



THE MIX



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Our Say – The other as promise or threat?

How do you react when people disagree with ideas, values and beliefs you regard as essential or at least very important? A constructive reaction – or response – might seek to understand the other person better through respectful questions, it might look for possible areas of agreement. It might also involve self-reflection, an attentive listening to what is happening within, in terms of one's own thinking and feeling. This kind of response assumes an inner strength, a certain level of maturity, emotional resilience, and a willingness to meet the other in an honest search for the truth. Such a response, at least implicitly, sees the other person and the situation as promise.

There is, however, another all too common reaction, one that merits special attention because it is potentially very destructive. Such a disagreement may be experienced as a threat. When human beings feel threatened they tend to either withdraw or attack.

Either withdrawal or attack can cause alienation and even violence in the human community. It can, for example, engender deep rifts in families or parishes. Aggressive religious conservatism and fundamentalism – be they from people who profess to be Hindus, Moslems, Christians or believers of any other tradition – seem to be based more on threat than promise. They are not so much a positive engagement with the Divine Reality as they are a defensive posture against a threatening reality. The world may seem more threat than promise, simply because it challenges what we hold most dear.

Over the last generation or so in Australia – and certain other parts of the world – aggressive religious conservatism and fundamentalism have begun to gain an ascendancy in mainline Christian churches. Three factors are evidence of this.

The first is reductionism. Truth and

falsehood, good and evil, are presented as simple and clear choices. The second is elitism. An assumption is made – implicitly or explicitly – that they know what is true and false, good and evil. The third is isolationism. There is active resistance to the idea that we are all in this together, that relationships are more important than any ideology. They seem intent on building an alternate, parallel social reality.

Thinking based on the other-as-threat rather than the other-as-promise, is dividing us. It undermines the common good in the wider society and promotes polarization and alienation in the Church. It is difficult to imagine this continuing without destructive consequences for us all.

Human beings will never stop seeking relationships. However, in a culture of alienation, that yearning might take some destructive turns. The little forums for conversation emerging in our midst may in fact be our social immune system at work? ■

This journal is one of the works of
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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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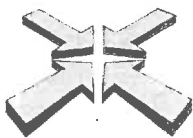
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

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THE HUMAN FACE

What's in a name? Perhaps this will become clear further down. I was christened Francis Hickey but for most of my adult life I have been known as Regis Hickey, Regis being the name I chose as a Christian Brother.

I was born in the Queensland country town of Maryborough. My mother was a woman of deep faith and remarkable intuition; my father had strong Australian values, which he never paraded, and an enquiring mind. I was the third of four children, three boys and a girl. Sport figured prominently in my early years, as did involvement in church life through altar serving. Playing with a meccano set opened up the creative side of my personality.

During a talk at school by the director of vocations, I experienced the power of God and followed his call to religious life. Halfway through my novitiate year I was confronted with a crisis of faith which lasted for seven years. Only later did I realise that this was a dark night of the soul experience.

My first teaching assignment was to Clifton Hill, an inner Melbourne suburb. The classes were large as the numbers swelled through the arrival of immigrant children from Italy and other European countries. The work was demanding, though I enjoyed it, and it often left me exhausted. At the same time I was studying as an evening student for a BA. I made many good friends among the boys I taught at Clifton Hill. Our most recent reunion was at the beginning of last year.

In my early 30s I was selected to do a theology degree in Rome. This was a great experience, but I sensed that I was pushing myself harder than was wise. Some months after my return to Australia I collapsed through total exhaustion. I was 35 and felt I was finished. Like Paul at Damascus, I'd been knocked to the ground. But the Lord sent his Ananias in the person of Dr Fred Kyneur, who treated me by changing my attitude, not by giving me pills. I had to learn trust in God, not the words but the reality.

Fred taught me to give in to win; to suffer to get well; and to share it to keep it. That took some doing, and several years of struggle. Later I came to see the wisdom of Fred's phrase, "everything by love, nothing by force". That's how I try to live. My breakdown was a breakthrough, teaching me to act in harmony with my nature rather than imposing preconceived ideas on it. The mind, I learnt, is a good servant but a bad master.

Years later, after work in schools and province administration, I was assigned to Rome again. I thoroughly enjoyed more than 20 years in the Italian atmosphere.

It was here that I came to understand the importance of a name. A lecture by Fr Herbie Alphonso, SJ, on personal vocation, helped to crystallise my thinking on the significance of a name. I reflected back on an experience I had had in Sydney years before and realised that the power of God was in a word that, during a liturgy, had thrilled me.

That was God's name for me. I have shared this insight with many friends and have found that they also resonate with some phrase or incident of Scripture. The variety of resonances is remarkable.

God has a name for each of us. We find acceptance and confidence in recognising what it is. I have also found that in any difficulty I have only to be true to my name and the difficulty is handled appropriately. Generally it just melts away.

Talking of names, why did I pick the name Regis? Having a tidy mind I was pleased to find that St Regis' feast day, 16 June, coincided with my birthday. Only later did I realise that it means "belonging to the King", and I'm very happy that I chose better than I realised.

During my Roman years I made many friends with whom I keep in touch; relationships being much more important than achievements.

As I age my life is becoming more simple. Isaiah's words are never far from my consciousness: "Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you by your name, you are mine." (43.1)



Regis Hickey

Your Say – Divided Catholics?

Michael Kelly

Recently I attended a lecture which presented Catholics as divided into three groups: the grey group, who attend Mass dutifully, who see morality as primarily about sex, and who are the main source of the Church's financial support; the baby-boomer group, who are little concerned with those matters but who are sensitive to questions of social justice and the natural environment; the disaffected group, sometimes hurt in the past by representatives of the Church, perhaps abandoning the faith, but still forever formed by their Catholicism and often clinging to the fringe of that link.

The speaker's concern was not simply that these three groups exist, but that they seldom even communicate with each other. And that does seem to me to be both true and tragic.

The cause of this division cannot be age, pure and simple; but age is surely relevant, since the grey group and the baby-boomers were brought up on different sides of the water-shed formed by two events in the early sixties – the invention of the contraceptive pill, which was to become the catalyst for a crisis of authority and conscience within the Church, and the Second Vatican Council. The ensuing debate took place at a time of radical change within the broader society, immeasurably intensified by the Vietnam war; and within the Church, as within the whole body politic, there seemed to emerge (more definitely than before) two parties: bishops, priests, theologians and lay people could now be characterised as traditional or progressive, as conservative or radical, or even as old or young.

The progressive-conservative distinction is an over-simplification, useful in some ways but dangerous because it distances people from each other by allowing us to substitute stereotypes for serious attempts to understand. This belief, that we fall naturally into parties, obscures the fact that the same person might hold conservative opinions on this and radical on that. And it hinders our consciousness that Christian love should always over-ride such differences.

Besides, the differences between the greys and the baby-boomers may not really derive from theology, at least in the sense that intellectual positions have been examined and embraced. They seem more a matter of taste, of mores, of attitudes to rules and customs, of ways of relating to other people; and it often seems to me that the gap between the greys and the baby-boomers is at bottom less a truly theological

one than one of different *virtues*. This may actually be a more difficult gap to bridge, for most of us have the weaknesses of our strengths, including a difficulty in appreciating those that contrast with them.

What are these strengths and weaknesses? The baby-boomer group is adventurous, enthusiastic for a better world, tolerant, free of excessive concern with appearances or mere formalities; and they may see the style of the greys as mixing the core truths with outdated and inessential encumbrances quite inappropriate today. They want to look forward, not back.

.... because my life spans the grey-baby boomer gap, these reflections are a small attempt to throw a bridge across it.

But greys may also feel that they too easily dismiss unimaginative liturgies as irrelevant, that they search for depth and meaning everywhere except in those places where these things have existed for millennia, and that they too readily adopt that impatience with distinctions which leads our culture to prefer glib generalizations to hard thought, sometimes repeating unthinking slogans.

The grey group, on the other hand, can be too easily satisfied, too unimaginative, closed, insensitive and even rude. But in many areas they have a greater sense of personal responsibility and, more importantly, they seem to have a greater focus on and devotion to the person of Christ; or at least, a greater sense of the intimate love of God as revealed in the Passion. For they were trained with devotions which focused on that – such as the Stations of the Cross and the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. If we add the rest of the rosary, they were also trained to think often about the Incarnation and the Resurrection.

Those devotions have fallen into disuse among most people under retiring age, and unless some widespread practice of comparable efficacy, such as scriptural meditation, has replaced them, there is at least the possibility that the baby-boomers are not led to dwell on them in a way which excites wonder, compassion, and that deep sense of the comradeship of Christ in the midst of our troubles, hopes, efforts and joys.

Of course, it may be that the old devotions have been replaced by more diffuse spiritual stimuli less easy to see simply be-

cause they are less formal. And perhaps the herculean efforts of the past which, under the inspiration of that sense of intimacy with God the Servant of Man, established schools, hospitals, and hospices, are still being made; but to-day they produce movements like l'Arche, Amnesty International, Médecins sans Frontières, Kids off the Street, human rights movements, politicians meeting for prayer, etc. For the Spirit of God cannot have gone to sleep.

In order to do justice both to new ideas and to the often hard-won treasures of the past, both sides have to become far more open than they have ever tried to be. All this is further complicated by the possibility that under the surface differences in mood or style, there really are implicit doctrinal differences. It could be argued that two unexamined and underlying theologies have been absorbed osmotically by the members of each group; and that whether those theologies are in real conflict cannot be tested until they are brought to the surface.

Even if that exercise of drawing out implicit theologies is possible, it may not be wise. Perhaps exposing the subterranean differences would only drive people further into opposing camps, raising the real possibility of a schism.

Real clarification – the sort which can preserve the best of two opposing views – is all the more difficult when those views are well-founded opinions about profound realities. In such cases, sometimes a new insight is required – one which reveals a previously unsuspected perspective capable of producing a measure of unity – and that is done by saints and geniuses. Yet to retreat from the challenge of clarification surely entails that timidity which St. Paul says is not the spirit we are given.

Whatever prudential judgment is made here, one thing is absolutely clear: that dialogue or debate must be conducted with care, gentleness, tolerance and love – a recipe which, if it had been followed in Luther's time, might have averted the Reformation and replaced it with slow reform.

I was born in 1936. And though I am far more comfortable in to-day's Church than in that of my childhood, I fancy I remember a spiritual beauty that arose from a certain unashamed passionate love and issued in widespread action. I suspect that too much has been jettisoned because of a failure to make distinctions. And because my life spans the grey-baby boomer gap, these reflections are a small attempt to throw a bridge across it. ■

Essay – Technology: friend or foe?

Peter Maher

This is the text of Fr Peter Maher's talk at Spirituality in the Pub, Penrith, February 22, 2005.

I love technology – where would I be without a knife, fork and spoon; hot and cold water; a house and household goods; my car; the phone; the movies, a computer, that magic wine bottle opener thingy and my latest party trick – the motorized pepper grinder thoughtfully given to me as a Christmas gift. Without technology I would not enjoy what I have come to know as the necessities of life – health, education, local government services; social services, community services and play.

Everything I touch for life, work and play involves the creativity and imagination of craftspeople, inventors, artisans, engineers and technicians. All these people armed with loads of technology provide excellent products and services at affordable prices. This enables me to live a joy-filled and healthy life around loving and supportive relationships supported by incredibly efficient means of communication and ever widening possibilities for celebration. I enjoy the ability to communicate, write, develop networks, publish and store information at rates unimaginable when I was ordained 30 years ago when a typewriter and a Gestetner were the advanced technology of evangelisation and celebration.

Today my work in the parish includes email access; publishing a weekly bulletin in hardcopy and to an email list; accurate information storage and accountable account keeping; producing professional documents, rosters and flyers in up to A3 size from our \$200 colour printer; an answering machine I can access from my second job and baptism record access by typing in the surname to the excel spreadsheet. And that's just to mention a few ways technology makes my increasingly bureaucratic job easier.

My other job as chaplain at the University of Technology Sydney would be unthinkable without the computer generated evangelisation possibilities of email; the internet; regularly updated websites; publishing of documents, speeches, liturgies, flyers and brochures; phone and fax access; egroups; national and international networks supported by the instant communication of chat rooms and not in the least the multistorey car park – essential for inner city living and working.

The advances in technology have brought us almost infinite possibilities for making money; spending money; sharing information; learning; creating better and

safer consumables; more and cheaper travel; developing research and recreational tools; staying in touch with family and friends; developing home-based publishing, instant communication and data transfer; developing networks; storing information; entertainment and celebrating with family, friends, local community, interest groups and the faith community.

Technology now touches everything we do at work, at home or recreationally. It's not just that a computer is now essential for every desk – work, home and school – but it is increasingly part of our entertainment whether we play a computer game or go to the gym. Not only will we be likely to use a readable membership card wherever we play or recreate but the equipment is also computerized in one way or another. Everything we do from shopping to driving the car or booking a holiday is highly dependent on sophisticated technology.

We must be prepared to critique technological advances not only for the ethics of the new possibilities for scientific and social consumables, even recognising some are health related, but we must question the way this continues to advantage the already rich and powerful and extend the gap between rich and poor.

In the midst of this rampant technological advance we see something strange. There is growing isolation and alienation. The information sought and peddled in our Western democracies is increasingly packaged to placate the public as we unwittingly serve the vested interests of the wealthy and powerful. Manufacturing consent, Noam Chomsky's chilling idea of nearly twenty years ago, is visible today in Western governments such as our own. We can be lied to successfully – the war in Iraq, Tampa, mandatory detention and the Australian Wheat Board serve as obvious examples. While spin doctors create an illusion around Industrial reform, security legislation, health, education and tax.

Somehow we consent by re-electing the government that imposed these things on us. While this problem is very complex, let me make the point that none of this is possible without the sophisticated technology of the mass media through which the people's consent is gained. While this is an example of technology used for manipula-

tion of ideas and to serve vested interests, it is also true that technology is being used more and more as a counter measure by grass roots organisations.

The internet can be a cheap and efficient tool for accessing accurate information from alternate sources, developing grass-roots movements and networks and developing new strategies and sharing ideas. Texting brought down Marcos in the Philippines in a non-violent coup. The internationally coordinated protest against the Iraq war that brought millions onto the streets in capitals and small towns around the world could not have been organised without the internet – a cheap and efficient means of global communication. New websites can be developed cheaply to share information often excluded by mainstream media.

Is there no end to the technological essentials for justice work, ministry, evangelisation and indeed living? Could not Jesus have come to this world in a time of mass communication to deliver his message more effectively? In the last few reflections, I have begun to recognise the complexities of technology and that there may be a downside to this wonderland of technology. Well, what of the limitations!

Technology can be difficult for the educated but there is a serious gap occurring between the haves and the have-nots – at least as serious as the basic question of poverty itself. The single most frightening technological statistic is the disparity between the technological rich and poor. The New Economy Revisited survey of 300 disadvantaged families in Australia with children at home (conducted by the Smith Family, 2002) showed that less than 60 per cent of these families had a computer at home, compared with 74 per cent of all Australian households with children at home. The *Earth Trends* website notes that in 2003 Denmark and Japan had almost 80% of homes with computers while Laos and Eritrea had 0.2 of 1%. The *United Nations* website notes that most African nations were under 1% in 2003.

There is a myriad of complex ethical questions involved in the technological advances in medical; reproductive and genetically modified research and development. I will not enter this minefield in detail here except to note that there is a serious ethical question for Australians who have a high take up rate of technological advances. Apart from the ethical questions about the research procedures, we must also ask if these procedures can be justified in a world where 50% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Certainly these procedures

will add to the consumer imbalance where 20% of the population of the world's developed nations use 86% of the world's resources.

Genetically modified foods that held out hope for feeding the world's poor have simply lined the purses of those who developed them leaving the peasant farmer unable to afford the patented seed; unable to compete; without an income for his family and forced to migrate to the city to try to find work. This often results in a series of undesirable outcomes such as homelessness; high infant mortality; lack of clean water, food or sanitary conditions; sending the children to work or beg and criminality born of spiralling poverty. (See *Global Issues* website.)

Other problems associated with the boom in technology include the effect on the environment (eg global warming). Some would even say there is evidence to suggest that technological advance does not make us happier, wealthier; healthier, wiser or more human. There is growing evidence to suggest the way some technologies erode human interaction could be negatively affecting all these outcomes. Anecdotes of office communication about the morning coffee and "how are you" enquiries through email between people at adjacent desks seem to be no longer urban myths.

We must be prepared to critique technological advances not only for the ethics of the new possibilities for scientific and social consumables, even recognising some are health related, but we must question the way this continues to advantage the already rich and powerful and extend the gap between rich and poor.

However the question of what makes us whole, free and more human individuals, what improves our social cohesion, creates civil society and interpersonal communication and what creates community for work and play, takes us onto the next step of spirituality. Technology could be a major barrier to personal spiritual growth.

It is not unusual for me to spend hours each working day writing and reading emails and surfing websites. Besides taking me into the solitary world of words, there is the danger of addiction (and that's without any untoward website activity). It is just as easy to be addicted to Online Catholics and Cath News as it is to a porn site. The material may pose different moral questions but the addiction or need to engage in this activity may be equally dangerous to my spirituality which must ultimately have as its

touchstone the "formation of the heart" as Pope Benedict says in his first encyclical. This requires both the challenge of human interaction and creating space for integra-

tion. The advances in communication can be devoid of both these. As a student wrote to me in recent email – "I find it hard to talk about these issues in an email. I prefer to wait till we can meet."

I acknowledge that much can be gained from the internet to help in spiritual formation but we might be cautious about it replacing the interpersonal challenge or allowing technology to seduce us into thinking information can replace space for integration.

Ultimately spiritual reality is deeply connected with who we are – with our identity. Ultimately it is in personal and interpersonal integrity with our self, community and God that forms our identity as fully human. There is a danger in the world of advancing technology that Descartes' rationalist wisdom, "I think therefore I am," may become, "I compute therefore I am". Then technology would threaten our very existence as fully human – mind/body/spirit beings. ■

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

I grew up believing that if I masturbated God would 'take' another one of my brothers – my eldest had died suddenly on Xmas Eve when I was 14. Somewhere in my head "Goodness" and "Wholeness" were related to being, "unsexual".

I also grew up thinking that each time I got attracted to a male it was lust.

By the time I got through adolescence, I was pretty sure that I wasn't going to be even fit for hell. I remember going to see the first *Star Wars* picture with the President of the local Catholic Youth Movement. After the picture we had coffee, and I said, "Well, I don't know about you but I'm going home to have impure thoughts about Hans Solo!" (Harrison Ford was rather gorgeous in those days.) Of course I wouldn't have, because all those sorts of thoughts had to be rapidly pushed out of consciousness or confessed at least.

As it was, my childhood had been fairly traumatic as I was led to believe that my father, an avowed atheist, was doomed when he died. Although Dad was good and kind and loyal, he was nonetheless automatically destined to spend the after-life with Saint Nick no doubt being made to be caddy for Beelzebub as he played 18 hell-holes each day. I prayed fervently for Dad to "see the light" and suddenly convert to the "truth" of Catholicism. It never happened!

I was the last of my family to be part of the institutional Church. In some ways I'm relieved. I remarked to a friend recently that I seem to have spent my childhood being chastised for being "Normal". I do miss

the ceremony and the music, and of course the Gospel only has its full impact when it is read amongst those that struggle to contend with one and other. But I do not miss the silliness with regard to sex.

So many priests that came into the Parish when I was young obviously struggled with their celibacy, not because they were bad or warped people, but because they were simply human. It is heartening to learn in recent days that the Church has finally solved all its myriad of sexual problems: of course it was the male homosexuals all along. That is a bit like the butler's role in cheap detective novels! If only we can de-program them the light will shine in the Church once more and all will be well with the world.

Where on God's earth did we get the blatantly silly idea that going without sex made people closer to God? (My observation is that sometimes it does, and other times it makes them neurotic and silly.)

I really hope that this silliness about homosexuality sorts itself out soon.

I still have much affection for the Church, and have many beautiful friends who do admirable work and remain in its midst. But somehow to me it has "lost the plot".

One of my favourite singers is Edith Piaf. When Edith died hundreds of thousands lined the street to mark their respect. Reading a biography about Edith would lead you to believe that she slept with anyone she found attractive. Edith was refused a Requiem Mass because of her lifestyle. She had a strong devotion to "The Little Flower" throughout her sad and short life. The "Little Flower" ironically had only 30 present at her funeral.

Both women touched lives, hearts and emotions. "The Little Flower" was my icon as a child. In adulthood, I listen to Edith in all her passion and humanity. Both "The Little Sparrow" and "The Little Flower" had lives filled with struggle and pain. Yet only God knows the real story of their souls – and that to me is what the Gospel is all about.

PS: Dear Michael: I send this to you as a "reflection". Some of my writing is very raw, I realise, and you may need to edit it if you print it – you had better to a "name and address supplied" thing, as I am already in trouble up to my neck! You do very good work. A friend recently sent me a reflection of yours and it touched me deeply. Much peace. God's blessings.

Name and address supplied.

The Bible – The gift on offer

Words for a Pilgrim People

“It is the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.” (John 15:8)

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“I discovered something which I had never confronted before, that there were immense forces of darkness and hatred within my own heart. At particular moments of fatigue or stress, I saw forces of hate rising up inside me, and the capacity to hurt someone who was weak and was provoking me! That, I think, was what caused me the most pain: to discover who I really am, and to realize that maybe I did not want to know who I really was! I did not want to admit all the garbage inside me. And then I had to decide whether I would just continue to pretend that I was okay and throw myself into hyperactivity, projects where I could forget all the garbage and prove to others how good I was. Elitism is the sickness of us all. We all want to be on the winning team. That is the heart of apartheid and every form of racism. The important thing is to become conscious of those forces in us and to work at being liberated from them and to discover that the worst enemy is inside our own hearts not outside!” (Jean Vanier, **From Brokenness to Community**, Paulist Press, 1992, 19.)

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“If one is not haunted by the sublime about man, one does not know the humiliation either. One does not feel the Fall. If it is in any sense true that man is the image and glory of God, then this sense must take into account the inescapable fact that something has evidently gone unaccountably wrong with him.” (Aelred Squire, **Asking the Fathers**, SPCK, 1972, 27f.)

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“Who thinks of hitching Pegasus and an old nag to one carriage for a ride? And yet this is what it is to exist (existere) for one compounded of finitude and infinitude.” (J. W. Elrod, **Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works** (Princeton University Press, 1975, 53f.)

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The Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Easter is taken from John 15:1-8. The passage begins: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” The passage ends: “It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.” Like bookends, these two statements hold the rest of that passage. They provide the context and allow us to begin to understand the rest.

The theme of Israel as a vine – chosen and later rejected – is common in the Jewish Scriptures. See, eg, Isaiah 5; Hosea 10:1; Jeremiah 2:21 & 5:10; Ezekiel 15:1-8 & 17:3-10; Psalm 80:8-18. Jesus is the true vine, the one in whom the Father’s desire for a Covenant is fulfilled. By joining our lives with His, we too share in the new and eternal Covenant. This is pure gift. Through Him, with Him and in Him, we participate in the unmerited, unasked for, unconditional, infinite love of God. This is the essence of the Good News.

The Gospels, implicitly and explicitly, through words, imagery, events and actions, in varying ways, seeks to tell us that we have been loved into freedom.

The Father’s desire is that we flourish. Would God make us to simply wither? Yet wither we will if we are cut off from Love. We are made to be in Love. That is written into our beings, as surely as the DNA and genetic programming. And we die when we are not in Love, whether we realise it or not. But we “bear much fruit” if we *remain* in Him. The verb “to remain” carries notions of steadfastness, attentiveness, waiting and expectancy. It is used repeatedly throughout John’s writings, especially this Chapter of his Gospel.

As with all the proclamations of the Good News, the focus is God’s action. Secondly and in the light of what is on offer, the Gospels reflect on our response. The gift of the Father, in Christ, constantly made available to us by the Paraclete, is the gift for which we are made – being in Love. The Gospels, implicitly and explicitly, through words, imagery, events and actions, in varying ways, seek to tell us that we have been loved into freedom. It is our birthright. The Gospel also, again implicitly and explicitly, through words, imagery, events and actions, in varying ways, seeks to tell us of the unspeakable sadness and tragedy of refusing the gift that is on offer. ■

The Tradition – The glory of God

A too negative understanding of the human person – especially the human body – has repeatedly crept into the history of Christian thinking. It is a curse! We find it in the great St Augustine, influenced as he was by the Manichees. In the 7th and 8th centuries there was a strong move to destroy all images in churches and one of the motivating forces was the belief that the human body was too corrupt to be depicted in a church. Martin Luther used the image of fresh snow over a dung heap to describe the relationship of grace to the human person. Jansenism – and its first cousin, Calvinism – have also made tragic inroads into the Christian consciousness and indirectly nurtured atheism and irreligion.

“For it is not you who makes God, but God who makes you.”

The best of the tradition, grounded in the person and teaching of Jesus, presents a very different portrait of the human person. Listen, for example, to the 2nd century bishop of Lyons, St Irenaeus: “The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human being is the vision of God.” (*Against the Heresies*, 4,20,7.) And St Irenaeus goes on to speak vividly of the way God continues to create us with our free cooperation: “How shall you be God who have not yet been a human being? Or how shall you be perfect when you have scarcely been created? How shall you be immortal when in your human nature you have not obeyed your creator? For it is necessary in the first place to keep to your position as a human being, and only then to receive a share in the glory of God. For it is not you who makes God, but God who makes you. If, then, you are God’s workmanship, await the hand of your maker, which does everything at its proper time, opportunely however, in relation to you who are being made. Offer him a supple and docile heart, and keep the form which the artist has given you, having in itself the water which comes from him, and for want of which, in hardening yourself, you would resist the imprint of his fingers.” (*Against the Heresies*, 4,39,2.) ■

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

[www.catalyst-for-](http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm)

renewal.com.au/news.htm

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

◦ **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

◦ **Blackheath Spirituality – The Australian Connection** The Gardners Inn (Info: Elizabeth 4787 6198).

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

◦ **Braidwood** Servicemen's Club (Info: Pauline 4842 2829).

◦ **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club May 10 "Radical Christianity Today: The Joy and the Hope" Rev Dr Anne Warsborough & Fr Andrew Granc ofm (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

◦ **Engadine** – Engadine RSL May 17 "How much Justice is there in our Church? How well do we the church respond to the needs of the faithful?" Fr John Usher & Sr Libby Rogerson (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

◦ **Five Dock - Passion** The Illinois Hotel, Parramatta Rd & Arlington St May 31 "Passion Misused – The Christian Journey with Homophobia" Justice Michael Kirby (Info: James 0418 242 932).

◦ **Goulburn** Soldiers Club May 9 "Washing up or wooing the world; women, family and work" Clare Barbato & Pia van der Zandt (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

◦ **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel May 8 "Dare to Dream – Recapturing our Culture" Gail Wallace & Megan Piket (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

◦ **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive June 6 "Embracing the Challenge" Margaret Douglass & Emma Pierce (Info: Carmen 4367 2743 or Sue 4334 3174).

◦ **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel May 25 "The Environment & Wealth Creation" Phil Glendenning & Lynn Czinner (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

◦ **North Sydney – Be Attitudes Vs Me Attitudes** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, May 15 "Finding hope in our Reality" Carolyn Martin & Michael Murphy (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Paddington - The Getting of Wisdom** Revue Hotel June 7 "The getting of wisdom: Contemporary spiritual paths in Australia" Carol Cusack & tba (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

◦ **Penrith** Golf Club June 28 "After the darkness comes the dawn" Glen Boyd & tba (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

◦ **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

◦ **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville May 31 "Living in a Climate of Fear?" Ken Moroney & Pauline Rae smsm (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

◦ **Waitara – We must choose to matter - In the part of the world we touch?** The Blue Gum Hotel May 17 Julian McDonald cfc & Therese Vassarotti (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 7451).

◦ **Bendigo** Foundry Arms Hotel 8pm-9.30pm June 7 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

◦ **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 16 "The Power of the Personal Human Story" Michele Gierick & Martin Flanagan (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

◦ **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel May 17 "Aboriginal Reconciliation – What is the Christian response?" Fr Kevin Lenehan (Info: Paula 5231 3376).

◦ **Darebin – Spirit of Life – Shades & Colours** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston July 5 "Reconciling Spirit – Giving Spirit" Delsie Lillyst & tba (Info: Gordon 9895 5836 & Margaret 9471 1410).

◦ **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm (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, (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).

◦ **Southern** The Dev Hotel, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm June 28 "The Church and Marriage breakdown: How do people resolve this situation? How do the people of God respond? Is the conversation over?" Tim Mulvaney & tba (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

◦ **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm (Info: Anne 9312 3595).

◦ **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel May 23 "Spirituality – What turns Youth on?" 4 young local people (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

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

◦ **Hobart North** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro June 28 "Viewing with Spirit" Joclyn Cooper & Maz Gil-Harper (Info: Mary-Anne 6228 6000).

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

◦ **Verdun (SA)** Stanley Bridge Tavern, Onkaparinga Rd June 6 "Empowerment" Dr Lorna Hallihan & tba (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

◦ **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, May 2-31 sabbatical retreat "Life's Journey Experience; 3-11 "Spirituality for Intimacy" retreat/directed retreat; 12-20 Life's Healing Journey/directed retreat; 22-30 directed retreat; June 4-10 & 16-22 guided retreats; 16-18 prayer weekend; 23-25 men's retreat (Info: 02 4630 9232).

REFLECTION MORNING

Marist Centre
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday May 20

With
Margaret & Denys Goggin
Life as Witness
9.30am – 12.30pm
All welcome. Entry by donation.

Reflection Mornings Victoria 2006

At Currajeen,
811 Bridge Inn Road, Doreen
"The Spirituality of our Lives"
9.30am – 12.30pm
May 13
September 9
Info: Margaret 9471 1410 (Bus hours) or Maria 0409792168
Entry by donation

SIP Days for Organisers of Spirituality in the Pub:

An opportunity for SIP people to come together to share insights and successes, pray together and talk about future plans.

This is an ideal opportunity for anyone who is thinking about starting a new SIP venue, or joining an existing local committee.
Sydney: Saturday, July 1st
Geelong (for all Victorians) Saturday, July 22nd.

Recommended

John T Noonan, Jr. *A Church that Can and Cannot Change. The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching.* University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame Indiana, 2005, 297 pages, notes and index, ISBN: 0-268-03603-9. hb, \$30.00.

The subject matter of this book is slavery, usury, the Pauline/Petrine Privilege and religious liberty. The central theme, however, is that the Church can change its moral outlook and teaching. Noonan, a highly-respected judge of the US Court for Appeals in San Francisco and also author of thirteen books, analyses each of the topics listed and examines the changes that have come about in the Church's official teaching. We are reminded that the Church burnt heretics, banned the charging of interest on loans, justified slavery. Lest you think he is angry, he is not. His sense of history is acute and his awareness of what might be thought to be intrinsically evil is deftly brought out in clear prose. In his discussion of slavery he identifies Newman, Hopkins, Aquinas who all justified this practice. His argument is that when change came it did so quickly and decisively. The test of faith will determine what is and will remain unalterable. He acknowledges the need for the Church to remain constantly alert to purification and that in the case of morality, there will always be the interplay of lived experience and new perceptions. We must balance genuine knowledge and insight with the Church's teachings. He does not advocate anything silly; rather he suggests keeping an open mind to issues and to be constantly alert to changing mores and experiences. For serious readers.

Michael Whelan, editor, *Issues for Church and Society in Australia: The Aquinas Academy Jubilee Lectures*, St Pauls Publications, 2006, pb, 159 pages, endnotes. ISBN 1 921032 14 6. (Available at pre-publication price of \$20 from Aquinas Academy. Add \$5 for postage if you want it mailed to you. – 02 9247 4651.)

This is a set of eight lectures celebrating the diamond jubilee of the Aquinas Academy adult education centre in Sydney. Presenters include James Franklin (Assoc Professor of Mathematics at UNSW), explores the relevance of the "natural law theory of ethics;" Bernadette Tobin (Director of the Plunkett Centre for Ethics at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and Reader in Philosophy at ACU) asks whether science will allow us to bring about fundamental changes in humanity and if we should put constraints on this; Gerard Hall, SM (Senior Lecturer in Theology at McAuley Campus of ACU) says "Vatican II is a symbolic watershed representing the movement from a self-referential, ghetto Church ... to a Church which perceives its mission 'in dialogue with the world;'" Andrew Murray SM (Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Catholic Institute, Sydney) asks whether it is possible to think of the Church as a democracy; Michael Whelan SM (Director of the Aquinas Academy) asks whether it is possible to be Catholic and humanly thriving. The style in each of the eight essays is very readable and the content very stimulating. Key issues for the Church and wider are opened up for intelligent conversation by each of the presenters. A good discussion group book.

Christopher Howse (editor), *The Daily Telegraph Prayers for this Life.* Continuum Books, London, 2005, ISBN: 0-8264-7642-2. 203 pages, Hb., notes, \$56.95.

This is obviously an expensive book, on that would be a resource for institutions or groups that want to expand participants' consciousness of the variety of good sensible prayers throughout the ages. We live in an age where many seek new ways of expressing their spiritual longings; ironically, they have in this text prayers of those of ages past which continue to address the situations of this day. The times might have changed but not the central issues. The text has three sections: God; God with us; and This Life with God. There are prayers that focus on reconciliation, Eucharist, daily life, morning and night; in other words, prayers for all occasions. There are prayers of Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Gerard Manly Hopkins, Newman, Aquinas, John Chrysostom and Ronald Knox. There are also prayers of Jane Austen, John Donne, Leo XI11, St Patrick, and the Book of Common Prayer. In other words, the collection is very broad and it will bring back memories of long forgotten or perhaps more accurately, long unused prayers in public worship and private times with God. There is a challenge here and the challenge is that printed prayers can take away spontaneity. It is a challenge that can be met by the reader using the breadth of the book to launch into one's own prayers. This is a book to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover. It gives a sweep of history and of religious sensibilities, and of the prayers of saints and poets.

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A REFLECTION ON THE CHURCH

"How much I must criticise you, my church, and yet how much I love you! You have made me suffer more than anyone and yet I owe you more than I owe anyone. I should like to see you destroyed and yet I need your presence. You have given me much scandal and yet you alone have made me understand holiness. Never in the world have I seen anything more obscurantist, more compromised, more false, yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous or more beautiful. Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face – and yet, every night, I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms! No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even if not completely you. Then too – where should I go? To build another church? But I cannot build another church without the same defects, for they are my own defects. And again, if I were to build another church, it would be my church, not Christ's church. No, I am old enough. I know better!" (From a letter of Carlo Carretto, cited in *Issues for Society and Church in Australia*, 156. See review above. Carlo Carretto, a leader in Italian Catholic Action, National President of Catholic Youth, 1946-1952, at 44 went to the Saharan desert and joined the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld. Carretto's books are based on the conferences, spiritual writings, and conversations with all and sundry (especially the youth) who came to the well-loved fraternity which he returned from Africa to found at Spello, near Assisi. He died on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, October 4, 1988 at the age of 78.)