



THE MIX



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Our Say – *The Mix* and *Deus Caritas Est*

In April 1996, Catalyst published the first issue of *The Mix*. We originally intended to publish eight monthly issues in that first year, a sort of straw in the wind. The response was positive enough to prompt a ninth issue in December. Since that time *The Mix* has been published ten times each year, once each month, March through December.

This milestone happily coincides with the publication of Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. (See review on page 8 of this issue of *The Mix*.) All those who look for good conversation in both Church and society ought to be thrilled with this encyclical.

Through his text, Pope Benedict puts us in mind of Pope John XXIII, and his Opening Speech at the Council:

"At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of people allow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like

fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.

We are also prompted to recall *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), the first encyclical of Benedict's predecessor, Paul VI. Paul spoke of "colloquium salutis," "the conversation of salvation," into which we are all called. This is an ongoing conversation of liberating love.

Over the last forty years this writer has read many encyclicals and Roman documents. None has moved him more deeply than this first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI. It is a simple and beautiful statement of our faith: God is love, God loves us infinitely and unconditionally, and we know it. This is

not only the core of our faith, it is the very essence of what we are made for. The Church is called to be a sign of this fact in the world. We are quite literally made to be in love. There is a key sentence in the second paragraph:

Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Benedict reminds us time and again in this encyclical of the mystical heart of our faith. Christian morality, Canon Law, dogmas, structures of authority, rituals and customs only have value in so far as they are manifestations of that mystical heart. Christianity can therefore never be reduced to an ideology or a merely human system. It is a set of relationships flowing out of and leading back into the relationships within the Godhead. This is "colloquium salutis," the great liberating conversation of our lives. Our particular conversations find their fruitfulness in and through this primary conversation. ■

100th issue of *The Mix*!

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

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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)

The Patrons are:

Sr Maryanne Confoy RSC
Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM
Br Julian McDonald CFC, AO
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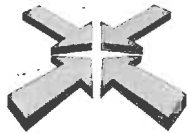
The Editorial Committee is:

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

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

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



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

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

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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Annette Milross. I was born in Marrickville, Sydney, in 1942. My father was in Queensland at the time, his army unit awaiting overseas deployment. He got leave to visit a couple of days after my birth and immediately took me to be baptized, my mother still in the hospital!

This was the beginning of a very traditional (Irish) Catholic upbringing. My schooling was with "the Sisters" – the Josephites, for a very short time at Dulwich Hill, then the Mercies when we moved out to the developing west, at Pendle Hill.

I have always been grateful to the nuns who taught me in secondary school, Our Lady of Mercy at Parramatta. Some of these women were Christian feminists, before I had ever heard of the words. They encouraged my development at every level, though I didn't recognize it then. It was a pre-Vatican II faith I was educated in but learning and understanding were to be encouraged and asking questions and debating admired.

After school I studied Pharmacy at Sydney University. I met my husband-to-be in those years. He was studying Engineering at Sydney Uni., and also from "good Irish Catholic stock". So it wasn't surprising that we married when we were both finished university and began to have a family very quickly.

Vatican II changes were just beginning. We still had a Latin Mass Nuptial, but with a few of prayers in English!

The 1960's were a very interesting time to be a Catholic and a pharmacist. It was the time of *Humanae Vitae* and very vigorous debate about contraception. The Catholic Family Life Centre in Sydney was started and I soon became involved in educating couples in fertility control, using natural means. This group went on to become the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning (ACNFP).

Over the years I embarked on a series of educational courses, in communication skills at the Institute of Counselling and in moral theology at St. Paul's Seminary, to better understand the Church's teachings and to be more able to assist the many couples who came to the NFP centers with moral, medical and relational dilemmas.

I began to realize that my inclination and my skills were drawing me more towards a career in relationship counseling rather than in pharmacy. Also, I was beginning to feel the need to "break out" of the Catholic environment and experience more of the secular. Thus, when my youngest child was well established in school, I began some retraining. I was accepted by the Marriage Guidance Council

of NSW (now Relationships Australia) to complete their excellent training in relationship counseling. I was then employed by them for the next 8 years. After that I felt called to return to Catholic circles and worked for Centacare at Wollongong for over 12 years, until my recent retirement.

People have asked me "why did you make this career change?" I believe it began when my husband and I attended a Marriage Encounter weekend in 1974, where I clearly heard that "WE ARE THE CHURCH". This belief has motivated me to follow the path I have over the past 30 years. It continues to inspire and motivate me.

Living through the post-Vatican time of "windows opening to allow a fresh breeze through" was an enlivening experience. What has been frustrating and disappointing to me has been the more recent years when the windows seemed to have been shut again.

At hierarchical levels there seems to be a fear, that the faithful need to be reined in, that the movement of the Spirit is not to be trusted in the individual arena.

What enlivens me today? What gives me hope for the future?

My experience has been that the Spirit is alive in our world. Movements such as Marriage Encounter have shown me this. Also Antioch which came along just as our firstborn son was about to "throw it all in". That proved to be a renewal for myself and my husband, and in fact for our 5 children. My children are all married, with families.

They are not all regular Sunday Mass-goers, but they are bringing up our grandchildren in our faith.

Today it is the Spirituality in the Pub movement that continues to enliven me and give me hope for the future.



Annette Milross

Your Say – A postcard from the front

Pat Murphy

Thank you for all the prophetic initiatives that you and your colleague disciples enable to merge and promote growth throughout worldwide clientele whose lives are enriched or disturbed by them – hopefully both.

I've just finished digesting at various levels *The Mix* of November 2005. *The Mix* is always a source of rich insights.

I have to say, I'm far from sure of my response to the essay of Zeni Fox – 'An unfolding reality affects all systems.' Whilst I recognise the incredible lack of awareness [so carefully 'nurtured' through several centuries – or should I say, since the beginning of time] concerning the grim powerlessness that is screaming for attention in our church today. I'm also aware of how very different and overwhelmingly institutional the American church is in comparison with ours – which is not to say that we don't have huge problems. Nor do I suggest that the overpowering obstacles of our own situation can be ignored 'for another day.' In fact, I believe they have been so skilfully established that it's almost impossible to convince the average person of the blindness that must urgently be addressed.

I am a Dominican Sister – Diamond Jubilarian + – long since retired from official ministry but I journey on with a range of challenges based on your conversation approach and hopefully guided by the Spirit. I try never to miss an opportunity.

The whole scene looks so simple except for all the human beings around – then comes the 'crunch' and the messy unfathomable blindness that clings to power and is indescribably crushing.

As you would guess, I spent many years in education, and was in Sydney at the time of Vatican II, which I ran with from its inception. A four-year Saturday course at Sancta Sophia brought many Orders together and, for me, the possibilities were endless. I was a Primary School Principal at Santa Sabina at the time and the introduction of a Parent-Teacher Association according to Vatican II was a most gratifying experience for all concerned. I was then transferred to our school connected with our Teacher Training College in Canberra where Parents and Teachers welcomed a similar experience.

This led to my own frustration as I became aware of the urgent need for Adult Education and my pleas that, we as a Congregation address, that led to my becoming our first Pastoral Associate. Little did I

know what I had done to myself and, as you have guessed, the whole issue of 'women in the church' began to add to my powerlessness. I actually did my Pastoral year at the EAPI before being appointed to Tasmania. This course covered several relevant topics including some excellent Scripture Lectures from whom I gratefully began to embrace the values in Jesus' own Mission Statement and became mightily aware of the dangers of Power, Wealth and Status – wondrous stuff [Luke, 4: 16-22].

Forgive me, I'm not about to bore you with my whole eighty plus years. Suffice it to say that I've worked in two Parishes in Tasmania, four in Melbourne – each one had it's own incredible story – so much pain, so much blindness, so much rejection. Through it all, my growing awareness of the ignorance behind all the unnecessary pain. Who are we? Whose are we? Who are we becoming?

For over forty years, I've used a rather simplistic analogy to explain the difference between the Pre-Vat and Post-Vat Church. Wasn't it BEHAVIOUR according to somebody else [Pre-Vat] and Relationship lived and bequeathed to us by Jesus as His way of life [Post-Vat]? But what a price we were paying for our Scripture deprivation for all too long – Behaviour seemed/seems set in concrete [John, 15:12 ...] etc.

I am a Dominican Sister – Diamond Jubilarian + – long since retired from official ministry but I journey on with a range of challenges based on your conversation approach and hopefully guided by the Spirit. I try never to miss an opportunity.

I love the story of little 6-year-old Mary who, when asked, 'Who made her,' replied 'Well, God made me little but now God and I are doing it together.' [One of Mark Links' stories.] But it says it all, so simply, for each of us to put it into context.

One of my deepest regrets, at this point in time, is what appears to be a decline in the development of the Catechumenate which made such strides through the eighties – Jim Dunning and Christiane Brusselmanns, such prophetic giants amongst countless others throughout the world.

The Catechumenate Process, with all it's potential brought me huge Hope and Delight as I journeyed with many candidates and catechumens. I also believe that it's much broader than non-Catholics becoming Catholics. I believe we're all on a conversion journey from birth to death and I've worked hard to share my insights and possibilities wherever I've worked – but it's so hard when the priest is unable to perceive the potential – to appreciate it's wondrous stages, and encourage the Faith Journey with ALL it has to tell.

With the passion I had for the potential of this conversion process, I decided to apply the relevant words and produce a visual that portrayed the process in the context of each person being *Called, Gifted and Sent* It enables each person to see life emerging through the breath of the one Spirit who calls, gifts, sends and journeys with us, as well as raising awareness of GOD'S WORD in each moment. Yes, each moment. The WORD OF GOD . . . for us to BE THERE . . . LISTENING, RESPONDING, MAKING A DIFFERENCE because we're 'connected.'

That's the simple process. It belongs to everyone, each one *Called, Gifted, Sent*, each one different.

Allow me to touch on just one more word that must be addressed i.e. EQUALITY. Not one of us is a mistake, each one of us has a WORD to proclaim. Jean Vanier portrays this so inspirationally in his communities world-wide – each person a source of LIFE. Henri Nouwen, who spent the final years of his life in one of these communities as Chaplain acclaims his companion, Adam, in an entire book, as the most empowering WORD of his own inspirational life.

Since it's inception in the early eighties, I think, I have been involved in WATAC [Women in the Australian Church]. EQUALITY – none of us a mistake – EQUALITY, the enlightenment between the male and female perspective.

I think I'm trying to say that, with the simple values, scarcely touched in the above comments, we have all it takes to build a better world and there's room for everyone. The Scriptures say it all and we rejoice and give thanks as we listen and give thanks for GOD'S WORD in the present moment – This is my Body. ■

Sr Pat Murphy OP, Croydon, VIC

On October 28, 1965, the Vatican Council document, *Nostra Aetate* (“Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”) was promulgated. The St Thomas More Society and the Jewish Board of Deputies organized a function on October 20 2005 at the Great Synagogue in Sydney to recognise the importance of this document and reflect on the forty years since. At the same function a book by Cardinal Cassidy, entitled *Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue*, was launched. Extracts from three of the presentations are reproduced below. Complete copies of all texts are available from the Editor.

From the message of Rabbi David Rosen in Jerusalem:

It is a great pleasure and honour to send this message to the Sydney special celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. I don't think it is hyperbole to say that this is the most dramatic transformation in the course of human history that we are celebrating. Remember that the way the Jewish people had been traditionally presented within the normative Christian tradition was as a people cursed and condemned to wander until they would recognise the true dispensation. Therefore, whatever suffering that was incurred was more or less to be expected, and as a correlation of this there was a demonisation of the people that facilitated some of the most terrible things in European history and, maybe, indeed even in world history.

To have gone from a state of seeing a people rejected and then to categorically refute that as the historic *Nostra Aetate* did and to affirm that God's covenant with the Jewish people is an eternal covenant, never broken and never to be broken, was in itself a remarkable change, a historic turnabout.

It was *Nostra Aetate* that ushered in this transformation in teaching and in preaching and in relation to the Jewish communities and the Catholic neighbours around the world. There was always however a lingering suspicion in Jewish minds that if there wasn't an establishment of full relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel as to how totally sincere this new transformation, this new relationship was. Leaders of the Church were at pains to point out that the issue of the delay in the establishment of relations with the State of Israel had to do with political circumstances and fear for the well being of Christian communities

and interests within the Arab world. But the proof of that was of course in 1993 when the bilateral commission between the State of Israel and the Holy See of which I was privileged to be a part, concluded this historic agreement known as the Fundamental Agreement, between the Holy See and the State of Israel establishing full relations between the two and making it perfectly clear in the preamble of that document that this took place within the context of that historic transformation in Catholic Jewish relations.

Part of the greatness of the late John Paul II was in his understanding of the power of visual images, understanding that these are more impactful today than a hundred documents, maybe even more than documents, no matter how wonderful they may be. And there were special moments in his Pontificate that summed up and personified that transformation.

One was the historic visit to the Synagogue in 1986 in Rome where he used the language that I referred to before, calling the Jewish people the dearly beloved elder brothers of the Church. The world saw that this new relationship was a reality, a transformed relationship between the Church and the Jewish community.

But in many respects the visit of the Pope to Israel, the Holy Land, in the year 2000, substantially facilitated by that diplomatic accord, itself the fruits of *Nostra Aetate*, facilitated images of enormous power, especially in Israel where there might have been, as I say theretofore, some suspicion as to how totally sincere this transformation was. For people to see the Pope in tearful solidarity with Jewish suffering at Yad Vashem, to see him standing in respect for Jewish tradition at the Kotel (the Western Wall) and putting there the text of a prayer he had composed for his convened liturgy of repentance at St. Peter's a few weeks earlier asking God's forgiveness for sins committed by Christians against Jews down the ages, was an enormous impact upon Israeli society, upon Jewish society within Israel and I would say Jewish society throughout the world and perhaps even throughout Christian society as well. The full accord to Israel's elected officials at the State reception, at the President's residence and on the Pope's departure left a powerful visual emphasis of how totally sincere and genuine this transformation was.

That Pope John Paul II's successor,

Pope Benedict XVI, has affirmed this commitment shows this is anyway not something that is dependent upon individuals. It is now enshrined in the very fabric of the Church. It is something to truly celebrate, both because it impacts upon the lives of Catholics and Jews everywhere, but because it is truly this historic transformation from what had been a tragic misrepresentation, a tragic demonisation of the Jewish community on the part of its daughter faith to a new found relationship based on mutual respect.

This places many special responsibilities upon us both in terms of our relationship and for the world. As the late Pope John Paul II put it, as children of Abraham we are called to be a blessing to humankind. In order to be so we must first be a blessing to one another.

Message from Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, in the course of giving high praise to Cardinal Cassidy's book:

Forty years have passed since the Second Vatican Council, and the generation that personally experienced it is now passing away. The younger generation perceives it as a distant and historical event, perhaps even concluded. Yet the contrary is true: the insights and teachings of the Council have never been more relevant and fundamental. The Council continues to be the cornerstone on which to build the future of dialogue, on which we base the search for full communion among the baptised; understanding, collaboration and respect between Christianity and Judaism; and the dialogue with other religions.

“NOSTRA AETATE – 40 YEARS AND BEYOND” – Address by Rabbi Raymond Apple, AO RFD

Once upon a time there was a light-hearted book about English history called “1066 and All That”. It habitually passed judgment on events by saying, “That was a good thing” or “That was a bad thing”. Tonight I would like to borrow its terminology and to say (not at all lightly but with the utmost seriousness and respect) that in the 20th century record *Nostra Aetate* was a good thing. Vatican II, of which it was a major element, was one of

the seminal achievements of modern history. It moved the Catholic Church away from defiant rejection of modernity to cordial conversation with the world. From then onwards, the Church would never be the same again, nor would the world. *Nostra Aetate* itself also changed the landscape for ever.

Religious diversity became for the Church an issue for engagement, not merely an irritant able only to be overcome by proselytisation. The Jewish chapter of *Nostra Aetate*, which is my particular concern, began to overturn a two-millennial culture of opposition. In all these respects the Church has continued to be true to its new self, though not without occasional difficult moments

Tonight, as we apply a forty-year perspective, we recall that forty years is a significant period in Biblical thinking. A famous verse says, "The land had peace for forty years" (Joshua 3:11). Similarly, the period since 1965 has on the whole been a time of peace in the relationship between religions, and even when we found it necessary to protest about mishaps and complain about misunderstandings we did so as friends. But it would not be done enough if all we did tonight was to limit ourselves to reporting on the chronicle of these forty years. We need to face a further forty-year challenge, suggested by the Talmudic saying, "Forty is the age for understanding" (Avot 5:21); and indeed today's vantage point is near enough yet far enough away to begin to understand the full significance of 1965.

That understanding cannot come in static fashion, looking at the event on its own without text or context. The assessment needs to be dynamic, as part of and the cusp of a movement. So allow me to address myself to *Nostra Aetate* dynamically, ...by... considering ...what...was... before it, what was around it, and what was after it.

What was before it? There were centuries of Christian antagonism to outsiders, especially to Jews. The diversity of religions had only one value, as a challenge to the Church's missionary energies. Other faiths could not, by definition, be valid or legitimate. Judaism in particular had to be condemned. It was not yet conceivable that a pope could say, as did Pius XI in 1938, "Spiritually we all are brothers". It was more likely that the voice to be heard would be that of Innocent III, who declared in 1169, "The Jews are paying for their crime by God's eternal banishment, and through them the truth of our faith is

confirmed".

The long, unpleasant story resounds through time. The first Church Council, taking place in Jerusalem before the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism, considered whether gentile followers of Jesus needed to keep the commandments. The decision, dispensing with the full spectrum of Jewish ritual law, was a major element in the shift from Judaism. The (subsequent) Councils constantly reaffirmed the rejection of religious toleration.

Probably none was as far-reaching as the first Vatican Council in 1869-70, which established papal infallibility and closed off dialogue with modernity, denying legitimacy to evolution, socialism, and political liberalism and warning against religious toleration.

Yet within a few decades came Pope John XXIII, described in an obituary tribute as "a man with a flaring intuition of our century". Within months, John took the decisive step of acknowledging the need for conversation with the modern world, thereby gaining sufficient credibility for the Church to enable the whole of humanity, for all its theological problems with Catholicism, to regard the pope as the world's moral leader. During the long incumbency of John Paul II, in particular, a papal response to events or moral dilemmas evoked grumbles, but the world knew that religion had spoken.

What was around it? What I mean by this question is what feeling we sense when we read the document. What does it say between the lines?

What we read between the lines of *Nostra Aetate* is that the Hebrew Bible does after all provide a striking and enduring resource and perspective.

The document adopts the position of the early chapters of Genesis, which see all humanity as made in the image of God. It echoes the Tower of Babel story that sees human diversity as part of the Divine design. It reflects the Hebrew prophets who envisaged all the nations making their way (may we say, their separate ways) to worship God on His holy mountain.

We also find a distinction being drawn between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and the non-monotheistic faiths on the other. While admitting the spirituality and ethical sensitivity of all religions, and respecting all that is "true and holy in these religions", the document cannot ascribe Divine revelation to the other faiths, but sees Judaism and its daughter Christianity as God-given and

forever linked. It accepts its own Jewish origins whilst not abandoning its conviction that it has the true light, but it no longer argues that Judaism has lost its lasting value. It makes it heretical to be an antisemite and/or to demonise the Jewish people, either of ancient times or of today, for alleged deicide.

The document cannot, however, be faulted in its iteration that the human community is one. It rejects all forms of prejudice and requires believers to seek to live in and at peace with all others, though of course a Jewish reader would much prefer a positive statement about human nature that does not need to rely on the old Original Sin doctrine that all men are (equally) sinners.

What was after it? *Nostra Aetate*, for all its defects, heralded a new age. So – have these forty years implemented the hope? Have they improved the document and made it workable? In the first few minutes of this presentation I anticipated my conclusions, when I suggested that despite the difficult moments it has been a good period and *Nostra Aetate* has not only worn well but turned out to be, in the terms of "1066 and All That", a good thing.

Obviously, the painful misunderstandings of centuries cannot be removed in a single year, but there is no doubt that the Church, during the Vatican Council, sincerely sought a new and better understanding of itself.

One of the points most discussed (in preparing *Nostra Aetate*) was the relation between the Church and the Jewish people. The final result was neither very good, nor very bad: it was a compromise addressed to Catholics; a pastoral document in a positive spirit, and as such a revolutionary declaration compared with the statements of former Councils. The Vatican Document is an important step, but it is only a first official step. It is a theoretical statement, the result of a painfully-won insight on the part of leaders of the Catholic Church. All will depend on whether – and how – this document is put into practice.

It is all a work in progress. Vatican II turned the Catholic community into a great modern movement. *Nostra Aetate* changed the Church from what I have heard described (bluntly and none too delicately) as a predatory bully, to a world faith ready to discourse with other world faiths. The Jewish chapter moved the Church from a mentality of hostility to a sibling convinced that Catholics and Jews are both partners in the mystery of God's plan. All this must be seen as a great achievement.

The Bible – That’s his territory

Words for a Pilgrim People

“He was with the wild beasts”
(Mark 1:13)

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“By the quality of our inner lives I do not mean something characterized by ferocious intensity and strain. I mean rather such a humble and congenial dovotedness as we find in the most loving of the saints. I mean the quality which makes contagious Christians; makes people catch the love of God from you. Because they ought not to be able to help doing this, if you really have got it: if you yourself feel the love, joy, peace and utter delightfulness of the consecrated life – and this to such an extent that every formal act of worship in church is filled with the free spontaneous worship of your soul. That is what wins people above all. It raises the simplest vocal prayer, the most commonplace of hymns, the most elaborate ceremonial action to the same level of supernatural truth. People want to see and feel this in those who come to them with the credentials of religion: the joy, the delightfulness, the transfiguration of hard, dull work and suffering which irradiate the real Christian life. You can’t do more for anyone than give them that . . . for that means real redemption, here and now, the healing of all our psychic conflicts, all our worries and resistances and sense of injustice.” (Evelyn Underhill in **An Anthology of the Love of God: From the Writings of Evelyn Underhill**, edited by Lumsden Barkway and Lucy Menzies, Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc, 1976, 220.)

□□□

“To come to the knowledge of all desire the knowledge of nothing. To come to the pleasure you have not you must go by a way in which you enjoy not. To come to the knowledge you have not you must go by a way in which you know not. To come to the possession you have not you must go by a way in which you possess not. To come to be what you are not you must go by a way in which you are not.” (St John of the Cross, from **The Ascent of Mount Carmel**, Bk I:13, 11. Kieran Kavanaugh OCD and Otilio Rodriguez. OCD translation.)

□□□

The First Sunday in Lent gives us a dense passage from the Gospel of Mark – 1:12-15. Mark’s Gospel, probably written about the year 85CE, has a breathless quality to it, as if you caught the author straight after the event. He writes with immediacy and earthiness. There is nothing contrived about this telling of the Jesus story, no adornment to the text. Its naïveté makes it eminently believable.

In a few lines, Mark tells us that “the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness” where he lived with wild beasts for forty days, was tempted by Satan and ministered to by angels, John the Baptizer was arrested, Jesus then went into Galilee and “proclaimed the Good News from God.” The listener is tempted to call out, “Hold on Mark! Let’s take this a bit at a time!”

“The Spirit drove” Him. Jesus is not on an ego project. He is *sent*. He is here on a mission. And his energy and power are derived from the Spirit of God. He remains in the wilderness for forty days. The Exodus is recalled, Moses is remembered. Every Jew knew the significance of the wilderness – the place of death in which the life of the Covenant is born by the grace of God. The Covenant, forged in the desert long ago, is what this story is about. This is a new and definitive chapter in the ancient story of love. The Jews in the first century can identify easily with the metaphor of the wilderness, given the desolation visited upon them by the Roman occupation. They need to be reminded of the Covenant of love and the fulfilment of the Great Promise: “I am with you!” That Great Promise is fulfilled, against the odds, in the wilderness of Calvary.

Jesus writes the definitive chapter of the ancient story with his very life and death. *He* is the Good News, this man who can be found in any wilderness anywhere in history, this man who is at ease with wild animals – perhaps a reference to Isaiah 11? – and consorts with angels, this man who knows the mocking voice of Satan and the temptation to abandon his vocation. This man is in you, with you, for you. And you are most likely to meet Him in the wilderness, that’s His territory. Through Him, with Him, in Him, we will bring light forth from darkness, love from hatred, despair from hope and life from death. ■

The Tradition – Asceticism of living

You cannot have your cake and eat it. This is one of the first lessons we all must learn in life. Woe betide those children who are told they can have and do what they like. A certain amount of discipline is essential for a happy life. There is another lesson that is learned hot on the heels of this one: The process of learning you cannot have and do what you like can be painful, even as it is rewarding.

This is the human ground of asceticism. The English word “asceticism” comes from the Greek word *askesis*, meaning “exercise.” The Greeks used it of athletes preparing for their events. St Paul applies it to the Christian life (see 1Corinthians 9:24-27). The great football coach, Jack Gibson, summed it up in his laconic and blunt manner: “No pain, no gain!”

This need for asceticism actually derives from the depths of our beings and our necessary struggle to be real. And this is, first and last, a work of grace (see Philippians 2:12). One contemporary guide puts it nicely: “This ‘salvation,’ or saving of ourselves, which is what life is about, consists in a kind of losing. It consists in the taking up of the cross in so far as this means the denial of our egotistical selves by submitting to what really and positively is. This is always a kind of continuous death. It is a death to our own perceptions, to our own understanding of things, to our own merely private point of view, and it is a death we desperately need to die in order to live. But it is one to which we can only wisely and properly submit if we understand that the work of our saving is primarily God’s work, and that in that work he will not fail us unless we insist upon making it impossible for him to succeed. It is precisely for this freedom of God’s action in our lives that we have to struggle and pray everyday.” (Aelred Squire, *Asking the Fathers*, SPCK, 1973, 102-103.) ■

.... this means the denial of our egotistical selves by submitting to what really and positively is.

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

SIP Promoter - Terry O'Loughlin on (02) 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 (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

° **Batemans Bay** Mariners Hotel (Info: Viviane 4471 1857).

° **Blackheath Spirituality - The Australian Connection** The Gardners Inn March 15 "Spirituality in the Mundane" Catherine Beaver & Camden Gilchrist (Info: Elizabeth 4787 6198).

° **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie March 1 "Prayer" Bishop David Walker (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

° **Braidwood** Servicemen's Club March 29 "Morality & Terrorism" Tony Coady & Jeremy Nelson (Info: Pauline 4842 2829).

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club March 8 "The Church & Freedom of Speech" Sr Mary Walsh pbvm & John Buggy (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

° **Engadine** - Engadine RSL March 15 "Living in Truth" Bishop Geoffrey Robinson & Julie Morgan (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

° **Five Dock - Passion** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St March 29 Fr David Coffey & tba (Info: Susanna 9888 5840).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club March 14 "Radical Christianity in today's world" Bishop George Browning & Bishop Patrick Power (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel March 13 "Dare to Dream and Live the Gospel Message Today" Bishop Geoffrey Robinson (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive March 7 "Spirituality - a variety of journeys" Stephanie Dowrick & Robert Fitzgerald AM (Info: Carmen 4367 2743 or Sue 4334 3174).

° **Newport** - Newport Arms Hotel **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

° **North Sydney - Be Attitudes Vs Me Attitudes** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & St St, North Sydney, March 20 "Will I move beyond my comfort zone?" tba & tba (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

° **Paddington - The Getting of Wisdom** Bellevue Hotel April 5 "Embracing the

Shadow" Michael Whelan sm & Marcelle Lawrence (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

° **Penrith** Golf Club April 26 "Sitting on the fence or stepping out?" Sr Margaret Hinchey & Fr John Crothers (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd March 14 "The Unbiased Samaritan" Jeff Gambin (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H)).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

° **Waitara - What can I do to preserve the wonder of the world, to eliminate anger & disparity & hate in the part of the world I touch?** The Blue Gum Hotel March 15 Leoni Degenhardt & Dr Graham English (Info: Carole 9869 1036(a/h)).

Victoria

° **Alphington** Tower Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 17 "Family - Youth - Church: What is Happening?" Marie Joyce & Ruth Wagner (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 March 22 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel March 8 "Living overseas as an exchange student" Rose Scanlon (Info: Paula 5231 3376).

° **Darebin - Spirit of Life - Shades & Colours** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston March 29 "Nourishing Spirit - Giving Spirit" Mary Nolan & Gerard Reed (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9471 1410).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm May 15 (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

° **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm, **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

° **Southern** Finbar's Irish Pub, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

° **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville March 7 "Who's Welcome at the Table of the Lord?" Fr Bob Maguire & tba 7.30pm (Info: Anne 9312 3595).

° **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel March 7 "Living with Addictions" Jean Dwyer rsj (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

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

° **Hobart North** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro April 5 "Christians should write, not just read, the signs of the times" Veronica Brady & Anne Kellas (Info: Mary-Anne 6228 6000).

° **Perth (WA)** The Elephant and Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm **Recommencing 2006** (Info: Deborah 0419 939 864).

° **Verdun (SA)** Stanley Bridge Tavern, Onkaparinga Rd March 7 "Regeneration of the Spirit" Brian Gilbertson & Jeanette McNicol (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

° **St Marys Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, March 5-13 directed retreat; 17-19 & 31-April 2 prayer weekends; March 17-23 guided retreat; April 7-9 & 28-30 prayer weekends; 7-15 & 18-26 directed retreats; 9-15 guided retreat (Holy Week); 28-30 Mid-years spirituality (Info: 02 4630 9232).

CATALYST ANNUAL APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In 2005 we launched our Seventh Annual Appeal by writing to our *Friends* to help us in our mission of raising the level of good conversation in the Australian Catholic Church as one way to promote renewal.

Thank you for your generous response in the past. This Appeal has raised \$33,960.

We continue to ask for your generous

Bridge for Asylum Seekers

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a Benefit Concert

"Building Bridges"

Sydney Town Hall,

March 23, 2006, 7pm

with Julie McCrossin

interviewing

Julian Burnside QC

John Doyle (Roy Slaven) will conduct a Charity Auction

Information: 9810 5826 or

building.bridges@hotmail.com

Cormack Murphy-O Connor of

Westminster will be coming to Australia in August-September 2006.

Info: Sandra on 02 9247 4651

www.aquinas-academy.com

Recommended

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Society of St Paul, 2006, 72 pages, pb, \$5.95. ISBN 1921032049

Pope Benedict wrote this, his first encyclical, in German. The resident Latin scholar at the Vatican translated it into Latin. Archbishop William Levada, who replaced Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, as Head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was surprised when Benedict submitted the text of *Deus Caritas Est* for examination by members of the CDF. The encyclical is about 16,000 words and is made up of a brief Introduction and Conclusion and two major parts. Part One – “The Unity of Love in Creation and in Salvation History” – is just over 6,000 words. Part Two – “The Practice of Love by the Church as a ‘Community of Love’” – is just over 7,000 words. This second part is based on a draft developed by Pope John Paul II. The encyclical maintains a simple focus on the nature and implications of love. Although it does gently note errors, at no point does it ever become polemical. The mood of hope and optimism is tangible. Various authors – like Aristotle, Plato, Virgil, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Descartes and Nietzsche – are referred to. The encyclical, from start to finish, is a quietly confident and joyful meditation on the love of God that permeates the outer reaches of the cosmos as much as the inner corners of our individual lives. Read it meditatively rather than analytically.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Society of St Paul, 2005, 426 pages, pb, \$39.95, footnotes, indexes. ISBN I 876295 96 I.

A compendium is – according to the Oxford Dictionary – “a work presenting in brief the essential points of a subject; a digest, an epitome.” The authors of this compendium, which comes from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, is a splendid resource. No other international organisation can claim the rich tradition of struggling intelligently, bravely and honestly with the principles of social justice than the Catholic Church. We may not always live up to our own best teaching, but that does not detract from the substance of that teaching. This compendium gathers a summary of that tradition between two covers. It is inspiring and enlightening. It is also very practical and easy to consult. The material is gathered under twelve chapter headings, including “God’s Plan of Love for Humanity,” “The Church’s Mission and Social Doctrine,” “The Human Person and Human Rights,” “Principles of the Church’s Social Doctrine,” “The Family, the Vital Cell of Society,” “Human Work,” “The Political Community” and “The Promotion of Peace.” It is intended as a companion to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, though the style is more open and the content more coherent. There is much here to give us heart and wisdom in the market place.

“The Monastery,” a BBC TV production (2005) to be screened on ABC TV during 2006.

The BBC approached the Benedictine monks of Worth Abbey in England and asked them to participate in an experiment. The experiment involved inviting some young men to live in the monastery. The purpose would be to see if the Benedictine life could offer them anything. The monks agreed. Several hundred young men applied to be part of the experiment. Five were chosen. None of the five shared the Catholic faith: Gary McCormack, aged 36, single, Northern Ireland Protestant, former UDA man; Nick Buxton, aged 37, single, studying for a PhD in Buddhist theology, brought up as Anglican but no longer committed in his Anglican faith; Antony Wright, young black man, single, “ambitious and successful,” abandoned as a child by his mother and raised by his grandmother, believes in “a higher being”; Peter Griffith, aged 69, retired teacher and published poet, wants to re-examine the Christian faith he abandoned as a young man; Tony Burke, aged 29, writes scripts for a sex chat line, non-believer. This is a remarkable three-part program. Apart from anything else, it demonstrates the power of submitting to a wise regimen of life. The Benedictine Rule, if it is followed faithfully and with wise guidance, can cut through the pretences and outright lies, expose the fears and anxieties, and thus open a human being to his/her best possibilities. Riveting!

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DEUS CARITAS EST

1. “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the *First Letter of John* express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us”.

“We have come to believe in God’s love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John’s Gospel describes that event in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should ... have eternal life” (3:16). In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel’s faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth. The pious Jew prayed daily the words of the *Book of Deuteronomy* which expressed the heart of his existence: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might” (6:4-5). Jesus united into a single precept this commandment of love for God and the commandment of love for neighbour found in the *Book of Leviticus*: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (19:18; cf. *Mk* 12:29-31).