



THE MIX



JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED

Circulation of approximately 2500 in Australia and overseas

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 8

OCTOBER 2005

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Our Say – Where do I enter the conversation?

It would be a mistake to limit our conversation as Catholics to internal “Church matters.” The conversation we promote must be truly catholic. *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us: “Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (#1).

Conversation, as we promote it in Catalyst for Renewal, is focused on a particular way of engaging with people. Central to this way is the desire for transformation within one’s own mind and heart. Conversion is, in other words, central to conversation.

In principle, no one and no topic is excluded from the conversation. In actual fact, there are limits. Those limits may be set by time, place, knowledge – or lack of it – temperament, and so on. And, of course, there are individuals who are unwilling or unable to engage in conversation.

A practical question arises: Where do I enter the conversation? The most obvious answer is that each of us enters the

conversation right where we are. We engage the people with whom we live and work. We do this in a manner that seeks to promote an environment within which human beings can flourish. Conversation does not have to be about weighty matters. It is first and foremost a way of being present to others. What a 1971 Pastoral Instruction says of “communication” may be said of conversation:

Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level it is the giving of self in love. (*Communio et Progressio*, #11)

From time to time, the ongoing conversation we pursue daily will take on a specific and serious significance. This may be very personal or it may be very public. Our commitment to living life as conversation ought to prepare us, at least in some measure, for such particular conversations. But we may also have to prepare ourselves by learning more about

the issue that specifies this particular conversation.

For example, throughout the world at this time there are significant social, cultural, political and religious forces reshaping the way we live. One of those concerns the matter of work. It is pleasing to see Christians and specifically Catholics entering that particular conversation.

Apart from the recent Australian Catholic Social Justice Council’s “Jesus Light for the World – Living the Gospel Today,” see “Prosperity with a Purpose: Christians and the Ethics of Affluence” and “Exploring the Ethics of Affluence” (go to www.ctbi.org.uk) and “Briefing Paper No 1 on the Commonwealth Government’s Proposals to Reform Workplace Relations in Australia.” That paper is reviewed on page 8 of this issue of *The Mix*.

We ought to be wary of relegating this particular conversation to the too-hard basket. Its outcomes will be highly significant for work and family life. ■

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

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

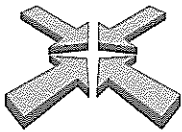
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Registered by Australia Post
Publication No: 255003/02125

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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.

All items submitted for publication in *The Mix* should reach the Editor no later than the 12th of the month previous to publication.

All original work in *The Mix*, unless otherwise indicated, is the work of the Editor.

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

My name is Ann McDowell. I am the only child of Frank and Jean Spratt, baptised at St. Francis Xavier Church, Arncliffe where my parents married. My father's involvement with post-war work meant he missed my early years. Mum named me Ann Elizabeth, believing the association with relatives of Mary, would provide powerful mediators. My father's influence came later, as sounding board for numerous questions posed after the Sunday sermons. Having spent four years in the seminary at Springwood he was quite knowledgeable on the thinking of the time.

During my father's absence, my maternal grandfather became significant in my life. He was a daily example of a faith committed Catholic. He married grandmother according to the rules for mixed marriages. An unfortunate brush with a Parish Priest, led to a prolonged rift with the church. Knowing my grandfather's love of people and the natural world, I promised myself not to let anyone influence me away from God.

In 1973 I married Geoff (a searcher of faith) at Regina Coeli Beverly Hills. Father Malone agreed to my involvement in the liturgy of the nuptial Mass that was celebrated on the sanctuary and not in the sacristy as in earlier days of mixed marriages. Geoff is a continuing support, joining me at Mass at Kingsgrove and giving encouragement to my involvement with the life of the church.

Maybe a lack of siblings caused me to develop an inaudible conversation first with Mary, in childhood, later with the Almighty. One magical moment came when driving just myself to work, I noticed beautiful purple jacarandas lit against the deep blue sky and said out loud to my constant companion 'Wow Lord, did you see that?' I laughed as I realised what had happened.

Two other occasions gave cause for exhilarating moments. Once, when our son, an amateur astronomer gave Geoff and I a glimpse of the country night sky far from city lights, and also when we attended the astronomers dinner under the stars at Uluru. These experiences left a strong impression for the need to promote a clean atmosphere. The immense creative process makes me stop and wonder.

We are blessed with wonderful sons, Darren and Christopher. Once they started school, I began instruction to become a Catechist, revelling in the information given. I was introduced to great spiritual writers, Thomas Merton, William Johnston et al. Taking Summer schools at Catholic Institute of Sydney added to my list of

inspiring theologians, including Thomas Berry. For me, his work includes such wisdom and understanding of our place and responsibilities in the universe.

When the children were young my mother, at the age of 65, developed Alzheimer's. For fifteen years we experienced the changes affecting her. This caused all the family great distress. Help came from Fr. Colin MacKay. Later, qualified as a counsellor, I joined his group which often involves people who have need to form relationships outside of family which often restrict them in their need to confide personal problems.

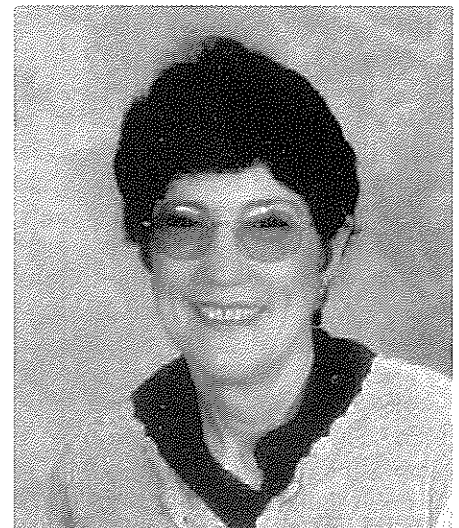
I have also been privileged to work as Pastoral Carer/Chaplain with Uniting Church aged care facilities. Becoming acquainted with the spiritual concerns of people in hostels and nursing homes, I was particularly moved when people of differing Christian views expressed their need to receive communion, they believed in this special relationship with Christ.

Presiding at funerals and assisting families at this often-complex time, was also a special part of my ministry. There was opportunity to learn of the beliefs of the Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist staff who enjoyed talking of their faith journey.

During this time my father became increasing ill from the effects of diabetes and required constant attention, finally dying in 2004. We, as a family, arranged the thanksgiving Mass and, to relieve the priest, conducted the graveside prayers.

Darren later asked me to become a mentor with Young Christian Workers. This is a wonderful environment to hear the concerns of young people and see the help they offer each other.

I look forward to my association with Catalyst where I can listen, reflect and continue my process of learning.



Ann McDowell

Your Say – Freedom & conscience – ongoing conversation

Adrian Bellemore and Peter Coleman

ADRIAN BELLEMORE

I refer to the article of Michael Whelan in the August, 2005 Number of the Mix and, particular, to what Michael has written under the heading of 'Conscience'.

It seems to me that when there is a discussion about matters of freedom of conscience, it is fundamental that, at least, there be agreement as to the meaning that is intended to be reflected by those words. When we speak of freedom of conscience, it surely does not mean that we can 'do whatever we like'. Rather, I think, it means that we are free to act in accordance with our conscience provided that our conscience has been properly formed and after due consideration and reflection.

In that formation, we should think and pray; listen to those more wise than ourselves; and, where available, read relevant material. And part of that formation is to look at what it is that the Church has to say about the matter and to give it due and prayerful consideration.

But the exercise of a Christian conscience can never be a mere slavish obedience to what others, including the Church, are saying or demanding. Whatever the ethic, whether Christian or otherwise, the values that are used in the formation of our conscience, must be such as to be seen as a responsible choice and a choice that is our own. Otherwise, it can fairly be said that a conscience so formed may well be merely a result of the superego. A conscience fails to be free and properly formed if we merely adopt values solely 'because that is what the Church teaches'.

It may well be that an occasion will arise where the Christian, in the formation of the appropriate values, will believe that the determination that is made as the basis for the exercise of conscience, is one that is inconsistent with what is said by the Church. Any action based upon a conscience so formed, however, is not 'sinful' and does not, of itself, mean that the Christian is disregarding his or her faith experience. In the determination of his or her conscience, the Christians must 'do their ethics in fidelity to their story' (1).

As Sean Fagan points out however, intelligent laity are angered by unhelpful statements from Church leaders who say that we must have an informed conscience with the implication that Church teaching will supply the information (2).

Those Church leaders who insist on regard being had to what the Church has said on a matter associated with the freedom of conscience are right to so insist. But it is

also true that whilst we listen respectfully to the authority of the Church we are 'not deaf to all other insights'(3) when engaging in the process of forming our conscience.

Nonetheless, whilst the theory supporting the ability to dissent is clear, there would, in practice, be few occasions where a person can act in opposition to the teaching of the Church and be said to be acting in fidelity to the Christian story. But there are those occasions. In those events, one must be on guard against relativism. As James Keenan says:

To protect us from relativism, then, contemporary moral theologians warn against being arbitrary, on the one hand, and against having a complacent belief in unyielding rules, on the other hand. In between, they propose prudence as the standard for moral reasoning that includes circumstances and rejects subjectivity(4).

1. Vincent MacNamara, *Ethics Human and Christian in Ethics and the Christian*, Columba Press, 1991, 83.
2. Sean Fagan, *Does Morality Change?* Gill & MacMillan, 1997, 101.
3. Timothy E. O'Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, Harper 1990, 116.
4. James Keenan, "Moral Theology Today," in *Priests & People*, October 1994, 376. ■

PETER COLEMAN

I wish to comment on Michael Whelan's thoughtful essay on freedom and conscience. In my view it is the misuse of freedom that leads to bad behaviour, never one's conscience. To follow one's conscience is to seek the good even though what is sought may not appear to be good in the eyes of others.

I have two friends whom I admire for the integrity and probity of their lives. Both have left the Church. One was an active member of the Newman Graduate Association and was chosen to represent Australia at the Consultation of the Laity Conference in Rome that followed Vatican II. The other was a Catholic priest who was much respected for his pastoral work. They seem to be sincere in their views and both reject the moral laxity and materialistic values of the society in which they live.

I have had long discussions with my two friends. Both have been deeply disappointed by what they see as a rejection, by the Church, of Pope John XXIII's challenge to become more effective in making the love of God known to an uncertain and tortured world. Rightly or wrongly, they both see the Church, clergy and laity alike, as having failed in its role of bearing witness to Christ. They see it as an institution whose leaders are not prepared to see their

power challenged, or like a human empire that has lost its way. I see things in a different way, but I respect both my friends. I believe they are following their consciences, just as those who govern the Church are following theirs.

I understand human freedom as a wonderful and mysterious gift from God. It comes along with the gift of conscience. Conscience always prompts, but never forces, us to choose the good. Conscience is bound up with free will and human dignity. Because it resides in the individual and concerns the right use of the individual's freedom I think it is misleading to speak of a "Catholic conscience." There can be no such entity as a corporate or social conscience.

I also think that it is misleading to speak of conscience as being at the service of anything. Such language suggests subjection and slavery and belittles the mysterious nature of God's call. The individual conscience, properly understood, can never be subject to another's conscience even though that conscience resides in a person of high or sacred office.

I am grateful for the moral values and the understanding of revelation that have been handed down to me by the Church. They have been like a pearl of great price. They have helped nurture my conscience and prepared me to live in an age of uncertainty. But it is to Christ, not the Church, to whom I respond in the depths of my conscience. ■

RESPONSE FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks Adrian and Peter for your thoughtful letters. You raised some questions for me. For example:

Adrian, you say: "... we are free to act in accordance with our conscience provided that our conscience has been properly formed and after due consideration and reflection." There is no doubt about the obligation to form our consciences, and a truly adult decision on a matter of significance surely requires reflection. But St Thomas Aquinas says: "Every conscience, whether it is right or wrong, whether it concerns things evil in themselves or morally indifferent, obliges us to act in such a way that he who acts against his conscience sins." Do we need some clarification here?

Peter, you say: "There can be no such entity as a corporate or social conscience." That set me thinking! Is there perhaps any sense at all in which it might be legitimate to speak of a "group conscience"? I will have to reflect more on that. ■

Essay – *Gaudium et Spes* is forty years young

Michael Costigan

Compared with most of the other fifteen documents approved by Vatican II, the pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world is what the Australian Catholic poet Vincent Buckley might well have called a “Late Winter Child” – the title of one of his last collections of poetry, honouring the out-of-season arrival of his and his wife’s youngest offspring.

The pastoral constitution, better known now, like a number of noteworthy papal encyclicals, by its Latin title, was unplanned during the Council’s preparatory and opening periods. It came on the scene thanks to the interventions of a few forward-looking cardinals. It was only near the end of the first session (1962) that Cardinals Suenens, Montini (the future Paul VI) and Lercaro called for a special document in which the Church would be outward-looking rather than introspective.

The Latin title, *Gaudium et Spes*, meaning literally Joy and Hope, tells us much about the expectations that the pastoral constitution helped to awaken in the Catholic Church after its solemn promulgation on 7 December 1965, the Council’s final working day. Even now, forty years after that eventful day, the document retains a capacity to enlighten and inspire, in spite of the fact that many of those early hopes appear not to have been fulfilled. It is probably better known to Catholics in general (and to others) than any of the other conciliar constitutions, decrees and declarations. And its opening sentence would have to be the Council’s most quoted passage: “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.”

During the first few years after the Council, which I had reported for sections of the Australian Catholic press, I gave numerous lectures, sermons and courses on *Gaudium et Spes*. My aim was to place it in context, historically and theologically, to offer some thoughts about its principal features and to reflect on how the Council Fathers had viewed the characteristics and problems of the world at that time.

While it is true, and was acknowledged then by the Bishops, that some of the document’s content would inevitably lose relevance with the passage of time, I find on revisiting the text as its fortieth anniversary approaches that much of its original freshness and vitality survives.

Gaudium et Spes in its final form saw the light of day only after prolonged debate

inside and outside the Council hall, mainly during the third and fourth sessions (1964 and 1965). Since no previous ecumenical council had tried to address the question of the Church’s relationship with the contemporary world in this way, some of the Conciliar Fathers were ill-at-ease about this break with the past. Others, including a few Australians (with the late Bishop Muldoon to the fore), had concerns about the way in which such sensitive issues as marriage, divorce, the population explosion, peace, war and conscientious objection might be handled in the document.

A number wanted the Council to denounce what they saw as the major evils of the modern world, such as communism, while others wished to remain true to Pope John XXIII’s desire to refrain from issuing condemnations. It is interesting to note that the pastoral constitution in fact contains Vatican II’s only formally expressed anathema, against total war:

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.”(# 80).

(This contrasts with recent efforts by some political leaders and media commentators to justify what happened in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo, Dresden and elsewhere sixty years ago.)

In the end, it was remarkable that *Gaudium et Spes* received such wholehearted approval, with a supporting vote of 2,309 and only 75 dissenters.

I stood in St Peter’s Square, Rome, on a Spring day in 1958 to hear the elderly Pius XII, then in the last months of his life, declare in a famous address that he could discern an astonishing Spring-time change in the world.

In spite of its unique and unprecedented position among the teachings of ecumenical councils, the document did not as it were materialise from nowhere. Much of it derived from pre-conciliar developments in theology, ecclesiology and sociology and should also be linked with certain prior acts and utterances of the Church’s leadership.

Nobody had more influence on the contents and direction of *Gaudium et Spes* than such French-speaking thinkers as the Do-

minican priests Marie-Dominique Chenu (whose contribution included the emphasis on “the signs of the times”) and Yves Congar, together with the Belgian priest Gerard Philips, adviser to the Council Father most responsible for urging the assembly to issue such a document – his compatriot, Cardinal Suenens.

On the other hand, some of the German-speaking theologians, who had such a significant role at Vatican II, were less enthusiastic about *Gaudium et Spes* than the French school. Karl Rahner had his criticism about what he saw as its too limited emphasis on sin, while Josef Ratzinger, the present Pope, who had played a part in its preparation, later expressed reservations about its failure to echo sufficiently what he saw as the justifiable pessimism of someone like St Augustine, to whom he has great devotion. Meanwhile, the two German-speaking Swiss theologians, Hans Kung and Hans Urs von Balthasar, each found fault with features of the pastoral constitution, but from quite different perspectives.

At the same time, it is important to recall that the social teaching and actions of all the Popes since Leo XIII (1878-1903) had helped to prepare the way for *Gaudium et Spes*. This is especially true of John XXIII (1958-63), whose two encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* introduced many of the pastoral constitution’s themes, such as its emphasis on human rights and the signs of the times. It is also true of the two Popes in that long pre-conciliar period who did not issue any social encyclicals – Benedict XV (1914-21) and Pius XII (1939-58). Their peace-making efforts and statements during the twentieth century’s two world wars surely qualify them as precursors of Vatican II’s attitude to armed conflict.

I stood in St Peter’s Square, Rome, on a Spring day in 1958 to hear the elderly Pius XII, then in the last months of his life, declare in a famous address that he could discern an astonishing Spring-time change in the world. People and nations were drawing closer together. The wonders of science and technology were producing a new world within which were glittering possibilities for the future of humanity. But there were also appalling dangers at this Spring-time moment. Those same forces, wrongly used, could destroy the human race instead of helping to weld a united family. And this would happen, the old Pope said, if men and women were not made aware of their dignity and responsibilities as the children of a heavenly Father. I see *Gaudium et Spes* as a response to this papal challenge, even if

the original Council agenda, drafted by the conservative Roman Curia, had failed to envisage such a response.

A conciliar document on the relationship between the Church and the world need not have taken so optimistic a view of the world as this one does. As I have remarked, some commentators have found it too optimistic. In fact, the word "world" is given more than one meaning in Scripture and in Church writings. A Christian can only pass an adverse judgment on "the world" in its less favourable sense – the "world" for which Jesus would not pray, into which sin and death have made their entry like victorious powers, as St Paul describes it. Often the Church has rejected the world in this pejorative sense. The pastoral constitution does not overlook this meaning, speaking of

that spirit of vanity and malice which transforms into an instrument of sin those human energies intended for the service of God and humanity (# 37).

We are reminded of "the monumental struggle against the power of darkness" that "pervades the whole history of mankind".

But "world" has other meanings and there is a danger that if too much time and energy are spent denouncing and building ramparts against the evil aspects of the domain of Satan, not enough will be left for the positive task from which nobody is exempted, least of all Christians: consulting the advantages of one's brothers and sisters, contributing by one's personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan (# 33).

We owe gratitude to the Fathers of the Council, I believe, because the document in its final form is so magnificently positive. It teaches us to see the whole of earthly reality in the light of the divine Mysteries of creation, incarnation and redemption. In this light, human activity is ennobled. It becomes a collaboration with the Creator, a fulfilment of God's command, a contribution to the saving mission of the Incarnate Son of God, and a preparation for that new dwelling place and new earth where justice will abide, and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all the longings for peace which spring up in the human heart (# 39).

The consequences of this vision of the world and of human activity are many. They include a proper recognition by Christians of the autonomy of earthly affairs – not in the sense that they do not depend on God, but in the sense that created things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order, and that

these values must be respected (# 36).

The consequences also include the rejection of any real conflict between science and religion, as well as the proposition that our ordinary activity as human beings is related to God:

They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities (# 43).

The Council's document strongly endorses all activity aimed at the socio-economic betterment of the human race, the relief of suffering, the promotion of peace and the elimination of injustice from the world.

On the difficult question of problems arising in the earthly city, *Gaudium et Spes* reminds the Church's laity not to imagine that to every problem, however complicated, their pastors can readily offer a concrete solution – or even that such is their mission. Rather, the document states, let lay persons,

enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, ... take on their own distinctive role (# 43).

Even now, forty years after that eventful day, the document retains a capacity to enlighten and inspire, in spite of the fact that many of those early hopes appear not to have been fulfilled.

Of course, the teaching of the pastoral constitution has been further developed by the Magisterium during the past four decades. One thinks of Paul VI's encyclical on development, *Populorum Progressio*, the three social encyclicals of John Paul II (*Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*), the World Synod of Bishops on Justice (1971), the Holy See's publication of the *Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine* (2004) and the teachings at local level on subjects like peace, the economy and women's place in the Church and in society by national conferences of Bishops, including those in the USA, England, Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

Gaudium et Spes also led to the creation of many new Church entities operating locally, nationally and internationally in the areas of overseas aid, development and social justice. It has also become a charter and inspiration for many lay and religious social justice initiatives and activists. They and others should be encouraged to keep return-

ing to the Council's document. Although it is long (perhaps a bit more wordy than it needed to be), out of date in places, possibly over-optimistic and, in most available English translations, irritatingly committed to the use of a masculinist vocabulary, it remains to this day one of the Catholic Church's most readable, helpful and indispensable texts.

To gain most from looking again at *Gaudium et Spes*, one needs to reflect on today's "signs of the times" and on how we who are the Church, the People of God, could be responding to them in the light of what the Gospel tells us.

Some of those signs are similar to or have evolved from those discerned by the Fathers of Vatican II in the mid-1960s. Others remind us of the truly extraordinary changes that have occurred in the world since then. Samples would be: advances in communication technology; the information explosion; much increased awareness of threats to the environment and in particular climate change; the AIDS pandemic; the emergence of new and ever more threatening forms of terrorism; the rise of religious fundamentalism; the fall of communist regimes; the movement of peoples, including growing numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers; the continuing influence and growth of the women's movement; the persisting gap between and within rich and poor nations; the phenomenon of globalisation; and the growing consciousness of a need for effective international law systems and agencies.

Change has also affected the Catholic Church in many ways during these years. It is no longer mainly or primarily a European institution. While the number of Catholics world-wide has never been greater, there is a sense that, at least in Western or affluent countries, it is in something of a state of crisis – although that is sometimes exaggerated by historically and theologically illiterate self-appointed "orthodoxy" police.

If a new edition of a document like *Gaudium et Spes* were to be issued in the near future, it would have to take heed of all these changes in both the world and the Church. But it would surely reiterate the pastoral constitution's strong appeal for the laity not only

to penetrate the world with a Christian spirit (but) to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society (# 43). ■

Michael Costigan has just retired from the position of Executive Secretary of the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Peace and Ecology. He is an adjunct Professor at Australian Catholic University. Michael lives in Sydney.

Words for a Pilgrim People

"Go to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find to come to the wedding," (Matthew 22:9)

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"Nationalism has been superseded by the doctrine of the Mystical Body, which is as old as Christianity. It is the mystery of Christ in us. Because Jesus lives in you and me, we are one. This truth comes down from heaven. We must try to grasp the reality that lies behind these words. In the conversion of St. Paul, one sentence contains the truth. I am Christ whom you persecute. We are one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father. How this can be is a mystery. When you think of Christ, think of the whole Christ, the fullness of Christ in space and time, a real existence. That the Mystical Body includes only the Roman Catholic Church is heresy. The Mystical Body is the inseparable oneness of the human race from Adam to the last person. Can I have any animosity toward any Japanese, German, Italian – black or white? If we have animosity, we are liars in Christ." (Dorothy Day, "During World War II," in Shawn Madigan, editor, *Mystics, Visionaries and Prophets: A Historical Anthology of Women's Mystical Writings*, Fortress Press, 1998, 355.)

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"Certainly the old order is changing, but we do not know what is to come. The enemy is in all of us. We have got to arm not against Russia but against war. Not only against war but against hatred. Against lies. Against injustice. Against greed. Against every manifestation of those things, wherever they may be found, and above all in ourselves." (Thomas Merton, "Christian Action in World Crisis," originally published in *Blackfriars*, June, 1962, reproduced in William H Shannon, *Thomas Merton – Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, Crossroad, 1996, 80, 81 & 82.)

□□□

The Bible – Who belongs?

On the Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) we are asked to meditate on the parable of the wedding feast. (See Matthew 22:1-14. See also Luke 14:15-24 for a similar parable.) Scholars suggest that Matthew's Gospel was probably written down about 85CE. This places it in the context of second and third generation Christians. However, it is also in the context of the enormous tensions of Jewish society at that time. This may account for the harsh polemical side to this and some of the other parables in Matthew. We ought to be careful, therefore, that we do not lose sight of the central thrust of the parable which is about an invitation rather than a condemnation.

The symbol of the banquet is borrowed from Isaiah's eschatological vision: "On this mountain, for all peoples, Yahweh Sabaoth is preparing a banquet of rich food" (Isaiah 25:6). A banquet is an event of great celebration and enjoyment. Isaiah goes on to speak of "fine wines, succulent food". A banquet is also an occasion in which we expect divisions to be overcome. It is in some small way a triumph of our best possibilities over our worst. And this is an intimation of what God has in mind: "The veil which used to veil all peoples, the pall enveloping all nations; he has destroyed death for ever. Lord Yahweh has wiped away the tears from every cheek; he has taken his people's shame away everywhere on earth" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

Everybody is invited! In the time of Jesus, there were some religious authorities who thought that the halt and the lame, as well as the "sinners," would not be invited to this banquet. Jesus responds: "Go out to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find" (Matthew 22:9). Who do you think you might find at "the crossroads" in a place like Jerusalem at this time? You will no doubt find some "decent" people. But you will certainly find some folk there who are not so nice. And let us not romanticise this. Yes, you will find the poor and the needy. But you will also find the criminals and those out to use and abuse others. Are they invited to this triumphant banquet? It seems so. The only requirement is that you do not exclude yourself by refusing the invitation or by turning up with some intent other than the enjoyment of the party. Such is the Kingdom! ■

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The Tradition – The eucharist

American Jesuit, Thomas Rausch, writes: "A marvelous story is told about Dorothy Day, Dorothy Day was no ordinary Catholic. Always a maverick, she was a radical, a one-time Marxist, a pacifist, the inspiration behind a vital movement of men and women which took root in the urban deserts of inner-city America. The Catholic Worker communities combine direct service to the homeless and destitute of America's skid rows with an uncompromising resistance to militarism, the arms race, and every recourse to violence. The story concerns a eucharist celebrated by a priest prominently involved in the peace movement at the Catholic Worker center in New York. The liturgy was celebrated around a table with a loaf of French bread and a cup of wine, simple but dramatic in that kitchen where so many were fed each day. Afterwards while those present were standing around chatting with one another someone noticed Dorothy Day on her hands and knees, carefully gathering the fragments of the Eucharistic bread that had fallen during the communion.

God in Jesus has truly entered into our history and remains there

"Contemporary theology could easily allay her scruple over the crumbs; after all part of the sacramental sign is bread, and a particle that no longer resembles the bread from which it came cannot be recognized as the body of Christ. But her attitude of reverence in gathering both the particles and the poor is of a piece. It reflects a deeply Catholic attitude which suggests a grasp of Eucharist and church in their essential meaning and relatedness. The Eucharist stands at the very center of the Catholic tradition; it affirms that God in Jesus has truly entered into our history and remains there to be encountered, in the members of the community, in the faces of "these least ones" (Matthew 25:45), in material signs and gestures, and in a special way in sharing the bread and wine of the Eucharist." ■

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Mail: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

W: 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?” tba (Info: Viviane 4471 1857).

◦ **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie October 26 Professor Jenny Edwards (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

◦ **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club October 12 “Christians and Homosexuality” John Marsden & tba (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

◦ **Engadine** – Engadine RSL October 19 “I dream a Church” Robert Fitzgerald & Bernice Moore (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

◦ **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St **A Just Society** October 26 “Nothing Personal – It’s just Business” 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 November 14 “Healing a Broken World – Seeing Hope with the eyes of a Joyful Heart” Christine Carlton & Fr Kevin Bates sm (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

◦ **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive **From Small Beginnings...** November 15 **Catalyst Dinner with Andrew Chinn** (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, October 17 “Recognising & Celebrating God’s Creation - Earthcare” Col Brown & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Waddington** Bellevue Hotel **2006 Theme The Getting of Wisdom** (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 October 11 “Does God Punish?” tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

◦ **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville October 26 “Dreaming a Church” Bishop Geoffrey Robinson & Kate Mannix (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

◦ **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel “**I have a dream. I have a dream today..?**” October 20 Phil Glendenning & Sharni Chan (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 November 15 “The possibilities of Spirituality in Politics” Anna Burke & Kevin Andrews (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

◦ **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel October 19 “Children leading community” Angela Kelly (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

◦ **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston November 16 “Give Peace a Chance: Telling our local stories” Pauline Clayton & tba (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9374 1844).

◦ **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm November 2 (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, November 28 “Unravelling the Da Vinci Code” Alex Cunningham & Fr John Petrus (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 (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 December 11 “Entertainment & Spirituality” Richard Leonard (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** (Info: Deborah 0419 939 864).

◦ **Mylor (SA)** Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd November 1 “A View from where we Stand” Rabbis David & Patti Kopstein (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

BISHOPS FORUM
With Bishop Michael Malone.
Tapes available \$10

◦ **St Mary s Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Oct 14-16 Taize prayer weekend; Oct 21-27 Spirituality of Ageing retreat; Oct 28-30 prayer weekend; Oct 28-Nov 5 directed retreat; Nov 11-13 prayer weekend; Nov 11-17 guided retreat; Nov 19-27 directed retreat (Info: 02 4630 9159).

◦ **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills, October 29 “Tasting with the Heart” Liturgy Retreat with Verna Holyhead sgs; November 11-13 “Mid Life Spirituality” weekend with Yvonne Parker sgs (Info: 9484 6208).

REFLECTION MORNING
Bishop Geoffrey Robinson
“The Christian Life”

Marist Centre,
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday October 15
9.30am – 12.30 pm.

All welcome. Entry by donation.

◦ **Aquinas Academy, Jubilee Lecture**, “Passionate about the process, detached about the outcome – Living creatively within the institution.” **Michael Whelan SM PhD**. The Crypt of St Patrick’s Church, Grosvenor St, Sydney. **Wednesday Oct 12 2005, 6pm – 8pm**. \$10 donation. All welcome! (Info: Sandra on 02 9247 4651)

◦ **The Gospel of Mark** – 7 mornings with Br Brian Beggs FMS, BA, Dip Ed, MA, BD, at Aquinas Academy, 141 Harrington St, Sydney, 10am-12noon. \$98. (Info: Sandra on 02 9247 4651)

Recommended

Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations, "Briefing Paper No 1 on the Commonwealth Government's Proposals to Reform Workplace Relations in Australia," September 2005, 59 pages. (Email secretariat@accer.asn.au or phone 03 9614 8644.)

ACCER is an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of solid thinking on social justice, grounded in the experience of the New Testament community and the Christian communities that blossomed around Asia Minor in the early centuries, even in the face of persecution, and expressed down the ages by the practical service of many different groups, by the extraordinary intellectual output of St Thomas Aquinas and more recently by encyclicals such as Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) and John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* (1991). The ACCER document stands within that tradition. It also stands within the culture, not outside it. This briefing paper is thoughtful and practical. It is also humble, recognising the complexities of workplace relations and the need for respectful and intelligent conversation on this matter. It does not withdraw, however, from expressing particular concerns about the proposed legislation, in so far as it is known at this time. Reading this sort of material can be hard going. However, given the implications for society, we ought to make the effort. To be Catholic is to be actively involved in such things.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi: The Love of Christ Towards Migrants*, St Pauls Publications, 2005, 95 pages, footnotes, pb, ISBN1 876295 95 3, \$5.95.

If the ideas and hopes expressed by the Pontifical Council were seriously put into practice, the face of the Catholic Church would change significantly. The theological bases for the care of all emigrants are clearly laid out. The role of the Church to alert its members to be Christian to migrants took shape under Blessed Giovanni Scalabrini in 1905, to be followed by pastoral letters, decrees, canon law, and Vatican II documents: local churches responded by establishing special ministries to carry out the mission of care for those who chose or who were forced to leave their homes. We are reminded of the Hebrews who were emigrants in Egypt, of Christ and His family who had to flee for their safety and of Pentecost where the Spirit empowered the Apostles to reach out to all people, regardless of race, language or creed. All Christians are enjoined to reassess their attitudes towards those who leave their homes, for whatever reason, and to exercise genuine Christian love towards them. We are asked to assist, welcome and to work towards their integration into our communities; especially we are asked to ensure that their living, working and social conditions are fair and just. This is a demanding ask of us all, and the section on the relations with Muslim immigrants requires close reading.

"Turtles Can Fly." A film made in 2004 by Kurdish director, Bahman Ghobadi. Ghobadi's previous films include "A Time for Drunken Horses."

Bahman Ghobadi says: "The Kurds do not have an instant of happiness, they have a knot in their throat. They want to scream, but they cannot. Their history is a history of exodus." "Turtles" is a view through the lens of Kurdish refugee children. The film is dominated – haunted? – by the presence of a teenage girl, Agrin. Agrin lives on the border of Iraq and Turkey, in a refugee camp with her older brother and her blind child. The brother has lost both his arms, blown off by a land mine. He now defuses landmines with his teeth. The defused mines can be sold. American land mines fetch the most. Agrin's child is the result of rape. In one memorable scene, this little blind child, abandoned by the young mother, wanders into a minefield. Death stalks these children. The arrival of the American liberators makes no difference. "Turtles" is a beautiful film full of ugly truths, a drama in which tragedy and comedy merge with each other so subtly you may be embarrassed to find yourself laughing at something horrible. The children are full of vitality, optimism and a worrying matter-of-factness. You will not watch the news or read the papers in quite the same way after seeing this film. Artists are prophets. They see and hear beyond the maze of taken for granted assumptions and views that tend to anaesthetize the rest of us. They remind us of what matters. This is particularly true of Bahman Ghobadi.

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WORK

"Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that human beings are called to. These two spheres of values—one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life—must be properly united and must properly permeate each other. In a way, work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which we normally gain through work. Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for the very reason that everyone 'becomes a human being' through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education. Obviously, two aspects of work in a sense come into play here: the one making family life and its upkeep possible, and the other making possible the achievement of the purposes of the family, especially education. Nevertheless, these two aspects of work are linked to one another and are mutually complementary in various points. It must be remembered and affirmed that the family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work. The teaching of the Church has always devoted special attention to this question, and in the present document we shall have to return to it. In fact, the family is simultaneously a community made possible by work and the first school of work, within the home, for every person." (John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, #10.)