



THE MIX



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Our Say – Reconciled diversity

The late Pope John Paul II was featured on the front cover of *Time* on no fewer than sixteen occasions. In 1994 he was named person of the year by *Time*. Kenneth Woodward, in *Newsweek*, wrote: “(John Paul II) transformed the figure of the pope from distant icon to familiar face.” The editor of *The Bulletin* (April 12, 2005, 8) wrote:

More than any other pope, Karol Wojtyla embraced his role as God’s ambassador. It would not have surprised to see him book a seat on the space shuttle. During a remarkable 27 years as head of his church, he kissed the tarmac in more than 100 countries, prayed before hundreds of millions of people and, along the way, helped to lift the Iron Curtain and transform the modern world.

The editorial of *The Economist* (April 9, 2005, 9) observed:

We shall never see his like again. In the case of Pope John Paul II, that is not merely a platitude; it is a hard statement of fact. As the world bids farewell to a titan of the 20th century, people

already sense that, in the coming decades, things will be different.

Not surprisingly, John Paul II’s death has left a hole in both the psychological and organisational reality of the Catholic Church. This is just one of many challenges facing our new Pope. Yet, life goes on. The worldwide community of the baptised continues to assemble, summoned by Word and Sacrament and continues to live in the world, bearing witness to the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. Catholics everywhere continue to make decisions, in their own circumstances, about their lives and their commitments.

One of the prime reasons for the longevity and remarkable resilience of the Catholic tradition is its ability to maintain what Avery Dulles has called “reconciled diversity.” The ministry of Peter is crucial to this. Without Kephias, The Rock, the worldwide community will become a fragmented flock, confused in its witness

and easy prey to the wolves outside. And without vital and vigorous expressions of faith-filled diversity, the community will diminish its ability to meet human beings in their need, to be with them in a way that is truly Christlike, and thus the flock will become easy prey to the wolves inside.

It is the responsibility of each and everyone of us to address the questions:

What do *I* bring to this worldwide community? How do *I* bear witness to the person and teaching of Jesus Christ where *I* am? The primary focus is neither The Rock nor me. The focus is Jesus Christ. And that focus is maintained within the ongoing mess of human relationships and the ongoing inadequacies of human institutions and the ongoing frailty of human decisions. Any other expectations are unreal.

We will thrive, by the grace of God. Our part is to apply ourselves intelligently, with generosity, forgiveness and an eagerness for the conversion that comes through good conversation. ■

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

These are the current Members: Maria Baden, Marie Biddle RSJ, Margaret Blake, Glenn Boyd, Jan Brady, Kevin Burges, Kevin Burke, Rosalie Carroll, Aidan Carvill SM, Mary Conlan, Maria Contempre, 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.

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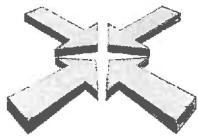
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Lisa Forbes. I work part-time as pastoral associate in the parish of St John's Wood – The Gap in Brisbane. Married to Michael, and with three children aged 15, 13 and 11, life is full!

An only child, I was born in Sydney where I spent my first nine years. I was baptised into the Anglican church as a baby, but I cannot remember ever going near a church apart from visiting Canterbury Cathedral as a tourist during several trips to England to see my maternal grandparents.

However, as I grew up, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* series by C.S. Lewis touched something in my heart that I can only describe as a holy longing and perhaps helped point me towards Jesus.

Spiritually I was not particularly nourished through my schooling, but through the latter years of high school I was searching for something, and finally found the courage to walk into a church shortly after I finished Year 12. At Kenmore Anglican Church there was a vibrant youth service every Sunday night and I was soon invited to join a 'cell group' for weekly Scripture study. The next three years as part of this group nurtured in me a deep love of God's Word.

All through my faith journey God has been present to me through my friends. The initial decision to go to church was influenced by the group of friends I had made at a newly-formed chess club. In time, the main attraction for me in the chess group was Michael, my first serious boyfriend. As well as teaching me that I was a lovable person, Michael showed me that it was possible to integrate my intellect with my faith. While we were going out, Michael's mother would lend me copies of the *Majellan* magazine, and drop hints about my becoming Catholic...

In 1985, both 21 years old, we married and moved to Sydney, where I had been working as a research assistant in a biotechnology company after completing a Science degree at the University of Queensland. I had become part of a Baptist church youth group, thanks to a flat-mate, and in the first year of our marriage we managed to juggle attendance at both Mosman Baptist and St Michael's, Lane Cove, as well as involvement in church groups in each community.

When we moved back to Brisbane and our first child was born, it seemed to make more sense for me to become Catholic than to be an outsider at mass for the rest of my life. I was received into the church at Easter 1990 and have come to love the Eucharist.

Friendships grew through play group,

the Majellan group, a mother's prayer group and the local parish school. And I grew as a person, as a mother, and as a Christian. One day I was 'tapped on the shoulder' by Deacon Gary Stone, who suggested I might do some theological study and training for pastoral ministry. Seven years hard labour later I have a Grad. Dip. Theol. and M.Min. and work for my local parish.

Through these years of study and struggle and growth in faith, I have found encouragement and support from my family and friends. However, I found the discipline of daily prayer difficult until a few years ago. Then I started sharing an early morning email reflection on God's Word with a dear friend. Our daily exchange has been immensely life-giving.

Currently, I am part of a small discussion group for two parish leaders who find themselves in new and challenging parish situations. Sr Kari is the first Lay Parish Pastoral Director appointed in our Archdiocese, and Fr Anthony finds himself administrator of six very diverse parishes. We meet each month to try to grapple with some of the theological and ecclesiological issues raised by these new ways of ministry. How does a lay person provide pastoral leadership to a parish, when the sacramental leadership is 'supplied' by someone else? How might a priest be pastor to people in diverse communities and help them seek a common vision?

These are just some of the many challenges our church will face in coming years. However, I am inspired each day by the people of faith around me. As always, God's Spirit is moving in powerful ways through everyday lives.



Lisa Forbes

Your Say – The answer is yes

Elizabeth Mara

Elizabeth responds to David Ranson (*The Mix*, March, 2005):

Prayer is not just “the space in which (we) give voice to (our) hope and to (our) desires.” It is essentially where we nurture relationship – specifically our relationship with “God”. This entails “listening to” as well as “asking for” or even just “being with.” The crucified Jesus is no stranger to most people in many situations whether in the ordinary experiences of their everyday lives or the extraordinary experiences of natural or man-made disasters. But to limit our understanding of the Crucifixion to a “vulnerable and powerless” God who is simply empathizing with the human situation (living/loving/suffering/dying) is to risk being glib. After all, the implication of a crucified God can be as scary as it is comforting (giving rise to that all too familiar wail of “if He is all-powerful, all-loving, how can He let this happen?” and the subsequent loss or diminution of faith). But essentially the Crucifixion is amazingly *reassuring*. It says to us that our omnipotent God has gone to the ultimate length to convince us of His participation in the God-human equation. He is more than willing to walk in our shoes. He is vitally involved in our human experience. He, God, is truly *arnate*.

I do not believe in a mechanistic/divine operator/manipulative God but I do believe in an omnipotent One. What we mere mortals seem unable to grasp is that even an omnipotent Being can and does make choices. And one of the choices He does make is to let us, His creation, make choices – not least the choice to reject relationship with Him or to maintain relationship at a dependent childish level, or to drop in and out of the relationship as it suits us.

We probably understand this best in the analogy of the parent-child relationship. How often as a parent have I restrained myself from being “omnipotent” and become powerless and vulnerable in the relationship with my children? (They of course quite frequently expect me to exercise financial omnipotence and come up with the “goods” whether that be a new pair of brand-name sneakers or the down payment on accommodation!) But again it would be glib to suppose that the parent-child relationship is all God wants of us.

If crucifixion faith reassures us that God-is-with-us, then resurrection faith challenges us to extend our perceptions, our

understanding, our very life experiences, to be-with-God. What is being offered to us is a participation in the “godness” of God – that is the (divine) grace of God (and the assurance that such access is always available to us even when we don’t care to avail ourselves of it). A maturing, dynamic, holistic faith-ful prayer relationship would create the space where the hopes and desires of my God for me would find voice and resonance and of course ultimately make a difference!

What we can be absolutely sure of is that whether our prayer is “gimme” or “let-it-be” we are being listened to. If we too listen, we will be faithfully and lovingly answered.

MORE FROM THE SURVEY

There were 227 responses (from a subscriber base of around 1900) to the Survey we included with an issue of *The Mix* last year. Here is a breakdown of respondents to the survey by gender and age:

Age	Male	Female
Under 20	-	-
20 - 30	-	-
31 - 40	2	1
41 - 50	3	6
51 - 60	13	21
61 - 70	34	52
71 - 80	33	26
81 - 90	6	11
91 - 100	1	1

Eight respondents did not state either age or gender, and four males and five females did not state their age. On the matter of “age” one respondent said, “The voice of the elderly is not heard, and “*The Mix*” provides me with a ‘printed’ conversation relevant to ‘my nature and culture,’ with myself.”

There was much that respondents liked about *The Mix*. Words such as thoughtfulness, inclusiveness, openness, honesty and charity were used frequently. Particular features were, however, liked or disliked – some said *The Human Face* was a favourite page, whilst others thought the concept tired, in need of freshening up. An interesting remark about this came from one reader who preferred it when the writer wrote of some difficulty in life, some crisis or obstacle, rather than the “perfect scenario” of catholic schools, lifelong catholic

church participation. Another called for being more positive, for remembering the “people in the pews” who need encouragement – but also to occasionally give the dark side.

Your Suggestions

Some readers called for more short extracts from other publications to which they do not have ordinary access. Another suggestion called for contributions from people who have different views to most subscribers, in order to widen the conversation. One asked for articles on cosmology and earth literacy, whilst another, noting this “Eucharistic Year” asked for relevant material from authors such as Frank Anderson and Frank O’Loughlin, authentic, helpful articles. One reader praised the content, suggested “Layout is appalling – doesn’t help the reader get into the text. Needs new design and layout.” Others hated the dark blue paper used for *Sip Snippets*, and this has been corrected.

Several were looking for more feedback from readers to be published – a regular “letters to the editor” column.

In terms of geographical “bias” it was noted that there was a need for more Melbourne-centric information, but others further afield – particularly Brisbane – were deeply disappointed that there was no local Spirituality in the Pub venue; an Adelaide reader on the other hand noted the new SIP there with satisfaction. And country readers felt frequently deprived compared to city dwellers. And beyond the geographical, one reader suggested more input from Australians of different cultural backgrounds.

Some specific suggestions were made: that over a period of time a concise, up to date theology of the individual and the people of God as viable participants and the Church in the work of Christ be published; that short “viewpoint” columns from people aged in their twenties be featured; an occasional themed prayer column; reduction of the Bulletin Board page to allow for more content; a resident cartoonist; articles on sects and groupings within the church; an international round up of news and noteworthy events. ■



The Editor is grateful to all who took the time to respond to our survey. We are always eager to find ways to promote good conversation for the sake of renewal. Within our limits, we will do our best to draw on the suggestions made. Thank you for your support. ■

Essay – Sexuality and Christianity – mutually exclusive?

David Leary

The following is the edited text of a talk given at Spirituality in the Pub at Albury NSW on 8 October 2003. The complete text may be obtained by sending an SSA envelope to the editor with 2 further stamps included.

In simple terms, the answer to this question is quite straightforward. For the sake of comfort in the church, it may be easier for some if we separate out the difficult issues from the life of the church: premarital sex, homosexuality, the plight of refugees, the role of women in the church, world debt, celibacy, substance use, child prostitution and slavery, to name but a few of the burning issues that do effect us at this time. But this is our world, and again, *if we are to gain credibility with the people of our times*, then we have no choice but to engage in a meaningful and potent manner, with such issues.

These issues are core to our existence as human beings because they are the stuff of daily life in our world. They are core to our existence as Christians, because the Gospel call is to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the very fibres of our life, and through engagement, to transform our experience of life in the light of the Gospel. And if we fail to engage with such matters, then we must ask where we stand in relation to the Gospel.

But engaging with the Gospel and hence with our world is messy and demanding. It is rarely a simple or easy task. It is neither neat nor clinical. But we should have no doubt that the call of the Gospel is clear: to engage with our world, with compassion, understanding, justice, and love.

I come from a world where disengagement with the reality of life is rife. For the last 25 years, I've worked with homeless young people in the inner city of Sydney. Their stories are inevitably tragic and their prospects, quite often dim. Theirs is a messy world: abuse, substance use, prostitution, crime, chronic homelessness, illiteracy, unemployability. For many of them, grasping hold of life is difficult and sometimes impossible. For them, finding the energy to continue the struggle is difficult and sometimes impossible.

Despite what is often a depressing reality, it is the call of the Gospel to be with the poor and the prisoner, the sick and the lame; but the call is to be with them in all of their reality, rather than in what we may like their reality to be. And this is where it becomes messy. To be with the poor and the

prisoner, the sick and the lame can never mean doing so on my terms. They are who they are. If I am to be with them, then it is their reality I must grapple with each day. This is the starting point of any evangelisation: living in and with the culture of our times, grappling with its complexity, living, not preaching the Gospel.

Let me dwell on this for a moment because although there is a subtle semantic point at play here, it is central to the problems that the church faces today. In my diocese, our clerical leadership would have us believe that to be a Christian is a simple task: attend mass on Sunday, follow the precepts of the church as divined by them, engage in acts of charity, and all will be fine. But I have no doubt that when many of us get home, life is not quite that simple because the stuff of life is complex and working out how to handle that complexity is a constant challenge: in our relationships, with our children, in our community, at work. I know that the ethical dilemmas I face every day receive no practical guidance from the clerical leadership in my town! And I have to say that that is a tragedy.

“...the failure to listen and understand turns to abuse...”

When church authority pretends, for the sake of a false sense of order, that life is simple and that answers are clear cut, then it becomes an abuser of the highest order. The classic examples of our time are: the 1968 encyclical of Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*; the church's current inability to engage with the question of homosexuality; the church's attempt at quashing discussion on the issue of women priests. There are numerous other pertinent examples, but these are three of the watershed issues of our time within the church.

Let me mention briefly the first of those issues, *Humanae Vitae*, exploring it as an example of the church's response to complex human dilemmas, looking at the consequences of the church's disengagement.

Imposing on couples an edict forbidding the use of contraception, against the learned advice of many theologians and bishops, was a cruel act and an abuse of power. For a time, it divided the People of God. Not surprisingly in the mind of some of the hierarchy and some lay people, it created a false and shallow sense of order. But in the broader Christian community, such an in-

ability to engage with life's reality effectively rendered the church (especially the hierarchy) as irrelevant in some of the core issues of life: intimacy, family life, sexuality. The inevitable consequence was an remains that people disengage from the church around these issues. The church is viewed as well meaning but incompetent.

Do young people in the church today even know of *Humanae Vitae*? I doubt it. Do they speak within the church about matters relating to their sexuality, sexual intimacy or relationships at any level beyond the superficial or the theoretical? Rarely, I suspect. In theory and practice, it is tragic, for the church should have something meaningful to say about matters sexual but it inevitably disqualifies itself because it cannot listen, and it speaks a language people struggle to comprehend. There should be engagement, listening, dialogue, understanding and a respect for difference but while ever these are absent, the church's pronouncements are little more than arcane words that miss the mark.

But the tragedy is not simply about the church's lack of relevance in the modern world on such important issues. An inability to engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue that may lead to a deepening of our understanding of such issues, the labelling of complex relationships and relational behaviour as *intrinsically evil* (as the church has done in relation to homosexuality), the attempt at silencing the Christian community on the issue of women in the church, are all of them, not just an abuse of authority, but perhaps more importantly, a callous fragmentation of what is critical to the survival of each of us: our core relationships with each other and with the community we call our own.

When you fail to listen in a relationship, when you cannot hear what is really happening in the life of the person you are with, then the failure to listen and understand turns to abuse.

In my inner city world, the abuse of power in relationships is never clearer than it is in the lives of homeless young people. Damien is a 20 year old who comes from outside of Sydney. At 13 years of age, he found himself homeless and drifting towards the inner city: bright lights and people like him were the immediate attraction. Let me read a segment of a conversation between me and Damien that occurred some time ago.

I asked him, “So for about 6 months from 13 years of age, you were involved

with this group and involved in petty crime?"

"Yeah," he replied.

"What happened after 6 months? Did it change or did it remain the same or was it more serious crime or other types of activities in order to survive?"

Damien said, "Yeah, it was kind of er activities. What happened was I met a guy and didn't realise that he was kind of gay, you know. I wasn't really well-educated or whatever, you know, sensitive to that kind of thing and he met me and we went back to his house. He was in his late twenties or something and he knew a couple of the other guys I was with, and we smoked heaps of cones and had a couple of lines and I didn't even know what it was. I found out later it was heroin. I ended up staying with him for a couple of months and, you know; he pretty much looked after me and he was selling heroin so he had plenty of money and, you know, whatever I wanted was there sort of thing. Yeah. There was also, you know, the kind of sexual side of it which, you know, really spun me a bit.

"With this guy?"

"Yeah. Because at first, I was so out of it and I think I was asleep or something and I woke up and thought, 'What's going on here kind of thing?' and just kind of went back to sleep I was that out of it. He was kind of really sneaky about it, like trying to do it when I was out of it and then gradually started; it became more obvious and he was more upfront about it. I didn't really want it, but I was kind of stuck because I became a bit dependent on him, being young and having someone there, it was sort of like a dad almost, you know, looking after me and giving me what I wanted. Yeah, so it was a bit of a trap."

"Do you have vivid memories of what you were thinking and feeling at the time all this was happening?" I asked.

"Yeah, yeah, pretty much. I mean, I guess a lot of the time I was, you know, like I wanted to tell him to stop, you know, I wanted to scream, 'Stop, you know, don't touch me' sort of thing, but at the same time I was really scared and didn't want to move, but as well I also felt like I owed him something. Yeah, so basically I just sort of lay there and didn't say or do anything. Yeah, it was pretty confusing, you know, like, I guess I just didn't have the power at the time to say, 'Stop, go away' or to leave myself, you know: to stop it from happening, because I didn't want it to happen."

"What did it confuse in you?"

"It just kind of shocked and, you know, confused me a bit at first because I wasn't expecting it. I'd sort of seen him as, like a friend and he acted like a friend and, you know, I liked him. He seemed an all right

kind of guy, and he's going to be like me and stuff. Yeah, just the fact that I thought he'd seen that I had nowhere to live and wanted to help me and I guess I didn't see the strings attached until it was too late, until I was so tangled up, it was hard to get away."

"What made it difficult to get away? What were the strings?"

"Just the fact that, you know, he'd given me somewhere to live, he'd given me clothes, food, whatever I wanted pretty much. I mean, I would have felt guilty if I'd just said, you know, 'Thanks a lot. See you later. I can't hack this sort of thing.' Also just, I guess, after being, you know, kicked out of home and feeling so unloved and unwanted, someone wanted me, you know, it kind of magnified my response to him sort of thing."

There are many things that can be said about that story. The guy abused Damien: at an emotional and physical level. He betrayed the trust that each of us bear as adults towards our children. He thought of his own needs rather than those of Damien. He didn't respect, listen, understand or love without wanting something in return.

"...a vast chasm between the church's rigidity in respect of sexuality and the more Gospel-oriented perspective."

It appears all too easy for this man to think only of himself and in so doing, ignore the self-evident needs of Damien. As a consequence, what Damien experienced was an overwhelming sense of abandonment. The person loses out because the other fails to engage with the reality of his existence and in so doing disengages the experience of sex from the experience of the relationship.

This is an extreme example of disengaged sex: where sex is about sex and not about relationships as well. It's hurtful, thoughtless and potentially dangerous. The only way sex and sexuality makes any sense is within the context of relationships, marked as they must be by respect, sensitivity, dialogue, conversation, negotiation, and I would add, the concrete living out of the Gospel precept of love and commitment for others and for oneself. Within this Gospel context, there is no place for disengaged sex as there is no place for divisive labelling about sexual identity.

While this is a dramatic personal experience, a similar abusive dynamic occurs when the church fails to engage with the

real human experience of the People of God.

With the Gospel as a backdrop, I'd like to offer some thoughts about what makes relationships flourish. The American psychiatrist J.M. Lewis, in reviewing the literature on human development offers a key thought on where we grow as persons.

Lewis indicates that there are three key encounters where growth is most obvious in human relationships:

- between husband and wife (and other types of committed relationships);
- between parent and child;
- between a therapist and patient.

In each of those relationships, there is a common thread: the point at which growth is most evident. Ironically, growth is not seen so much in the good experiences that occur in these relationships but rather in the experiences of relational rupture that are then repaired. It is the dynamic of rupture and repair that brings about the most poignant growth in relationships: me with you, you with each other, me with my clients, us in our community.

It is a paradox but it is a way of seeing the world and relationships which prizes and respects the essence of humanity: that we are fragile and imperfect but capable of love, remorse, compassion and forgiveness. Does this sound like the Gospel? I think so.

There is a vast chasm between the church's rigidity in respect of sexuality and the more Gospel-oriented perspective that speak of humanity, weakness, sorrow, compassion, forgiveness and fidelity in relationships. Why that chasm is present is any one's guess but the clear challenge for the church is quite simple at this point: engage with people where they are at in their lives; don't pretend that a hierarchy, comprised of celibate men, have all the answers; engage with the vital relational issues, not in destructive and offensive labeling; be prepared to speak out but do so after thoughtful and honest consultation, and do so with reverence and humility.

If we could but see our church engage with notions of rupture and repair, then our public statements would be more compassionate, less strident and more engaged with both the Gospel and peoples' lives.

We are in a time where the fragility of the church is absolutely self-evident. Such times call for serious reflection, understanding and compassion: for all involved. But the church must also understand that if sexuality and Christianity are mutually exclusive, it will be because the church continues to resist an active and lively engagement with the reality of people's lives, in all its complexity. ■

Words for a Pilgrim People

“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.” (John 4:34)



“By now liberal humanism is as badly fragmented by dissension as our witness ever was, and its fiercest adherents are often covertly uneasy at its lack of gentleness, its readiness to force the facts and its desolate this-worldliness. Its unrelenting adulthood forces people onto the thorns of tragic complexity and the strange intractability of the world, and often when people who subscribe to it relax for a moment, their eyes are seen to contain an almost desperate appeal: please prove us wrong, make us believe there is more to it than this, show us your God and that Grace you talk about. We are more widely judged on our own best terms than we think, and more insistently expected to be the keepers of the dimension of depth than we find comfortable. We will be punished if we do try to live up to what we profess, but we will be punished much worse if we don't, because so many of our enemies are relying on us. If we say God and Christ stand by what we've said, we don't stand alone, but we do have to expect some splinters in our shoulders. We should not, I suggest, be tempted to see ourselves as a team that has to win for God; He is not helpless – and anyway His idea of a win is the Cross.” (Les A. Murray, “Some Religious Stuff I know About Australia” in D. Harris et al, eds., **The Shape of Belief: Christianity in Australia Today**, Lancer, 1982, 25-26 of 13-28.)



“We can say therefore, in the light of the Biblical revelation and the teaching of the Church, that the will of God is the product of divine and human interplay. The person creates the will of God together with God.” (Michael Whelan SM, **The Call to Be**, St Pauls, 1986/2000, 114.)



Each of the four Gospel accounts, as they have come down to us, include in their final verses some kind of “mission.” Thus, in Mark: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation” (16:15); in Luke: “... repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this” (24:47-48); in John: “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you” (20:21). On the Feast of the Ascension, Matthew's Gospel will be proclaimed throughout the world. There we hear: “Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations” (28:19). So much a part of Jesus' conversation with the intimate band of disciples, they came to be called *apostoloi*, “those who are sent.” To this day, “apostle” is a word that is aptly applied to all those baptised into Christ.

The English word submission comes from the two Latin words *missus*, meaning “sent” and *sub*, meaning “under.”

John's Gospel records an incident that might just as easily apply to any of us who take our Christian vocation seriously. After the testing conversation in which he asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” Jesus then says: “... somebody else will put a belt around you and take you where you would rather not go” (21:18). We grow into the experience of “being sent.” When we are young and healthy and full of idealism and possibilities, we may lose sight of the fact that the centre of gravity in this experience is not with self but with the Other. We come to know ourselves as one who is sent by submitting to the true and the real and the good in every moment of every day. The word “submission” does not get good press these days. But it contains a concept that is absolutely essential to our growth as human beings. The English word submission comes from the two Latin words *missus*, meaning “sent” and *sub*, meaning “under.” We go into the world under the direction and protection of God. This lies at the heart of being an obedient person: One who listens, hears and heeds.

The Christian is one who knows herself/himself to be defined by a dynamic relationship. Each of us must come to experience ourselves as “one sent.” This lies at the heart of my identity and my purpose in the world. Each of us will experience that uniquely as part of the community of the baptized and the work that must be done to nurture the growth of the Kingdom. The work we do or the place we live or the lifestyle we choose is subsequent to and servant of who we *are*. Through constant listening, we not only find our very identity and sense of self slowly taking shape under the influence of the Other, we will know ourselves to be a unique embodiment of the great promise to the world, “I am with you!” ■

The Tradition – The will of God

An overwhelming theme in the Catholic tradition has been the desire to do the will of God. It has been the cause of some confusion at times. However, the desire itself is a sound one, central to the Christian vocation. The baptized seek constantly to be those who are sent into the world for the sake of the Kingdom.

The late Karl Rahner, speaking in 1972 of the challenge to Jesuits, wrote: “As Jesuits and priests precisely for tomorrow, we must have a new, original relationship to the thing one called and calls “spirituality”; a relationship that corresponds to the situation of tomorrow and not of yesterday. It is simply not true, but basically a very old-fashioned and peripheral illusion, if we should think that the people of tomorrow will expect nothing more from us than social involvement, secular humanism and brotherliness. Will we never make a job of foreseeing the really coming thing, and introducing it? But this coming thing is the spiritual dimension, the experience of God, the taste of eternity – no matter how valid all our social involvement, (with regard to which we have a terrible amount to make up). The coming thing is sober peace in the face of all the absurdity of existence, the absurdity which no social development will spirit away, which precisely on that account seizes the individual in his loneliness even more terribly.”

“The coming thing is sober peace in the face of all the absurdity of existence, the absurdity which no social development will spirit away, which precisely on that account seizes the individual in his loneliness even more terribly.”

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

mail: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePubNSWandACT> – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St **Survival Today** June 14 “Where is your survival community?” Dr David Hunt & tba (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

° **Batemans Bay** Mariners Hotel June 5 “Why are our schools full and our churches empty?” Sr Noelene (Info: Viviane 4471 1857).

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

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club May 11 “The Spirit, the Bishops & the Laity: Who is listening to whom?” Barbara Campbell & Fr Harry Morissey msc (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL May 18 “Respecting Differences” Dr D Taylor & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **A Just Society** May 25 “Obedience & Justice” Peter Maher & Mary Cresp rsj (Info: (Susanna 571 7769).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club **Love your neighbour as yourself** May 10 “Youth Ministry” Rev Carol Wagner & “Looking after people with HIV” Fr Hugh Murray (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel May 9 “The power of active non-violence” Anne Lanyon (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive **From Small Beginnings...** June 7 “Themes of Life” Ron McCullagh & Sr Eileen Quade (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel May 26 “Where is the life we have lost in living? The wisdom we have lost in knowledge? The knowledge we have lost in information?” Geraldine Doogue & Hugh McKay (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney May 16 “Reconciling with Self .. love yourself as I have loved you..” Deborah de Wilde & Rev Peter Maher (Info: Michelle 9958 763).

° **Paddington** Bellevue Hotel June 1 “Is religion killing the world?” Chris Albany & Cath Leary (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club June 22 “Realising the vision, living the reality” tba (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd May 10 “The Resurrection – A Challenge to Faith” Dominic Vitetta & Fr Patrick Kervin sm (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H)).

° **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville May 25 “Tying down God” John Hill & Patricia Thomas (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel **“I have a dream. I have a dream today..?”** May 18 Andy Bullen sj & Dorothy Hoddinott (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

° **Alphington** Tower Hotel, **Marketing Jesus** 8pm-9.30pm June 8 “Marketing Jesus in our schools: where we’ve been and where we’re going” tba (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

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

° **Bendigo** Foundry Arms Hotel 8pm-9.30pm June 8 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 17 “Modern day Prophets” Maryanne Confoy (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel May 18 “Spirituality of the Laity” Peter Price (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

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

° **Echuca** Bar at the Star Hotel (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm June 1 (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

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

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

° **Southern** Finbar’s Irish Pub, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm June 28 “Reconciliation – one long journey” tba (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

° **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm May 10 “Being Catholic in a changing Church” Terry Monagle & Mary Cameron (Info: Anne 9312 3595).

° **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

° **Devonport (TAS)** Molly Malone’s Irish

Pub, (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

° **Hobart North – Health of Body, Mind & Spirit** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro May 11 “Addiction & Spirituality” Betty Roberts & AA member (Info: Mary-Anne 6228 6000).

° **Perth (WA)** The Elephant and Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm **Relationships in the Contemporary World** May 24 (Info: Deborah 0419 939 864).

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

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

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy s Diamond Jubilee Lectures**, 2nd Wednesdays of each month, March-Oct, 6pm-8pm, the Crypt of St Patrick’s, The Rocks. **May 11, Lecture #3: Gerard Hall SM, “Have We Lost Our Nerve? The Changing Theology of Mission”.** (Info: Sandra on 02 9247 4651).

° **St Mary s Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, May 9-17 Life’s Healing Journey; 19-27 directed retreat; June 3-5 prayer weekend; 3-9 guided retreat; 10-13 & 10-18 Life’s Healing Journey; 10-18 directed retreat; 24-26 men’s retreat (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills May 28 “Creative Sacred Art” with Veronica Griffith sgs; June 7-13 “Centred on Love” with Yvonne Parker sgs (Info: 9484 6208).

° **Marist Reflection Day** with Fr Paul Cooney sm & Fr Patrick Kervin sm May 21 10am-2pm St Patrick’s Crypt Church Hill (Info: Cathy 9677 2123).

° **All Day Forum** May 15 ACU Strathfield 11am-5.30pm “A Church that won’t be Silenced!” AND/OR Public Lecture 6-7.30pm with Francisco “Chico” Whitaker, Julie Morgan, Fr Michael Whelan, Phil Glendenning & Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon (Info: 0403 181 586 or newpentecost@gmail.com).

REFLECTION MORNING

Marist Centre
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday May 14
with

Greg Homeming ocd
“I Can t Forgive?”

9.30am – 12.30 pm.

All welcome. Entry by donation.

Recommended

Jean-Paul Marthoz and Joseph Saunders, "Religion and the Human Rights Movement," in *Human Rights Watch: World Report 2005 (Events of 2004)*. For the full report go to <http://www.hrw.org>. For this essay, contact the Editor of *The Mix*.

The essay begins: "Is there a schism between the human rights movement and religious communities? Essential disagreements appear increasingly to pit secular human rights activists against individuals and groups acting from religious motives." The emergence of the human rights movements presents all Christians with a welcome challenge. At its best, the human rights movement forces us back to the Gospel and the profound respect Jesus had for each person. It also forces us to think carefully about some of our taken-for-granted religious claims, such as freedom of speech and the role of women. "This essay argues that the human rights movement needs to be able to provide clearer answers to the hard questions presented by the demands of believers and by religious organizations seeking direct political influence." There is a particular need for an intelligent and frank response to this by Christians. We should encourage the conversation and work with all people of good will for the betterment of the human family in every way possible. This essay is a very measured and balanced statement. It is not polemical. It deserves a serious readership within the Catholic Church.

Harry Morrissey MSC, *To Grow a Parish: Unearthing the Human*, Debut Publishing, 2004, 207 pages, pb, annotated bibliography, index. (Order hotline 1800 625 399.)

"This book is an invitation to look at what is happening in your parish. Does its life make sense to you? Does your community awaken hearts and minds, release new leadings? Where are you all going, really? Is there more to 'church' than what you are all experiencing? Is what is happening for the people you know, just what you would all want to pass on as the truth?" So the author says. The book is that alright, but much more. It is a very personal, humble reflection that takes the reader on a journey. Especially if the reader is old enough to remember what it was like to be brought up a Catholic in the pre-Vatican II Church. From a traditional Catholic family in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney during the 1930's and 40's, Harry Morrissey went to the seminary and was ordained in 1952. Most of his priesthood has been spent working with people in parishes in different parts of Australia. Morrissey is very practical and at all times down to earth. He is aware of the major cultural and theological movements of the times. He has had a particularly positive experience of Basic Ecclesial Communities and shares that. This is a hope-filled story of one good priest's journey through a remarkable era of history. It is well worth sitting down with Harry for an hour or two.

Thomas W Mann, *God of Dirt: Mary Oliver and the Other Book of God*, Cowley Publications, 2004, 77 pages, pb, endnotes, \$27.49 from John Garratt Publishing - tel: 1300 650 878.

Catholicism carefully protects the tension between Scripture and tradition. We believe that the promise, "I am with you!", is good in every age. Practically it means a reassurance and a challenge. It gives us the reassurance of the Holy Spirit's guidance as we confront the specific issues of our age and endeavour to respond in a way that is truly Christlike. It also throws down the challenge. We must continue questioning and seeking to read the signs of the times and be led where we must go. In the last thirty years or so the issue of our relationships with the environment has emerged as a critical issue. What do we say? Just as tradition is critical to the Catholic mind, so is sacramentality. God meets us in and through the material world. St Augustine was profoundly aware of this. It is perhaps ironic that the re-awakening to this sacramental awareness might come from beyond the Catholic tradition. Mann was raised as Southern Baptist in the US and discusses the poetry of the ecologist Mary Oliver in this good little book. Mary Oliver does not speak with the voice of orthodox religion. At times she sounds "pantheistic." But she and Mann will make you think. And there is much thinking to do. What is God saying to us in the crying of the earth?

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1965: A WATERSHED YEAR

In 1965 a number of well-known people died: T S Eliot, Somerset Maugham, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Buber and Paul Tillich, to name a few. Arafat took over leadership of the Arab guerilla force, Al Fatah and Kenya became a republic with Jomo Kenyatta as president. Lyndon Johnson was inaugurated as President of the United States, the Watts race riots in Los Angeles resulted in 35 dead, 4,000 arrested and \$40M damage and students demonstrated in Washington DC against US bombing of North Vietnam. Pope Paul VI visited New York, Constantinople, Jerusalem, the Philippines and Australia. (He was the first Pope to leave Italy since Napoleon had deported Pius VII in 1812.) And in December of 1965 the Second Vatican Council closed its fourth and final session. One of the last documents to be promulgated by the Council was the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*). The opening sentences of that extraordinary document are: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." There never was a time in which the Church reached out towards the world in the way the Second Vatican Council did. It is epitomized in this document. Forty years on, that document remains vital and challenging.

Michael Whelan SM