



THE MIX



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Our Say – Catholicism and social justice

The Catholic tradition, by any reckoning, is a remarkable social and cultural phenomenon. James Joyce is supposed to have described it as “here comes everyone.” The very word “catholic” – literally meaning “embracing the whole” – is profoundly evocative. It is arguably more descriptive of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ than the other common adjective, “Christian.” “Christian” seems a little abstract, a step removed from the tough reality of *embracing everybody*.

At the heart of Catholicism is the principle of the common good. This principle does not mean “the best for the most.” It means no one of us can rest while any one of us is destitute. There is a lovely story of the desert father, Serapion:

(He) sold his book of the Gospels and gave the money to those who were hungry, saying: “I have sold the book which told me to sell all that I had and give to the poor.”

St Justin, just before he was martyred in

Rome in the middle of the 2nd century, wrote:

We who loved above all else the ways of acquiring riches and possessions, now hand over to a community fund what we possess and share it with every needy person.

We should be having a conversation about this. We might start with questions like: Is my lifestyle in any way at odds with my being a disciple of Jesus Christ? How “all-embracing” am I? Do I really care?

Amidst our prosperity and our materialism and consumerism and busyness and the sheer struggle to keep up, we might forget some of the things that matter most. It is instructive, for example, to keep an eye on the St Vincent de Paul.

In May of this year, Vinnies’ National Council published a fine paper, “The Reality of Income Inequality in Australia.” How many Catholics studied that paper or are even aware of it? *The Australian* was

aware of it, as was the Centre for Independent Studies. Both were critical. Christopher Pearson, writing in *The Australian*, even cites John Paul II – inaccurately – in support of his criticism.

It is wonderful that Vinnies is out there – with others – carrying the conversation on social justice forward. But can we leave it to them? Is there not something essential to our being Catholic that demands we join this conversation?

In Toronto in 1984, Pope John Paul II issued a blunt challenge, utterly expressive of our Catholic tradition:

The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich, the rights of workers over the maximisation of profits.

Any citizen is entitled to participate in this conversation. Every Catholic should participate in the conversation. A good starting point might be a sound knowledge of our rich tradition in social justice. ■

THE HUMAN FACE

This journal is one of the works of
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These are the current Members: Marie Biddle RSJ, Margaret Blake, Glenn Boyd, Jan Brady, Kevin Burges, Kevin Burke, Rosalie Carroll, Aidan Carvill SM, Mary Conlan, Maria Contempree, Margaret Costigan RSC, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Paul Durkin, Peter Dwight, Maria George, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Andy Hamilton SJ, Catherine Hammond, Andrew Howie, Barry Hughes, Michelle Kamper, George King, Helen Kingsley, Mary Kirkwood, Patrick Kirkwood, Francois Kunc, Ann McDowell, Richard McLachlan, Katharine Massam, Marcelle Mogg, Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Tim O'Hearn, Mary Pearson, Denise Playoust, Peter Price, Margaret Rigotti, Roy Rigotti, William Roberts, John Stuart, Vin Underwood, Ruth van Herk, Carmel Vanny, Michael Whelan SM, Carole Wilson, and 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)

The Patrons are:

Sr Maryanne Confoy, RSC
Mr Robert Fitzgerald, AM
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The Editorial Committee is:

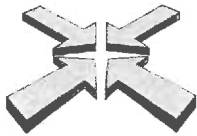
Michael Whelan SM, Geraldine Doogue,
Tim O'Hearn and consultants

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Address all correspondence to:

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

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



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

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

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There are three things I would like at my funeral: the Adagio from Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*; the *Leaden Echo* and the *Golden Echo*. (*Maiden's Song* from *St Winefred's Well*) from Gerard Manely Hopkins; and, most important of all, someone to tell the assembly that I had wonderful parents, Eileen and Jack Hatton. But, at my funeral? It's not about me; it's about the people present!!

I am Vianney.

At birth, I was given the names, Vianney and Anne, because they were the religious names of my Dad's two eldest sisters who were Lochinvar Josephites. At confirmation, I took Josephine, after my Mumma's sister, who, by then, was a Brown Josephite. From our earliest memories, my brother, Mick and I recall visits to Convents. Nuns were important... and the plethora of holy cards and statues in our house were evidence of their influence.

On both sides of the family I was the first-born grandchild and, from the very beginning, I was surrounded by a wonderful bevy of loving aunts and uncles, as well as my doting grandparents. I grew up thinking the whole world loved me and it was a rude awakening, indeed, to find that that was not necessarily so!

I started school at St Pat's, Bondi Road and believe my claim to fame was my answer to Sr Marita's question about the Holy Souls. "My mother" I told her solemnly "was a holy soul". Well, she was, too...and she was also a generous and bubbly person and an upholder of women's rights long before the feminists made an impact. She was a wonderful story-teller and her warm Irish brogue filled many an afternoon for my school companions and me, especially when, at age six, I was packed off to boarding school at Lochinvar. This was because children were evacuated from Bondi, during World War 11. I don't need a degree in psychology, to know why, to-day, I so enjoy family gatherings and the happy times I have with the Georgelin, Vandeleur and Keating families.

Sydney was a place of holidays and family. To this day, I love nothing better than a ride on a ferry on Sydney Harbour and the walk from the Opera House on a starry night. My Dad was a great companion at holiday time. Long before school excursions, he made sure we visited Parliament House, the Law Courts, the Art Gallery, attended live theatre and got the books we needed to read. He came with me, late in the night, to St Mary's Cathedral for the very first (restored) Easter Vigil, in 1953.

I guess I always knew I wanted to be a nun, but the only "reason" I could give was in Hopkins' words: to "give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver". After graduating as a physiotherapist and working for a year at RPA, I entered the Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Melbourne.

The first dozen years in an enclosed contemplative setting were pretty tough, though I learnt a lot about myself and life. Then came Vatican 11 and some profound development and growth in my Eucharistic theology and spirituality. From a concentration on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we moved to an emphasis on the many other meanings (theologies) of Eucharist... celebration, memorial, presence, assembly, Word, sacrifice, Berekah, broken bread for a broken world etc. Commitment to Christ meant zeal for peace and justice and a yearning for oneness of Being with God and all creation. For me, now, Eucharist is a shorthand word for so many realities of prayer, worship and life ...and all for the sake of God's presence and action in the people.

All my life I have been blessed with exceptional opportunities for study and formation and with mentors, advisors and friends. Charlie Mayne shepherded me from the age of 16. My Liturgy teachers, Greg and Jake inspired and fired me. My collaborators and friends of today are my dearest treasures.

What can I say of such gifts and my joy in them, when we find ourselves in a world where so many have so little? Now (and at my funeral!) please pray with me: "We thank you God for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you."



Vianney Hatton

Your Say – Generosity of spirit – open to the other

Julie Morgan

This is excerpted from a talk given at North Sydney SIP in September 2004. Julie is Franciscan Promoter of Justice and Peace. Her full text is available on request.

To face the Other is to take them seriously, and to invite them to take you seriously too. We do this every day in our one-to-one relationships.

I like to think about our one-to-one relationships in terms of *intimacy* – these are the ones to whom we turn our face, and to whom we give our thoughts, our feelings, our body, our spirit, our dreams, our hopes and even our failures. Think for a moment about those with whom you are intimate... the circle is small, very small. Yet this is the context in which we spend most of our lives.

Generosity is one of the things which helps us to characterize the way we live those intimate relationships. The longing that we experience in intimacy, the giving, the receiving, the risking – it is all done or not done – in a particular way, and hopefully that way is with generosity and graciousness. And if the loving isn't given generously and graciously then suspicion begins to erode and wither intimacy.

“...generosity is about an overflowing, more than you deserve type, unconditional, outrageous love.”

It is here too that we realize that the flip side of generosity isn't just meanness.

Meanness is only a symptom of the deeper reality, the deeper, darker flip-side of generosity is actually fear. The fear that I'm not loveable enough to receive your generosity. The fear that my generosity won't ever be enough and therefore the Other will consume me.

And so it is here in the light and shade of our original sin that we see the inextricable link between generosity and forgiveness – the capacity to generously encounter the Other's truth and mercy in order that justice and balance might be restored so that peace will come again.

Yet while it is true to realize that the intimate, one to-one relationships are often most vital to us, it is also true to recognize that the journey of life is about developing an ever expanding sense that we are also involved in what we might call 'one-to-

many' relationships (and that there is wonderful meaning in being involved with Others beyond intimacy). It is this expanding sense of the connectedness to multiple others that motivates and inspires that branch of Catholic ethical thinking that we call Catholic Social Teaching. But... that is a body of thought, a code, a system... and what I've learnt from Levinas is that codes are nice in libraries and that popes are good at quoting previous popes but that codes and quotes rarely if ever prevent holocausts and crimes against humanity.

What can generosity mean in today's post-holocaust, human-rights denying, hungry, trafficked world? How am I am to live generously in this context? And it is here that that most beautiful (but slightly overused word) *solidarity* comes in.

Just as I am invited to be generous in intimacy, I am also invited to be generous in solidarity. But while generosity in intimacy makes intuitive sense, generosity in solidarity can make people a little nervous!

When I am generous to the Other in intimacy I see change occur in me and in the Other. I take the risk, love generously, outrageously, exuberantly and sure enough, bit by beautiful bit, the one who is Other becomes more entwined with me and me with them. The freedom and beauty are breathtaking!

But it only happens when the first move is a generous one – generous meaning that I take the risk of doing or being more than I think the other deserves! Or more than they think I deserve! Generosity always exceeds specific measures!

One version of justice suggests that justice is about getting what one deserves, but generosity, particularly as it is demonstrated in the Gospels, is about an overflowing, more than you deserve type, unconditional, outrageous love.

So, while I'm not talking up the unlimited use of the credit card, I am suggesting that generosity to the intimate Other will take us beyond expected limits.

And so what about generosity to multiple others? If Levinas says that I am utterly responsible for the Other, what on earth will this mean when I realise that beyond this one face, there are many faces, many others... am I responsible for them all?

Generosity to the Other involves expanding our sense of who we are connected to – beyond intimacy. The ancient Stoics had a word for this, they called it 'oekiosis'. Today we call that deep feeling we have for the plight of others in distress – others

whom we do not know, and whose faces are entirely new and foreign to us – we call this solidarity.

This will mean that I will look into the face of the Other, whether that person be a Rwandan villager, an Afghani refugee, a Bangladeshi flood victim, a young child from Cambodia trafficked for sex into Singapore, a Sudanese woman sheltering under a UNHCR or Caritas blue tarp, an Islamic fundamentalist bomber, and I will feel in my bones that I am responsible; I will know that I am more responsible than any other; and I will know that I must act.

Now we are comfortable in Australia with our sense that we are a generous nation. Yes? However, such a judgment doesn't stand up to more than two minutes of scrutiny! UNHCR, the UN Commission for Human Rights, and OECD statistics will all indicate very clearly that Australia lags behind most other nations in terms of its refugee intake, its overseas aid grants and cooperation packages, its thinking about the oil in the Timor Sea...

“... Australia lags behind most other nations in terms of its refugee intake, its overseas aid grants and cooperation packages...”

So from the safe vantage point of the pub, how do we encourage and model generosity to the Other? How do we accompany our family and friends (or even ourselves) so that the generosity demonstrated in intimacy models for them, invites them into living more generously in solidarity?

Because we recognise, don't we, that there is a profound link between our capacity for intimacy and our capacity for solidarity – that each nurtures the other, making me and the Other (and the community in which we live and love) grow towards redemption and wholeness.

A subscriber writes: “Sadly the enclosed will be my last \$40 contribution to Catalyst. I have just completed eleven weeks in hospital and am not yet 100%. I have had my eightieth birthday and am now retired. Thank you for many hours of enjoyment from *The Mix* and the clear way they express sentiments on Church which are truly mine. Every blessing.”

Essay – Freedom, conscience and our catholic tradition

Michael Whelan

In the December 8 1984 issue of *The Tablet* there was a report of an interview with the eminent historian of philosophy, Frederick Copleston SJ. Copleston refers to a debate on the existence of God he had with Lord Bertrand Russell on BBC Radio in 1948:

He (Russell) thought that value judgment is simply the expression of emotion, attitude or something purely subjective, and that there is no absolute morality. I remember saying to him something like: 'I'm sure, Lord Russell, that you would say it was absolutely wrong to behave in the way that the guards in the German concentration camps behaved to the inmates.' He said: 'Of course I would wish to say that is absolutely wrong, but it doesn't fit in with my theory, so I'm rather in a dilemma.' He said that in the original talk, but then when it came to preparing the script, he said: 'I can't say that in public,' and toned it down."

Thank God atheists – for the most part – don't practice what they preach. The logic of Russell's thinking was unacceptable even to Russell. Dostoevsky has one of his characters sum it up nicely: "Without God, all things are lawful."

Some may object: "But Bertrand Russell was a morally decent man and many believers are not morally decent people." That is not the point. The point is that Bertrand Russell *had no reason to be moral*. The believer does have a reason to be moral. The sad fact of the matter is that many a believer just doesn't hear and heed his/her conscience.

Disconnected humanity

For the sake of our sanity we must, as a society, be able to recognise good and evil and name them in a way that is reasonable. When sound reason ceases to be part of the human equation, we literally run out of reasons for sound living. For example, I am reminded of an interview I heard on ABC Radio National in August 2003. Margaret Throsby was interviewing a visiting Canadian philosopher, Professor Mark Kingwell. A transcript of the relevant part of the interview follows:

Throsby: Just staying with the happiness thing, in this day and age when everything is instantaneous, and our demand for gratification is also that we want it now, that there seems to have been a loosening of restraint and patience, in a sense. But this is Whenever I start talking like this, I feel myself imposing morality on the argument, which I don't think is a good thing.

Kingwell: But why not? We're here to ...

Throsby: Because it's my morality and may not be yours or somebody listening.

Kingwell: But can you defend it, can you make it cogent to somebody else? I think that's the question.

Throsby: I don't know whether you can defend ... I don't know whether morality is defensible. Is it?

Kingwell: I think it is. And I think that one of the mistakes that we make as modern people is the retreat into that absolute subjectivity.

Throsby: But let's talk about what's just happened in Jakarta: The morality of someone driving a bomb into a hotel and blowing up and killing people. It is understood by fanatical, fundamentalist people who think it was a cause for celebration. That's the morality they would have the rest of the world accept, if the rest of the world was going to accept a morality imposed on them. I happen to find that that is reprehensible behaviour, and that is my morality ... which is right, which is best?

Why do we think like this?

Margaret Throsby's question at the end of this piece suggests helplessness. She can find no reason for condemning evil and promoting good. This is the direct result of abandoning any sense of the transcendent. It raises an urgent question for the Church: Why do otherwise reasonable and decent people come to this way of thinking?

My own reflection has led me to believe there are at least two forces at play here.

In the first instance, the kind of thinking manifested by Bertrand Russell has radically affected the consciousness of our generation. There seems to be a lack of insightful self-reflection and rigorous thinking, the kind of thinking that might reveal the practical limits of such a consciousness.

The moral person, surely, is someone who seeks "the moral good." This necessarily places one's life in dialogue with an objective reality, one to which we must ultimately freely submit. There is a fairly obvious logic here that Bertrand Russell sees but does not want to accept and Margaret Throsby does not seem to even see.

In the second instance, I believe there is something a little more pre-reflective happening. For many in our society, there is a deep gut reaction against someone – anyone – telling them that they know what is best for them. Hence the common rejoinder: "Don't impose your morality on me!" (The fact that this rejoinder implies a certain moral position that they are trying to impose, does not seem to cross their minds.)

This reaction may be nearly as prevalent amongst Catholics as it is in the population at large. While it is not an entirely adult response, it is what we must deal with. These people cannot be simply dismissed. And I also suspect they cannot be dealt with

in any merely abstract way, say by rational argument. What is happening here? How might we respond? What can we learn from them?

A point of pastoral redress

Many people I know have walked away from the Catholic Church and abandoned religion (in any formal sense), some even claim to be atheists. Most would admit to some kind of "spirituality" and many even think of themselves as Catholics still. They are good people. Do we simply say they have succumbed to the prevailing culture? Or is there more to it than that?

In my experience, people want to connect with people for whom God is real. They respond well to relationships that are honest and open, relationships that take them seriously as adults. Instead, too often, from the Church, they encounter impersonal and uninspiring talk about rules and regulations. Further, this talk seems to assume that they are children, not adults. Intelligent adults, typically, resist this. This sort of paternalism, so prevalent in a former time, is concisely articulated by Pope Leo XIII:

To the pastors alone has been given the full power of teaching, judging, directing; on the faithful has been imposed the duty of following these teachings, of submitting with docility to these judgments. (Cited in *The Catholic Weekly*, September 19, 1993, quoting *The Freeman's Journal*, September 12, 1885.)

It is sad that this paternalistic way is still sometimes the case. And, indeed, some who walk away may use this as an excuse for not facing the deeper challenges of their own consciences. But that fact should not lead us, who have particular responsibilities for the wellbeing of the Church, to excuse ourselves. With the wisdom of a great poet, Les Murray sums it up well:

For many historical and other reasons, some of them Australian and our own fault, Christianity is no longer On Top in Australia. the experience is probably a salutary one for us. The time for ecclesiolatry, the worship of the visible church instead of God, is past. We're no longer free to indulge our bad habits of boring people, bullying them and backing up respectability; we're no longer in a position to call on the law to do for us what we should be doing by inspiration and example; we're no longer in a position to push second-rate thinking ("Some Religious Stuff I know About Australia.")

Each person has a unique story to tell and all their stories are complex. But two of the recurring themes in the stories I hear are those of freedom and conscience.

Freedom

Cardinal Walter Kasper wrote a fine little piece on freedom in his book, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*. He makes a remarkable admission, that “the Church was always terrified of freedom.” He goes on to speak beautifully and insightfully:

The saving reality of the redemption is the lived reality of freedom. ... To believe in God and to decide that freedom is the ultimate value in reality is one and the same.

Cardinal Kasper leaves us in no doubt that this freedom is the result of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. The freedom for which we are created and which we naturally seek is, therefore, much more than merely psychological or political freedom.

Cardinal Avery Dulles similarly writes well of freedom (*The New World of Faith*). Like Cardinal Kasper, he too emphasizes the complexities in this concept and Jesus Christ as the ultimate and, in the end, only source of the freedom we seek.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council remind us that freedom is at the core of our human dignity: “For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within the human being” (*Gaudium et Spes*, #17).

This whole paragraph on freedom in *Gaudium et Spes* is, in fact, a compromise statement. It is not entirely satisfactory. Yet, the Council – like Cardinals Kasper and Dulles – indicates a direction in which we ought to move. Is it not both faithful to the Gospel and our tradition, and prudent at this time, to affirm freedom, promote reflection on it and educate people to it?

The fact that some people misuse or abuse or misrepresent freedom is no reason for us to abandon it or diminish its importance in a healthy human life. On the contrary, we ought to be in the forefront of rescuing freedom from its destructive counterfeits. Fr Lamennais, the French intellectual at the beginning of the 19th century spoke insightfully when he said that “freedom which has been called for in the name of atheism must now be demanded in the name of God.”

Pope John Paul II highlights the link between freedom and conscience in his Apostolic Letter of September 1, 1980, “Freedom of Conscience and of Religion”:

First, it is clear that the starting point for acknowledging and respecting that freedom is the dignity of the human person, who experiences the inner and indestructible exigency of acting freely ‘according to the imperatives of his own conscience.’ (#2)

Pope John Paul II is speaking specifically here in the context of religious freedom.

But we must be consistent. If the fundamental concepts of human freedom and conscience are grounded in the dignity of the human person, are they not to be promoted as essential parts of our humanity in every field of human endeavour, including our commitment as faithful Catholics within the Church?

Conscience

In an address in 1988 at La Trobe University the then Bishop Pell expressed concern at the misrepresentation of “the doctrine of the primacy of conscience.” I believe that concern was well placed. Bishop Pell went on to say that the concept “should be quietly ditched.”

In April 2003, when Cardinal Pell gave his presentation at the Bishops Forum (organized by Catalyst for Renewal) he said that he “believe(d) strongly in the importance of individual conscience.” He offered a powerful example of a person coming to a conscientious life decision. But he then went on to say that:

conscience is at the service of truth; it stands under God’s word. Conscience has no primacy. Truth has primacy. The Word of God has primacy. When basic Catholic and Christian doctrines are explicitly and sometimes publicly denied, basic questions of personal integrity then have to be answered. I believe that the mischievous doctrine of the primacy of conscience has been used to white-wash the Church, used to justify many un-catholic teachings, ranging as I mentioned from denying the Divinity of Christ to legitimising abortion and euthanasia.

Again, in “The Inconvenient Conscience” (May 2005), Cardinal Pell writes:

A Catholic conscience cannot accept a settled position against the Church, at least on a central moral teaching. Any difficulty with Church teaching should be not the *end* of the matter but the *beginning* of a process of conversion, education, and quite possibly repentance. Where a Catholic disagrees with the Church on some serious matter, the response should not be ‘that’s that – I can’t follow the Church here.’ Instead we should kneel and pray that God will lead our weak steps and enlighten our fragile minds,

We Catholics are struggling to develop an understanding of conscience in accord with the Gospel, the demands of ecclesial commitment and the realistic challenges of an adult faith concretized in a variety of new and demanding circumstances. Whatever else may be said of his opinions, the Cardinal forces us to address this struggle. For example, consider the tension between these teachings from Vatican II. The first is from *Lumen Gentium*, the second is from the *Gaudium et Spes*:

This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. (*Lumen Gentium* #25)

And:

In the depths of our consciences, we detect a law which we do not impose upon ourselves, but which holds us to obedience. (*Gaudium et Spes*, #16)

Gaudium et Spes here, in fact, seems to represent the best of the Church’s tradition on conscience. It suggests the Gospel vision of radical discipleship. This vision allows us to live responsibly and compassionately with the reality that sometimes those who teach on behalf of the Church get it wrong. What if, for example, someone had stood up in the face of repeated teachings on slavery or usury and said, “In conscience, I cannot accept this”? Our bishops stood in that tradition when they advised:

It is not impossible, however, that an individual may fully accept the teaching authority of the Pope in general, may be aware of his teaching in this matter, and yet reach a position after honest study and prayer that is at variance with the papal teaching. Such a person could be without blame; he would certainly not have cut himself off from the Church; and in acting in accordance with his conscience he could be without subjective fault. (“Pastoral Letter on the Application of *Humanae Vitae*” (1974).)

The Sacred Congregation for the Clergy likewise represents this tradition well:

In the final analysis conscience is inviolable and no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to conscience, as the moral tradition of the Church attests. (Official Communication of the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy, April 26, 1971.)

If people are behaving badly, and claiming the primacy of conscience to excuse their bad behaviour, we should do what we can to help them. Again, as with the concept of freedom, we ought to be in the forefront of rescuing conscience from its destructive counterfeits. We have a very rich tradition of teaching on the primacy of conscience, a teaching both we and our contemporaries would do well to study carefully. ■

Michael Whelan is a Marist priest who lives and works in Sydney. He is currently the Principal of Aquinas Academy, is a co-founder of Catalyst for Renewal and edits The Mix.

THE EDITOR WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS CONVERSATION.

The Bible – He made them get in the boat

Words for a Pilgrim People

“Courage!. It s me! Don t be afraid!” (Matthew 14:28)

□□□

“Yes, but where is God in the silence and darkness, in the laboured beatings of the heart? Where is the idea of God in this uttermost emptiness? Perhaps after all the ultimate truth is not light and goodness but darkness and horror? Surely this terrible happening, this extreme anguish of the poor naked human spirit is proof that there is no God at all or that if there is he is without care of me? ‘All thy billows and thy waves have passed over me The water compassed me about even to the soul ... the bars of the earth have shut me up for ever’. So spoke Jonas, and Job too under the silent heavens. It is indeed a note that is struck again and again in the Old Testament. But always the Lord comes to save, and is as it were thus, by this extremity, defined in the fullness of his saviourhood. Jesus comes as the one who saves, the God who saves. Yet he is also Jonas and he enters into the darkness of Gethsemane and the darkness of the tomb.” (Noel Dermot O’Donoghue, **Heaven in Ordinarie**, Templegate, 1979, 74)

□□□

“They lay quiet for a while in the hut. The priest thought the lieutenant was asleep until he spoke again. You never talk straight. You say one thing to me – but to another man, or a woman, you say, “God is love.” But you think that stuff won’t go down with me so you say different things. Things you’ll know I ll agree with.

Oh, the priest said, that s another thing altogether – God is love. I don’t say the heart doesn’t feel a taste of it, but what a taste. The smallest glass of love mixed with a pint pot of ditch-water. We wouldn’t recognize that love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us – God’s love. It set fire to a bush in the desert, didn’t it, and smashed open graves and set the dead to walking in the dark. Oh, a man like me would run a mile to get away if he felt that love around.” (Graham Greene, **The Power and the Glory**, Penguin, 1982, 199-200.)

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On the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) we are asked to meditate on one of the most colourful passages in the Gospels. It is Matthew’s description of the disciples caught in a storm on the lake (Matthew 14:22-33). (It is worth also reading the parallel accounts in Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:16-21.) How do they come to be on the lake in a storm? Jesus “made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead” (v22). There is something very definite about this: He *made* them do it. An analogy might be parents sending the child off to school. The disciples had to learn to look to the world and their role in it. Even as they remain united with him and do his work, they must go they are sent they have a job to do.

The “going” also means “leaving.” It is tempting to stay with the familiar. Predictability and safety can be such a seduction. “Our group” can be safe. Jesus “sent the crowds away.” The disciples – all disciples – must find their identity beyond the sociological and cultural reality. The very nature of discipleship grounds us elsewhere.

The promise of God is, “I shall be with you!”. This is not a guarantee of calm sunny days, trouble free living. Being a disciple may actually lead to suffering and death. It will certainly lead you into the odd storm or two. The storm is the place where we discover Jesus anew. We learn to see him afresh. Remember that this story occurs immediately after the miracle of the loaves. Miracles can be a distraction. The Gospels make it clear that the Incarnation is about something more important than miracles. Move on! Get into the boat and go! He awaits you in the turbulence of life.

Interestingly enough, when Jesus is discovered in the storm the disciples are terrified (v26). The terror evoked by the reality of Jesus’ presence diverts them from their fear of the storm. Do we assume that God’s love will always soothe and console, that the presence of Jesus will be experienced as some kind of pleasant relief? Jesus comes among us as the eternal, incomprehensible Mystery, he is the embodiment of infinite and unconditional love. Can we grasp that? Does that terrify us? Perhaps it should. Is it possible that we use religion to reduce God and Jesus to manageable proportions? Do we use a comforting idea of God to escape the fact of God? Maybe our moralism and legalism and dogmatism and authoritarianism and institutionalism are ways of avoiding the living God? Who do I think Jesus is and what do I think he has on offer for me? ■

The Tradition – Dark night

The great guides of the Catholic tradition are unanimous in recognizing the struggle – sometimes very painful struggle – in the liberation of our deepest possibilities as people made in the image and likeness of God. One of the most powerful images used to describe this experience – at least part of this experience – is “the dark night.” The metaphors of light and darkness are frequently used in the writings of the guides, but John of the Cross (1542-1591) has given us the most complete description of “the dark nights.” While we do struggle in such experiences, for John the focus is God and God’s infinite and unconditional love leading us towards our best possibilities.

God is greater than our feeling of God, greater than our concept of God.

The Carmelite commentator, Iain Matthew OCD, writes: “That is the focus of John of the Cross: a night that spells bewilderment; all the spokes of the wheel pointing inwards, and the hub taken out. John has taken us to those outer regions, which lie beyond the threshold of our own resources, the unfamiliar lands of birth and death; he is calling that the place, not of chaos, but of transformation. Greater than the temple, greater than Jonah: God is greater than our feeling of God, greater than our concept of God. When our lights no longer offer support, when our sense of worth or place or progress is growing dim, when what should not be, is – then a God who is greater than we are has room to impinge. If Christianity were a human enterprise before a spectator God, this would not be so. Darkness would mean only darkness. But if the enterprise is divine, and the divine is pressing in to fill, those outer regions can be places of healing. They offer the emptiness God needs to pour himself out entirely.” (*The Impact of God*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, 84-85.) ■

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com
catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St **Survival Today** August 9 “Moral Judgement in Business” Rob Maclin & tba (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

° **Alstonville** Pioneer Tavern (Info Cathy 6628 5168)

° **Batemans Bay** Mariners Hotel Sunday August 28 “Where is God in Suicide?” Neil Harrigan (Info: Viviane 4471 1857).

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie August 24 “Islamic Perspective on Spirituality” Jean de Hosson & Dr Munir Hassan (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club August 10 “Conscience & Obedience: Do we have a choice?” Claire-Louise Mitchell & tba (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL August 17 “Aboriginal Spirituality” Br Graham Mundine & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **A Just Society** August 31 “Prisons & Social Justice” Fr Michael Walsh & Sr Margaret Wiseman (Info: (Susanna 9571 7769).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club **Love your neighbour as yourself** August 26 “Right from Wrong” Hugh McKay & Commissioner Ken Moroney (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel September 12 “Healing a Broken World – Picking up the Pieces” Sr Anne Lane pbvm & Dr Irwin Pakula (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive **From Small Beginnings...** September 6 “Coming Together” Donna Rhall & Mary Banks (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel August 25 “Who are the prophets today?” Fr Tony Doherty & Sr Patricia Faulkner (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, August 15 “Reconciliation and the National Psyche – Reciprocity” Eva Cox & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** Bellevue Hotel **Our Place at**

the Table September 7 “Grief and Anxiety” Brianna Webster & Ken Marslew (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club August 24 “Vatican II: 40 years since Gaudium et Spes” Sr Susan Connelly & Fr Andrew Murray (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd September 13 “Empowerment - Enduring Stories of Courage” tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

° **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville August 24 “Justice?” Ken Marsley & Maurizio Vespa (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel **“I have a dream. I have a dream today..?”** August 17 John Murray (Info: Carmel 0418 451 549).

Victoria

° **Alphington** Tower Hotel, **Marketing Jesus** 8pm-9.30pm August 10 “Marketing Jesus: Drama & Art – How is Jesus presented” Peter Steele sj & Rosemary Crumlin rsm (Info: Charles 0417 319 556).

° **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 September 7 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm September 13 tba (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel August 17 “Lay Catholics & social responsibility” Marg & Gerry Leahy (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston September 21 “Give Peace a Chance: Telling our Local Stories” Bishop Hilton Deakin & tba (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9374 1844).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm August 3, September 7 Fr Peter Collins (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 August 24 “Who is welcome at the Table?” Peter Collins & Fiona Dodds (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

° **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm September 13 “Living with Mental Illness” Jenny Burger & Richard McLean (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 (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** August 23 (Info: Deborah 0419 939 864).

° **Adelaide (SA)** German Club, 223 Flinders St (Info: Michelle 8278 6353).

° **Mylor (SA)** Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd September 6 “Art leading to peaceful solutions in Conflict” Helen Stacey Strathalbyn (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

° **Interchurch Families conference** “Sharing our Dream Downunder” August 18-22, Noah's on the Beach, Newcastle (Info: Bev 4945 0200 or kevinbev@bigpond.net).

° **Intensive Journal Retreat** 12-16 Sept at St Joseph's Kincumber (Info: Kate 4368 2805 or kscholl@optusnet.com.au).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Aug 10-18 & 19-27 directed retreats; Sept 16-18 prayer weekend; Sept 16-22 & 23-29 guided retreats (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills, August 5-7 “Taize Weekend” (Info: 9484 6208). Oct 8-9 overnight retreat for women “Return to Paradise” – contact Judith 4945 5343 or kellsull@ozemail.com.au

“AQUINAS AND THEOLOGY AS CONVERSATION”

Tom Ryan SM, PhD

Sixth Diamond Jubilee Lecture
Aquinas Academy
In The Crypt of St Patrick's Church
Grosvenor St, The Rocks.
Wednesday August 10 2005
6pm-8pm Entry: \$10

REFLECTION MORNING

Dr Chris Needs
**“Pain & Suffering:
A Search for Understanding”**

Marist Centre,
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday August 20
9.30am – 12.30 pm.
All welcome. Entry by donation.

Recommended

Lawrence E Mick, *Living Baptism Daily*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 119 pages, pb, \$29.95, Sophia \$22.46. (Tel: 1300 650 878).

The thrust of this small book is simple: we need to consider the implications of our baptism daily. There might be a tendency among some people to consider the sacrament a "once" – received once and then we can forget it and get on with our real lives/go on to other sacraments. Fr Mick argues that baptism should be a central consideration throughout our lives. He adopts the schema of the RCIA process and illustrates how the process, prayers and activities apply to all the baptised. The RCIA got it right in its slowly-slowly approach, giving the catechumens time to reflect before making the sacrament their own. Ideas are provided on the Paschal Mystery, the presence of the Holy Spirit, community, Eucharist and mystery are all dealt with clearly. The challenge raised in the book is "What am I going to do as a result of my baptism?" The book offers a sound and thoughtful insight into the sacrament and its application in everyday life as a Christian. There is a mixture of anecdotes, sound theology, prayers and ideas for further contemplation or discussion. Baptism and its effect on our spiritual lives is part of this challenge, to be faced by all Christians. The final chapter illustrates how parishioners can implement the ideas raised in the book, to develop their spirituality, adding greatly to its usefulness.

Wayne Swan, *The Splintering of a Nation*, Pluto Press, 2005, 248 pages, pb, \$26.95.

Yes, the author is the Labor member for Lilley (in Brisbane). But the content of this little book breaks party political boundaries. *Postcode* forces us to ask: What sort of a society are we creating? Society does not just happen. It gets formed by various forces, including the choices you and I create daily. Swan writes that the book is "primarily about what governments can do to build a fairer and more prosperous society." He goes on to say: "But it's not just about government. It's a matter for everyone of us. We need to reframe the public debate about fairness We need to get away from the old idea that investing in individuals and communities is a drag on the economy and bad for people's self-motivation and initiative. Helping other people wisely can often be the best way of helping ourselves. Altruism and a stronger economy go hand in hand." Affluence can dull our sensitivities, a sense of impotence can cause us to withdraw and clichés and moralistic pronouncements can divert us from the real issues. Allowing for the occasional political point scoring, Swan writes with a steady hand. Any reasonable reader will find this book a useful catalyst to think about what is going on in Australia at this time. In particular, Catholics will welcome the opportunity to reflect on the implications of taking the principle of the common good seriously.

Demetrius Dumm, *Praying the Scriptures*. Liturgical Press, 2003, 189 pages, pb. c \$30.

The central chapter of this book is praying the canon of the mass. The writer brings together the early chapters that dealt with prayer in scripture and now focuses on the scriptural base of the canon. He links our prayers with those of Jesus, shows the relevance of the scriptures to this central part of our worship, and brings to attention the relevance both of scripture to the mass and to our lives. Demetrius Dumm gives the reader insights to the Hebrew texts, demonstrates the large number of prayers in these early biblical texts and also their relevance to ourselves. The text covers the watershed biblical events: the exodus from Egypt and Christ's resurrection; he distinguishes between the prayer of David and that of Saul and why those of the former seemed to find greater favour with Yahweh. Dumm writes poignantly of the different ways people pray, their different hopes and how central Jesus is to our prayer life. The strength of this book is the focus on Jesus, his humanity, his prayers, and their relevance today. This is not a "how to" book; it leads one into prayer through a very detailed consideration of the prayers of scriptural figures: Moses, Abraham, Miriam and more significantly of course, Jesus Mary and Paul. This is an insightful and warm book helping the reader to join with the great biblical figures in prayer.

THE MIX IS A FORUM FOR CONVERSATION

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

Tertullian (160-220) wrote: "Our care for the derelict and our active love have become our distinctive sign before the enemy. ... See, they say, how they love one another and how ready they are to die for each other."

Basil (330-379) wrote: "The food of fish differs according to their species. Some feed on mud; others eat seaweed; others content themselves with the plants that grow in water. But the greater part devour each other. And the smaller are food for the larger. And if by chance a fish that has eaten another smaller than itself is itself eaten by another larger, both are swallowed up in the belly of the last. And do we human beings act otherwise when we oppress our inferiors? What difference is there between the last fish and the people who, urged by devouring greed, swallow the weak into the belly of their insatiable avarice? One person took possession of what belongs to the poor, you caught him and made him part of your wealth. You have shown yourself more unjust than the unjust, and more miserly than the miser. Take care that you do not end up like the fish, by hook, by snare or by net. Surely we too, when we have done the deeds of the wicked, shall not escape punishment at the last."

Peter Brown (patristic scholar): "If a poor man or a destitute stranger should come in (to the liturgical assembly), 'do thou, o bishop, with all thy heart provide a place for them, even if thou hadst to sit upon the ground.'"

Michael Whelan SM