



THE MIX



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Marion Hilton

The human face 2

Heather Coombes

Finding a purpose 3

Pat Kenna

Unlocking religious imagination 4

The bible

The right side of the road 6

The tradition

Looking out for others 6

Our Say – Freedom and the exercise of authority

The French writer, Jacques Ellul, made a challenging observation a number of years ago. One of the lessons to be learned from history, he argued, is that, when people have struggled for freedom and the freedom is eventually won, they soon look around for someone to relieve them of the burdens that freedom brings. Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor extends this to the belief that the mass of people are actually *incapable* of handling freedom. Thus, the role of leaders is to carry the burden of freedom, with all its consequences, on behalf of the weak masses. In the context of religion, this becomes a sacred duty for which the leaders are accountable before God. It is then explained that God has established this order of things.

These are very interesting theories. Although the theories may not be articulated starkly, it is reasonable to suspect that this line of thinking has imbued much of the Catholic Church's attitude to and exercise

of authority for a number of centuries. If, for example, the reader goes to the 1914 version of the Catholic Encyclopedia on the internet and looks up "Laity", he or she will find a more or less clear example of the kind of thinking we have been describing:

The Church is a perfect society, though all therein are not equal; it is composed of two kinds of members (see can. "Duo sunt", vii, Caus. 12, Q. i, of uncertain origin): in the first place, those who are the depositaries of sacred or spiritual authority under its triple aspect, government, teaching, and worship, i.e. the clergy, the sacred hierarchy established by Divine law (Conc. Trid., Sess. XXIII, can. vi); in the second place, those over whom this power is exercised, who are governed, taught, and sanctified, the Christian people, the laity; though for that matter clerics also, considered as individuals, are governed, taught, and sanctified. But the laity are not the depositaries of spiritual power; they are the flock confided to the care of the shepherds,

the disciples who are instructed in the Word of God, the subjects who are guided by the successors of the Apostles towards the last end, which is eternal life. Such is the constitution which Our Saviour has given to His Church.

The centralism that is currently being reasserted by the Vatican, over against the Second Vatican Council's calls for respect of local churches, collegiality and subsidiarity, suggests this kind of thinking is still very much with us. Apart from the Catholic Church, what other organisations in the modern world so resemble feudalism and so resist the devolution of authority or any other way of thinking about how authority might be exercised? And is this thinking governed by an appreciation for the life and teachings of Jesus or are there some other dynamics at play?

Perhaps the best antidote to this sort of thinking is well-informed conversation by people well-grounded in the Gospel. □

THE HUMAN FACE

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

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The following is its Mission Statement:

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

The Patrons are:

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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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My name is Marion Hilton and I grew up in Wagga. There's always been a "flip side" to my Catholic faith and it became evident at an early age.

I remember it vividly: age five, first day at St Joseph's Primary School, Wagga – Sister had asked the class who would like to dust the desks that week. I put up my hand, and accomplished the job successfully on Day One.

Day Two: I tackled the task before class began, starting with Sister's desk, flipping the woolly duster with much enthusiasm. Clink! I saw Sister's ring roll off the desk. I looked under the desks and chairs, the heaters lining the walls and all the aisles. It was gone – the ring which Sister had told us showed she was married to God.

I stayed home for two days before my mother informed me: "You're not sick; you're going back to school tomorrow". I was sick – sick with worry because Sister's precious ring was lost.

The next day Mum entered the classroom with me – I was terrified. As she talked to Sister, I couldn't meet the nun's gaze. But my eyes were drawn to her hands and there resting resplendently was... the ring. Relief flooded me and, extraordinarily, the ring was never mentioned.

As a child I often thought about that outcome, and felt there was something reassuring in it. I'd been trying to be good, something awful had happened, but the final result was both positive and a relief. These attributes seemed to have underpinned my Catholic faith at key stages in my life.

Like many of those educated in the 1950s and 1960s, my faith seemed important, but prescribed. The flip side was there seemed to be more 'can't dos' than 'can', with greater emphasis on rules, retribution, and rigidity than the sense of generosity and fulfilment that religion should bring. But my vague notion of this shortcoming was strongly offset by my experiences and memories of my Catholic education with the Presentation Sisters – who were highly educated, committed and driven by strong aspirations for those of us lucky enough to be in their care. The values they imparted were to stand me in good stead.

In my late teens and twenties, however, while I absorbed and made good use of those values, I turned from the outward manifestations of the faith that I had embraced so strongly at school. This troubled my mother, a practising Catholic, but she never pressured me. My father, a non-Catholic agnostic, was indifferent. These two figures and their situations when

they died in the 1980s are what yielded two more significant "flips".

When my mother came to Sydney to visit me, she loved going to Mass at St Patrick's, Church Hill. I rarely went with her, but always drove her and collected her afterwards. On 4 November 1980, Melbourne Cup Day, I spoke with her that morning in Wagga. At 6.30 pm that night my only sister rang and told me Mum had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and was in intensive care. She was taken off life support two days later.

No educational concepts or religious credos had equipped me for this emotional wrench. But amid the shock, tears, and sense of loss, I knew I could not cope on my own. As I planned my mother's funeral, I knew I wanted to return formally to the Catholic faith. One of my non-Catholic friends said this was my way of communicating with my mother. I think it was God's way of communicating with me. Each week when I enter St Patrick's there's always a sense of connection with her there.

The death of my father also had an unexpected outcome. Despite his seeming indifference to religion, he told both my sister and I that "when my time comes, the Catholic Church will do for me". We were both surprised and pleased. And so it was that his funeral service, too, was held in St Michael's Cathedral, where all the Sacraments were administered to our family over 40 years.

Recently I've had the privilege of attending several courses at the Aquila Academy adjoining St Patrick's and gaining many insights into my world. Several "flips" have also resulted: greater awareness of the need to strive for kindness, and warmth in life's more difficult situations; the realisation that prayer is about giving, not receiving; that God gets in touch with us in His good time and in ways which are unique to every individual.



Marion Hilton

Your Say – Finding a purpose

Heather Coombes

The following is the partial text of a talk given by Heather Coombes at SIP in Kincumber, NSW. Heather has cerebral palsy and, following ministerial training, has worked as a chaplain to people with disabilities and in aged care facilities. Send self-addressed stamped envelope to THE MIX for full text.)

I was three months premature and nearly died when a baby. That knowledge has impressed upon me both the fragility of life and also its preciousness.

The fact that I have survived has encouraged me to think that I was left on this earth to somehow achieve a little of God's purpose. There are sometimes when I wonder what that unique mission is, but most of the time (except when the alarm rings its head off at 6 am!), I try to let God use me in whatever way he chooses, even though I may never know the results...

The Christian faith is important in my life in trying to make sense of struggle, in trying to find a purpose in the midst of weakness.

The call of Moses was the Bible story that catapulted me into ministry. Remember the story of Moses and the burning bush? God called him to lead his people from the terror of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land.

Moses was the reluctant one. He argued with God. He felt he could not assume such a huge task. He complained, I am slow of speech, I cannot possibly speak to the Egyptian king. God's response: "Who made your mouth? I will be with you and I will give you the words to speak". With those words the journey towards the liberation of the Israelites began.

I knew many church ministers, many of whom ran around like racehorses to do the work that God had called them to do. I felt I didn't fit into that mould at all – this slow coach Heather. However, I realised that, like Moses, I was giving the excuse of my disability as to why I couldn't engage in ministry.

I began to realize through the protests of Moses that the God who calls me also enables me. It was a call "out into the deep", certainly outside of my comfort zone. It is a continuing challenge to me to recognize that God does not give me energy for weeks ahead. This enabling takes place in hour-by-hour compartments.

I still remember the words of my faithful grandmother as she quoted the book of Deuteronomy, ch. 33: "As thy days ... so shall thy strength be".

I have always strongly identified with

the suffering and paralysis of Jesus on the cross. Somehow in this way, Jesus is with me in those God-forsaken moments when the experience of disability is hard to bear.

Many years ago, I attended an Easter Sunday Service where there was a huge wooden cross, laid on the floor. Crucifixion was an image of Jesus that I could fully relate to. However, in the spirit of the celebration of Easter, two people took up the cross and ran out of the church, crying out, "He is risen! He is risen!"

Suddenly, it struck me: it seemed as though, in his triumph of resurrection, the crucified Christ had abandoned me. I was an emotional mess for months.

Until, that is, a theological lecturer – God bless her! – was able to interpret for us the story of Doubting Thomas. She made me realise that when Thomas reaches out to touch the wounds of Christ in his resurrected body, those wounds are not forgotten in the resurrection. In fact, the wounds of Christ help fan the flickering faith of doubting Thomas, so that he could reaffirm his loyalty to the Lord.

If you look at my lecture notes from that day, you will still see excited exclamation marks beside the words, "Christ's wounds are not forgotten in the resurrection."

I could have danced on the tables at that point! But such things are not done in theological college!

In some strange way, it began to dawn on me that, in a similar way, God could use my woundedness to perhaps help a fellow struggler in the faith.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the woman with a huge heart of love, has made a profound impression on the shape of my life and the values I hold dear.

I once saw her in Sydney airport alighting a plane. She was a tanned, wrinkled, bent, little lady – not much to look at. She would not win a beauty contest and if you weren't alert, you would easily miss her. I was struck by her simplicity of dress: that white habit edged with a blue stripe.

Her writings have impressed me more. They speak of simple trustfulness in a God who provides. They speak of compassion and providing dignity for the lowest of the low. They also speak to me of focusing on the simplicity of growing on the inside, not being distracted by materialistic clutter, which can hold us back. She wrote:

"We are neither big nor small, but what we are in the eyes of God, and as long as we surrender ourselves totally then God can use us without consulting us. We like to

be consulted – but letting him use us without consultation is very good for us. We must accept emptiness, accept being broken in pieces – accept success or failure".

What Mother Teresa teaches me are lessons of 'humble surrender to the provision of a loving God. For a strong-willed person who likes things done her own way, this is a hard lesson to learn.

It began to dawn on me that God could use my woundedness to help a fellow struggler in the faith.

The spiritual journey in the companionship of God is one of continual learning and surprise. Believe me, I have not arrived, and rest assured I am no plastic saint. My rusty halo chokes me sometimes. I am still learning to be less anxious and more loving, to move from paralysing fear to greater trust, from plodding in the mud to a greater spirit of playfulness. All this, as I stumble along the way of Jesus.

I am grateful for the many gifts God has showered on me – a very supportive family who have been with me through thick and thin, a challenging job to do in pastoral care with ageing people and a dedicated team to work with.

Dear Editor,

In regard to Peter Kaukas' letter ('Your Say', May '04), I feel that he and others reading *The Mix* should be aware that the Catholic Church does care about homosexuals and their families.

Courage and *EnCourage* are respectively two spiritual support groups helping Catholic men and women – and their families – to live in accordance with the Church's pastoral teaching on homosexuality.

As someone who has personally benefited from *EnCourage*, I am able to say without hesitation that through this Catholic organisation, I have learnt how to reach out with compassion and truth and at the same time gaining a deeper understanding of the needs, problems and issues experienced by those in our lives with same sex attraction.

For those wanting more information about these organisations, I suggest they phone *Courage* on 0410 184 174, and *EnCourage* on 0413 974 781.

Carmel Hillier, *Dee Why NSW*

Essay – Unlocking Religious Imagination

by Pat Kenna

The following is the text of a talk given at Spirituality in the Pub at Jamberoo, NSW, November 10 2003. Fr Pat Kenna is a priest of the Diocese of Wollongong. Spirituality in the Pub is an initiative of Catalyst for Renewal begun in Paddington in 1995, and now at over thirty-five venues Australia-wide. See page 7 for listings of venues, dates, topics and speakers in the coming month.

Once overheard a father warning his teenage daughter setting out on what was, apparently, her first experience of a spiritual crusade: “Don’t leave your intelligence behind”.

Which reminds me of the times I used to advise children at the end of a planning session for a Mass the following day: “Make sure you bring your body with you. Don’t leave it in the playground.” It was a way of saying, “Being at Mass isn’t a head trip. The more aware we become of our breathing, our physical posture, our hands making the sign of the cross ... etc., the more we are really present.”

So, our intelligence. Our body. As well, we carry, snail-like, wherever we go, a haversack of memories.

Besides this, we can be described at any given hour of the day as either glad, mad (= angry), scared, or sad. Our every experience will be coloured by our feelings, our emotions.

Anchored way beneath these is the will. I accept, I embrace this situation (or: I decide not to). I wish to continue in this direction. Or: I wish to follow a different path.

Intelligence. Body. Memory. Feelings. Will. And now let’s focus on the one we’re about this evening – our host, we might say, for the session here at Jamberoo Pub – The Imagination.

Think of a world without colour or without music. Minus imagination, our lives would be dull indeed. Desert-like. Without religious imagination our spiritual journey would hardly be a journey at all. While religious imagination can never “solve” the mysteries at the heart of our faith, it can certainly illuminate them, enabling us to see them differently.

Let me share two recent examples of religious imagination at work. The first is about conscience, the second about dying. These come out of a clergy retreat led by Redemptorist Kevin O’Shea, only last week at Galong monastery.

Let us take an example from mountain climbing. Two people want, as a team, to climb a mountain face. One is the most experienced climber in the world; the other is a rank amateur who has never done it before. If they are going to succeed, the experienced one must let the inexperienced one make all the moves, that is, find the hand-holes and foot-holes that he can manage, even if they are not the recommended ones in the mountain-climbing text-book.

Even if the ones chosen, because in reality there are no others for the amateur, are positively named as bad in that book, the experienced climber will find a way to support the amateur, and work around him, so that the two of them eventually get to the top. As time goes on, the learner will find better ways to do it, but only because of, and through the experience. This is the courtesy of mountain-climbers to one another.

‘As a flyer I must have complete trust in my catcher. You and the public might think that I am the great star of the trapeze, but the real star is Joe, my catcher. He has to be there for me with split-second precision and grab me out of the air as I come to him in the long jump’.

It is also the courtesy of God to us. God is the experienced one, we are the amateurs, in the journey of personal life. There is a courtesy, a decency, a respect of God for us as we try, with God, and God will be there to back us up, as only God knows, even if the law has never spelt it out. God is ready to let his more fragile partner take the initiative. God recognises our frailty, and we recognise God’s courtesy. That is the basis of our teamwork, our partnership. Our limitation, and his omnipotence, are forgotten in the graciousness of trusting one another. Both live with what is possible in practice.

A God who knows and does that is real to ordinary normal people, whose lives just wouldn’t stand up otherwise. It is wonderful, after a difficult moral decision, to be able to say about ourselves and our God, that “WE” did that together.

That is exactly what conscience means. ‘Conscience’ comes from two Latin

roots: *con* and *sciential*. Conscience means knowing (or, understanding) together. God takes the conscience decisions we take. We are equally responsible for them, God and us. As a result, there comes to us a gift of the grace of moral self-respect. If I cannot keep what people call the ‘law’ at this moment of my life, then for ‘US’, that is, for God and me, it isn’t the law at this moment. At this moment it doesn’t bind God and it doesn’t bind me either. It can’t bind one of us without binding the other. ‘We’ respect ourselves in the limits of the present moment, and our partnership stands the test.

Afterwards, we talk to each other about it. I tell God how decent it was of him to be like that, and he tells me how I can gain strength and understanding and a greater capacity to discern and assimilate the law in the future. It is kind of prayer. It is God’s blessing on what is possible, normal, ordinary, in the wisdom of simple little people. Conscience is really the common sense – the sense that is common to us and to an understanding God.

The other recent example of religious imagination at work that I’d like to share with you is about DYING. A speaking of personal dying as an act of letting go, and personal dying as a huge act of trust, Kevin O’Shea led us into an example from the writings of Henri Nouwen.

Nouwen tells of a conversation he had with a trapeze group in a famous German circus. Their leader was explaining:

‘As a flyer I must have complete trust in my catcher. You and the public might think that I am the great star of the trapeze, but the real star is Joe, my catcher. He has to be there for me with split-second precision and grab me out of the air as I come to him in the long jump’.

Nouwen asked how it worked.

‘The secret is that the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything. When I fly to Joe, I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands waiting for him to catch me and pull me safely over the apron behind the catchbar’.

Nouwen was amazed: ‘you do ... nothing?’

‘Nothing. The worst thing a flyer can do is to try to catch the catcher. I am not supposed to catch Joe. It is Joe’s task to catch me. If I grab Joe’s wrists, I might break them, and he might break mine, and that would be the end for both of us. A flyer has to fly, and a catcher has to

catch, and the flyer has to trust with outstretched arms that his catcher will be there for him!

Kevin O'Shea continued:

The flyer does nothing: the catcher does everything.

The flyer flies: the catcher catches.

You give up trying to catch the catcher.

You stop trying to be your own God:

and you let go,

and you are instantly caught by God.

'Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit...'

A third example I'd be happy to elaborate but it hasn't happened yet. It's to take place this Saturday at Hunters Hill, with Redemptorist Anthony Kelly as facilitator. To whet your appetite, let me quote from the advance publicity.

"Even though Vatican II speaks of the Eucharist as 'The summit and source of the life of the Church', it can become routine. One way out of this problem is to realise that the Eucharist is the product of Jesus' imagination. By giving himself so completely to the Church through this sacrament, he intends to be not only our food and drink, but also to draw us into his way of imagining God, the world, and every aspect of life".

(Blessed, surely, will be the ones who can make it to Hunters Hill this Saturday!)

And now that we've finally arrived at the religious imagination of Jesus, let's hear again this passage from the opening of St Mark's Gospel, Chapter 4:

Again he began to teach them by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered round him that he got into a boat on the water and sat there. The whole crowd were at the lakeside on land. He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them, 'Listen! Imagine a sower ...

Listening to those words, I am projected back exactly fifty years. It's November 1953. We, the student body of Manly Seminary, are attending a religious rally of some kind at Sydney showground. My companion for the day, Neville Drinkwater, I introduce to a Marist Sister I've struck up conversation with. "Drinkwater?" she wonders. "Would you be related to Canon Drinkwater?"

Neither of us had ever heard of this "Canon Drinkwater". Twelve years later, in July 1965, I was being welcomed into his house at Sutton Coldfield, on the outskirts of Birmingham. He was by then a sprightly, alert 91-year-old.

Francis Drinkwater had been chaplain with the British Army in World War I. He was later given the responsibility of supervising religious education in the schools of

Birmingham archdiocese. To encourage and guide the teachers under his care, he began a monthly publication. After some years the name "Drinkwater" became known and admired even in faraway Australia. Part of the reason, I believe, was the title he'd chosen for his magazine: "The Sower". It said it all. A catechist, a parent, any religious educator, may well have discovered in that title the inspiration needed in an often humdrum situation.

Early in Lent this year I sat in on a group preparing to reflect on the Readings for the following Sunday. Chairs had been carefully arranged in a semi-circle, as well as a long green (or blue?) cloth on the floor in front of where the group would be, along with some rocks. You could sense that this was going to be something more than a Gospel discussion.

God recognises our frailty, and we recognise God's courtesy. That is the basis of our teamwork, our partnership. Our limitation, and his omnipotence, are forgotten in the graciousness of trusting one another. Both live with what is possible in practice. A God who knows and does that is real to ordinary normal people, whose lives just wouldn't stand up otherwise. It is wonderful, after a difficult moral decision, to be able to say about ourselves and our God, that "WE" did that together.

Religious imagination, however, doesn't always come off. It can backfire. Following a Confirmation Mass in Bishop Murray's time, I was, in thanking him, pointing out how valuable it was for a parish to have their bishop visiting. Isn't he the one who, like the hub of a wheel, holds the diocese together? The bishop stood, cleared his throat, and began, "My dear spokes of the wheel ..."

And while an image is meant to inspire, to shed light on the mysterious, it can, one has to admit, degenerate into the trite, or trivial. In Bill Davis's stage play of the 1970's, "MASS APPEAL", there are just two characters, an older priest and his apprentice, played, in the Australian production, by father and son, Michael and Christopher Pate. At one point, the younger man is complaining about the kind of theology he'd been served in his recent seminary experience. "For the feast of the Ascension

we sang as the opening hymn, 'Leaving on a Jetplane'."

But then there's the case of Ennio Antonelli, archbishop of Florence, one of the thirty new cardinals created by John Paul II. An outspoken critic of military action against Iraq, he asked all the churches in his archdiocese to toll their bells in mourning on the first night of the war. Not a televised address. Not a pastoral letter to be read at all Masses. But something else. Simple. Powerful. Memorable. The tolling of bells.

Spirituality in the Pub has, as you know, for its theme: "Search for the Sacred". In your own search for the sacred, may I recommend a book teeming with examples of religious imagination: Anthony de Mello's "SADHANA - A WAY TO GOD". Let me conclude with this sample:

Exercise 16: A Place for Prayer

One of the finest helps to our prayer is a place that is conducive to prayer. I spoke above of places that contain good "vibrations". Quite apart from this, you may have noticed what a beautiful sunrise or sunset did to your recollectiveness and your prayer. Or the twinkling of the stars at night when they shine out brightly against a black sky. Or the moonlight shining brightly through the trees.

Has it ever occurred to you that Jesus, that master in the art of prayer, would take the trouble to walk up a hill in order to pray? Like all great contemplatives he was aware that the place in which we pray has an influence on the quality of our prayer.

Most of us, unfortunately, live in surroundings that cut us off from nature and the places we are forced to choose for prayer are, alas, drab and hardly conducive to lifting our spirits to God. All the more reason to expose ourselves long and lovingly to places that help us to pray whenever we get the chance. Take time out to gaze at and drink in the atmosphere of the starry or moonlit night or the seashore or the mountain top or whatever.

You can carry this around with you in the heart and even though you may be far from these places geographically, you will have them vividly etched in your memory and will be able to return to them in fantasy.

Try this right now.

After some time spent in quietening yourself, withdraw in fantasy to some place that is likely to foster prayer for you: a seashore, river bank, mountaintop, a silent church, a terrace that gives on to the starry sky, a garden flooded by the light of the moon...

See the place as vividly as possible .. All the colours .. Hear all the sounds (the waves, the wind in the trees, the insects at night ..)

Now raise your heart to God and say something to him. □

Words for a Pilgrim People

“You Pharisees and teachers are show-offs, and you’re in for trouble! You give God a tenth of the spices from your garden, such as mint, dill, and cumin. Yet you neglect the more important matters of the Law, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness.” (Matthew 23:23-24 – NRSV.)

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“One must denounce the existence of economic, financial and social mechanisms which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest. These mechanisms, which are maneuvered directly or indirectly by the more developed countries, by their very functioning favor the interests of the people manipulating them and in the end they suffocate or condition the economies of the less developed countries. Later on these mechanisms will have to be subjected to a careful analysis under the ethical-moral aspect.” (Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (“On Social Concern”), December 30, 1987, 17.)

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“One of the monks called Serapion, sold his book of the Gospels and gave the money to those who were hungry, saying: ‘I have sold the book which told me to sell all that I had and give to the poor.’” (Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert*, New Directions, 1960, 37.)

□□□

“Those who are prosperous and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he or she chooses to. The collection is deposited with the president (of the Eucharistic liturgy) who will take care of the orphans and widows, those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, those who are in prison, and the strangers sojourning among us, in a word, he (ie the one who presides at the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup) is the guardian of all who are in need.” (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67.)

□□□

On the fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle C), we meditate on two passages from Luke’s Gospel. The first passage (10:25-28) is also found in Mark and Matthew. Jesus is asked about what is most important. He cites the common prayer that he and his questioner would both have recited several times a day, the Shema: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart etc.” Jesus then adds a reference to Leviticus 19:18: “... and your neighbour as yourself”. We can be sure this addition is no slip of the tongue. We can also be sure that the context given by Leviticus 19 is on Jesus’ mind. It is a sort of extended rendition of the Decalogue and we read, for example, in verse 34: “You will treat resident aliens as though they were native-born, and love them as yourself – for you yourself were once aliens in Egypt”.

Luke then adds a passage that is peculiar to his Gospel. He says the man who asked the original question was “anxious to justify himself” (v29) so presses Jesus: “And who is my neighbour?” (v30) Luke has Jesus tell a story in reply. That story, one of the most challenging and heart-warming in the history of literature, has become known as “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”. We would be entirely justified in reading this parable as a call to reach out in justice and compassion to the poor and needy, no matter who they are or where we find them. By the same token, we must always allow a parable to surprise us. For the parable speaks first and foremost to the imagination, rather than the rational mind. As such, Jesus’ words can speak to you and me now with the same freshness and originality as they were spoken to that man two thousand years ago.

**Where does the movement
of my life take me ...
“Where are you?”**

We might, for example, look at the verbs. Take a phrase like “he passed by on the other side”; compare the movement described in that with the movement of the bandits who “made off” and “the Samaritan who was moved with compassion”. What are the movements in my own life, those deliberately chosen and those emerging from unconscious urgings or conflicts or wishes? Where does the movement of my life take me – into flight, into respectability but “on the other side of the road” or maybe into intimacy, where I embrace this person, event or thing of pain and hurt and perhaps ugliness? Every parable has embedded in it the question God asked Adam and Eve: “Where are you?” □

The Tradition – Looking out for others

There is ample evidence from the writings of the early centuries that the first Christians took Jesus’ summons to care for the poor and needy very seriously. One scholar indicates the way this became incorporated into the organisation of community life: “Altogether, unlike the many trade associations and cultic brotherhoods – most of which were class- or gender-specific – the Christian Church was a variegated group. In that respect, it was not unlike the new empire in miniature: high and low met as equals because equally subject, now, to the overruling law of one God. Those who entered such churches were encouraged to find in them an orderly assembly. Grown men, married women and children, widows and unmarried women: each group was carefully separated, and seated in their appropriate place. Deacons watched the doors to scrutinize incoming strangers: ‘and let the deacon also see that no one whispers or falls asleep or laughs or makes signs.’ Social differences were not expunged in such gatherings. They were, rather, handled with an elaborate and pointed courtesy. If a ‘man of worldly honor’ entered a crowded church, the bishop must on no account rise to receive him, lest he be thought to be a ‘respector of persons’. But the deacon should tell one of the young men to move over: ‘that they also may be trained and learn to give place to those more honorable than themselves.’ If a poor man or a destitute stranger should come in, however, it was an entirely different matter: ‘do thou, O bishop, with all thy heart provide a place for them even if thou hadst to sit upon the ground.’” (Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, Blackwell, 1996, 26.) How much of this early practice, do you think, is simply shaped by the exigencies and expediencies of the time and how much by the Gospel? □

**‘Do thou, O bishop, with all
thy heart provide a place for
them, even if thou hadst to
sit upon the ground.’**

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: *Pauline on 02 9816 4262*)

SIP Meetings

SIP Promoter – Terry O'Loughlin on (02) 9816 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePub>

SW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

° **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St August 10 "Truth" tba (Info: *Joan 6021 6880*).

° **Ballina** Paddy McGinty's Pub August 24 "The Church and Politics" Marlette Black pbvm (Info: *Anne anne@ballinacatholicchurch.org.au*).

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

° **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club July 14 "Mystical Prayer at home?" Bridie O'Connell rsj & Graham Hill (Info: *Rosemary 9603 2975*).

° **Canberra** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry as above.

° **Engadine** – Engadine RSL July 21 "Interfaith Dialogue: Foundation for Peace" Sr Trish Madigan & tba (Info: *Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475*).

° **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parramatta Rd & Arlington St July 28 "Venus and the Vatican" Graham English & Pam Williamson (Info: *Susanna 9798 8071*).

° **Goulburn** Soldiers Club July 13 "Choosing a Future" Dr Anna Corbocrehan & Fr Michael Whelan sm (Info: *Tony 4822 2636*).

° **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel July 5 (**Date Change**) "The Road to Discipleship" Fr David Catterill & Loreta Brinkman (Info: *Gabrielle 4232 2735*).

° **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive August 3 "And this is the heart of the matter" Rev Greg Woolnough & tba (Info: *Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174*).

° **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley's Pub (Info: *Lynne 6625 1195*).

° **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel August 26 "Respecting Differences" Gail Gill & Robert Fitzgerald (Info: *Terry 9973 1192*).

° **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney July 19 "Who are our Prophets today?" Rev Andrew Bullen sj & Jenni Winters (Info: *Michelle 9958 5963*).

° **Paddington Theme "Walking the Edges"** The Bellevue Hotel August 4 "Praying around the Edge" Jack Carmody & tba (Info: *Marea 9387 3152*).

° **Penrith** Golf Club August 18 "How are

relationships influenced by diversity?" Dorothy McRae-McMahon & tba (Info: *Sue 9760 2324*).

° **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd September 7 "Prayer – Our connection to God" Judy Taylor & David Ranson (Info: *Maria 9680 2220 (H)*).

° **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club July 13 "Search for the Sacred" Ellen Geraghty & Gary Boyle (Info: *Janice 9684 4109*).

° **St George Kings Head Tavern** South Hurstville July 28 "Enough is Enough – Stop and Smell the Roses" Geraldine Doogue & David Rafferty (Info: *Ken 9580 1183*).

° **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel July 21 "Where is: the Life we have lost in living? the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? the knowledge we have lost in information?" Hugh Mackay & Catherine Hammond (Info: *Carmel 9477 4824*).

VIC:

° **Ballarat North Midlands Golf Club**, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm (Info: *Kevin 5332 1697*).

° **Bendigo** Boundary Hotel (Info: *Helen 0409 212 009*).

° **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm July 20 "Australian Spirituality" Jack Stuart (Info: *Jo 9807 1912*).

° **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel (Info: *Clare 5236 2091*).

° **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston, (Info: *John 9478 3642*).

° **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... The Dock Hotel August 18 (Info: *Carmel 5482 1342*).

° **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, first week each month 8pm-9.30pm (Info: *Denise 9816 3001*).

° **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm August 13 **Dinner** "Are Australians Spiritual?" David Tacey (Info: *Kerry 0408 579 904*).

° **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm August 11 "Spiritual Journeying – has organised Religion lost its way?" MaryAnn D'Souza & David Tacey (Info: *Susie 9859 6184*).

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

° **Southern** Finbar's Irish Pub, Cnr Bay & New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm August 25 "What is the Heart of Australia today? Seeds of Greatness? Seeds of Destruction?" Frank Brennan sj (Info: *Kevin*

9776 2705).

° **Western Victoria** on Hyde, Yarraville July 20 7.30pm "My Passion for the West" Robert Stary & Mary Tobin (Info: *Anne 9312 3595*).

Other States

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

° **Hobart North** Moonah Café Bar & Bistro July 27 "The spirituality of service" Sherrin Jackman & Andrew Maver (Info: *Gwaine 6228 2679*).

° **Brisbane (QLD)** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry above.

° **Perth (WA)** The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm (Info: *Andrew 0422 305 742*).

° **Mylor (SA)** Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd August 3 "The Drama of the Spirit" Michele Langman (Info:).

Other Matters and Events

° **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, programs day and evening, special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM Director (Info: *Sue on 02 9247 4651*).

° **St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, July 23-25 Mid-years Spirituality; July 30-Sept 1 Ignatian Exercises; directed retreats July 31-Aug 8, Aug 9-17, Aug 18-26 (Info: *02 4630 9159*).

° **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills September 19 – 26 "Seasons of Hope" guided retreat for those 70 years of age or over (Info: *9484 6208*).

° **St Kevin's College Parent Enrichment Program** "Spirituality as Living Relationships" Michael Whelan sm College Pavilion July 20, 7.45pm \$10 (Info: *Anne 03 9508 1375*).

° **Spirituality & Sexuality: Embodied Conversations** Drummoyne Community Centre July 31 7pm (Info: *Eremos 9683 5096*).

° **Louis Dupre SJ**, internationally acclaimed scholar of world religions and Christian spirituality: twilight seminar Marxist Centre Hunters Hill Sunday August 29 4pm – 6pm organised by Aquinas Academy (02 92474651) and a lecture at CIS Tuesday August 31 (02 97529500).

Catalyst Dinner

Friday July 23rd Villa Maria Parish Hall 7pm for 7.30pm

"In Search of the Sacred: Toward an Understanding of Sexuality"

Sr Angela Ryan & Professor Peter Sheehan Info: (02) 9816 4262

Recommended

Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters*, Darton Longman and Todd, 2003, 324 pages, pb. (Available for \$34.95 from John Garratt Publishing – Tel: 1300 650 878.)

Christianity is content-dense. The Christian community has a responsibility to seek out and submit to right teaching about who Jesus is and what God has done through Him, with Him and in Him. The Nicene Creed is no idle statement. Our weekly communal recitation of that Creed is a most serious event in our lives. And there is the rub. We live in a world that is impatient with if not dismissive of doctrine. “Dogma” is a dirty word. Johnson, a former Benedictine monk and currently Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Emory University, is honest, intelligent and challenging as he takes us through the contents and history of the Creed. Johnson writes: “Some sleepwalk through the words they memorized as children, bothered not at all by the outrageous ideas to which they are declaring their commitment. ... I think that the Christian creed enunciates a powerful and provocative understanding of the world, one that ought to scandalize a world that runs on the accepted truths of Modernity.” This is an outstanding book, one that transcends categories such as “liberal” and “conservative”. While there are no footnotes or lengthy bibliography, the work is redolent with good scholarship. It is also thoroughly readable. Let us hope it finds an extensive readership. Highly recommended!

Don Watson, *Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language*, Knopf, 2003, 198 pages, \$37.95.

Language is shaped by the mind. Language also shapes the human mind. In this ongoing interaction there is much at stake. Language expresses, develops and helps us to maintain perceptions of what is real and what is not real, appreciation for what is good and what is not good, a sense of the difference between the beautiful and the ugly, an ability to communicate and connect with care and at depth with each other. Perhaps more to the point, language arises from experience and depends on experience for its power. We Christians forget that at our peril. In this delightfully grumpy and unostentatiously insightful little book, Don Watson amuses and worries, but most of all, challenges the reader. Language is his business and he is angry at what is happening. The epigraph from George Orwell is a hint of things to come: “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?” The book consists of four untitled chapters, with an Introduction and Glossary as bookends. Watson blames the business world for generating the decay that has crept into most aspects of public discourse. He gives many quotations, like: “We need to counter the shock wave of the evil doer by having individual rate cuts accelerated and by thinking about tax rebates” (George Bush) and “To find my home in one sentence, concise, as if hammered in metal” (Czeslaw Milosz).

Michael Casey, *Fully Human, Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology*, John Garratt Publishing, 2004, 352 pages, index, endnotes, pb, \$29.95. (Tel: 1300 650 878.)

The time is ripe for a re-introduction to Jesus of Nazareth. So much of the discourse within the Catholic Church these days is pre-occupied with structure and politics. From time to time someone needs to remind us of the basic question: Who is Jesus and what difference does he make? Michael Casey is an Australian Cistercian monk and he brings to this book both a sensitive appreciation for Mark’s Gospel and a monastic wisdom that comes from a listening heart. The reader gains a good idea from Michael Casey’s opening words what he intends through this book: “For the past ten years I have been interested in the theme of divinization. According to the teaching of many Church Fathers, particularly those of the East, Christian life consists not so much in being good as becoming God”. *Fully Human* is a powerful corrective to both the docetism – Jesus only appears to be human – that has plagued Christology over the centuries and always remains a force to be reckoned with in popular piety, and the moralism that has laid its dead hand on Catholic life, particularly moral theology, for far too long. This book will help us to recover the mystical heart of our faith. While it is dense, it is also very readable. Be prepared for a transforming experience if you take up this book. It is a brilliant *vade-mecum* for today’s Catholic.

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