in our biology, order is crucial. It summarises the notion of bodily good health and, ultimately, I would argue, of the finest art. Therefore, since I believe that art is a human activity of the profoundest moral importance, the topic touched upon deeply spiritual ideas with that image of the thread and the cloth.

The most important and fundamental thread is the molecule of DNA. It is formed of two long spiralling and cross-linked threads which resemble, therefore, a twisted ladder. Their constituent molecules comprise the code which when properly read -- or “transcribed” as the biochemists say -- will eventually lead to the production of quite different molecular strings, the proteins. Thus the integrity of the DNA (and of the code which it carries) is crucial to our good health and -- given that proteins are molecules of the greatest operational significance -- ultimately, too, for the function of our brains and therefore our psychological selves. Those proteins can remain as filaments or they can be twisted or rolled into different configurations to perform their tasks in the body.

Almost all disease can be identified as a malfunction of a protein. So those threads and the manner of their weaving are crucial.

These truths are often reflected in antique myths. A fine example occurs in

Nordic mythology, which Wagner exploited in his *Ring Cycle* of operas. The three Norns -- Urd, Verdandi and Skuld -- are Past, Present and Future, though some say that they are symbolic of the races of gods, elves and dwarfs. They are, I think, reflected in the three Graces of Ancient Greece and perhaps, also, in the Christian Trinity and they have the responsibility for our destiny. At the beginning of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* they are caring for the rope of fate and reflecting on the decay of the world since Wotan broke off a branch of Yggdrasil, the “World Ash Tree”, to make his sword. The *First Norn* says to her sisters, “So today I weave at the World Ash-Tree no more and the fir must suffice for me to fasten the rope”. The *Second Norn* continues the précis of this cultural decay and laments, “The Ash-tree fell; the spring dried up forever. Today I fasten the rope to the jagged rock”. Later she sings, “The jagged edge is cutting into the rope. The spun strands no longer stretch tight; the texture is tangled”. The *Third Norn* responds, “The rope is too slack; it does not reach me.....it must be stretched tighter. It has snapped!”

“...human life as a constant striving for completion and perfection which is constantly sabotaged and undone by ourselves or by the actions of others.”

Together, they then sing in despair, “Our eternal knowledge is at an end! The world will know nothing more of our wisdom.” It is a truly catastrophic fraying of an important piece of weaving.

Think, too, of how deep is human fear of dense, unwoven strands -- such as vines in jungles. Or of our distaste for -- even fear of -- spiders and what they spin. Even in modern German, the word *spinnen* has an ambiguous meaning -- to spin or weave, certainly, but also to make something up (especially maliciously), or to be mad or stupid.

You would be familiar with another ancient metaphor of the significance of weaving for the good and complete life. During the long years of Ulysses’ absence fighting beside Menelaus in Troy and then his hazardous return journey to Ithaca, his noble wife Penelope was pestered by a gaggle of greedy and importunate suitors. One

stratagem for protecting her virtue and loyalty to her heroic husband, as she explained in Homer’s epic, was her weaving.

“I set up a great web on my loom and staid weaving a large and delicate robe, saying to my suitors, ‘I should be grateful to you young lords who are courting me now that King Odysseus is dead, if you could restrain your ardour for my hand till I have done this work, so that the threads I have spun may not be altogether wasted. It is a winding sheet for Lord Laertes. When he succumbs to the dread hand of Death that stretches all men out at last, I must not risk the scandal there would be among my countrywomen here if one who had amassed such wealth were laid to rest without a shroud’. That is what I put to them, and they had the grace to consent. So by day I used to weave at the great web, but every night I had torches set beside it and undid the work.”

Metaphor is a grand characteristic of Homer and I consider this superb image to be one of human life as a constant striving for completion and perfection which is constantly sabotaged and undone by ourselves or by the actions of others. But, whether you have a different reading, it seems to me to offer much reflection for the theme of fraying edges.

There is an immensely important image of the intact, woven garment in the *New Testament*. In Chapter 19 of St John’s Gospel we read, “When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, ‘Instead of tearing it, let’s throw dice to decide who is to have it. In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: *They shared out my clothing among them. They cast lots for my clothes.* This is exactly what the soldiers did.” That scripture was Psalm 22: *I can count all my bones -- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.*

This image of the seamless garment, of course, refers our attention to Christ as the new High Priest -- the robe of the High Priest was without seam. So the image of the perfect, unbroken, piece of weaving -- what Penelope sought to avoid -- is of the complete, perfect life. Art and medicine tell us that this is essentially beyond our reach; that if we believe that we’ve attained it, that is either illusion or a disappointingly transient achievement. When and where the garment has to rub against the hard reality of the world, fraying occurs. Only the

other-worldly will have an unfrayed hem. And that, surely, is the significance of the image in Chapter 9 of St Matthew's Gospel (it is also found in Mark and Luke):

"And behold, a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for he said to herself, 'If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well'."

What sort of fraying or mystery exists at the interface of the numinous and the quotidian?

Salvation and the perfection of creation are, naturally, fundamental themes in the *New Testament*, together with the pervasive importance of revelation. Such moments -- the psychologist Abraham Maslow called them "peak experiences" -- can be as cataclysmic as they are definitive and unexpected.

The Gospel account of the tearing of the Veil of the Temple provides a powerful image of the abrupt destruction of a piece of complete weaving, though the truth of the symbol is, surely, the destruction of a barrier. The just-born world of new spiritual experience is suddenly opened to us. "The Veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom," as St Mark described it, and we are invited to walk through the frayed edges. A curtain has been opened to reveal a richer scene.

Each day and night of Penelope's existence could, indeed, be seen as a tiny picture of life. Mostly we are born with a perfect body, which slips into decline, and disarray as we journey -- more or less clad -- through life. Our life has a metaphorical fabric which we try to sustain or enhance. We also talk of the "tissues" of the body, made up as they are, from a myriad of fibres within the cells and between them.

When Adreas Vesalius began modern medical science in 1543 with his great textbook of empirically observed and pictorial anatomy, he called that masterly work, *De humani corporis fabrica* -- "On the fabric of the human body". He recognised -- though the microscopes did not yet exist to prove it -- that it is an *organised* array of tissues, themselves woven together, and assembled into a beautiful and initially perfect whole, akin to a wondrous tapestry. And like such a tapestry, that human perfection is impermanent; the loss of its order constitutes disease. The loss of moral order -- so obvious in Australia and the rest of the contemporary world -- stems from an indifference to that beauty and our duty to care for it diligently and ceaselessly.

It is a universal human characteristic to clothe that anatomical fabric with outer fabric for protection and for adornment.

We often think that clothes *do* make the man. I can remember when, as a student in Brisbane, I was walking past Parliament House on a wet day, wearing a plastic raincoat (no fine weaving there!). I decided to go up to the gallery to watch proceedings, but was stopped at the bottom of the stairs by a police constable who was no older than myself.

"Have you got a coat on underneath that raincoat, sir?" he asked.

"No," I replied.

"Then I'm afraid that you can't go into the Gallery, sir."

"Why on earth not?" I enquired.

"It's against the dignity of the House, sir," was his mystifying reply.

I was perplexed then and, despite knowing Queensland and its Parliament even better now, I remain puzzled. Beauty, I reflected, is at least skin deep; clearly, dignity doesn't go even as deep as that!

The Gospel account of the tearing of the Veil of the Temple provides a powerful image of the abrupt destruction of a piece of complete weaving, though the truth of the symbol is, surely, the destruction of a barrier. The just-born world of new spiritual experience is suddenly opened to us.

Yet we do place great importance on our clothing -- whether it's the robes of office, or official uniforms, whether it's fashion and glamour -- and we foolishly judge people (their success, their worth, their social status) from their clothing. Clothing which has frayed at the edge -- we decide -- indicates a person of diminished worth. There's abundant Biblical and mythical warning against that: Penelope's suitors paid a terrible price because they scorned the scruffy beggar whom they did not recognise as the returned Ulysses. Failure to recognise that it is the vitality and the beauty of the soul that give us our humanity is, perhaps, our greatest and enduring deficiency. This is something that Yeats reminded us of so beautifully in *Sailing to Byzantium*.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium. ■

Progress Report on The Mix Survey

With the October issue of *The Mix*, we sent out a survey seeking our readers' feedback. The response has been excellent! Thank you to all those who took the time to offer their suggestions. Over 180 replies have been received to date. (It's not too late to send your form in. The more feedback we get the better!)

Because of the open nature of the survey, it will take some time to complete a full report, but we thought we would share some of the comments we have already received:

- ◆ "I used to love the 'Our Say' but lately I sense it is reverting to 'Church' traditional ways of seeing issues."
- ◆ "I particularly like page 6 with its spiritual and scriptural emphasis. I like the book reviews even though I can seldom afford to buy one. Overall I like the willingness to discuss otherwise unmentionable issues."
- ◆ "The varied views of contributors; openness to change; honest discussion of weaknesses in the Church, yet loyalty to the doctrines of faith and morals."
- ◆ "I like its objectivity and deep spiritual values. Love of the Church is clearly evident even when its weaknesses and shortcomings are lamented."
- ◆ "Firstly, I love your thrust about good conversation, and how it differs from authoritarian bullying. Front page comments are gems, as are clear clarifications of (topics such as) conscience."
- ◆ "Keep it very much as it is, but be prepared to reduce the space given to some of the more formulaic sections rather than cut a really good main article."
- ◆ "Some input (...succinct and thoughtful) on specific issues (moral, social, political, ethical, even economic where it impinges on faith and justice) such as stem cell research, poverty, Eucharist..."
- ◆ "Sip Snippets on lighter coloured paper!"
- ◆ "Time to drop The Human Face" (but this one is counterbalanced by many commenting on how much they value this section.)
- ◆ "Inclusion of reflective prayers, extracts from classics (eg Merton), current issues (eg interfaith dialogue); new format, with cartoon, humour, extracts from newspapers."
- ◆ "Please keep in mind your readers are not all heavily educated in theology. Please consider an article on Confession -- especially its demise among the majority of Catholics. Also birth control -- what has happened to the dogmatic preaching against this practice some years ago." ■

Words for a Pilgrim People

"His mother kept all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:51.)

□□□

*"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I do not do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone". (Thomas Merton, **Thoughts in Solitude**, Farrar Straus and Cudahy, 1958, 83.)*

□□□

*"The malady of contemporary man is his deliberate effort to forget the coming of God into human history. God chose to come down among men and his coming is indelibly inscribed in man's conscience as part of man's future. The malady seems to be trivial enough, but its unnoticed sway over the human race embodies the profound depths of man's depravity and deprivation. ... Anxiety is God's secret way of pricking our disenchanting consciousness. It is the divine antidote to the mythological interpretations of human existence, the grazing wound inflicted on our psyche as we flee from God at night". (Johannes Baptist Metz, **The Advent of God**, trans. John Drury, Newman Press, 1970, 1-2. & 13)*

□□□

*"Advent is the time for rousing. Man is shaken to the very depths, so that he may wake up to the truth of himself. The primary condition for a fruitful and rewarding Advent is renunciation, surrender." (Alfred Delp SJ, **The Prison Meditations of Father Delp**, Macmillan Company, 1966, 17.)*

□□□

The Second Sunday of Advent (Year A) gives us a Gospel reading teeming with history. It is the story of John the Baptist as found in Matthew 3:1-12. "He preached in the wilderness of Judaea. ... This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said, 'A voice cries in the wilderness ...' (3:1-3). "Your eyes saw what I did to Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness a long time" (Joshua 24:7); "I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness" (Ezekiel 20:10); "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness" (Jeremiah 31:2); "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (Hosea 2:14).

The Exodus story is the story of the people and their being overwhelmed by grace, liberated by love.

Through the Exodus Event this people becomes the people of the Covenant, the people chosen and called to live in intimacy with the living God. The wilderness is at the very heart of that story. It is in the wilderness that the Covenant of intimacy is forged.

This story, however, is not the final story, as the Prophet Isaiah reminds the people. Matthew quotes Isaiah 40:3 in his report of John the Baptizer. This reference suggests another text of the Prophet: "Behold I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert ... to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise" (Isaiah 43:19-21).

It would be wrong to assume that the wilderness was an attractive place to go. In fact, the desert is a 'howling waste' (Deuteronomy 32:10), a land of 'trouble and anguish' (Isaiah 30:6; Deuteronomy 1:19), of 'deep darkness ... that none passes through, where no man dwells' (Jeremiah 2:6). And so the lament: 'Why have you brought us here to die in the wilderness?' (Numbers 21:5). Nonetheless the people must go to the wilderness. This is the place of the advent of God. It should come as no surprise that Jesus, whose name is Emmanuel, 'God-with-us', should be revealed in the wilderness. Where do I experience wilderness? Expect the advent of God there. ■

The Tradition – Waiting for God

Each liturgical celebration, in some way, places us before God as ultimate mystery. Advent does this by drawing us into the tension of ambiguity. The advent of God is both a matter of history and a matter for our future, an issue of memory and anticipation, here and now but not yet. Advent reminds us that to live is to be suspended. To live is therefore to wait. It is important that we wait well.

The late John Courtney Murray SJ writes: "The text (Ex 3:1-15) ... contains a threefold revelation - of God's immanence in history, of his transcendence to history, and of his transience through history. God first asserts the fact of his presence in the history of his people: 'I shall be there'. Second, he asserts the mystery of his own being: 'I shall be there as who I am'. His mystery is a mode of absence. Third, he asserts that, despite his absence in mystery, he will make himself known to his people: 'As who I am shall I be there'. The mode of his transience is through his action, through the saving events of the sacred history of Israel. However, what thus becomes known is only his saving will. He himself, in his being and nature, remains forever unknown to men, hidden from them."

The Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, complements Murray's reflection: "Waiting means *not* having and having at the same time. ... The condition of our relation to God is first of all one of *not* having, *not* seeing, *not* knowing, and *not* grasping. A religion in which that is forgotten, no matter how ecstatic or active or reasonable, replaces God by its own creation of an image of God. ... Therefore, since God is infinitely hidden, free and incalculable, we must wait for Him in the most absolute and radical way. He is God for us just in so far as we do *not* possess Him. ... We have God through *not* having Him". ■

"Therefore, since God is infinitely hidden, free and incalculable, we must wait for Him in the most absolute and radical way."

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

mail: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

[.p://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePub](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).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club Recommencing 2005 (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel Recommencing 2005 (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive Recommencing 2005 (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 Recommendation 2005 (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

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

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on WindSOR Rd Recommencing 2005 (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 Re-

commencing 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 Recommencing 2005 (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel Recommencing 2005 (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston Recommencing 2005 (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9374 1844).

° **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... PW Bar at the Star Hotel Recommencing 2005 (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 Recommencing 2005 (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

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

° **Hobart North (TAS)** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro Recommencing 2005 (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)** Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd Recommencing 2005 (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, celebrates its diamond jubilee in 2005. Our special guest is **Esther de Waal** (in July). Inquire about other offerings. (Info: Sandra on 02 9247 4651).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, 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).

REFLECTION MORNINGS 2005

The first one will be on Saturday
March 19, 2005, with
Fr David Ranson

9.30am at Marist Centre,
Hunters Hill.

Other presenters and dates:

April 16 **Michael Kelly** osb
May 14 **Greg Homeming** ocd
Aug 20 **Dr Chris Needs**
Sept 17 **Michelle Connolly** rsj
Oct 15 **Bishop Geoffrey Robinson**

CATALYST ANNUAL APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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

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

As of November 12, this Appeal had raised
\$31,950.

We continue to ask for your generous support.

Recommended

Jeffrey Johnson, *Acquainted with the Night, The Shadow of Death in Contemporary Poetry*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 157 pages, pb, \$27.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878)

Death – a topic that many refuse to talk openly about. People pass away, go to their eternal reward, are no longer with us; we have many euphemisms to avoid saying that someone has died. The word and the event are so final that some get scared even to think about death at all, as if we will live forever. This slender volume discusses death as it relates to Hebraic and Christian scriptures, as well as to other secular writings. It then delves into the poetry of five contemporary poets: Geoffrey Hill, Scott Cairns, Mark Jarman, R.S.Thomas and Wendell Berry. As if death were not enough, poetry might send some into apoplexy, others into a reading of enjoyment. The poets are contemporary and readers are unlikely to have heard of them. This makes the book all the more interesting and enjoyable because it extends the reader's horizons. They each treat the theme of death differently and the differences are interesting and challenging. All the poets are Christian and approach death from the many Christian viewpoints. R.S.Thomas, for instance, is one who explores the theme of absence from the perspective of the clergyman and takes up issues of silence, the tree, as well as absence; Wendell Berry writes from his Kentucky farmland and ties to the earth. This is a book for quiet reflection and is in no way depressing as it asks the reader to face his or her own thoughts of death within a Christian framework.

Mark Patrick Hederman, *I Must be Talking to Myself. Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 138 pages, pb, \$34.95. (Tel:1300 650 878). ISBN: 1 85390 747 2.

Fortunately for the Church, ecumenism will just not go away. Mark Hederman, a monk of Glenstal Abbey, addresses the apparent ambiguity of the Council's Decree on Ecumenism. Some read this Decree as a call to Catholics to enter into sincere dialogue with other Christians; others read it as a call to non-Catholic Christians to join the Catholic communion; others read it as a call for all Christians to trust the Holy Spirit to bring about the unity that Christ spoke of: "that they all may be one" (John 17:21). He also examines post-conciliar documents to investigate whether the Church removed the ambiguity. He is unsuccessful, hinting that there is increasing evidence that the current Vatican preference is for the second reading above. Of particular interest is his analysis of Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's use of "dialogue". Here all *Catalyst* members will be interested in the concept both as it applies to ecumenical "dialogue" and to what *Catalyst* has identified as "conversation", with Buber's "I-Thou" representing a going out to meet the world in communion. In respect to ecumenism, Hederman stresses the need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide such conversation, to lead parties into the unknown, to the pursuit of truth, wherever the conversation leads and to trust in the guidance of the Spirit. This is a challenging book that will satisfy all seekers after unity with one's fellow Christians.

Jean Vanier, *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 360 pages, pb, \$29.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878). ISBN: 1-920721-09-6.

This is a most interesting and stimulating book. Vanier, best known for his foundational work with l'Arche and Faith and Life, takes the reader slowly through the gospel of "the beloved" of Christ. His twenty-six chapters each focus on a text and Vanier comments on the significance of the text from his very personal perspective of the world and people's lives. His reflections are contemporary in their comments on current world events; they are also personal in his use of examples from his l'Arche experiences. Vanier resonates with John's own more imaginative story of Christ. At times he moves into metaphor that extends one's vision of how to use the text for enlightenment. As the title alludes, we are "drawn into the mystery of Jesus". There are no easy understandings of the life and meaning of Jesus; Vanier hopes to reveal something of the Gospel's spirituality that has been a "light, strength and love" for his own mission at l'Arche. The focus remains on a personal relationship with Jesus, leading to "communion with God". The chapters are brief – between ten and fifteen pages each – and this allows for slow reading and time for lengthy contemplation. This is a text that will have appeal to an individual reflecting on John's Gospel; it will also be very appropriate for groups to use to reflect on the Gospel of John and also on Vanier's ideas and reflections.

THE MIX

is a forum for conversation

established by

CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INC

AN IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT!

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY
FOR
YOURSELF AND/OR A FRIEND**

CONTACT US:

Email

catalyst-for-renewal@tpg.com.au

Tel/Fax:

02 9816 4262

DECREE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES OF THE EASTERN RITE – November 21 1964

Of 21 Church Councils we in the West recognise as "Ecumenical" (ie universal), Eastern Christians only recognise the first 8 of those Councils as "Ecumenical". There were many reasons for the schism between East and West. For example, the disagreement over whether the Holy Spirit proceeds *from* the Father *and* the Son (*filioque*) or *from* the Father *through* the Son; in 1054 there had been a mutual excommunication issued, firstly by Rome of Constantinople then by Constantinople of Rome – much of the blame can be laid at the feet of a hot-tempered and truculent Roman legate called Humbert; the final straw came in 1203 when the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople. In 1949 Pius XII declared marriages between Catholic and Orthodox Christians invalid. Although the Decree of the Second Vatican Council is a step forward – eg it abrogated Pius XII's teaching on mixed marriages and permitted intercommunion – it leaves much work to be done. Paul VI, in a shared statement with Athenagoras at the end of the Council, addressed the excommunications of 1054. But a huge challenge – and opportunity remains. In his speech to the Council at the time, the Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV, noted that there is only *one* universal Church - the document seems to insinuate there are two Churches – and "the pope is the patriarch of the West". (This brilliant speech of Maximos IV is available from The Editor of *The Mix*. Send SSA envelope + 2 stamps.)

Michael Whelan SM