



THE MIX



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Our Say – The unity we must go on discovering

When St Ignatius of Antioch first used the word “catholic” to describe the followers of Jesus in the first decade of the 2nd century, he was pointing to a unity we find in Christ. The Catholic identity calls us into a journey of discovery. Every Catholic is bound to seek the unity that is on offer in and through Christ. The unity is not created by us. *We are* one in Him. Our challenge and our joy is found in actively receiving the gift of unity.

Each of us will have his or her own pathway into this unity and contribution to make to it. It cannot be forced. All our endeavours must – implicitly, at least – serve this quest for unity. Divisions must be healed. There is no progress in hate.

Seventy schemas were brought to the Second Vatican Council. In the end, sixteen documents were produced. The journey from the seventy to the sixteen was momentous, and is epitomised in the speech of Cardinal Suenens to the Council on December 4 1962. Suenens urged the

Council to divide its reflections on the Church into two parts. The first would consider the Church in its inner life, the second the Church in its call to be the Light of Christ in the world. In response to the second part of Suenens’s suggestion, the Council went on to produce that prophetic document, *Gaudium et Spes*. It begins with a poetic expression of unity:

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.

Lest we think these words are just poetic rather than truly prophetic, *Gaudium et Spes* (27) goes on to make some very blunt and challenging statements about our responsibilities. For example:

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping others when they come across our paths, whether they

be old people abandoned by all, foreign laborers unjustly looked down upon, refugees, children born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin they did not commit, or hungry people who disturb our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, ‘As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me’ (Mt 25:40).

A worldview – be it religious or secular – that sets people against each other, that refuses conversation with people of good will, that divides the world into winners and losers, that perpetrates or turns a blind eye to injustices of any kind, is utterly at odds with our Christian heritage. This is not to claim that we Christians have never been guilty of such things. We have. It is, rather, to reclaim the prophetic vision of unity that is at the heart of the Gospel.

Gaudium et Spes turns forty on December 7 this year. The anniversary is a good time to rediscover the vision. ■

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

THE HUMAN FACE

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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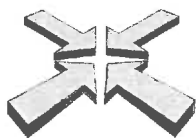
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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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My name is Ed Campion. After a lecture recently someone asked me what forces had shaped my life and I found myself telling them about my years at the University of Sydney. We were a rum lot, the Catholic undergraduates of more than half a century ago. For one thing, we were intensely Catholic, the sons and daughters of a closeknit tribe dyed deep in school and parish by our religion. We partied together in the Latin 1 room. Confident in our Catholicism, we read papal encyclicals and social justice statements by the Australian Catholic bishops and we organised lunchtime talks by champions of apologetics like Dr Paddy Ryan or Father John Leonard.

At the same time, while living at such religious intensity, we were plunging into all the life around us: student politics and journalism—we learned to write on *Honi Soit*—theatricals, sport, faculty balls and club dances, movies and lunchtime debates, and occasionally we attended lectures and completed essays. And there was an endless conversation going on all this time in university cafeterias, coffee shops, the Quad or on the steps of the State Library ("the real University of Sydney," Peter Condon said) ... an endless conversation that hasn't stopped yet. Thus we came to know and appreciate The Others, their values and aspirations and stories. It was ecumenism before we had learnt the word, which changed us by opening us to the goodness we found flourishing outside our own tribe.

Elsewhere too our lives were changing direction. Going to Mass had been a duty enforced, as with much else, by the prescriptive powers of the Church. Now, in the Newman Society, we came to experience it as a prayer of joy and we became Mass enthusiasts. This was a time of small-group Catholicism, when we met Jesus in Gospel discussions and grew to know Him as a friend. Salvation, once seen as individualistic and even intimate, now stretched out to include all of society: the whole world had to be saved, not just "souls". This was our responsibility as much as it was that of the bishops; we had vocations, not just priests and nuns. Our call was to serve the values of the university community, not to impose "Catholic values" from outside.

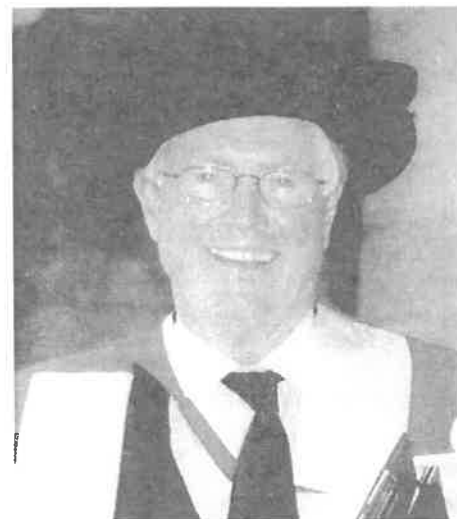
What we were experiencing, there at the University of Sydney, was Vatican II before the documents were even written.

So by the time I went off to the seminary, in 1954, I had a fair idea of the sort of Australian Catholic (and hence priest) I wanted to become. Truth to tell, the seminary itself, a museum piece still

functioning on iron rails laid down by the 16th century Council of Trent, was a constant trial of faith. But God is good: I survived, as the French priest said when asked what he had done during the Revolution; although for years afterwards nightmares cauterised my sleep (cf. Christopher Geraghty's memoirs).

And so it goes. Here are some of the things I've learned as I pilgrimed along the way:-

- Ours is a religion for failures. You cannot belong unless you are prone to failure. We are suspicious of get-saved-quick schemes or short cuts to Heaven. Because life isn't like that, we've found.
- The psalms of the Church's daily prayer put us in touch with the mind of Christ. We get to know Jesus better by praying the psalms.
- We do not let go of our dead. Their story is part of our story too.
- In praying for the dead we are putting words into their mouths at the mysterious moment when they are passing from time to timelessness. For there is no time in eternity, it is all NOW.
- Our history is about quarrels of good people. Because you disagree with someone, that doesn't make him or her a scoundrel. We want a catholic Catholicism not a fundamentalist ii. group. Cultivate a generous mind.
- Ours is a religion for people with bodies. A church without a votive candle stand is not a Catholic church.
- The part of the gospels that should scare us most is the parable of the talents. The first talent God gives is our bodies and our bodily health. Often we realize this when it's too late.
- Gratitude is the core virtue of a Eucharistic people.



Fr Ed Campion

Your Say – Ten years on – where are we?

Judy Sipple

This is part of the homily given by Sr Judy Sipple RSJ, Provincial of the NSW Province of the Sisters of St Joseph (North Sydney), at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney for the celebration of Blessed Mary MacKillop on August 7, 2005. The full text can be found on the Sisters of St Joseph web site: www.sosj.org.au.

When he came here to beatify Mary MacKillop ten years ago, Pope John Paul spoke of Mary as embodying "all that is best in your nation and in its people ..." He said Australians are marked by:

- a genuine openness to others;
- a generous hospitality to strangers and to the needy;
- a strong sense of justice to those unfairly treated;
- a rich kindness and compassion for the suffering; and
- an ability and willingness to persevere in the face of adversity.

Pope John Paul expressed the hope that Mary's example would inspire Australians to take pride in their Christian heritage and to work for a better society for all.

During this time of reflecting on the Beatitude and its meaning for us, I find myself asking: Are we really that people, that nation who holds such hospitality and openness, such generosity and perseverance, such justice and compassion as our deepest values?

For better or worse Australia has seen many changes in these past 10 years:

- Ten years ago REFUGEES recently fled from war and massacre in Timor would have believed that we were genuine in our offer of refuge. What are they thinking today as some of them await yet another reprieve from being sent home to possible starvation, pervasive unemployment and minimal education opportunities? Are we still that people of whom John Paul spoke – hospitable to strangers and generous to those in adversity?
- Ten years ago our INDIGENOUS PEOPLE could have held on to the hope that with the Bringing Them Home Report, Sorry Days and Bridge Walks, some sort of attitudinal change was taking place among us. What do they think now that political disinterest and opposition have just about ground the Reconciliation movement to a halt?

now that opinion has been tamed to the point that public conversation and discourse have been silenced? It isn't so easy to recognise ourselves as that people who in John Paul's words, "Do justice to those unfairly treated".

Ten years ago, political leaders and concerned Australians actually talked about NARROWING THE GAP between the very rich and the very poor. Today not even a Vincent de Paul report exposing shoddy statistics and showing that the tax reforms of the last budget widen rather than narrow the gap – not even this can get the conversation restarted. It is an unfortunate example for a people who persevere in the face of adversity.

And what of the ASYLUM SEEKERS who, ten years ago, may have believed that ... we would uphold the UN Charter on Human Rights? What do they think now after ten years of detention, after the ongoing exposure of human rights denied, wrongful deportation and the incarceration of mothers and their children? In John Paul's words we are supposed to be a people with a strong sense of justice for those unjustly treated.

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Today's Gospel, however, puts before us a very different vision of how life might be. "Do not worry about your life", Jesus says "Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25-26) Is not life

- more than the mindless gathering of possessions, the undue desire to be surrounded by all that the heart desires, whether we need it or not?
- more than the hapless use of the earth's resources to ensure our own comfort and security – as if it were not there to be shared among all, both rich and poor and our children of generations yet to come?
- more than protecting ourselves, our property and our life-styles at the expense of those who have nothing?
- more than appropriating the riches of

another's land, of another's culture and story as if we had it by right of domination?

- more than the creation of unequal power structures and the submission of those less powerful?

Today's gospel asks: Can we not be satisfied with what is basic to our human need so that there may be life with dignity for all ...? Can we not trust in the goodness of a God who names himself in today's gospel as Father ... a God whose loving Providence will supply all our needs?

The gospel answers: Life is about more than what we are to eat, what we are to drink, what we are to wear. "Seek first", Jesus says, "the Kingdom of God and God's justice."

Where do we seek this Kingdom and its justice? Matthew's gospel, ... is at pains to assure us that it is already among us; we need only stay awake and be attentive. Given the experience in our country over the past ten years we may want to claim that this Kingdom of God and its justice is very difficult to recognise! But have not our eyes been opened and our ears unstopped by God's gift to us – in the person of Mary MacKillop, and in the lives of all who share her spirit?

We know her story and we recognise in it the depths of her love for God and humanity, expressed in her life of service, especially of the powerless, the needy and those on the margins; we hear the all-pervading certainty that what she was doing was God's work, and her unflinching trust that God would provide; we are heartened and encouraged by the very humanness of her seeking the Kingdom and its justice, of her failures and the weight of her burdens at times, of her courage and determination that, whatever the opposition, God's will would be done in her.

Now, more than ever, ... Australia needs the witness of our lives. We can make a radical difference in this land of ours by translating our goodness, our faith and trust in our God, our commitment to the gospel into living flesh by the lives we live, lives made compelling and attractive by the sorts of people we are. As we prayed in the Opening Prayer this afternoon: May we, like Mary MacKillop, learn to live by the power of the Cross that in our lives we may embrace what she pioneered – new ways of living the gospel, of seeking the Kingdom, that respect and defend the dignity of all in our land. ■

Essay – From labouring to co-labouring

Michael Malone

Michael Malone is Bishop of Maitland - Newcastle in NSW. This is the text of his address to Catalyst for Renewal's Bishops Forum of July 28, 2005. An audio tape recording of the address, which includes anecdotes not included here, and the question and answer and conversation which followed, is available from the Catalyst office for \$10 including postage.

A colleague of mine wrote to me recently regarding an article I had written for *Online Catholics* in May 2005. The article, entitled *Consultation and Collaboration: a Bishop's Tale*, explored the Second Vatican Council's call for authentic consultation and collaboration in the Church. Of necessity, I looked at both the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

My colleague, a retired bishop, complimented me on the article, stating that one doesn't "hear these things being said much by bishops these days." He went on to say that "the theological foundations of that practice were basic at Vatican II and will surely return one day to enrich the whole

In my reading these days I see the issue of collaboration in ministry being discussed and practised in some areas of Church life. However, in other areas, the notion of collaboration is met with a mixed response.

Church." Is my colleague suggesting that we haven't really taken on board the practice of consultation and collaboration? I found his statement challenging. Consequently, I thought I would address the issue of collaboration in ministry with you today.

My colleague was correct in his observation that bishops say little about consultation and collaboration these days. I believe that this challenge of Vatican II must be developed further, not only because of our baptismal commitment to serve the Church, but because collaboration is a process that genuinely mirrors the Gospel message of inclusiveness. It respects the equality of all believers and the dignity of each person.

In my reading these days I see the issue of collaboration in ministry being discussed and practised in some areas of Church life. However, in other areas, the notion of col-

laboration is met with a mixed response. Let me explain.

First, I notice that the National Council of Priests in Australia is preparing for a national convention of priests to take place in Adelaide in 2006. The topic of the convention is *Imagining Pastoral Leadership: Conversing, Reflecting and Acting Together*.

The NCP members' bulletin of June 2005 explained the topic by asking the question "How should ... primacy be given to the sacramental nature of ordained priesthood whilst giving due recognition to the right of the laity to be involved in ministries and to share in the leadership of our Church?"

Three cheers for the NCP! They are at least prepared to bite the bullet on the difficult subject of collaboration-in-ministry. I also noticed in their submission to the special Synod on the Eucharist to be held in October this year, they wish to develop the connection between Eucharist and *communio* – that spirituality of relationships which embraces genuine collaboration.

Second, the Diocese of Westminster in the United Kingdom recently issued a 'Green Paper' entitled *Graced by the Spirit: Planning our future together* (May 2005). There has been an extensive process of consultation in Westminster, discussing issues such as mission, participation and collaboration with a view to producing a 'White Paper' which will be a solid pastoral plan for their future. The 'Green Paper' points out the gap between those Catholics who wish to depend passively on the priest and those who desire to take on ministries. The paper tries to explore ways of overcoming that gap.

Third, in the 18th June 2005 edition of *The Tablet* an editorial on the permanent diaconate challenged the bishops of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to act on this significant ministry. The editorial highlighted the value of the permanent diaconate. It stands beside other ministries of the Church; helps to build up the body of Christ and contributes to a more collaborative approach to Church life.

These are just some of the positive things connected with collaboration which I have read lately.

The mixed response to which I referred earlier concerns those dioceses where priests are being brought in from overseas to respond to a clergy shortage. On the one hand these dioceses may be talking about the need for collaboration and sharing ministries, while at the same time they are invit-

ing priests in from foreign countries! How consistent is that approach?

Foreign priests do have a place in our Church community but the practice of plugging gaps left by diminishing numbers of local priests is not necessarily the answer to the problem.

When dioceses choose foreign priests to solve the problem of diminished clergy I wonder if they have lost sight of the value of collaboration. I also have a problem with the ethics of bringing in a priest from a country where the ratio of priest to Catholics is much higher than we experience in Australia.

Three cheers for the NCP! They are at least prepared to bite the bullet on the difficult subject of collaboration-in-ministry. I also noticed in their submission to the special Synod on the Eucharist to be held in October this year, they wish to develop the connection between Eucharist and *communio* – that spirituality of relationships which embraces genuine collaboration.

In the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle we are discussing the possibility of engaging foreign priests. Because a number of my colleagues do this, people say to me "Bishop so-and-so has foreign priests, why don't you?" or "I was in such-and-such-a-parish last weekend and they had a lovely Polish priest!"

We haven't decided against foreign priests coming to our diocese, but we have decided – priests and people – firstly, to work together in developing our mutual role in the Church. Our diocesan pastoral plan offers us the vision and guidelines.

The following are examples of some of our efforts thus far:

1. Developing new strategies within different regions to cope without a resident priest.
2. Encouraging groups of priests to share the same house and to serve the needs of outlying parishes.
3. Supporting the practice of training and paying pastoral associates to share ministry.

4. Introducing lay ministers for funerals across the diocese.
5. Developing local guidelines for celebrating liturgies in anticipation of the Eucharist (Communion Services).
6. Encouraging the close integration of parishes within the pastoral regions of the diocese with the intention of establishing regional offices to serve a number of parishes.

These initiatives, and others, demonstrate our strong belief in our mutuality in ministry. At the same time these initiatives offer one solution to fewer priests.

It's good to be reminded that ministry in the Church in Australia has not always been the exclusive domain of ordained clergy. There are letters in our diocesan archives from the 1850s and 60s which reveal some disquiet among the laity. Some parishioners wrote to the bishop claiming that the arrival of a priest was very welcome but they also felt that their role and ministry in the local Church was being diminished; that the new priest had assumed some of their duties.

Over the last 150 years or so most parishioners generously volunteered so as "to help Father", to get the job done, that is, to engage in fundraising and the building of churches and schools. It was the priest and the religious sisters and brothers who were involved in pastoral ministry. But this is no longer the case. Anyone looking at the Catholic Church today would be struck by the increasing involvement of lay people in almost every facet of Church life.

With this trend there is an increasing need for formal acknowledgment of lay ministries in the Church. This belief is based on the teaching of the Church as contained in *Lumen Gentium* (Chapter 4, Vatican II), *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Vatican II), *The Code of Canon Law* (Canons 224-231), *Christifideles Laici* (John Paul II, 30.12.1988), *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (John Paul II, 6.1.2001).

In all fairness and as a matter of justice we now need to employ competent people to attend to the essential pastoral and administrative duties in our diocese. Dioceses are now required to follow the statutory requirements of civil law in their employment of staff. No longer can we engage in *ad hoc* arrangements.

Of course the close collaboration of priest, religious and laity in ministry in present a number of challenges. Let's face it, for some, seeing a lay person preside at a funeral service or Sunday liturgy will be disturbing. For others, robust discussions between a strong-willed and de-

termined lay minister and the local parish priest will be just as distressing.

A diversity of views on issues of theology, spirituality, ecclesiology, liturgy and social justice will pose a challenge to how ministry in the Church is perceived and practiced. All of this represents a change in Catholic culture or the way we do things.

Do we really believe and accept what Paul had to say to the Corinthians? "There will be many different gifts but always the same Spirit, many different ways of serving but always the same Lord, many forms of activity ... but the same God at work in them all" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

From labouring to co-labouring: the changing face of ministry is the title of my address to you today. Labouring can produce results. We can be effective working by ourselves. But when we co-labour or collaborate we are called to put aside our egos, to let go of our singular ownership, and to listen to others and ultimately create something that is greater than ourselves.

One way of meeting the challenge offered by diverse views and culture changes is for all of us to embrace faith opportunities which would include prayer and discernment, a deeper understanding of servant leadership, and a need for the virtues of humility, tolerance, mutual respect and compassion. Oh, a sense of humour would help too!

In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II spoke beautifully of the spirituality of *communio* (Chapter 4). He painted the idyllic picture of a Church in harmony with itself and the world; he dreamt of a Church in which each respected the other, where each of us saw what was positive about the other and made room for our brothers and sisters.

Why? Because we believe in the Trinity! We believe that the Trinity dwells within each of us! We believe in the community we see manifested in the Trinity. We believe in right relationship which again we see between Creator, Son and Spirit.

In other words, in a Church which is authentic and functional, the ordained and the non-ordained should work collaboratively and creatively and should not perceive the other as a threat or a competitor. In such a Church there is no room for the

distinction between "Jews or Greeks, slaves or freeman, male or female – we are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

We are called to live out this challenge as clergy, religious and laity working together at every level in the Church. There is no room for petty disputes or office politics; rather we need to recognise the gifts of others, their sacredness and uniqueness. We are called to model a better way of doing things.

I am constantly reminded that we have a great deal to learn from one another; of how to act more inclusively, to acknowledge the place of women in the Church, to achieve gender balance on committees, to promote lay ministries, to step outside the square and dare to be different, to place the Church and its mission firmly in the marketplace.

From labouring to co-labouring: the changing face of ministry is the title of my address to you today. Labouring can produce results. We can be effective working by ourselves.

But when we co-labour or collaborate we are called to put aside our egos, to let go of our singular ownership, and to listen to others and ultimately create something that is greater than ourselves.

Authentic collaboration tends to be the path less traveled in the Church and in the broader community. There are many reasons for this, but largely, I think it's because it requires greater effort on the part of all concerned.

That being said, I believe that to engage in collaborative ministry is the only way forward. In fact, I would go as far as to say that not to engage in collaborative ministry is to oppose the Gospel message.

"To make the Church
the home and the school
of communion:
that is the great challenge
facing us in the millennium
which is now beginning,
if we wish to be faithful
to God's plan and respond to
the world's deepest yearnings."

Pope John Paul II,
Novo Millennio Ineunte
(January 6 2001)
#43

Words for a Pilgrim People

“Then Peter went up to him and said, Lord, how often must I forgive my brothers and sisters if they wrong me? As often as seven times? Jesus answered, Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)



“Our greatest protection is self-knowledge and to avoid the delusion that we are seeing ourselves when we are in reality looking at something else.” (St Gregory of Nyssa, **Commentary on the Canticle, Sermon 1** in Jean Danielou and Herbert Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts From Gregory of Nyssa’s Mystical Writings*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961, 159.)



“Abbot Mark once said to Abbot Arsenius: It is good, is it not, to have nothing in your cell that just gives you pleasure? For example, Once I knew a brother who had a little wild-flower that came up in his cell, and he pulled it out by the roots. Well, said Abbot Arsenius, that is alright. But each man should act according to his own spiritual way. And if one were not able to get along without the flower, he should plant it again.” (Thomas Merton, **The Wisdom of the Desert**, New Directions, 1960, 67-68.)



“I cannot understand it anymore. I am reconciled to myself, the poor shell of me. How easy it is to hate oneself! True grace is to forget. Yet if pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity – as one would love anyone of those who themselves have suffered and loved in Christ.” (Georges Bernanos, **The Diary of a Country Priest**, translated by Pamela Morris, Fontana Books, 1936/1960, 251.)



On the Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) we are asked to meditate on forgiveness (see Matthew 18:21-35). This call to forgiveness is as dangerous as it is necessary. Correctly understood, forgiveness is the beating heart of the Christ life. Incorrectly understood – and it is too often incorrectly understood – the call to forgiveness can be very deformative. Under facile statements, like “forgive and forget,” we may actually be encouraging a destructive suppression of healthy but daunting emotions such as anger. This may in turn lead to the accumulation of much un-lived dying in the individual and the community. We need to read the Gospel instruction carefully.

Correctly understood, forgiveness is the beating heart of the Christ life.

As with every instruction in the Gospels, we must understand this call to forgiveness in the total context of the Incarnation. What is God doing in and through Jesus who is the Christ? He is restoring a broken world, recovering a lost unity, healing relationships that have been sundered. This is the work of unconditional and infinite Love. This is a momentous task, one that can only be accomplished by God. By grace we are called to participate in that work of God. Matthew makes us aware of just how momentous this task is by telling us the parable of the un-forgiving debtor (18:23-35). The servant owes 10,000 talents – a ridiculous figure, amounting to say \$60,000,000. He is forgiven this debt but then is unwilling to forgive a fellow-servant a debt of 100 denarii – a relatively tiny sum, say \$200. This is outrageous! The human family cannot thrive with this sort of behaviour going on. It is a radically selfish response to overwhelming generosity, oppressive behaviour when he has just been liberated. The community must make a total and unambiguous rejection of such destructive behaviour. It strikes at the very heart of the unifying work of God in Christ.

We are participants, by the grace of God, in the work of forgiveness. Only God can forgive, only God can heal the broken relationship and restore the lost unity. We can freely cooperate though. In particular, we can get out of the way. We can choose not to place obstacles that will frustrate the work of grace. The work of forgiveness is first and last a work of grace. We participate in that gracious gift by bringing our hurts and pain, our resentments and anger, honestly, into the presence of God. This process may involve both sacrament and therapy, both conversation and apology, both sadness and joy, both triumph and failure. That is life, the life that God has entered and is redeeming. ■

The Tradition – Mercy within mercy

In the Epilogue to *The Sign of Jonas*, Thomas Merton writes: “What was cruel has become merciful. What is now merciful was never cruel. I have always overshadowed Jonas with My mercy, and cruelty I know not at all. Have you had sight of me, Jonas My child? Mercy within mercy within mercy. I have forgiven the universe without end, because I have never known sin.” There is probably no better basis for coping with the sins of others than this experience of mercy in one’s own life. Such an experience, of course, implies that I have come face to face with myself as one who needs mercy, an essential station along the way to self-realization.

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

Thomas Merton (*No Man is an Island*) suggests the importance of a personal experience of mercy in human relationships: “Your idea of me is fabricated with materials you have borrowed from other people and from yourself. What you think of me depends on what you think of yourself. Perhaps you create your idea of me out of material that you would like to eliminate from your own idea of yourself. Perhaps your idea of me is a reflection of what other people think of you. Or perhaps what you think of me is simply what you think I think of you.” St Bernard of Clairvaux had summed it up well in the 12th century, in a little treatise entitled *The Steps of Humility and Pride*. At the beginning of that work, St Bernard says we all seek the Truth in itself, but we cannot attain the Truth in itself unless we embrace the truth of our brothers and sisters. And we cannot embrace the truth of our brothers and sisters until/unless we embrace the truth of ourselves. The only way we can embrace our true selves is in compassion and mercy. ■

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

www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St **Survival Today** October 11 “Sight and Insight” tba (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

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

° **Batemans Bay** Mariners Hotel Sunday October 28 “Life, what’s it all about?” Neil Harrigan (Info: Viviane 4471 1857).

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

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club September 14 “Australian: Spiritual or Religious?” Fr David Ranson & Gerardine Evans (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL September 21 “Living with Disability” Donna Rahl & Simone Kennedy (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **A Just Society** September 28 “A Youthful look at Justice” tba (Info: (Susanna 9212 7968).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club **Love your neighbour as yourself** November 8 “Moving toward lay ministry” Sr Margaret Watson & Br John O’Shea (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...** October 4 “Pathways to ..” Peter Stuckey & Brigid Cox (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel October 27 “Christian Fundamentalism & Politics” Dr David Milliken & Catherine Hammond (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, September 19 “International Reconciliation - Reconnecting the Nations” Simon Longstaff & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington** Bellevue Hotel **Our Place at Table** October 5 “Joy & Hope” Brad Cooper & Ruth Townley (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club October 26 “Being

Eucharist to one another” Sr Carmel Pilcher & Fr Paul Hopper (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 September 28 “Whenever you do this” Mick Elphick & Virginia Casanova (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel “**I have a dream. I have a dream today..?**” September 21 David Leary & Libbey Byrne rsc (Info: Carmel 0418 451 549).

Victoria

° **Alphington** Tower Hotel, **Marketing Jesus** 8pm-9.30pm October 12 “Marketing Jesus – Is there a role for media?” Geraldine Doogue (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 November 10 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

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

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel September 21 “Spirituality beneath our feet” Sr Anne Boyd (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 October 5 (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 October 26 “The sacredness of life” Margie O’Connor & John Stuart (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** September 27 (Info: Deborah 0419 939 864).

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

° **Mylor (SA)** Warramong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd October 4 “Spirituality, Sensuality: Sexuality & the Sacred” Philippa Goodbourn (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

° **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, Sept 16-18 prayer weekend; Sept 16-22 & 23-29 guided retreats; Sept 30-Oct 8 Life’s Healing Journey/directed retreat; Oct 14-16 Taize prayer weekend; Oct 21-27 Spirituality of Ageing retreat; Oct 28-30 prayer weekend (Info: 02 4630 9159).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills, October 29 “Tasting with the Heart” Liturgy Retreat with Verna Holyhead sgs (Info: 9484 6208). Oct 8-9 overnight retreat for women “Return to Paradise” – contact Judith 4945 5343 or kellsull@ozemail.com.au

REFLECTION MORNING

Michelle Connolly rsj
“On John’s Gospel”

Marist Centre,
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday September 17
9.30am – 12.30 pm.
All welcome. Entry by donation.

Forum with
Bishop Michael Malone
Tapes available \$10

RICHARD ROHR

Aquinas Academy is hosting
Richard Rohr
in Australia, November 2006.
Precise dates are yet to be set.
It is anticipated that Richard will visit
Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.
For further information check:
www.aquinas-academy.com
Tel: 02 9247 4651

Recommended

Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centring Prayer and Inner Awakening*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 178 pages, notes and resources, pb, \$32.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878).

This book will appeal to all readers who are familiar with meditation in the Benedictine tradition of John Main's Christian Meditation. Centring Prayer has been developed by the Benedictine, Thomas Keating, who in turn used as his guide *Cloud of Unknowing*, the work of a 14th century English monk. Centring prayer seeks to develop awareness in the adherents to the level of the divine, beyond the ordinary and the spiritual. This form of prayer bypasses the more commonly understood forms of meditation that use reason, memory, imagination, feelings and will. It uses perception more than it uses the more mental processes and our sense of selfhood. Centring prayer seeks to work on the individual's intention more than concentration and awareness. Attention is paid to thoughts that intervene in the praying: ordinary or attractive thoughts, insights and illuminations and even that which seems to come from the unconscious. All prayer is difficult at times and so too is centring prayer. Those who are adept at this challenging form often begin with twenty minutes of handling their thoughts before moving into centring. It is, thus, not for the "too busy to get involved" but extremely rewarding for those who persevere. This is partly a "how to" book but also a good introduction to various forms of prayer for those who take it seriously.

Richard Lennan, (ed.), *The Possibility of Belief. The Challenges and Prospects of Catholic Faith*. St Pauls Publications, 2004, 272 pages, pb, index, \$24.95.

Here is a theology book for all readers. The text is clear, the language is easily understood by non-theologians, and perhaps best of all, the writers are all Australian. The chapters challenge the reader, many times in unexpected ways. The coverage relates to Faith. Along the way the various writers address sensibly and soundly matters such as: woman, science, religious experience. Contemporary challenges such as justice, Christian marriage, a sexual ethic, Catholic spirituality are all given full treatment. The reader can focus on liturgy, tradition, the place of the Bible or doctrine. There is something for everyone in this quite compact treatment of issues facing us all. One of the great achievements of the book is the ways that the writers refer to other chapters in the text, thus consciously linking ideas and making it challenging for the reader to follow the suggested links. This also gives the appearance of a holistic approach to the theology under discussion. Each chapter (there are fourteen in all) is well footnoted allowing for even further reading. This is an excellent text for beginners, those who may never have had the chance to study theology, for senior high school students, and adult study groups. You come away from this book feeling that Australian theologians understand us and our problems and that they have something substantial to say about their topic.

Len Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*. John Garratt Publishing, 2003, 186 pages, index, pb, \$38.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878).

It's easy to believe that American culture life became paralysed after 9/11. It is just as easy to think that US Catholic thinking has been paralysed by the sexual abuse scandals of last decade in particular. Len Sherry's book seems to be another example of the heightened focus on priests, celibacy and aberrant behaviour. Yet it is a book that has a lot to recommend it, not only to those involved in priestly formation and professional standards. One of the serious and current flaws in discussions about the abuses is that often there is no conversation going on at all. Married people sometimes speak as if they know a lot about sexual matters, thus they suppose that they know as much about celibacy; celibates just as often give homilies about married love from nil or limited experience of such relationships. Sherry's book could be a very useful means of bridging this gap. Lay people would be helped if they understood sexuality more fully before launching into discussions about voluntary celibacy for others (priests, that is); celibates would be helped by a fuller understanding of human sexuality and its actualities. This book is well researched and challenging to all. Yet it is finally about priests, but the laity have a duty to understand the challenges of our ministers and to cooperate with them as much as priests might be expected to cooperate with the laity in their pilgrim journey.

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GAUDIUM ET SPES – 1965-2005

Some excerpts from the document:

"Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them" (28).

"Excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace" (29)

"In order for individual human beings to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various group to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resources available today to the human race. Above all, the education of youth from every social background has to be undertaken, so that there can be produced not only men and women of refined talents, but those great-souled persons who are so desperately required by our times" (31).

"When the order of values is jumbled and bad is mixed with the good, individuals and groups pay heed solely to their own interests and not to those of others. Thus it happens that the world ceases to be a place of true brotherhood" (37).

Michael Whelan SM