



THE MIX



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Our Say – The Regensburg event

On Tuesday September 12 Pope Benedict gave a lecture at the University of Regensburg. The lecture is a 3,900 word reflection on the relationship between faith and reason. In the introduction, he cited a dialogue that took place at the end of the 14th century in Constantinople between the Christian emperor and an erudite Persian. The Muslims had laid siege to the city. The Christian emperor, says Pope Benedict, “addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness:”

‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’ The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. ‘God,’ he says, ‘is not pleased by blood – and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the

soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind,...”

On September 20, at a General Audience in St Peter’s Square, the Pope said “this quotation, unfortunately, lent itself to possible misunderstanding.” He apologised for any offence to Muslims and affirmed his respect for Islam and his desire for dialogue. On October 9 he released an amended version of the text.

In London, *The Sunday Telegraph* said it is a fair bet that few Muslim protesters have read the full text of the Pope’s speech. If they did, *The Telegraph* went on, they would see that it in no way insults Islam. *The Daily Mail* wondered why Muslim leaders have to be so quick to take offence. *The Independent* said that, although he did not set out to offend, the Pope should have chosen his words more

carefully in the light of today’s religious sensitivities. *The Guardian* said the Pope’s comments might have caused less fuss if he had “a clearer record in favour of dialogue with Islam. ... As a cardinal in the Holy See, he was known to be sceptical of John Paul II’s pursuit of conversation.”

Two Gospel passages come to mind – Matthew 16:3, on reading the signs of the times and Matthew 9:17, on putting new wine into fresh skins (see also Mark 2:22 and Luke 5:37). We have moved into a world of increasing cultural and religious pluralism. Feelings run high. No, we do not abandon the truths of the faith. But, as John XXIII noted in his Opening Address to the Council, those truths are one thing, how we articulate them is another thing.

We are all like children learning to know and name an emerging world. We have not been here before. The way of conversation seems increasingly, even urgently, to be demanded of us. ■

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

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

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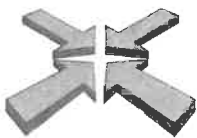
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The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

My name is Mary Shanahan and I am a religious of the Sacred Heart. I was born in Winton, Central Queensland, the first girl after five boys. (I was followed by a sister, making a family of seven for my parents, Thomas Shanahan and Morna Corcoran.) Both my grandmothers were Irish though my maternal grandmother was born in Dundee of Irish parents and came to Australia when she was a child. She was obviously a remarkable woman. She would ride from Camooweal, where my mother was born, to Hughenden, a distance of 700km, where her two daughters boarded in the convent while at primary school. She died when I was a very young child. I inherited from her a love of the bush and of horse riding.

Though we lived in the town I spent most of my school holidays on the property of friends. There I would find myself alone, perhaps behind a mob of sheep or riding to the various watering places to ensure that all was well. There was no one and nothing around for miles except the open spaces and the stillness which have become part of my being.

Both my parents were deeply religious and the sisters and the parish priest were regarded as friends. Thanks to both, but particularly my mother, religion was related to life and was not experienced as something imposed. My mother has been the greatest influence in my life. She was a truly gentle woman with an inner strength. She genuinely loved people and accepted them for who they were. She was a wise woman who knew how to bring out the best in people.

On becoming a boarder at Stuartholme School of the Sacred Heart in Brisbane, I was opened to a wider world. One of the aspects of the school that struck me from the beginning was its international connection. The spirituality of the Sacred Heart echoed something of my mother's and it was the spirituality that drew me to be a religious of the Sacred Heart.

I was in the noviceship before I alerted to the fact that I may have to teach one day. That did happen and I loved it though it was only for a short time. In preparation for my final profession I lived at our Mother House in Rome with forty-three other religious of the Sacred Heart of eleven different nationalities. That was another transitional period in my life. Firstly, the religious who was responsible for our formation at this time, a Belgian, was a woman of incredible breadth and freedom who gave me a wonderful foundation for discerning my choices. Secondly, it was a time of growth in my understanding of how to live out my spirituality. From the strong contemplative

side of that spirituality I grew in the awareness of the apostolic dimension of my vocation – of a life given for others; of living the Eucharist in my daily life.

I returned from Rome to begin my university studies. Apart from a year in charge of a school, the university was to be my place of ministry for many years. This was all before Vatican II. My time at Sydney University broadened my experience and developed my critical faculties.

During my time at Sancta Sophia College within that university I was involved in residential theology courses for women religious. These were organised by Roger Pryke at the request of Cardinal Gilroy. The course lasted over two years and required a period of time each holidays.

It was the first time that women religious had spent such time together in a residential situation. These seminars had a profound influence not only on individual religious but on religious life in general. Women were being educated in theology and were learning to look at the Church in a new way. It was perhaps the influence of these seminars that helped to develop in me a passion for educating people in a way that assists them to integrate their faith and their life. It is a passion that has only got stronger with the years.

The internationality that had attracted me as a child was to become part of my life. I worked in Rome for six years and during that time my work took me to many of the countries where there were communities of our sisters. It was a veritable opening to the world.

Vatican II was liberating. Our vocation 'to discover and reveal the love of the Heart of Jesus' seemed in many ways to be blocked by restrictions imposed by an outdated understanding of religious life for women. After Vatican II the Church did open the windows and gave me new energy to bring the love of Christ to others. That is the mission, the ministry that I will carry to the day I die, even were I to live to be a hundred!



Mary Shanahan

Essay – Christian-Islamic dialogue continued

Ann Long

I was interested to read the two items about Islam and Christianity – April and September, in the Mix. It seemed to me that some of the issues raised are not really 'ressed. As I am neither a biblical nor Qur'anic scholar – and I do not speak or read Arabic – I find myself at a bit of a loss to express the problem.

Hashmi's reply to Wahaby doesn't really address Wahaby's point and Wahaby's distinction re 'the different God' seems to relate to Unity versus Trinity. Cardinal Pell's article, (which I acquired to see if he really said that 'some of the hysteric and extreme claims about global warming are also a symptom of paganism' and he did) doesn't seem to me to be especially pertinent to Wahaby's bit about 'the different God.'

Counting references to violence didn't seem to me to illuminate the difficulties which really relate to interpretation either, but what I did find interesting in the articles were some of the references to the linguistic and faith origins of the Qur'an and the problems for Qur'anic scholars. I do support the notion that we should be working on what is in common and respecting the difference, and especially supporting scholarly research and discussion. I attach some thoughts:

Many thanks for the discussion about the common beliefs of Islam and Christianity (April and September 2006). The discussion is pertinent for its attempt at better understanding between Muslims and Christians. Kerri Hashmi summarised the similarities and pointed clearly to the differences in the concept of God between the two faith traditions.

M Wahaby suggested that the Muslim and Christian God are very different. Hashmi raised the differences. While Unity and Trinity are certainly different, is this a difference in 'God,' or difference in manifestation? It gets to the heart of whether Jesus is 'divine' or not but does it really point to a difference in 'God.'

I don't think Hashmi contradicted herself as Wahaby claims. If one believes in the Immaculate Conception it doesn't necessarily mean that the product of that conception must be Divine, although Christians believe it is so.

Hashmi's reply to the query about the position of women in Islam is accurate as far as it went. But, while the Qur'an was liberating for women in the seventh century, it doesn't answer the question for women

21st century. Many devout Muslim women don't think it does either.

Hashmi could have also made the point that the Catholic tradition of Christianity

has hardly moved by leaps and bounds in its attitude to women as well.

Which brings us to the dilemma for modern and moderate Muslims – that the Holy Qur'an is believed to be 'the word of God' as given to the Prophet by the Angel Gabriel. It is unmediated, unchangeable and not open to interpretation. The scholarly debate about interpretation of the Bible continues. Most Christians do not consider that the Bible is to be interpreted literally. Those Christians who do, do not address the very real problem of which translation is the truth,' nor the culture in which the Bible was written.

The fact that Wahaby and Hashmi can argue about the meaning of Islam in Arabic demonstrates an aspect of the dilemma. The Qur'an is said to have been written in Arabic. Arabic continues to be spoken, so it is claimed that the word of God is unchanged. Yet here we have an argument about the Arabic meaning of Islam. It becomes even more problematic when the Qur'an is translated into other languages. According to Ziauddin Sardar there is a good deal of disquiet among Q'uran scholars about the various translations of the Qur'an into English.

The most widely available translation by N J Daewood (1956) is accused of subverting the original in several ways. A more recent translation in 2004 by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem is regarded as more accurate, albeit conservative. For example Daewood translated chapter 2 verse 217 as 'Idolatry is worse than carnage,' a statement said to justify violence on the infidel. According to Abdel Haleem the word 'fitna' was translated as 'idolatry' but means 'persecution' or 'oppression,' so that the Qur'an really says 'persecution or oppression is worse than carnage.' This suggests that violence on the infidel is not justified.

Wahaby mentions the battle of 'Badr.' I understand that historians view those battles as self-defence, and what the Prophet Muhammad brought to the peoples of that time was the unimaginable – that is peace without the need for, or a framework of, protective tribalism.

I wonder which translation of the Qur'an Cardinal Pell used for his article Islam and Western Democracies? He said that it was 30 years old, and incidentally, that there were so many invocations to violence that he gave up numbering them after 60 or 70 pages. I suspect the same could be said of the Bible.

The above is about translation and history even before we get to interpretation. If

the Qur'an is the word of God and no interpretation is permitted, why then are there sectors or traditions of Islam which have developed differently? It is often claimed that these differences are really 'cultural.' However, the different manifestations of Sharia Law are examples of different 'interpretations.'

Hashmi pointed out there is no central authority or scholarship for informed discussion, so which is the 'word of God'?

The great wisdom that nurtured Islam in its first 500 years has not kept pace, for various reasons, with the intellectual and faith developments in the following centuries. As I understand it, Islamic scholars and reformers are now grappling with how to 'interpret' the Qur'an.

Luxenberg (cited by Pell) suggests that the Qur'an has its basis in the texts of Syriac Christian liturgy, and Tariq Ramadan, AbdilKarim Soroush and Ziauddin Sardar suggest ways should be found to interpret the Qur'an as a broad set of guidelines on how best to organise a just society and not a list of do's and don'ts.

It seems to me that Christians and Muslims really have a good deal more in common than either Hashmi or Wahaby revealed. Both traditions have great and dangerous difficulties threatening from within when the faith traditions are hijacked for power and political purposes, or when learning and wisdom are directed at do's and don'ts rather than guidelines for developing and maintaining a just society. ■

I enjoyed reading the letters from M Wahaby and Kerri Hashmi on Islam and Christianity (see *The Mix*, September 2006, page 3).

I like reading opposing views on any subject but it seems to me that it is not in anyone's interest to encourage a view that interprets the Islamic Scriptures as promoting violence and disunity. We should not say to Moslems that the Koran, which they believe is the Word of God, gives them the authority to act in a violent and discriminatory way. Rather, we should support those Moslems who believe Islamic Scriptures exhort them to act in a peaceful and inclusive way.

We should also encourage Christians to do the same with our Scriptures. Not all Christians interpret the Bible in a way that encourages peace and tolerance among people. ■

Lindsay Benson, Burnie, TAS

Essay – On freedom, peace and related matters

Michael Costigan

This text is based on an address given by Dr Michael Costigan to an Engadine SIP, at Sutherland's United Services Club, Wednesday 20 September 2006.

My fellow speaker, Sister Patty Fawcner, and I were given a difficult question to ponder: How do we, the Church, build freedom in these times, through pursuing truth, acting justly and loving wholeheartedly? Other speakers at Engadine SIP gatherings this year have presented their ideas about three of Pope John XXIII's four pillars of Peace: Truth, Love and Justice. The fourth pillar, our main concern on this occasion, is Freedom. In some ways, I feel that this pillar of Peace presents us with more problems than the other three.

We know that Jesus came to reveal the Truth - and declared that the Truth will make us free (John, 8.32). Pope John Paul II reflected on the nature and importance of Truth in his encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*. He did so with the assistance of the man who was then Cardinal Ratzinger and is now John Paul's successor, Pope Benedict XVI. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu has demonstrated in South Africa, Truth is essential if real Peace is to be attained. On the other hand, the Pope's own attempt in Regensburg to open up the question of the truth about Islam may or may not contribute to a peaceful outcome to inter-religious conflict in the way he undoubtedly desires.

The centrality of the second pillar of Peace, Love, in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ became the theme of Pope Benedict's own first encyclical, a marvellous and lyrical document, titled *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love). The link between Love and Peace is so obvious that it hardly needs to be demonstrated.

The third pillar of Peace, Justice, has been the subject of much Magisterial teaching for more than a century, from the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) to the present day. The social doctrine of the Church has been expounded in a dozen or so major papal documents since Pope Leo's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* appeared in 1891, in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and in numerous pronouncements by national episcopal conferences and individual Bishops, supplemented by the publications of Catholic Social Justice agencies around the world. That teaching shows in no uncertain terms that there can be no Peace without Justice.

So Truth, Love and Justice are indispensable elements in the pursuit of genuine Peace. But the Church teaches that Peace is

sustained by four pillars, like the top of a four-legged table or an edifice resting on four columns. Freedom is the fourth pillar. In sustaining Peace, can Freedom perform an equivalent function to Truth, Love and Justice? If not, does it mean that genuine Peace is unattainable, that the edifice is in danger of toppling over?

One problem about freedom is that it can mean different things to different people. Does it mean an absolute licence to do as one pleases, with complete independence from God's law or indeed from any law? No. That means anarchy or the philosophy of Libertarianism. Even the defenders of laissez-faire capitalism in its more extreme form cannot ignore or overlook the fact that the consequent enrichment of the few can diminish the freedom of the many. Paradoxically, it was a one-time defender of laissez-faire liberalism, the British philosopher Herbert Spencer, who wrote that 'no one can be perfectly free until all are free' (*Social Status*, 1850).

Real freedom must co-exist with law. Human beings are created as members of a community - and society cannot function without certain rules and regulations which bind its members.

Can freedom be reconciled with Indifferentism - an attitude leading to actions taken without any consideration for the views or situation of others?

In the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, some of the 19th Century Popes condemned the notion of Religious Freedom - a position that was not fully reversed until the final working session of the Second Vatican Council

Again the answer is clearly 'no.' True freedom requires respect for the rights, needs and opinions of others. By the same token, authentic freedom does not imply the acceptance of Relativism - the position of those who reject the notion of absolute truth and of values needing to be embraced by all civilised people if society is to function properly.

What, then, are some of the implications of freedom in society? As the song says, we are born free. In most cases, however, we are born into a family and become part of a community. We have parents, possibly siblings and usually a number of close and distant relations (an extended

family). This usually gives us much joy, many rights and privileges, but it also imposes certain duties or obligations, which can be seen as placing limits on our freedom.

The same is true of our relationship with others around us - friends, school companions, work colleagues, neighbours and other members of various groups, organisations or institutions that may become part of our lives. From birth to death our lives are lived in this rich, multi-coloured human environment. In no sense is our God-given freedom so absolute that it exempts us from the obligation to love and serve others, respecting their rights and needs. With this proviso, however, we have every reason to accept gratefully and to defend our own freedom and that of others.

In history and even in today's world, the right to freedom has often been transgressed and denied. This happens in dictatorships and even at times in relatively democratic societies, when those in power abuse their authority, unjustly persecuting, disadvantaging or discriminating against those whose well-being has been entrusted to them. It is not unknown for power to fall into the hands of those who have campaigned for it on a liberation platform but who have become oppressors and deniers of freedom after assuming coming into power. The world has yet to rid itself of tyrannical and authoritarianism.

The opposite of freedom is slavery. For many centuries millions of men, women and children were enslaved. It seemed for a time that the phenomenon might be gradually disappearing after campaigns like the anti-slavery movement in the 18th Century and events like the American Civil War in the 19th Century. Sadly, however, it has not vanished from the 21st Century world. One of the worst contemporary examples is the trafficking of women and children, often for sexual exploitation. The media have drawn attention to examples of sex slavery even in our own country - and it is suggested that isolated reports are only the tip of the iceberg.

There is, of course, another form of slavery or quasi-slavery - the self-enslavement involved in addictions of various kinds, above all the addiction to sin. How truly free are those who become the victims of addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling? (In my own case, I should confess to a troublesome addiction to football, and in particular the Collingwood team. Whether or not it can be said to diminish my freedom is an open question.)

Another form of freedom-deprivation is

poverty or the serious absence of the goods and opportunities needed to live in a way that conforms with the God-given dignity of the human person. Those who lack the minimum requirements for sustenance, shelter, education, employment and health-care are not able to experience many of the benefits of freedom. In Australia, some members of the Indigenous community, as well as others, are in this situation.

One of the most conspicuous current threats to freedom – and one of today's 'signs of the times' – is terrorism. Obviously the terrorist has no respect for the freedom of the victims. But the response to terrorism can also be such that it undermines or diminishes the freedom and rights of citizens. One disturbing example in Australia is the attitude of the authorities and some media to the treatment of the Australian detainee at Guantanamo Bay, David Hicks. Citizens must be vigilant even in a democracy lest essential rights and freedoms are jeopardised in the name of security.

The Catholic Church enters into the struggle to give or restore freedom to the millions deprived of it around the world. This is done, on the one hand, through the proclamation and application of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, and, on the other hand, by offering aid and support wherever possible – in a word, by applying the teaching of Jesus: "As often as you do this to the least of these my brethren, you do it to me" (Matthew, 25.40).

Does the Church itself have an unblemished record as a champion of freedom? No, unfortunately it does not. While Church authorities and others have frequently given an inspiring lead in word and action in recent decades, one cannot deny that over the centuries Catholics have often failed to promote or defend freedom inside and outside the Church. One only has to think of the persecution and at times the torture and execution of alleged heretics, witches, dissidents and rebels of various kinds.

The late Adrian Hastings, the English theologian-historian, refers to the section in Dostoevsky's masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov* about an imaginary meeting between Jesus and Spain's Grand Inquisitor to illustrate how far the institutional Church can depart from the spirit of its founder (*The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, p.251). Pope John Paul II apologised a number of times for this and other past failings, such as those that occurred during the Crusades, the so-called religious wars and Europe's colonising period, when forced conversions and other acts of violence in the name of Christianity were not unknown.

In the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, some of the 19th Century Popes condemned the notion of Religious Freedom – a position that was not fully reversed until the final working session of the Second Vatican Council on 7 December 1965, the day on which the Council's historic Declaration on Religious Freedom was promulgated. So the Church no longer teaches that 'error has no rights.' Instead, we defend the right of all who belong to other faith communities or non-Christian religions to follow their consciences and to practise their faith freely, provided that their beliefs and actions do not endanger the common good of society.

There is, of course, another form of slavery or quasi-slavery – the self-enslavement involved in addictions of various kinds, above all the addiction to sin.

Leaving behind a fortress mentality, Catholics are now encouraged to enter into dialogue with other Christians, non-Christians and other people of good will (even including atheists), in the interests of better understanding and harmony in the community. Participation in the ecumenical movement and in the broader dialogue movement is one of the principal ways in which we, the Church, can contribute to peace.

While we deliver a message of freedom to the world at large, how well do we put the ideal of freedom into practice within our own Church today? Here we need to examine the Church's performance honestly and without rancour.

One of the sad realities of Church life today is the existence of sundering divisions among Catholics. Certainly it is not unprecedented for believers to have different approaches to the practice of their faith. In one way, diversity has been and is one of the Church's great riches. In recent times, however, we have witnessed deeper conflicts between those who claim to be defenders of what they see as Catholicism's integrity and orthodoxy and those who advocate a liberalising of some of the Church's teachings and practices.

Clashes occurred at the Second Vatican Council itself between those who were labelled 'conservatives' and those who were identified as 'progressives' or would-be reformers. Such terms continue to be used to describe the upholders of opposing viewpoints in the Church. Their use is not always helpful and can be both inaccurate and unfair. Nevertheless, the labels are to some

extent indicative of a reality. Some Church members at the two ends of the ideological spectrum are at times hardly on speaking terms with each other.

For example, some reform-minded Catholics can be almost contemptuous of the preference shown by their more traditionalist brethren for Latin Masses, silent churches, processions, Communion on the tongue, the wearing of Roman collars and religious habits, the retention of the clerical celibacy obligation, and so on. On the other hand, conservative Catholics can sometimes be almost paranoid in their resistance to change, accusing the reformers of abandoning orthodoxy, of disloyalty to the Pope and of favouring what they call 'smorgasbord' or 'bistro' Catholicism – selecting only those Church teachings and practices that are to their taste. They deny that there is any place in the Church for dissent or for what certain advocates of change refer to as 'loyal opposition.'

In an attempt to create better understanding among Catholics with differing viewpoints, a great American Churchman, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, started a new movement, the Catholic Common Ground Project, in the months before his death in November 1996. It was his hope that the fostering of dialogue between differing groups, in a spirit of charity and respect, would help to eliminate the more undesirable features of the intra-Church battleground.

While Bernardin's initiative might not yet have produced the results he desired (and it was not well supported by some of his episcopal colleagues), his example continues to inspire many who wish to contribute to greater harmony and unity – in other words, peace – in the Church. His other notable gift to the Church beyond Chicago and the USA was his teaching on what he called the 'Seamless Garment' or the 'Consistent Ethic of Life,' wherein he underlined the inter-relationship between all pro-life issues, including capital punishment, militarism, euthanasia, abortion, social injustice and economic injustice. The approach to some of these matters (more serious than clerical dress or Communion on the tongue) still divides Catholics at times.

I believe that the Catalyst for Renewal movement lives in the spirit of Joseph Bernardin's Common Ground project. Catalyst's emphasis on dialogue and open conversation, as practised at SIP gatherings, is surely deserving of praise and support. If we as Church are seeking ways to bring our zeal for Truth, Love, Justice and Freedom to bear on our pursuit of Peace in the Church and in the World, we would do well to continue following the Catalyst agenda. ■

The Bible – The great commandment

Words for a Pilgrim People

“Love consists in this: It is not we who loved God but God who loved us.” (1John 4:10)

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“Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other people. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue.” (Paulo Freire, **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, The Seabury Press, 1968, 78-79.)

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“God is in captivity in this world, in the oblivion of our lives. God is in search of humanity, in search of a home in the soul and deeds of people. God is not at home in our world. Our task is to hallow time, to enable Him to enter our moments, to be at home in our time, in what we do with time.” (Abraham Heschel, “On Prayer” in Susannah Heschel, ed, **Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Abraham Joshua Heschel**, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996, 260)

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On the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), we meditate on the great commandment, to love God, ourselves and other people (Mark 12:28-34). (See also Matthew 22:34-40 & Luke 10:25-28.) Is it possible to break through the thick crust of familiarity that surrounds this text? Can we read it with fresh eyes and ears?

The context is important. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and a series of controversies with the religious authorities ensues – this is the fourth. We can learn much about Jesus’ thinking if we look closely at those controversies. Scripture scholar, John Dominic Crossan, argues that the religious authorities “were precisely lay the problem which Jesus ... saw so clearly.” Their emphasis on fidelity to the 613 precepts shifted the primary focus from God’s gracious and unconditional Love to the individual’s response to that love by fulfilling the law. If you start with yourself, and what you must do for God, you finish with yourself and what you must do for God. If you start with God you are drawn into the unending riches of God’s infinite Love.

We go into the world as members of Christ. It is Christ who loves through us, with us and in us. Our task is to get out of the way.

A scribe, admiring the way Jesus has handled these controversies, asks: “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus’ reply incorporates two major references. Firstly, he cites the *Shema*: “Listen Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart ...” The faithful Jew said this prayer every morning and evening – see Deuteronomy 6:4-9 for the beginnings of that prayer. It is a prayer of remembering: Yahweh is the God of the Exodus, the One who has taken the initiative to forge a Covenant of love with this people. It is as if Jesus is saying: Remember that – remember it in the depths of your being – and all else will fall into place.

Secondly, Jesus cites Leviticus 19:18: “You must love your neighbour as yourself.” This chapter of Leviticus is based on the so-called “ten commandments” – see Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-22. It develops the implications of being in the Covenant. There it is again: The Covenant. The Covenant is a bond of love, initiated by God, unmerited gift. It implies a transformed and transforming way of being: To be is to be in Love.

We could summarise the great commandment as follows: As you have been loved into freedom, go into the world so that God may love others into freedom through you. Human beings, at their best, have a natural inclination to care for one another. The great world religions promote this. There is nothing peculiarly Christian about asking people to love each other. There is, however, something peculiarly Christian about the basis for that request as given by Jesus Christ. For the Christian, the call to love is the call to be an agent of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is forged in Jesus’ Passover. We go into the world as members of Christ. It is Christ who loves through us, with us and in us. Our task is to get out of the way. ■

The Tradition – The centre of gravity

Growing up is marked by a shifting centre of gravity. In a healthy life formation process we move from the self-centredness of the infant towards the Mystery-centredness of the adult. Self-fulfilment is found through self-transcendence. It is sad to see adults who are still self-centred. Selfishness, arrogance, egocentricity and various forms of narcissism are signs of arrested development, even if they do bring “success.” St Augustine reminded us at the very beginning of his *Confessions*, we are made to be with God and we are restless until that communion of being is brought about. In other words, we are incorrigible God-seekers. And if it is not God we seek it will be “god,” an idol of some kind. And the idol nearest at hand and most commonly worshipped, is the self. Thus, the 14th century Dominican guide, Meister Eckhart, says: “Our last and highest parting occurs when, for God’s sake, we take leave of god. St Paul took leave of god for God’s sake and gave up all that he might get from god, as well as all he might give – together with every idea of god.” ■

“Our last and highest parting occurs when, for God’s sake, we take leave of god.”

Bulletin Board

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

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

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

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

NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

- **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Joan 6021 6880).
- **Blackheath Spirituality – The Australian Connection** The Gardners Inn November 8 “Does Affluenza kill Spirituality?” Sr Libby Rogerson & Chris McGillion (Info: Elizabeth 4787 6198).
- **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Julian 4861 4649).
- **Braidwood** Servicemen’s Club **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Pauline 4842 2829).
- **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).
- **Engadine – Sutherland United Services Club**, 7 East Pde, **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).
- **Goulburn** Soldiers Club November 14 (Info: Tony 4822 2636).
- **Inner West – Recommencing 2007** (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 **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Terry 9973 1192).
- **North Sydney** – Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).
- **Paddington** – Bellevue Hotel **The Heart of the Matter** March 7 2007 (Info: Marea 9387 3152).
- **Penrith** Golf Club **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Sue 9760 2324).
- **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Maria 80 2220 (H))
- **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Greg 9546 2028).

◦ **Waitara** - The Blue Gum Hotel Elphick **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Carole 9869 1036(a/h)).

Victoria

- **Alphington** Tower Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm February 21 “Mental Health Illness: What can I do? What can we do?” Chaired by Len Thomas, Healthcare Chaplain, Speakers tba (Info: Charles 0417 319 556).
- **Ballarat North** Midlands Golf Club, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm **Recommencing 2007** (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 **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Paula 5231 3376).
- **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm **Recommencing 2007 March 7** (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, **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Colleen 9775 2163 or Carole 5976 1024).
- **Southern** The Dev Hotel, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Kevin 9776 2705)
- **Wangaratta** Café Martini **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Kate 5721 6322).
- **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Anne 9312 3595).
- **Woodend** Holgate Brewhouse-Keatings Hotel **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Marg 5429 5907).

Other States

- **Devonport (TAS)** Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Graham 6424 8286).
- **Hobart North** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro 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 **Recommencing 2007** (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, Nov 3-5 Taize weekend; Nov 10-12 prayer weekend; Nov 10-16 guided retreat; Nov 20-28 & Nov 29-Dec 7 directed retreats; Dec 8-10 Advent prayer weekend; Dec 8-14 Advent guided retreat (Info: 02 4630 9232).
- **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 www.onlinecatholics.com.au
- **Retreat on Meditation in Christian context** – Presentation Spirituality Centre, Manly, Qld, Nov 24 – 26, Presenters: Bernadette Kavanagh/Stewart, Paul Gilroy, James Stewart, Full residential, daytime only (Info: 07 5520 7242).

EUCCHARISTIC REFLECTION

Marist Centre
1 Mary St, Hunters Hill
Saturday November 11th
with
Fr Frank Duneen msc
“Why am I a Catholic?”
4.00pm – 6.00pm
followed by light meal.
Please ring (02) 9816 4262
for catering purposes. By donation.

HELP US SPREAD THE MIX!

This little publication is intended to promote conversation. Conversation is crucial for us at this time in history. We find ourselves being forced to address major questions and issues we have never had to deal with before. We simply must collaborate with all people of good will.

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The Mix is run mostly on a volunteer basis. Subscriptions also help us promote other forums for conversation, apart from paying for *The Mix*

Recommended

Amanda Lohrey, "Voting for Jesus. Christianity and Politics in Australia." *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 22, 2006. ISBN: 186-395-230-6, \$14.95

There was a time in Australia when Catholics voted Labor. Then some turned against Labor and voted for the Democratic Labor party. Now, their votes are split between Labor, Liberal, Independent, the Greens, and the Democrats. How times have changed. Things are far more complex.. Amanda Lohrey's essay challenges the idea of Catholics casting a block vote for one party. Certainly one party cannot count on that any more; parties have learnt that they have to capture their voters with promises, and for Catholics that usually means schools policies. This essay covers a range of issues: Hillsong and the mega-churches, young peoples' ideas of personal relationship with Jesus as distinct from religion, the courting of religious groups by politicians, and the covert use of religious groups' finances to influence the outcome of elections. Newspapers and television (*Four Corners*, for example) have taken up the issue of the silent forces and their influence on political outcomes. The relationship between religion and politics has become very complex in the past two national elections. Christians are increasingly involved at various levels in attempting to influence the outcome for their own benefit. The essay has some interesting interviews with young people who give us a glimpse of the rising generation and their more laissez-faire approach to religion. The warning is: don't take them for granted.

Michael Mason, Ruth Webber, Andrew Singleton and Philip Hughes, *Spirit of Generation Y*, Project website: <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/ccls/spir/spir.htm>, June 2006.

So, you think you know something about Generation Y, those aged between 13 and 29? This report of a three year study, carried out by researchers at Australian Catholic University, Monash University and the Christian Research Association, will give you some hard data from which to make your generalisations. There will be some surprises. For example, there has been little change in belief and practice from the baby boomers (currently aged between forty-five and fifty-nine) to the present Generation Ys. It seems that to raise committed Christians, the principal influence is practising parents who are enthusiastic about their faith; attendance at a church school has had little influence. The research should carry weight with decision-makers as they approach World Youth Day and those groups seeking to attract the young to their ranks. They just aren't into organised religion. They are a generation of pickers and choosers, committed to their friends as their chief support-base in times of difficulty. (This is borne out by a number of related research studies which show the significance of friendship rather than religion in hard times.) This is an important study and one that all who want to engage with the next generation of Christians ought be familiar with. It constitutes a reality check. As the researchers say: we need to find contact points with these people.

Umberto Eco and Cardinal Martini, *Belief or Nonbelief? A Confrontation.*, Arcade Publishing, 2000, ISBN: 1-55970-497-7, hb, 102 pages, \$US17.95.

There are some who consider debating to be an excellent exercise of the mind and a public performance. It gives one a chance to display one's ability to mount an argument, to analyse the arguments of the other and to point out their weaknesses. Against this there are many who consider debating to be the antithesis of conversation – that process of listening, discerning the truth of the other's point of view and of modifying one's own and of being prepared to think differently about the other as well. This little gem of a book is an excellent example of two highly intelligent minds in written conversation. Eco was raised a Catholic – his doctoral dissertation was on Thomas Aquinas – but he speaks now as a secularist. Cardinal Martini writes as Martini, without the "Cardinal" in these conversations about the Apocalypse, the beginning of life, women in the Church, violence and secularism. There are two particularly fascinating aspects of the book: the topics themselves and the insights each offers, and the ability of these two great people to speak with each other without rancour and without any attempt to win an argument. The reader might not agree with the points of view expressed. However, it would be unfortunate if the same reader didn't long for such humane conversation. Many of us within the Catholic Church have such a longing, where difference is often and regrettably expressed without charity and often with hostility.

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"Next morning I met the most powerful speaker from the previous day. Aunty Cathy Mills is the daughter of a Gurindji woman stolen from Wave Hill; she is also the Senior Territorian of the Year. 'Where are the wise Australians,' she asked. After the Gurindji sat down, Vincent Lingiari moved to the view that the dispute was more than about pay. It was about something to do with the Gurindji as people. He then made a decision. The Gurindji would establish their own settlement and he led them to a place, not just any place, a place of tribal meaning commensurate with the moment. 'That's what land rights is about,' she told me. 'Going back to the source of your power.'"

[Martin Flanagan and Tom Uren, *The Fight*, One Day Hill, 2006, 166-167. Martin and Tom went back to Gurindji country for the fortieth anniversary of the walk-off on Wave Hill station. This is Martin's reporting.]