



# THE MIX



*JOURNAL OF CATALYST FOR RENEWAL INCORPORATED*

Circulation of approximately 2500 in Australia and overseas

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 08

OCTOBER 2006

**Jacqui Crane**

The human face 2

**Denys Goggin**

Life as witness 3

**Michael Whelan**

Keeping ministry alive at the edge 4

**The bible**

The question of divorce 6

**The tradition**

We are one 6

## Our Say – Institution – blessing and curse

In 1971, former Beatle, John Lennon, published a song that continues to be played, in one version or another, to this day. The song is called "Imagine." The melody is uncomplicated and catchy, the lyrics are variously idealistic, banal, even silly, yet strangely seductive:

Imagine there's no Heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today  
Imagine there's no countries ....  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace ....  
And the world will be as one  
Imagine no possessions ....  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man ....

Who does not want unity and peace in our world? Who does not yearn for a world in which we have outgrown the destructive-

ness of greed and hate and we serve one another in love? Jesus recognised this deep universal desire. He encouraged us to love one another and pray for the coming of the Kingdom. And his death and resurrection have actually made it possible.

The rubber meets the road, however, in the concrete, day to day business of living with other human beings. We are herd animals. Of necessity, we seek community. Whether we like it or not, this fact of our beings demands structure, law, organization. That is, we need institutions. And this applies to all dimensions of our lives, including our commitment together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This truth is both blessing and curse and there is no escaping it or its terrible ambivalence. When we imagine that we are able to live beyond this truth, we not only create a destructive pipe dream, we miss out on the wonderful possibilities of being human together within our institutions. Yet, the sentiment commonly heard today,

"I am spiritual but not religious," suggests we are yet to come to terms with this truth.

The backing away from religion is, I suggest, essentially a backing away from institution. Given some of the recent history of religious institutions, perhaps we can all find some reason to justify this.

However, the more sane response is to work for the renewal of the institutions. A world without them is unthinkable.

Kenneth Clark concluded his TV program, *Civilisation*, with a warning:

Even in the darkest ages, it was institutions that made society work, and if civilisation is to survive, society must somehow be made to work.

I believe Lord Clark has said something that is profound. The stakes are high. How shall we respond? Do we abandon our religious institutions or do we commit ourselves to their renewal? ■

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

Members: Marie Biddle RSJ, Margaret Blake, Jan Brady, Kevin Burges, Kevin Burke, Rosalie Carroll, Aidan Carvill SM, Mary Conlan, Maria Contempree, Margaret Costigan RSC, Marea Donovan, Geraldine Doogue, Anne Dowling, Peter Dwight, Maria George, Denys Goggin, Margaret Goggin, Andy Hamilton SJ, Catherine Hammond, Andrew Howie, Barry Hughes, Michelle Kamper, George King, Helen Kingsley, Mary Kirkwood, Patrick Kirkwood, Francois Kunc, Ann McDowell, Richard McLachlan, Katharine Massam, Christine Morton-Evans, Chris Needs, Margaret O'Hearn, Tim O'Hearn, Mary Pearson, Denise Playoust, Peter Price, Paul Redmond, Margaret Rigotti, Roy Rigotti, William Roberts, John Stuart, Vin Underwood, Ruth van Herk, Michael Whelan SM, Carole Wilson, Sue Winkworth.

The following is its Mission Statement:

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

The Patrons are:

Maryanne Confoy RSC, Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM  
Andrew Hamilton SJ, Br Julian McDonald CFC, AO  
Prof Francis J Moloney SDB, AM  
Dr Richard J Mulhearn OAM,  
Most Rev Geoffrey Robinson

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

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

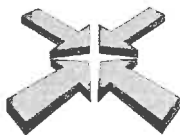
The Editorial Committee is:

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

Registered by Australia Post  
Publication No: 255003/02125

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](http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au)  
[catalyst-for-renewal@tpg.com.au](mailto: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.

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

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

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

## THE HUMAN FACE

**M**y name is Jacqui Crane. I am the Melder daughter of Honor and Jack Murrell and I spent the first 23 years of my life living in a very happy home in the bay side suburb of Sans Souci on the southern edge of Sydney, at a time when the punt was the only direct means of going further south, swimming in the baths was free and the trolley bus went past our front door.

My father was a baptised Catholic and my mother a very stubborn Methodist who would not convert to Catholicism, although she did agree to being married in a Catholic church, in a room at the back of the church with the housekeeper as a witness. No family attended, neither family were happy about the mixed marriage. Sadly this was the last time my father went into a church until I was married and he was never reconciled with his Catholic faith.

I was educated in the public school system, attended Methodist Sunday School but never went to church. I studied for my Leaving Certificate at St George Girls High School, tried all the scripture classes seeking something but never finding "it". I should say I tried all denominations except the Catholic class as there were too few girls at catholic scripture and I would have been noticed.

On finishing school I was employed as a laboratory technician in Foveaux Street, Sydney and used to walk through the park and up George Street to the shops at lunchtime. I soon became very aware of a feeling of curiosity and a longing to know what was behind the wooden doors of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Haymarket. The smell of the incense acted like a magnet and soon I was going there regularly, not understanding anything but needing to be immersed in the special atmosphere. On reflection, I am sure I was being lead by the Holy Spirit to the beginning of my long and wondrous faith journey, on which I am still travelling.

The words of St Paul to Timothy, 'God has given me the gift of his spirit, not of timidity but the power to pray and the boldness to love with sincerity' (2Timothy 1:7), have a special meaning for me and have been a source of great strength.

I became a Catholic in 1963 after taking lessons at Cusa House, but it was a long lonely journey. I remember going to mass each Sunday but no-one welcomed me or even spoke to me. My first confession was terrifying and the priest was anything but welcoming. My parents had no objections but showed no interest either. My mother was actually abused by a neighbour for letting me become a Catholic.

In 1965 I married Robert, the eldest of nine children who had been educated at St

Patrick's College Strathfield and has been the best companion I could have had on my faith journey, especially through his untiring dedication to the Eucharist, the church and all things Catholic.

We moved to Cheltenham and became very involved in the faith community of Epping especially when our three children went to school. I loved the sense of belonging to a faith community. I became a catechist and in the early eighties was asked to be a sponsor in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The RCIA is the way people learn more about the Catholic faith. It is so different to the way I was introduced to the Catholic church. It is non-judgmental, friendly and parish based. The inquirers are not talked at, there is conversation, discussions and breaking open 'the word'.

Now, as a parishioner at St Agatha's Pennant Hills, I am co-ordinator of our RCIA and am always amazed at the number of people of all ages, from all walks of life and for reasons too many to remember, who want to know more about what it means to be Christian and Catholic. I am also a Eucharistic Minister taking Our Lord to the frail, sick and elderly in our parish. This is a very special ministry and the people I visit are so spirit-filled that I am humbled and truly blessed to be able to visit them. They minister to me in a far greater way than I minister to them.

In November 2005, after 28 years employed by the one company, I resigned. I was becoming, due to the changes made in the workplace, someone I didn't like. I am now finding my way in a new phase of life – retirement. I have enrolled in a Spirituality course at the Aquinas Academy which is giving me a clearer understanding of myself at this time in my life. It is helping me to discern where the Holy Spirit is now leading me. I am learning so much from the people with whom I am doing the course and I feel a sense of finally being in a place that is spirit-filled and with people all travelling towards the same goal – peace in God's love.



Jacqui Crane

# Essay – Life as Witness

Denys Goggin

**Margaret & Denys Goggin spoke on this topic at a reflection morning at Hunters Hill in May 2006. They have been married for 42 years and have 3 children and 4 grandsons. Both are now retired and actively involved with family, church and community activities. This is an edited version of Denys' talk. Margaret's talk was published in the previous *Mix*.**

Margaret spoke, in her talk, of the meanings of WITNESS and I like her words:

The idea of the truth of who we are and of living your life with integrity.

I wish to develop the idea of 'being present' as an effective way of being witness to others. We are speaking this morning as Christians, as people with a deeply grounded faith, which inspires love for others: we are disciples of Jesus and our life flows from this underpinning, as we develop relationships and map out our actions in life.

A life lived faithfully and with integrity is a witness to others. The value is enhanced if the person has true humility – not trying to impress or 'preach'. It is as if God is using that person to further his or her love for others. I feel this is beautifully expressed in a poem written by David, a regular visitor to homeless shelters in Sydney.

## *A BLESSING by David*

*May you know by your heart what is real,  
May living waters cleanse your soul...*

*By loving may you understand,  
And live what God has planned...*

*Because of you may others live,  
Because of you may others love  
That you may find within your heart  
A paradise: a work of art.*

My mother and mother-in-law have influenced my life. Both were women of deep faith, reflected in generosity and care for others. They had an amazing ability to know and be present to their children and grandchildren – to meet them at their level and recognise their individual gifts and so unconsciously influence them in their life choices. For both women their steadfast faith was noted and respected by those who knew them well.

Perhaps you have women or men who influenced your life – am I mistaken or is it so that women especially influence us in our lives? These 'mothers' lived simple lives and so you could imagine their influence was limited, but I would like to illustrate how my son saw his maternal grand-

mother's values in a wider – national and global - context. I will quote a few lines from a poem he wrote on Eileen's death:

*"...People in need were welcomed  
invited to dinner, asked to stay,  
became part of the family.  
A lesson for an island nation  
grimly fixed to reject  
those in need, seeking asylum,  
craving sanctuary."*

This expresses how a simple life can be a profound witness to others.

I worked for 39 years in the Chemical, Oil and Gas Industries, with 31 years spent with the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. My life as a professional engineer and manager was in a very secular environment where faith and spirituality were not topics for discussion. I had almost 2 decades as site general manager of large oil and gas facilities – at Shell oil refineries in Geelong and Sydney and with Woodside on the North West Shelf gas project in Karratha WA.

Particularly in Geelong and Karratha I was well known in the community. I was a regular church attendee and involved in church and community issues. During this time we always had an industrial chaplain on site (ITIM), with whom I worked very closely. It is my experience that there is a latent spirituality in industrial communities. It seemed that many people have a real spiritual need – often not recognised by them and mostly unspoken except in times of personal crises and need.

We did not have a formal chaplain's office. Experience showed that the best approach for the chaplain was to 'be present' in the workplace – 'walk the talk' it is often called. Over a few years, familiarity and friendship would develop and employees found the confidence to approach the chaplain with a concern. Any lengthy conversation would take place off-site – unobserved.

I sometimes visited families at times of sickness or death and attended funerals – on several occasions being asked to contribute to the eulogy. It seemed that my approach was appreciated and maybe my life was a witness to others. I guess, in a way, I was being 'present' to people – but I also found they were being 'present' to me.

A pivotal time for me – and all our family – was in Holland, The Hague, in 1977-78. I worked for Shell, a Dutch company, and this was the second spell for the family in Holland, each being for about 12 months. The children spent time in the American School in The Hague at junior

and intermediate levels. They experienced other cultures, made a range of new friends and had their eyes opened to international opportunities in a significant way.

Margaret and I also made new friends, saw wider horizons and developed in many ways. One aspect was involvement in the English Catholic Parish in The Hague. As well as Mass on Sunday, we had education sessions from Priest lecturers, who visited each week from Louvain University. These priests were top class and instilled in us a desire to further explore faith and church. I grew up in a Church with a pre-Vatican II clerical leadership model and so these lectures represented a turning point in my understanding of faith and lay leadership in the mission of the Church.

We all have situations where we can provide leadership and we need to have confidence to do this. At all times our humanity and love for others must shine through with the utmost humility.

We lived in Geelong, Victoria, after returning from Holland and I was active in the Parish Council and St Vincent de Paul Society. This involvement in Church issues and leadership has been a constant thread in my life ever since. Margaret also developed special skills in Religious Education and has a Graduate Diploma in RE as well as Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Theology. The love and depth of our marriage developed in parallel and the seventy's and eighty's represent a most beautiful time in our relationship as a married couple and in the mutual love and trust as a family unit with our children. This spirit and wonder continues to the present.

I am now on the Board of James Milson Retirement Village, North Sydney, a member of the Catholic Bishops' Australian Council for Clergy Life and Ministry, a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and Margaret and I are members of Catalyst for Renewal.

Having said all that, one of my most satisfying activities is to play the piano at Nursing Homes and Aged Hostels, which I do several times per month. I have an extensive range of medleys of old favourites and sometimes feel this is more appreciated and a greater witness than the various committees I am involved with.

We all need to reflect on our own 'charisms' or 'gifts' to develop a sense on how we can deepen our faith so our unconscious actions day by day be a 'witness' to others. We can be a listening and caring presence – a witness – to others but we must reflect on what we have learnt from the other person – their witness to us. ■

# Essay – Keeping ministry alive at the edge

Michael Whelan

**This is most of the text of Michael Whelan's presentation at the Catholic Health Australia National Conference, Melbourne, August 29, 2006. The presentation's original title was "Keeping the passion of ministry alive at the edge."**

It is worth asking why many thousands of us are out 'on the edge,' why we are spending our lives in ministry. More specifically, why would we want to maintain a ministry of Catholic health care?

The response to such questions takes us back to the Gospels and the person and teaching of Jesus. He lived on the edge and reached out to those on the edge, the refugees, the outcasts, the homeless, the sick, the poor and those whom life had defeated in one way or another. For example, we could cite the circumstances of His birth (see Luke 2:1-20), the flight into Egypt which made refugees of Him and His parents (see Matthew 2:13-18), the criticism from the religious authorities that 'this man welcomes sinners and eats with them' (see Luke 15:1), the teachings of such parables as 'the good Samaritan' (see Luke 10:29-37) and 'the last judgment' where we hear the remarkable statement that is at once consoling an haunting, 'as often as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me' (see Matthew 25:31-46).

Jesus gave us a vision in his living and teaching. And it is ultimately about a new order, a 'new heaven and a new earth' (see Revelation 21:1). In the Gospels it is called 'the Kingdom' and we are urged to pray and work for the coming of that 'Kingdom' – an order of existence in which love drives out hate, the truth overcomes the lie, goodness replaces evil and beauty suffuses all.

In the end, Catholicism has only one reason of be, and that is this new order. In particular, throughout its history, Catholicism has expressed this intent by caring for the sick. For example, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, St Basil established hospitals for the sick and the victims of contagious diseases, homes for the poor and hospices for travellers. His dear friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, says Basil built an entire 'new city.' The monasteries became centres of such care in medieval times and beyond. In fact, one of the tragedies of Henry VIII's disbanding of the monasteries in 16<sup>th</sup> century England, was also the disbanding of an extensive health care system.

Not everything in our culture supports this vision of a new order of things. If we are committed to this new order, we will almost certainly find ourselves at odds with

the prevailing cultural ethos. The Australian author, Kim Mahood, speaking of her own life might just as well have been speaking of us all at this time:

When I finally crawled out the landscape had changed in all sorts of subtle ways, or the way I saw it had changed, which amounts to the same thing. I had encountered someone in the fault-line whom I didn't know, and whom my own particular set of myths could not accommodate. She crawled out with me, inarticulate and storyless, and although she looked at the world through my eyes, when I tried to speak for her the language was crippled and absurd, full of psychological cliché. Over the years I learned, and am still learning, to listen to her silences. If my own busy voice goes on for too long she begins to howl, a primitive psychic noise which cannot be ignored. (Kim Mahood, *Craft for a Dry Lake*, Anchor, 2000, 26.)

I have heard that 'howling' to which Mahood refers, in myself and others. And yes, it cannot be ignored. Yet, the secularized world view that dominates our society does not know what to do with that 'howling' because that secularized world view cannot bear the weight of our deepest human needs and desires.

**Jesus gave us a vision in his living and teaching. And it is ultimately about a new order, a 'new heaven and a new earth' (see Revelation 21:1). In the Gospels it is called 'the Kingdom' and we are urged to pray and work for the coming of that 'Kingdom' – an order of existence in which love drives out hate, the truth overcomes the lie, goodness replaces evil and beauty suffuses all.**

In addressing this issue of keeping passion for ministry alive at the edge, we are not entirely without precedent. Religious life in the Catholic tradition has always, at its best, been a liminal state, a place for pioneers of the spirit, men and women, wounded though they be, offering prophetic witness to what matters in the end. The current hospital and health care works – Catholic and other – owe them much.

In nearly forty years of experience as a religious, I have met many religious who seem to me to be very sane, loving human beings. In fact, I have met many, especially older religious women, whom I believe embody a rich humanity. I was keen to ques-

tion these people and find out how they could not only survive a system that many tell us is dysfunctional, but they have actually learned to thrive. I believe I discovered three particular qualities in these people:

- Firstly, they all have a simple faith. More specifically, they believe Jesus is the Son of God, that in His death he set us free from death and that He is with us now. Most could not give a coherent theological articulation of this faith. If pressed they would almost certainly begin articulating heresy. And their simple faith did not exclude doubt, confusion and struggle. At the core of their beings was a conviction that set their life on solid ground.
- Secondly, they all exhibited *epieikeia*. This is the virtue by which you know the appropriate thing to do when you come to the edge of law and custom. Jesus demonstrated this virtue when he proclaimed that the Sabbath is for us, not vice versa (see Matthew 12:1-8).
- Thirdly, all of these people had a sense of humour. Even as they spoke of difficult and sometimes very painful events, they could laugh. It seems to me that this is a precious gift, a sign of good faith.

It is good to be able to ask the right questions. It is also good to be able to ask questions in the right way. There is a way of asking questions that is open. We could say that we ask the question then go within and wait attentively for a sense to emerge.

Three open questions might usefully be asked often when we are at the edge:

- The first open question is: What is happening? We all have a genius for self-deception and if we are not constantly listening for what is *actually* going on, it is highly likely that we will be seduced by unrealities. This is the most practical and useful question you can ask at any moment. So often in human affairs, our relationships are governed by subterranean forces that we are not aware of. This is hardly a free or adult way to live.
- The second open question is: What matters? It is amazing to see what human beings will do and suffer when they feel something is worth it. Similarly, it is amazing how quickly we all are distracted when we are not convinced this or that is worth it. We might even say that passion is the normal healthy human reaction when we find ourselves gripped or in the presence of someone or something that matters a lot. Having a realistic sense of what *actually* matters is not only good for your own sanity and happiness, it is good for your ability to participate in human systems. In a culture heavily influenced by the myth of materialism – especially as that myth is manifest in the cult of unending youth – the person who knows what matters in the end is to be treasured.



- The third open question is: What do I want? This is about discovering what is already given – your heart’s deepest longing. What I *like* is a matter of ego and emotion, what I *want* is a matter of who and what I am. It is also a matter of what I *actually* need, as distinct from what the materialistic and consumerist culture tells me I need. In my experience, the people who thrive are people who know what they actually want and this is a result – at least implicitly – of a life lived in willing submission to what is. These are people very familiar – at least implicitly – with the questions, ‘What is happening?’ and ‘What matters?’

The Nobel Prizing-winning author, Saul Bellow, might be a useful companion for at least part of our exploration here. In his 1975 novel, *Humboldt’s Gift*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize, Bellow gives us a sort of parable about a materialistic culture in which ego mastery is the accepted *modus operandi* and, as a result, the human soul suffers from under-nourishment. The novel’s central character, Charlie Citrine, reflects on the experience of boredom against this backdrop:

“Suppose then that you began with the presupposition that boredom was a kind of pain caused by unused powers, the pain of wasted possibilities or talents, and was accompanied by expectations of the optimum utilization of capacities. ....” (Saul Bellow, *Humboldt’s Gift*, Penguin Books, 1973/1986, 199.)

Charlie goes on to suggest that “boredom has more to do with modern political revolution than justice has.” (Op cit, 200.)

The novel ends with Charlie Citrine gazing at a crocus growing through a crack in the pavement in a Jewish cemetery.

A younger contemporary of Basil in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was a man by the name of Evagrius who had the temerity to suggest that the edge might actually be a good place to find yourself, to literally find what matters and what it is you actually want in life.

Evagrius, in particular, wrote about a condition called *akedia*. The word has no satisfactory English equivalent. It is inadequately described as “laziness,” “sloth,” “apathy” or “listlessness.” I suggest the word as Evagrius used it is actually not far removed from Charlie Citrine’s boredom. And like Charlie’s experience, it suggests the person is being called to go deeper, to facilitate the emergence of unlived life.

We could say *akedia* is that peculiar affliction, marked by a loss of passion, which comes upon us when we are actually on the threshold of a deeper way of living. Far from being a signal to turn back, it is a signal to keep going. The danger, of course, is that we wilt in the face of this experience,

that we fall into despair and walk away from the struggle.

That struggle might manifest itself in apathy and agitation, we might feel beset by a sense of tedium, we might become distracted and we might begin to wonder whether it is all worthwhile, whether we might not be better off doing something else, somewhere else with someone else, anything but persevering here.

And so we abandon a marriage, change a job, buy things we don’t need, drink too much, over eat, abuse drugs, seek out destructive relationships, become cynical and negative, perhaps just chronically bitchy and irritable. In any of us these might simply be the symptoms of a life of evasion, a refusal to face what is actually going on within us, a denial that I am on the edge of a deeper way of living, a denial of what I actually want in the depths of my being.

If we sought out Evagrius and asked him: What must I do? He would say something like, ‘Stand firm! Don’t turn away! You will only exacerbate your situation if you choose flight rather than fight. This is promise not threat. You are on the verge of something good, though you must expect a struggle. Face into it and wait.’

Evagrius would then go on to tell you – and here I quote him directly, or at least an English translation of his Greek:

“No other demon follows close upon the heels of this one (when it is defeated) but only a state of deep peace and inexpressible joy arise out of this struggle.” (Evagrius Ponticus: *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, translated by John Eudes Bamberger, Cistercian Publications, 1981, 12.)

---

**We could say *akedia* is that peculiar affliction, marked by a loss of passion, which comes upon us when we are actually on the threshold of a deeper way of living. Far from being a signal to turn back, it is a signal to keep going. The danger, of course, is that we wilt in the face of this experience, that we fall into despair and walk away from the struggle.**

---

In the foregoing comments, the metaphor of ‘the edge’ is used in two ways. Firstly, there is the experience of being and working with people at the edge of society. Secondly, there is the more subtle reference to the inevitable experience of life, that sooner or later, if we take ourselves and our lives seriously enough, we find ourselves on the edge of the unknown, facing an abyss in fact. I suggest the two are not unrelated.

There are a number of reasons why Jesus should ask his disciples to reach out to those on the edge. I believe a crucial reason is that going to those on the edge can remind us of our humanity and save us from a fictional existence. Being at the service of those on the edge gives you and I the opportunity to recognise that, to be human as such, means to be on the edge. It is an essential characteristic of our very existence. We can live nowhere else honestly.

In closing let me say four things. They are not meant to be a summary of the above nor a complete ‘final word,’ just some key thoughts that emerge.

Firstly, commit yourself to building deep and worthwhile relationships – with God (however you name God), with yourself, with other people and the events and things of your world. The truly beautiful and rich things of life happen in the in-between of our relationships. Those beautiful things happen as a matter of graced emergence, not ego mastery. The fulfilled human life is mystery-centred not ego-centred and the lives of the truly mature are marked by relationship in freedom and grace. We are simply not made to thrive in selfishness, no matter what our culture might suggest to the contrary.

Secondly, don’t strive to be passionate, you’ll be a pain in the neck. Learn, rather, to wait upon life, *your* life. Release the passion from within by discovering what actually matters and what you actually want. Enjoy the crocus growing through the crack in the pavement of your life. Remember that on life’s menu are some gravel sandwiches. Eat your gravel sandwiches with good grace. Get over your precious ego and your unreal expectations. We’re all earthenware vessels that carry a great mystery to show that the power comes from God (see 2Corinthians 4:7).

Thirdly, be ruthlessly honest about the things that matter as well as the things that do not matter. A fictional existence is no existence at all. ‘What does it profit you if you gain the whole world but lose your very self?’ (see Mark 8:34-38). Nothing will sap your life force more than dishonesty, even if you appear to those around you to be successful. Consider any violation of human dignity and you will find dishonesty lies at the core of that violation. The devil is indeed the father of lies (see John 8:44)..There is no better basis for your life than what is true and real.

Finally, get used to being on the edge. Seek out people on the edge to serve them, as Jesus did, they have much to teach you in their vulnerability. You and I are pilgrims and that’s where pilgrims live – on the edge. ■

### Words for a Pilgrim People

*“God created human beings in the image of himself .... Male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)*

□□□

*“ .... We should be made justified by being made one in the one Just One, .... And through Him as Mediator, reconciled to God, we should cleave to the One, and enjoy the One, and abide one forever.” (St Augustine, On The Trinity, Book IV, Chapter vii.)*

□□□

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

□□□

*“ .... (we) are one in Him Who is One.” (St Augustine, On The Psalms, CXXX, I.)*

□□□

On the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), we meditate on Mark’s account of Jesus’ teaching concerning divorce (Mark 10:2-12). The same question arises four times elsewhere in the Christian Scriptures: twice in Matthew (see 5:32 & 19:3-9), once in Luke (16:18) and once in Paul (1Corinthians 7:10-16). John only alludes to it (see John 4:16-18). Mark is similar to Luke in being unambiguous about this teaching: there are no exceptions. In Mark, unlike both Matthew and Paul, the issue is not a question of the legitimate grounds for divorce but rather the legitimacy of divorce as such. Mark adds a peculiar comment concerning the possibility of the woman divorcing her husband. The Jewish law (see Deuteronomy 24: 1-4) is entirely focused on the man divorcing his wife. In fact, Jewish custom allowed the man to simply write a writ of dismissal and hand it to his wife, thus achieving a divorce. There was

no need for any court to monitor or assess the procedure. Roman law, on the other hand, did allow a woman to divorce her husband. We should also note that Mark prefaces this entire discussion with the observation that Jesus “came to the district of Judaea.” He has moved from the territory of those who live outside the Covenant tradition and is now firmly in the territory of the Covenant tradition. His audience is Jewish.

Jesus counters the arguments based on the Law given by Moses with the way things were from the beginning: “From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother and the two become one body. They are no longer two therefore but one body” (Mark 10:6-8). This is a remarkable vision, recalling the very moment of creation: “God created human beings in the image of himself .... Male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). And so “a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This is a teaching about what it means to be a human being as well as a teaching about what it means to be married in the sight of God. We are made for communion, we each participate in Being as such. We *are* one. Marriage is both gift and task, manifesting and challenging us with this truth.

The variations of teaching in the Christian Scriptures concerning marriage, as it emerges in the historical, cultural reality of human living, should give us pause for thought. Why would Matthew, for example, on the two occasions he mentions the question of divorce, also mention exceptions? Why would Paul, in his mention of it to the community in Corinth, also mention exceptions? Both Matthew and Paul, like Luke and Mark, also give strong emphasis to the permanency of the marriage commitment. This issue of marriage and divorce is one aspect of Church life that troubles us deeply today. We must take the commitment of marriage seriously, because we believe it is an expression of our radical unity in God, sealed in a sacrament, and we accept the commitment of the two adults who say “I do.” This carries most serious implications that cannot be easily set aside. However, given the human reality, the institution must find ways of dealing with those tragic situations where the covenantal unity is not only not realised, it is violated. ■

### The Tradition – We are one

Thomas Merton, in Calcutta in October 1968, made some notes about the life of a monk that could easily apply to us all: “He must be wide open to life and to new experience because he has fully utilized his own tradition and gone beyond it. This will permit him to meet a discipline of another .... and find a common ground of verbal understanding with him. The ‘postverbal’ level will then, at least ideally, be that on which they both meet beyond their own words and their own understanding in the silence of an ultimate experience which might conceivably not have occurred if they had not met and spoken. This I would call ‘communion.’ I think it is something that the deepest ground of our being cries out for .... (this requires us to move beyond) “the inexhaustible chatter with which modern man tries to convince himself that he is in touch with his fellow man and with reality.” (*The Asian Journal*, 315-16) ■

**.... the deepest ground of our being cries out for (communion).**

# Bulletin Board

## Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

### SIP Meetings

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

**Email:** [terry\\_catalyst@hotmail.com](mailto:terry_catalyst@hotmail.com)

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

◦ **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 October 11 "Why have a Catholic Education system?" Greg Whitby & Susan Connelly rsj (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

◦ **Engadine – Sutherland United Services Club**, 7 East Pde, October 18 "Freedom & Rights: My rights, your freedom. Where does one end and the other start?" Ken Moroney & Pauline Coll (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

◦ **Goulburn** Soldiers Club November 14 (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

◦ **Inner West – "Passion" Note new venue: The Pine Inn, 19 Parramatta Rd, Burwood** October 25 "The music moves me .. let me pick up the beat" Tanya Sparkes & Trish Watts (Info: James 0418 242 932).

◦ **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel November 13 "Dare to Live and Dare to Dream – In another Person's Garden" Geraldine Kearney sgs & Fr Joe Nguyen (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

◦ **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive November 14 **Dinner** Rev Dorothy Macrae-McMahon (Info: Carmen 4367 2743 or Sue 4334 3174).

◦ **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel October 26 "Happiness and Wealth Creation" Fr Tony Doherty & Marea Donovan (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

◦ **North Sydney – Be Attitudes Vs Me Attitudes** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, October 16 "Dare I suffer for goodness' sake?" Simon Longstaff & Sr Marnie Kennedy (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Paddington - The Getting of Wisdom** Bellevue Hotel **March 7 2007 – The Heart of the Matter** (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

◦ **Penrith** Golf Club October 25 "Spirit v

Law in daily life" Sr Veronica McClusky & 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 October 25 "Acting Justly" Claude Mostowik & Julie Morgan (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

◦ **Waitara – We must choose to matter - In the part of the world we touch?** The Blue Gum Hotel October 18 Catherine Hammond & Michael Elphick (Info: Carole 9869 1036(a/h)).

### Victoria

◦ **Alphington** Tower Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm October 18 "What the Church says and what it does!" Jan Gray (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 November 8 (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

◦ **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm November 21 "Drugs: An Indicator of our Troubled Society?" Maureen Buck & Fr Peter Hansen (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

◦ **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel (Info: Paula 5231 3376).

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

◦ **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm November 20 (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 October 25 "Our Stewardship of the Earth, Developing an eco-spirituality; Responsibility for monitoring our living style & standards; Allowing others to develop: a fair share for all" Peter Coghlan & Anne Boyd (Info: Kevin 9776 2705)

◦ **Wangaratta** Café Martini (Info: Kate 5721 6322).

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

◦ **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

### Other States

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

◦ **Hobart North** Moonah Café Bar & Bistrot Early November "The drama of Spirituality" Noel Christian (Info: Tony 6273

8590).

◦ **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 November 7 "Singing the Spirit Home" Eric Bogle & Tiffany Stroh (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

### Other Matters and Events

◦ **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Oct 6-14 Life's Healing Journey/directed retreat; Oct 20-22 & 27-29 prayer weekends; Oct 27-Nov 2 guided retreat; Nov 3-5 Taize weekend; Nov 10-12 prayer weekend; Nov 10-16 guided retreat; Nov 20-28 directed retreat (Info: 02 4630 9232).

◦ **Readers** are encouraged to visit website:

[www.schoolofstjude.co.nz/default.asp](http://www.schoolofstjude.co.nz/default.asp)

It will lift your spirits.

◦ **Online Catholics: An independent Australian e journal: News – Opinion – Discussion** A weekly summary of news event; Informative book reviews; Reflective writing of spirituality; An occasional good laugh; Independent analysis of issues in the Church. Enquiries: (03) 9755 5944

### REFLECTION MORNING

Marist Centre

1 Mary St, Hunters Hill

Saturday October 21

with

**Sr Josephine Mitchell rsj**

"Living Justly"

9.30am – 12.30pm

All welcome. Entry by donation.

### RICHARD ROHR

#### "REASONS FOR HOPE"

Two Reflection Days at St Joseph's College Hunters Hill

**Sat Nov 4 & Sun Nov 5, 2006 – 9.30am – 3.30pm (\$65/person/day)**

Sunday is a repeat of Saturday.

BYO lunch both days.

Plus

#### "THE SHAPE OF GOD"

Public Lecture

Salvation Army Function Hall

140 Elizabeth St, Sydney

**Tues Nov 7, 2006 – 6pm – 7.40pm (\$25/person)**

**BOOKINGS:**

Sr Clare at Aquinas Academy

Tel: 02 9247 4651

Email: [Sandra@aquinas-academy.com](mailto:Sandra@aquinas-academy.com)

## Recommended

Timothy Radcliffe, OP, *What is the Point of Being a Christian?* A Continuum Imprint, burns & oates, 2005, 218 pages, pb, bibliography, ISBN 0-8601-2369-3, \$32.95.

Timothy Radcliffe has become a thinking Catholic's guru, and reading this book makes it clear that faith in his wisdom and insights is extremely well placed. His writing is very clear, his wit shines through perhaps more so when it is self-deprecating, and he makes sense. He draws on scripture, Dominican writers, especially Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, Rowan Williams, and interesting literary figures, and so many others that reveal a well-read and intelligent person. The theme of the book is that we are people of God and our lives make sense in that light. Timothy Radcliffe addresses the effects of both personal and societal responses to life's issues: the breakdown of marriage, fear, chastity, death, the Sabbath, hope, spontaneity, 9/11, the war in Iraq, imprisonment in Guantanamo Bay. The point of being a Christian is a life pointed to God. Our lives make sense if they are God-directed. Especially significant for *Catalyst* readers are two chapters that address the need for Catholics to talk with each other about what is currently keeping them apart. He refers to two groups, the Kingdom Catholics (the liberals) and the Communion Catholics (the conservatives); they are both in exile after Vatican II, suffering from "root shock" as he puts it, and both need each other to restore the Church to be what it is meant to be: a witness to the presence of God in this world. For these chapters alone this is a book to be read and its ideas discussed between thinking Christians.

Jim Wallis, *God's Politics, Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get it*, Harper, 2005, 384 pages, notes, hb, ISBN: 0-06-055828-8, \$35.

It is not news that the star of evangelical Christianity is in the ascendancy. Jim Wallis, an American evangelical preacher has identified issues that concern all, Christians especially. Are our moral/religious concerns limited to abortion, single sex marriages and stem cell research? Important issues indeed, but we cannot reduce our issues to these three alone. Wallis asks us to return to the prophets and identify those who need special care from the body politic: the poor, the widows, the homeless, the prisoners, the displaced, single parents, and those with AIDS. We must ask what governments have done to look after these most needy people in our society. Whilst his focus is the American scene, the principles apply equally to Australia. Instead of assuming that God is on our side, we ought to ask whether we are on God's side. We need to ask whether government budgets are moral documents. Do they apply finances to God's poor? Do we just accept what governments present? The questions he asks are pertinent to all believers, perhaps more so when so much finance is devoted to so few, when tax breaks and superannuation arrangements favour the wealthy. The challenge is to be clear about the principles on which we make our political decisions, to be accountable for our decisions, to propose alternatives and to offer a vision for a better society where all God's people are cared for.

Tom Frame, *Church and State. Australia's Imaginary Wall*, University of New South Wales Press, 2006, Further Reading, pb, 96 pages, ISBN:0 86840 916 2, \$16.95.

An archbishop was appointed to the role of Governor-General. At least one senior government minister told clerics to butt out of politics. Anglican archbishop Tom Frame deals with the historical and the immediate questions of church and state in our country, what he names as never having been a Christian country. Some want to establish a separation wall between church and state; others want close collaboration and the churches to have a major impact on state policies. There is a quick breeze through philosophers and theologians who have considered the relations between church and state. Tom Frame delves into our history of Christianity's influence on public policy and events; yet Christianity is not the official religion of the nation. He questions the effects of Section 116 of the Constitution and its interpretation. How do we see the relationship? Should Christians get preferential treatment from governments? Should Muslims and other faiths receive better treatment, equal to that received by Christian denominations? These are questions that we can answer too quickly without serious consideration of the implications. What are the implications for equal consideration at Christmas and Easter and our expectations about such hol(y)days and the sabbath? The book asks serious questions and readers are asked to think clearly about their personal assumptions and their implications. A brief book for thoughtful readers.

**BECOME A FRIEND OF CATALYST  
WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!  
SUBSCRIBE TO *THE MIX* FOR  
YOURSELF AND/OR A FRIEND  
\$40 PER YEAR**

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Phone: .....

I am paying by cheque  OR

Visa  MasterCard  BankCard  Number:

.....

Name on card: .....

Expiry date: .....

Signature: .....

**POST TO: CFR, PO Box 139, Gladesville 1675  
T 02 9816 4262**

"By now liberal humanism is as badly fragmented by dissension as our witness ever was, and its fiercest adherents are often covertly uneasy at its lack of gentleness, its readiness to force the facts and its desolate this-worldliness. Its unrelenting adulthood forces people onto the thorns of tragic complexity and the strange intractability of the world, and often when people who subscribe to it relax for a moment, their eyes are seen to contain an almost desperate appeal: please prove us wrong, make us believe there is more to it than this, show us your God and that Grace you talk about. We are more widely judged on our own best terms than we think, and more insistently expected to be the keepers of the dimension of depth than we find comfortable."

[Les A. Murray, "Some Religious Stuff I know About Australia" in D. Harris et al, eds., *The Shape of Belief: Christianity in Australia Today*, Lancer, 1982, p. 26 of pp. 13-28.]