



# THE MIX



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## Our Say – The way we seek truth

On March 13 2007, Pope Benedict XVI released the apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, on the Eucharist. The exhortation is the concluding act of the eleventh synod of bishops held in Rome in October 2006. Because the document is intended to represent the mind of the synod, it is not possible to say just what was and was not actually written by Benedict. (These synods are the highest expressions of collegiality in the Church today.)

However, the opening paragraphs seem to be the work of Benedict. There he explicitly links this exhortation with his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. The following statement is probably his also:

In the sacrament of the altar, the Lord meets us, men and women created in God's image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:27), and becomes our companion along the way. In this sacrament, the Lord truly becomes food for us, to satisfy our hunger for truth and freedom.

This statement invites further reflection.

Firstly we must note three minor points in passing. It may be the first Roman document of this status to use inclusive language. And the use of the nuptial metaphor to explain the celibacy of the priest does seem strange (see 24), as does the metaphor of “nuclear fission” (see 11) to explain the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

More noteworthy is the reiteration of the discipline concerning those who are divorced and remarried – they are “not to be admitted to the sacraments” (see 29). The explanation is given as follows:

.... their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist ....

The document says “this represents a complex and troubling pastoral problem”. Pastors are urged to act out of “love for the truth” in supporting them. Further, they are “to live as friends, as brother and sister.” Again, the phrase, “love for the truth” is repeated as the basis for this teaching.

Is it possible that the truth we seek, the truth we will ultimately meet in the Eucharist, might in fact be revealed to us in and through the living experience of the Body of Christ in the world? Is there not some validity in disposing ourselves to be surprised by the truth revealed in the tension between the abstract and the concrete, between theoretical ideals and the discovered facts of human experience? Might the Spirit of God reveal truth to us if we listen to the pain and honest struggles of a man or woman who has grown through a bad first marriage, been purged in the crucible of life, and found a more mature loving commitment in a second marriage?

Far from demeaning marriage, such an honest conversation could in fact enhance both our appreciation for marriage as an institution and the lives of those directly involved. It might also enhance the lives of those entrusted with the responsibility of teaching in the name of the Church ■

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

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

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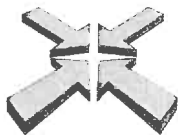
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**The Four Arrows and the Cross** symbolise diversity giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture, in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

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

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## THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Mary Beasley. My parents were Irish. At the time of my birth in 1937 they were living in London. My mother took the boat back to Ireland for my birth but I came early and arrived on the ship, in the Irish Sea. The Captain registered me as a British citizen. My mother then registered me in Dublin as an Irish citizen.

During the war I was sent back to Ireland several times because London was being bombed. Our place got bombed three times. On one of those occasions, when I was about five, I was waiting with my friend for her father to return with his jug of beer from the pub across the street. We met him in the middle of the road as a bomb landed and were all buried under rubble. I was between my friend and her father. I knew he was dead straight away. I knew my friend was still alive for a short while because she talked to me, but she died there beside me. They had to be very careful because there was another bomb near us that had not gone off. And there was leaking gas. They put a pipe down to me so I could breathe. Our parish priest, Fr Michael Carey was lovely. He stayed there all the time. They finally got me out after four and a half days.

My friend who died in that attack was Jewish. We had helped the family find a home in London at the time. She has two brothers who are still alive. They went to live in the United States. One became a Catholic and is now a Jesuit priest, the other became a Rabbi. The Jesuit sends me a Christmas card each year, for himself and the Rabbi.

A week before my eighteenth birthday I married Len, an Australian who was in the navy, and returned with him to his hometown of Gunnedah. We lived in a tent with his family. This was all a bit of a shock for an only child raised in London.

I have had lots of jobs over the years. I cooked and cleaned, I cut cane in Queensland and after I split from my husband I dug potatoes in Victoria to make ends meet. Len’s father was a drover and he was taking a herd of cattle to Katherine in 1958. I went along as the cook. At the end of the first day I stopped the horse near a tree and just slid down the tree to the ground. I could hardly move. When we delivered the cattle in Katherine we turned around and rode home.

When Len left the navy in 1960 we moved to Melbourne where all of my eight children – five girls and three boys – were born. When I split up from my husband, Shane, the older boy was sixteen. He decided to go with his father. He got on drugs and lived with different women.

There was not much I could do. I kept in touch with him. Whenever he was in jail I visited him. He had a little boy with one woman and I still keep in touch with him. With another woman he had three girls and another little boy. At ten weeks that little boy died. They said it was a cot death, but I do not know. Shane eventually died of the drugs.

Shane’s eldest daughter and her sister were staying with me some time after Shane’s death. She broke a little devotional lamp I had with a statue of the Sacred Heart but she blamed her sister. I let it go. Some time afterwards she was abducted. She was six. Before the police found her body several months later, she appeared to me in a “dream,” but I thought I was awake. She was dressed in white and she told me she was sorry and admitted that she had broken the lamp and that I should tell her mother that “if she doesn’t live properly I’ll never see her again.” So I found where her mother was living and told her. When they did find the child’s body, she came to me again in a “dream,” dressed in white and she was dancing around. There were all these people queued up at a set of gates. I said to her, “What are all those people doing?” She said, “Oh Nana, they’re all waiting for the Second Coming!” After that I never heard from her again.

I have thirty one grandchildren and two great grandchildren. They are a blessing. I keep in touch with them all. The big challenge for me in life is to get as close as I can to God and be at peace with God. I pray for people who need prayers, especially people who went through things I went through. And I pray for my children of course.

I entered the Poor Clares at Campbelltown in February 1994. I wanted a stable life where I could be with God and be at peace. I am now a finally professed member of that community.



Sr Mary Beasley

# Your Say – The sad case of Mr Welby

Peter Coleman

I was greatly heartened to read your balanced comments on the Welby 'euthanasia' case in "Our Say" (Mix, March 2007). It is not unnatural to desire to be released from excessive suffering. It is not unnatural to desire a dignified death. It is not, in itself: "incompatible with Catholic Doctrine" to publicly express a desire for death. The 1980 Declaration on Euthanasia from which you quote goes on to say "the pleas of gravely ill people who sometimes ask for death are not to be understood as implying a true desire for euthanasia; in fact, it is almost always a case of an anguished plea for help and love." Such a compassionate stance could have provided Cardinal Ruini with the opportunity to adopt a less rigid approach to a difficult and complex situation.

To deny a funeral Mass to Welby's grieving family seems an extraordinarily inhumane exercise of administrative power and I am forced to conclude that there must have been deeper motives involved other than the mere desire to avoid scandal. In any event, I thank you for your informed comments on the difficult moral issue of euthanasia and for helping me to bridge the puzzling gap between Cardinal Ruini's attitudes and those quoted in the gospel of St. Luke (6/36-37): "Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned.'"

Peter Coleman  
North Sydney, NSW

I want to tell you how much I enjoy reading *The Mix*. As soon as it arrives I have to open it and quickly read through the topics and then later on when I have more time I read it properly. *The Mix* is a wonderful publication to keep up with current thinking in the Church. I also enjoy the book reviews and sometimes buy the books.

Monica Mahoney  
Lara, VIC

## A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Recently the Editor was given a copy of an old exam paper. It was headed, "Diocese of Armidale – Leaving Certificate Christian Doctrine" and was dated Thursday, November 3, 1932. The students were allowed 3 hours for the exam. Readers of *The Mix* are invited to reflect on that exam, reproduced below:

### Section I - Instruction

- (a) Prove that Christ is a real man.  
(b) Name and explain the various ways that Christ, as man, had of possessing knowledge.
- Show that Christ on earth was a priest, a Prophet and a King; show that also in these three capacities he is still a living force on earth.

OR

- (a) What effects does the Sacrament of Holy Orders produce in the recipient?  
(b) Prove that Anglicans have neither Priests nor Bishops.
- (a) What special help did Christ give the Apostles to enable them to preach the Gospel?  
(b) Show briefly the effect produced by such help.

- What is meant by an invalidating impediment? What are the invalidating impediments to marriage?

OR

What are the duties of parents regarding the education of their children? What are the special laws of the Church in this matter?

### Section II – Church History

- (a) Discuss briefly any two of the causes of the French Revolution.  
(b) "The misfortunes of the Church in France were used by God as a means of re-awakening Catholic life in England." Discuss this statement showing the causes and the effects of this re-awakening.
- Give and explain the three grounds, as stated by Pope Leo XIII, on which the State must guard the workers' welfare.

OR

Pope Leo XIII, shows by four arguments that Socialism is an evil. Give and explain any two of the Pope's arguments.

### Section III – Sacred Scripture and Church Liturgy

- (a) What was St John's chief object in writing a Gospel?  
(b) Give any two of the arguments brought forward by him to achieve his object.

OR

(a) Prove from the Gospel of St John that the Church founded by Christ must have unity.

(b) Prove from the same Gospel that the Church is infallible.

- What are the three chief divisions of the Mass? Prove from this division that the proper time for the faithful to go to Holy Communion is after the Priest's Communion.

*Editor's Reflection: History, like parenthood, makes us all vulnerable. Don't look back if you don't want to know. The fragility of the human condition – in both its individual and corporate expressions – is exposed against the sweep of the years. Time reduces us all to size. In doing that it should make us wary of facile judgments of either our own era or a former one.*

*One of the most obvious features of this exam paper is its sheer rationality. Its whole tone is one clearly removed from experience. In that, I suspect, it reflects the tenor of the times, both secular and ecclesiastical. The sphere of the subjective, taken for granted by our generations and perhaps over-prized by us, took a distant second place to the objective "facts" and "proofs" and "teachings" in seeking the truth.*

*In seminaries, before the Second Vatican Council started to take effect, education was primarily one of learning "objective truths." (I noted with embarrassment: "Prove that Anglicans have neither Priests nor Bishops.") Notions of "conversation" – ecumenical and other – "loyal dissent," "discerning the signs of the times" and "listening to experience," were yet to emerge.*

*I searched in vain for any suggestion that the Christian faith is about being in love and that the heart of our faith is a mystical heart. The impression given by the exam is that the faith is a body of abstract knowledge – albeit knowledge with practical applications – and receiving and passing on the faith is a matter of learning the right answers. How we maintain a realistic and solid commitment to the intellectual study of the faith on the one hand, and keep alive the truth that faith is a living relationship with the God who is nameless and incomprehensible and loves us infinitely and unconditionally, is a challenge we probably have not wrestled with enough in our generation.*

*There is also a legalism evident here – for example, the whole of Section III. Once our faith loses its grounding in the initiative of God and God's overwhelming love, given without reserve to everyone everywhere, the structure and its teachings gradually – or not so gradually – usurp the place of God. Ecclesiolatry is the eventual outcome. The whole point of our necessary attempts to articulate doctrinal statements that express what we believe, laws that protect our tradition, moral visions that help us to remember who we are and institutional structures that serve right order, is to help us to open ourselves individually and corporately to the liberating love of God.* ■

**This is the text of Fr Patrick Kenna's talk at the Campbelltown Spirituality in the Pub, May 10, 2006. Patrick is a priest of the Wollongong Diocese in New South Wales.**

If you were browsing around in a bookshop and happened to notice in the religion and spirituality section a book with the title above, my guess is that you'd take it in your hands at once and begin leafing through its pages. So, congratulations to our Campbelltown team of SIP on the choice of such a compelling title for this evening's conversation.

When I called Dr Ann Wansbrough last Thursday to inquire about her approach to the theme she at once threw the ball back into my court: "Perhaps you'd tell me what you're planning to say." We were soon at ease. Her presentation and mine would, we felt, complement each other.

Ann is to be speaking of her work within the Uniting Church's initiatives for social justice. My own approach will be to attend to the spirit underlying such activity.

It's always an attention-getter to bring into a classroom a potted seedling and have the students reflect about it: the beginnings as a tiny seed, and how, given the right conditions, it will mature; how it might look ten, twenty, fifty years from now. And at that point the class might be taken outside to stand around and look up into the branches of a huge tree. One would ask, "What's the most important section of the tree?" Under the earth, unseen, its root-system keeps this tree alive, flourishing.

From the Latin word, "radix" ("root") comes our word for this evening's conversation, the familiar adjective, "radical."

In St Matthew's gospel we hear Jesus sounding out against shallow, showy religion: "For I tell you (*we can see his eyes blazing, his index-finger stabbing the air in front of our faces*) "if your virtue goes no deeper (*is not more radical*) than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into The Kingdom of Heaven." (Mt 5:20)

What sorts of experiences might make us radical? I'd like us to think back on one of those times when we were shown life in a radically different way; when our taken-for-granted Christianity was given a jolt; when we found ourselves unexpectedly outside our comfort zone. A moment of "radicalisation." (Later this evening you might share with us one such "moment.") The following are two from my experience.

First experience: I'm behind the wheel,

driving down the main street of a country-town. Alongside, in the passenger's seat, is Shirley Smith. In the back of the Holden are three young aboriginal children she has with her. We've just eaten our meal of sausages, fried onions and mashed potatoes.

Stopping at the intersection, I find myself looking across the street at a familiar landmark in the township, a restaurant all lit up for the night. Through its curtained, plate-glass one can see well-dressed couples settling in to enjoying their dinner in warm, pleasant surroundings. I know the place well, having eaten there myself more than once. But tonight I seem to be seeing the restaurant as if for the first time. I'm looking at it in Mum Shir's company. Not a word is said. The traffic eases. We drive on.

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**From the Latin word, "radix" ("root") comes our word for this evening's conversation, the familiar adjective, "radical."**

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Second experience: A group-of parents has arrived in the parish hall, some running a bit late, for their pre-confirmation session. It's a chilly evening and – something overlooked in our planning – there happens to be a State of Origin game scheduled. So there they are: loyal, obedient mums and dads, glancing nervously at their watches; with a bit of luck they'll be home in time for the second half. In bounces our guest-speaker.

Against all odds, he soon has them eating out of his hand. Looking something like (and behaving something like) Rolf Harris; he cheekily enlists his first "volunteer," a nuggetty electrician seated three rows from the front, whose name, he learns, is Barry. Barry is invited to stand and cup both hands at waist-level and gaze upwards towards the ceiling. In a different soft voice our facilitator whispers, "Blessed are the poor."

Then, "Hold it there, Barry. Thank you!"

A second father is standing, embracing an imaginary child. "Blessed are the gentle."

Next, a mother bent forward, her face covered by both hands. "Blessed are those who mourn."

With arms up-stretched, a fourth parent is miming the words, "Blessed are those who thirst for what is right."

A fifth, with smiling face and arms in a

welcoming embrace, is expressing, "Blessed are the merciful."

"Blessed are the pure in heart." is shown by a father whose right hand is resting across his chest.

Facing one another, two women have their hands resting on each other's shoulders. "Blessed are the peace-makers."

Finally, in the back row a parent had been invited to stand with arms stretched outwards. "Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right ...."

Now, our facilitator whispers excitedly, "look around at each of these eight people." (And here comes the moment of revelation.) "There we see eight images of Jesus. He is among the poor. He is with the one who mourns. He is the gentle one ... the peace-maker ... the one persecuted."

The familiar, well-worn Beatitudes have been given a depth, new, surprising. The State of Origin game for the moment is all but forgotten.

Moments of "Radicalisation" may not be everyday occurrences, but neither are they rare. (As I suggested earlier, it would be interesting to hear from you.) But what about that everyday journeying of ours? How can our discipleship avoid becoming shallow and facade only?

Back to that potted seeding. If it's to grow and blossom and bear fruit, its roots will need watering, fertilising, it will need to be dug around. Weeds, stones, whatever may be hindering its growth will be uprooted. How? . While no-one would claim a "one size fits all" formula, there are certain essentials all of us would accept. I'm nominating three; seeing them as three sides of a triangle, each as important as the other two.

Firstly we need guides. Are any of these names familiar: Joan Chittester; Richard Rohr; Daniel O'Leary; Timothy Radcliffe? It seems that one of the answers to our intercession, "Give us this day our daily bread," is that we are given certain remarkable men and women in our particular generation and culture who provide bread in the wilderness – and keep on providing, for their wells of inspiration seem never to dry up. Their books, their articles keep on coming.

A sampling from Daniel O'Leary's *Travelling Light* (pages 98-99) will help to illustrate what I mean:

My heart goes out to folk who despair at the perceived failure of their lives. I think it is a desperately sad thing to happen to anyone. I



## AN UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

Michael Whelan SM

want to hold them close and fill them with hope; to tell them of the wonder of their lives; how they have, all unknowingly, changed the world; how, one day, the love they have incarnated in the hearts of others will be their shining selves in heaven forever. There is nothing the baby does that is not delightful to the parents. Whether playing, sleeping, dribbling, on the potty, sucking a nipple, a thumb or toe, there is beautiful meaning for the adoring mother. So with us and God. Even the most ordinary and routine actions and duties of our roles in life, may be the most sacred of all. The mystery of God is experienced as paradox. The Holy Spirit spins gold from the bare threads of our threadbare days.

Secondly, there is the value of a special one-to-one. The Celtic tradition has a word for it, *anamchara* ("heart-friend"). One meets with such a friend humbly and openly, a few times in the year.

Without such a friend we could easily deceive ourselves, heading towards activities that may appear impressive yet in fact may well be coming from our ego.

The *anamchara* will enable us to discern, to sift the wheat from the chaff. From him/her we will be given the encouraging word we need and the word of warning.

Thirdly, we need radical prayer. Let's be honest about our present experience of worship. With so much time and energy being devoted to achieving well-planned and successfully celebrated liturgies, it would seem time to be taking stock lest that Sunday worship becomes shallow, "No deeper than that of the Scribes and Pharisees ..."

I'm thinking of the need – the absolute need – to step aside from our readings and our hymns and our rituals and our spoken prayers and to present ourselves empty-handed before the One who loves us. This wordless, radical form of prayer is called "Meditation" or "Contemplation." Jesus preaches it: "But when you pray, go to your private room and when you have shut your door pray to your Father who is in that secret place ..." (Mt 6:6)

And he practised what he preached: "In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there." (Mk 1:35)

A certain Religious Sister, well known, as it happens, for her continuing ministry among those on the fringe, and for her occasional outburst on their behalf, was noticed by a friend of mine as she sat alone before the Blessed Sacrament. Later, when he asked her how she prayed, she smiled, "I just sit there, letting myself be loved." ■

In Sydney's Catholic newspaper, *The Catholic Weekly*, Cardinal George Pell had a piece on global warming (25/02/07, p.6). It was on the Opinions page and under the banner, "Cardinal's Comment," the piece was headed "Climate Scaremongers". It began:

Global warming doomsdayers were out and about in a big way recently, but the rain came in Central Queensland and then here in Sydney. January also was unusually cool.

We have been subjected to a lot of nonsense about climate disasters as some zealots have been painting extreme scenarios to frighten us. They claim ocean levels are about to rise spectacularly, that there could be the occasional tsunami as high as an eight-storey building, the Amazon basin could be destroyed as the ice cap in the Arctic and in Greenland melts.

The Cardinal went on:

What we were seeing from the doomsdayers was an induced dose of mild hysteria, semi-religious if you like, but dangerously close to superstition.

I am deeply sceptical about man-made catastrophic global warming, but still open to further evidence. I would be surprised if industrial pollution, and carbon emissions, had no ill effect at all.

The Cardinal concludes by saying that "the science is more complicated than the propaganda!" (The emphasis is his.)

I wonder about the wisdom of the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney going into the public forum in this way. With a small minority of dissenters, the world's scientists agree that the size of the human footprint on this planet needs to be reduced.

These scientists say we are using too many of the earth's resources in ways that are unsustainable, we are destroying for ever significant numbers of the earth's species of animals and plants, we are polluting our waterways and subterranean aquifers at a rate that cannot be repaired, we are destroying our fertile farming regions through over-cropping and destruction of the plant life that has breathed life into that land for centuries, our industry and motor vehicles are pumping poisonous gases into the atmosphere at levels that cannot be sustained and forests that cleanse our air are being destroyed at an alarming rate.

Of course these scientists – seemingly the vast majority in the world today – might be wrong. They might be just "doomsdayers." Then again, they might be right, or at least substantially right.

In a matter as serious as this we ought to

play the percentages. Even if the odds are say only 1 in 50 – and nobody seems to be suggesting the odds are that good – the risk is too high to ignore.

Global warming is of a piece with this whole environmental reality. Need we fear climate change and global warming or not? I don't know. I am not a scientist. But I do not have to be a scientist to make a decision. Enough scientists have sounded the alarm to suggest to me that it would be irresponsible of me not to act to reduce our human foot print on this earth.

Suppose the authorities sounded a warning that there had been massive earthquakes in New Zealand and there was about a 1 in 50 possibility of a hugely destructive tsunami hitting the east coast of Australia. What would we say of those parents living at sea level near the coast who did not move their families to higher ground?

There does seem to be a link between the affluent economies of rampant consumerism, the conservative mindset and the refusal to accept lifestyle change in view of environmental needs. The two nations that refused to go down the track of lifestyle change after the Kyoto conference were Australia and the United States. Both countries share the dubious honour of creating the highest rates of pollution per head of population in the entire world.

Where does this leave someone who wants to bear witness to Jesus Christ, he who had nowhere to lay his head (see Matthew 8:20)? What of the example of renunciation and the spirit of sacrifice that have been such a crucial part of the Christian tradition and given it so much moral authority in history?

This whole issue of the environment and the potential threat from the way we live, begs for a radical and generous response from Christians. We need leaders who can point the way and encourage the prophetic ones to break new ground. Are we so identified with the materialistic culture or so intertwined with the market economy that we cannot bear witness to the freedom of detachment?

Leaders must help us discern the signs of the times, they must encourage and support prophetic witness.

Doubtless another Francis of Assisi would have an impact. But in lieu of Francis, who among us can provide leadership for a society that is bereft of leadership, speak the truth to a people that has grown cynical of that possibility, embody a viable alternative to the lifestyle based on material possessions and slick marketing? "If no one can be sure which call the trumpet has sounded, who will be ready for the attack?" (1Corinthians 14:8) ■

### Words for a Pilgrim People

*"When Simon Peter realised it was the Master, he threw on some clothes, for he was stripped for work, and dove into the sea." (John 21:9)*

□□□

*"To see the infinite pity of this place./ The mangled limb, the devastated face./ The innocent sufferers, smiling at the rod;/ A fool were tempted to deny his God;/ He sees, and shrinks, but if he look again./ Lo, beauty springing from the breast of pain./ He marks the sisters on the painful shores./ And even a fool is silent and adores." (Robert Louis Stevenson - After a visit to the leper colony at Kalaupapa, Molokai, 1888.)*

□□□

*"O Lord, remember not only the men of goodwill, but also the men of illwill. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us, remember the fruits we have gathered thanks to this suffering - our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of this - and when they come to judgment, let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness." (Prayer found in a concentration camp after the War.)*

□□□

*"One dark night,/ Fired with love's urgent longings/ - Ah the sheer grace! -/ I went out unseen,/ My house being now all stilled." (John of the Cross, "Stanzas of the Soul" from **The Dark Night**, trans. by K. Kavanagh & O. Rodriguez.)*

□□□

*"Maybe the burning bush was burning all the time and Moses didn't notice. Maybe the miracle is when you stop and pay attention." (Francine Prose. **Household Saints**, St. Martin's, 1981, 220.)*

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On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter (Year C), we hear a very complex and rich account of one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances (John 21:1-19). The disciples spend the night fishing, Jesus appears on the shore in the morning light, he tells them to cast their net to the right of the boat and they catch a huge haul of big fish, Peter – who is "stripped for work" – jumps in the water to greet the Lord, Jesus cooks them breakfast then asks the three poignant "Do you love me?" questions of Peter, foretells Peter's death and concludes with the command, "Follow me!" We are left breathless!

There is a sentence that can help us to move more deeply into this story: "They caught nothing that night" (v3). Even as we meditate during these days on the resurrection, we cannot avoid the totality of Jesus' passing over. The resurrection is experienced by us as an event of great joy in part at least because of the stark backdrop. The dawn is the dawn because it is born of the night.

Quite apart from the highly significant use of "night" as a specific metaphor for the world of sin in John's Gospel, the word night has obvious suggestions for us all. There is something forlorn in the bare statement: "They caught nothing that night." They had gone fishing because Peter suggested it. When in doubt, escape to the familiar. The disciples seem more than a little lost. They have not yet passed over to the new way. They come up empty handed.

For a terrible instant, their lives seem pointless. It would be easy for them to be overwhelmed by the nothingness of the night, the sheer futility of life now, without Jesus.

The very next sentence gives a revealing contrast: "When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the beach but they did not recognise him" (v4). The disciples are still caught in the night of their own self-absorption. They cannot see. The truth has not yet dawned for them. Jesus, like the dawning of a new day, characteristically emerges for us from the night, when we have caught nothing, those experiences when night and nothingness seem to have caught us. Our faith urges us to expect him in such moments. ■

## The Tradition – Beyond ego

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The infant is necessarily self-focused. When the hunger pangs strike or the nappy is wet or there is some irritation or pain, the infant cries. In effect, the infant is saying: "Come here I need attention!" We are expected – quite rightly – to outgrow this sort of behaviour. We are expected to develop the ability to look after ourselves, more or less. There is within all of us an organizing centre which we call ego. It is entirely appropriate that, as young children, teenagers and young adults, we develop a good strong ego. But maturity does not end with the development of ego. What follows – or what *ought to follow* – is even more important.

We grow into our richest possibilities through self-transcendence. The ego life is a great servant but a terrible master. Ego helps me to make and keep appointments, work a computer or drive a car, do a heart transplant or bake a loaf of bread. Ego can even help in developing good routines of prayer and life-giving habits of behaviour. But what we seek most, what the human heart longs for, comes as pure grace. Life is gracious. The mature person is a gracious person, unlike the ego-centred person. Ego is about control. Ego fears loss of control. The more mature stage of growth through self-transcendence is about surrender and submission. Self-transcendence is about openness to grace.

**The riches of our humanity typically only begin to emerge when we have known ego desperation ...**

The truth of who we are can never be gauged adequately by what we have organized, even we wrote books, built buildings and led teams of people to the top of Mount Everest. The riches of our humanity typically only begin to emerge when we have known ego desperation, when we have reached the end of mastery and begun to sense the beauty and freedom of grace. That Gospel moment of potential despair – "They caught nothing that night" – may be the moment in which we begin to be human. ■

## 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 **Recommencing 2007** (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

◦ **Batemans Bay** Soldiers Club, Beach Rd.

◦ **Blackheath – What the World Needs Now...** The Gardners Inn May 9 “A Listening Heart” Fr Eugene Stockton & Brahma Kumaris Centre for Spiritual Learning (Info: Elizabeth 4787 6198).

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

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

◦ **Engadine – How can we leave the World a better place for our Children?** Sutherland United Services Club, 7 East Pde, April 18 “A place of Freedom to Grow” Amir Mesrinejad & tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

◦ **Goulburn – Let your Words be for the Improvement of Others (Eph 1:29)** - Soldiers Club (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

◦ **Inner West** The Pine Inn Burwood/Concord (Info: James 0418 242 932).

◦ **Jamberoo – Prophets in Our Time** The Jamberoo Hotel May 14 “Prophets in our Time – Robbing our Children of a Healthy Future” Col Brown & Phil Woods (Info: Gabrielle 4232 2735).

◦ **Kincumber – And the Greatest of These is Love** - The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive May 1 Ralph Kershler & Friends (Info: Carmen 4367 2743 or Sue 4334 3174).

◦ **North Sydney – Maintaining Human Dignity ... Mission Impossible?** – Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney, April 16 “Human Dignity and Bio Ethics – Do not claim to be wiser than you are” Dr Bridget Vout & Neil Ormerod (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Paddington – The Heart of the Matter** – Bellevue Hotel May 2 “Belief” Margaret Cody & Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

◦ **Penrith** Golf Club May 2 “Living our

Spirituality by working for justice” Julie McCrossin & John O'Neill (Info: Sue 9760

2324).

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

◦ **Waitara – Ours is a Destitute Time. What is the way forward for Religion?** - The Blue Gum Hotel April 18 Tim O'Hearn & Libby Rogerson ibvm (Info: Carole 9869 1036(ah)).

### Victoria

◦ **Alphington** Tower Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm May 16 “Leadership in the Church” Peter Price (Info: Charles 0417 319 556).

◦ **Ballarat North** Midlands Golf Club, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm (Info: Kevin 5332 7451).

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

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

◦ **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel May 17 “A missionary experience in Tanzania” Melissa Patterson (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

◦ **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm May 2 Sr Maryanne Confoy (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

◦ **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) May 21 (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

◦ **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm, May 23 “A life lived in Fear is a life half-lived” Greg Lowe & Margaret Clerke (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 (Info: Kate 5721 6322).

◦ **Western** Victoria on Hyde, Yarraville May 15 “Spirituality and our Biological Limitations” Rev Dr Norman Ford sdb & tba (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 & Bistro (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 May 1 “Spirituality & the Environment” Professor Mike Tyler & Dr Lucy Larkin (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

### Other Matters and Events

◦ **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, April 1-7 Easter with Julian of Norwich; 13-21 directed retreat; 23-29 Walking with Teresa of Avila; May 1-31 sabbatical retreat “Life's Journey Experience”; 2-10 “Spirituality of Journey” retreat/directed retreat; 11-19 Life's Healing Journey/directed retreat; 21-29 directed retreat (Info: 02 4630 9232 ext 101).

◦ **Mount Saint Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills has facilities for group bookings, for day or residential seminars and conferences. Daily sessions and weekend packages available. A number of programmes available for 2007 (Info: 02 9484 6208).

**Catalyst Dinner**  
**April 27<sup>th</sup>, 7pm for 7.30pm**  
**“Unveiling Islam”**  
with  
**Afroz Ali & Zuleyha Keskin**  
**Villa Maria Parish Hall**  
**Cnr Mary St & Gladesville Rd**  
**Hunters Hill**  
**Tickets \$40**  
**Info: (02) 9816 4262**

◦ **Aquinas Academy** programs coming up this month and next:

#### A SPECIAL PARISH PROGRAM:

##### “From Easter to Pentecost”

5 Tuesday evenings, 7.30pm-9pm,

April 17 – May 15

Presented by Fr Michael Whelan SM  
in St Charles Parish Ryde

+

##### Reading Christian Literature I

4 Wednesday mornings, 10am-12noon,

April 18 – May 9

Presented by Marie Biddle RSJ MA MTh

##### Christian Roots in the Jewish Scriptures,

5 Tuesday mornings, 10am-12noon,

May 1 – May 29

Presented by Fr Bernie McGrath OSB

##### Church and Sacraments,

6 Monday evenings, 6pm-8.30pm,

July 23 – August 27

Presented by Virginia Bourke RSJ MTh

##### Mysticism:

##### Islamic and Christian Perspectives,

5 Monday mornings, 10am-12noon,

July 30 – August 27

Presented by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei  
and Fr Michael Whelan SM

Inquiries: Sandra – 02 9247 4651

See the regular inspirations and reflections on [www.aquinas-academy.com](http://www.aquinas-academy.com)

## Recommended

Peter Lynch, *The Church's Story. A History of Pastoral Care and Vision*, St Pauls Publications, 2005, ISBN: 1 876295 79 1, 352 pages, bibliography, index, pb, \$32.95.

Some books look daunting when you pick them up in the shops – typeface, length, an academic look about them. Don't be put off if you pick up Australian priest Peter Lynch's wonderful narrative of Church history with its particular focus on pastoral care. What the book delivers is a context within which to understand the Church's response to the times. The early chapters link Paul's writings to his context and open up the doors to early Church struggles with Judaism and the Roman and Greek world of Paul's writings. Here is the real world of early Christian Jews trying to make sense of Jesus within their known world. The book is a fascinating read in very clearly written prose. Peter Lynch has given the readers a history of the Church that makes sense of the social and political context of the times. He also treats other denominations and treats them fairly to show their interaction with the Catholic Church. There have been many ways that the Church has given support to the people. At times the care came from the official Church through its pronouncements; at others, and principally, it came through individuals who saw a need and acted upon it. Some readers won't agree with what the Church defines as care: gays, the divorced, many women won't see it as caring at all. For all that, the book itself doesn't suffer. This book is recommended to all, including senior students who would benefit from understanding the Church's two thousand year history.

Neil Vaney, *God in a Grain of Sand. An Ecological Journey with the Spiritual Exercises*. Ave Maria press, Notre Dame Indiana, 2004, ISBN: 1-59471-017-1, pb, 190 pages, Sources, John Garratt, ph: 1300 650 878, \$34.95.

The sub-title comes from William Blake's "to see a World in a grain of sand . . ." and signals the intent of Marist Neil Vaney's reflections of the Ignation *Spiritual Exercises*. This small set of retreats is to counter the addiction of those who are captives to an endless working week. Yet it is not for them alone; it is for all who seek a fuller life of the spirit. The book gives four weeks of retreats which can be carried out at home or in the office, whichever suits the retreatant. Each retreat has its own pattern of introduction, prayer desire; Ignatian focus; Vaney's introductory comments; an ecological reflection; scripture reflection; commentary on scripture; additional scriptural passages for further reflection; questions for reflection; and a final concluding thought. In other words, this is a highly structured process of leading the retreatant to reflect on the journey of Christ and to situate the meditation on the world around us all. Like all texts that encourage prayerful reflection on scripture and the linking of this to our physical world, the connections are arresting and urge one to enjoy God's creation. The world is seen through a prism that sharpens the focus and at the same time leads 'outwards to the colours of endless possibilities of God's creation. The ecology reflections will see "a Heaven in a Wild Flower/ Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand/ an Eternity in an hour" as Blake wrote.

Robert Ellsberg, *Blessed among all Women. Women Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*. ISBN: 0-8245-2251-6, 2005, hb, Crossroad Publishing, 313 pages, index, \$US 12.97.

Fortunately women are claiming their rightful place in the history of the world. More and more they are refusing to remain silent and increasingly demanding to be taken seriously. Parallel to this movement is the rise of Church women who are also demanding that they be noticed and that the Church take account of their lived experience. Robert Ellsberg offers a wonderful insight into a wide range of women's experiences and singles out those who offer hope to us all, male and female alike. The women aren't all saints; the Church gave some of them short shrift. Undeterred, they came back and their lives demanded attention and emulation. There are non-Christians, lay women who have not sought recognition, and some who once were "in" and are now "out" and many recognised as saints by the Church. Like all gatherings of the people of God, they are a motley lot, but for all that, women who have lived extraordinary lives and shaped the imagination of others. Gone are the stereotypes of the submissive, demure, quiet saint; here are the world-shakers, those who have opposed injustice; some have raised families, have led justice movements; and all seem to fit the Beatitudes. They are blessed, people who have made their mark on their and our times. This is a book well worth reading; the lives are inspirational and the struggles show that oppression can be overcome and that women have so much to teach us all, men and women alike.

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### MOVING BEYOND RACISM

"The Magisterium of the Church has always highlighted the importance of an education that stresses what is common to all. It is also important to show that others, precisely because they are different, can enrich our experience. While it is normal, for instance, for history to cultivate esteem for one's country, it is regrettable that it can lead to a blind chauvinism and to according only a secondary place to the achievements of other nations, considered inferior. As has already been done in some countries, it may be necessary to revise scholastic texts which falsify history, pass over the historical misdeeds of racism in silence or justify the principles behind it. In the same way, civic education must be conceived in such a way so as to uproot discriminatory reflexes toward persons belonging to other ethnic groups. More and more, the school provides the occasion for the children of immigrants to mix with the children of the receiving country. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to help both groups to know one another better and to prepare a more harmonious coexistence."

(Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, "Church and Racism," November 3, 1988, 28.)