

mir·a·cle

mír akel

noun

1. an effect in the physical world which surpasses all known human or natural powers and is therefore ascribed to supernatural agency.



St Mary's Matters

Contents

Little Miracles

Noela Moran - page 3

Walking on Water?

Submitted by Penny Wearne - page 4

Spirituality and the Problem with Modernity

Peter Kennedy - Page 5

Eva's Story....Eva graduates!

Narelle Mullins - page 6

The Miracle of Breath

Margaret Orange - page 7

You Do What?

Jenny Ryan talks about her work with Refugees - page 8

My Twist on the Subject of Miracles

Shar Ryan - page 10

Ordinary Miracles

Julie O'Dea page 10

BIFF

Public Viewing of 'The Trouble with St Mary's' - page 11

Open Day at Splyard Creek

Photostory - page 12

A Personal View

Barbara Fingleton - page 13

Celebrating at the TLC

Photostory - page 14

First Communion

Photostory - page 15

Why Me?

Jonathan Inkpen - page 16

The Wheeler Debate

Lorraine Walker - page 17

Climate Change and Problem

Gambling

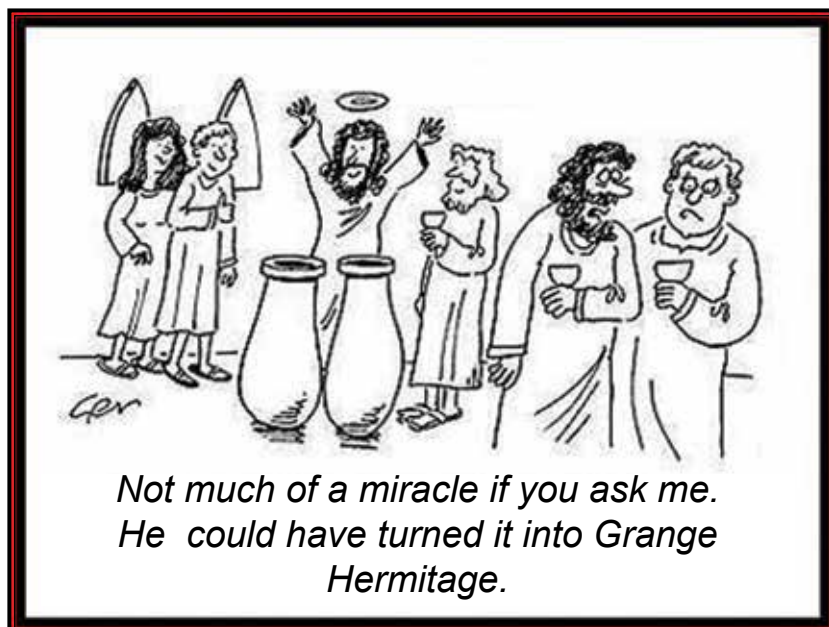
Peter Brown -page 18

The Bo

Albert Moran - page 19

A Thought

Ted - page 10



From the Editor

There is an air of expectancy about in the community. Peter gave a great homily after Christmas which expressed this feeling so well. We have a future, a wonder filled future, and we need to share it. It is time for us to take wings and fly. We have so much to offer, and from what we read, there are many out there who would just love to share what we have.

So our next magazine will focuss on how we can put our enthusiasm into effect. What do you think is our next step forward? We have settled the administrative issues and all is moving along well there. So now, what can we do as a vibrant faith community to spread the word - The Good News - the Gospel?

Marg Ortiz

Who are we?

Leo Wright - page 21

Epiphany

Peter Kennedy - page 22

Four Boys -A Story and a Baptism

Kim Rowland - page 24

Under the tree

What people are reading - page 25

SMX Community Library

Marg Ortiz - page 26

News from the Drop Shop

Doc Ortiz - page 27

The Excuse was the Melbourne Cup!

Photostory - page 28

Twenty-one months ago my husband and I became grandparents, and from that moment on we have revelled in the miracle of our grandson.

The arrival of this child took us back magically to the birth of our own children, those tiny pieces of ourselves who were to grow into such fine adults. We remembered them so helpless and dependant, so responsive to our touch and eager to meet the world. Through their eyes, we were gods – the ones who supplied all of their needs and seemed infallible. Of course, we were destined to fall by varying degrees from this state of grace, but the memories of that process revisited us as we welcomed this new person.

With him also came the opportunity for his parents to remember their parents actively engaged with a newborn. They for so long now have known us as confidants and friends yet the

**“we become linked
in a chain of precious
memories”**

arrival of their son enabled them to see us again through the eyes of a child. They ask questions: “Was I as stubborn as my son” and “Was my hair that colour when I was born” and in so doing we become linked in a chain of precious memories.

Each time we see our grandson, we notice changes – some physical and others in his personality. He looks like our daughter more and more but has the energy and certainty of his father. Both of these adults, whom we so love and

Little Miracles



respect, are experiencing the joy of their son evolving and revealing features of themselves.

We look at our grandson and wonder about his future. It is exciting to think of him exploring the world, initially his world and then the wider world. We look with fresh eyes at problems our generation has bequeathed to the planet and global warming takes on more urgent priority. We observe that if our world leaders could think more deeply about the world they will leave their

grandchildren to inherit, they may indeed take actions based on a priority other than financial cost.

All of these thoughts run through our minds as we soak up the beauty and miracle of our grandson.

*Noela Moran (grandmother of
Thomas Kenneth Simpson)*



The miracle is not to walk on water.
The miracle is to walk on the green
earth in the present moment, to
appreciate the peace and beauty that
are available now.

Touching Peace (1992), Thich Nhat Hanh
Submitted by Penny Wearne



David Tacey, one of Australia's leading thinkers in religion and spirituality wrote a book in 2003 entitled *The Spirituality Revolution – the emergence of contemporary spirituality*. I believe it has something to say to us, to our community today.

Tacey believes that the educated Catholics are in a crisis today because they have to catch up with their protestant cousins, who have been grappling with problems of modernity for a longer period of time.

However, he argues that there is not much solace for the educated Catholic in a protestant style faith. For the Catholic the protestant liturgy is too 'rational, cerebral, wordy and not sacramental enough'.

To enter a so-called 'modern' faith, where God is seen to be somewhat distant and remote, where Jesus is a moral example rather than a spiritual presence is a colossal leap into disenchantment for the Catholic.

It is little wonder that the 'lapsed' Catholics are attracted, not to the protestant style churches but to the New Age movement and the Eastern religions such as Tibetan Buddhism, Zen, Yoga and Gnostic philosophies because such pathways offer the possibility of a

Spirituality and the Problem with Modernity

renewed sense of spirituality. The problem facing the educated Catholic is how to conceive of God's presence in creation i.e. in the world and in sacrament. In the past, it was conventional to adopt a basically supernatural understanding of God's presence.

In this supernatural model, the priest is the sort of latter-day shaman or magician who performs magic in the sacraments, waving his hands over the Eucharistic elements and turning them into the body and blood of the Redeemer.

In this model, God is a supernatural being, living in heaven, who intervenes at will in the lives of people and the course of history. It is this supernatural model of religion that is dissolving rapidly, causing many Catholics to abandon their faith because it is no longer tenable. Modern women and men have rejected this medieval worldview. Newer models and understandings of God's presence are needed today.

Hans Kung in a book he wrote in 1980 *Does God Exist? – an answer for today* suggests so. As did Karl Rahner before him, saying that the only way forward for a dying tradition is the mystical tradition, because, in the mystical tradition, God is an immediate experience i.e. there is no need for intermediaries – the Presence with no Name is discovered by going inwards through meditation, by bringing the mind to stillness.

God somehow 'inheres' in all things – we do not have to know

how this works – says Kung – only that it happens to be so, and can be verified through prayer and experience.

The priest in this model is not a magician who goes zap and says 'abracadabra' and causes God to be present but a poet or bard who reveals to people the God who is already present.

The priest is called to be a spiritual teacher, the figure who helps us transform our lives and suffering by reconnecting our lives and sufferings to a deeper more profound understanding or presence. (See *Anam Cara* by John O'Donohue)

Any confidence in the existence of God today must have passed through our individual human experience of the ground of reality itself. We can no longer have faith merely because tradition tells us about it or because an authoritarian church commands us to do so.

God has been obscured in our churches, and often by their actions, so that the only remaining possibility is to turn inwards and find the all-encompassing, all-directing God in the secrecy of our inner conscience, to sense, feel and experience God at the core of our being.

Peter Kennedy

Eva's Story.... EVA GRADUATES!

Some 10 years ago I was at my usual 6pm Mass at St Mary's South Brisbane. At the end of Mass, a young African man was introduced by Fr Peter Kennedy.

Yannick Ndikumara shared how he had spoken out against injustice in Burundi and been beaten and left for dead in a drain pipe. Someone had found him and taken him to hospital where, while recovering, the authorities discovered that he was still alive. They came after him. Yannick literally jumped out of the hospital window and ran through three African countries until he arrived at Botswana where he was told he would need to try to find a country who might accept him as a refugee as he was too much of a risk for Botswana.

A kind Australia (has something happened since?) accepted



Yannick as long as he could get ongoing sponsorship. This was Yannick's first request which struck a chord with me, although I wondered if anything went wrong how I could possibly finance the outcome. I was not the only person who put their hand up that night – testimony to a St Mary's community that to this day, despite many obstacles still puts its hand up for justice. The paperwork was huge but led me to a further "complication." Yannick had fallen in love with Eva over in Botswana and he wanted to marry Eva – in Australia!

We pushed on...

I will never forget the day, not long after more paperwork and further commitments made with my heart in my mouth, that Eva came to Australia – a frightened young woman who knew no English. She



could not even speak Yannick's language! The language of love is a great communicator!

A few weeks later, Eva and Yannick were married at St Mary's South Brisbane. The community put on a party and there was much celebration. My husband was Best Man!

Two children later, Eva and Yannick are buying their own home in Forest Lake and Yannick has his own courier business. Eva has already sponsored her own niece to Australia after the death of Eva's sister and Sandra's mother. Sandra is also now studying nursing. This is success enough...but on the 15th December, Eva graduated as a nurse from QUT in Brisbane!



Our family regards Eva, Yannick, Micki (who goes to primary school at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School, Darra Jindalee) little Mika and Sandra as friends for life. Ingerid Meagher from St Mary's has been a wonderful nurse mentor to Eva.

Narelle Mullins

The Miracle of Breath

She pours a cup of tea and walks from the kitchen to her comfortable chair in the lounge. It faces high wide windows that allow her a view of the garden. Beyond the fence distant roof tops rise to vast blue sky where today early morning puffs of cloud drift lazily eastwards.

As she sips her tea she watches cheery sparrows and bossy blackbirds gobble bread scraps that earlier she has tossed onto the lawn. Sunshine casts dappled shadows across the grass, a soft breeze stirs the crab apple tree and teases the climbing roses along the fence. There is a sweetness to the morning. Her world has been renewed by the quiet of the night just passed. Time spent here each day has become a ritual. It is her leisure half hour when her mind and spirit is refreshed.

“she is filled with wonder at this simple act ”

She puts down her cup and closes her eyes. At once she is aware of her breathing, in and out, in and out. Muscles relax, her mind is stilled. Enveloped in timeless space she listens to the silence, deep, rich and healing. It embraces her in a cocoon of peace. Sometimes she remembers, as from far away, an event from the past or a need for tomorrow. The thoughts are fleeting and of no consequence; she pushes them away. She concentrates again on



her breathing. On rare occasions she is filled with wonder at this simple act. Constant, regular, vital, through all the minutes and hours and days of her life it never ceases.

There was a moment, a long time ago and never recaptured, that filled her with an awe beyond words. As she breathed she became aware that all creatures, all life breathed with her. She, Creator and Creation were one. A unique and beautiful gift that defies all thanks.

Today there is no such moment, but the silence surrounds her and takes her into itself. As she absorbs the nothingness of time she becomes lost in the wonder of Creation. The infinite worlds of galaxies, of stars and of endless universes where our tiny planet has its pre-planned space is more than human understanding can imagine. Yet, her own small yard teems with life, each tiny vulnerable seed and blade of grass and insect going about living and pro-creating and dying, all united

by the bond of the Breath of Life. But with inevitable persistence reality taps at the door of her mind. The thread that ties her to the silence of the room and to her innermost being is broken. She sighs, and as she does every day, ponders on those she loves to wish them all a blessed day, that all will be well as they travel the road of life.

She opens her eyes. Last night's dew has left sparkling jewellery on flower and leaf; sunlight makes magic in the garden. With enthusiastic energy a little bee dives headlong into the throat of a lily flower. In the distance a car door slams. High heels tip-tap on the yard next door, a woman calls a greeting, intruding on the peace that surrounds her. Today is beginning. She feels ready for what it may bring. What will happen will happen.

*Margaret Orange
Carterton Catholic Community, NZ*

You Do What

Jenny Ryan talks about her work with Refugees

It's hard for me to identify the moment when I decided that I wanted to work with refugees. I grew up on a sheep property outside Warwick, the youngest of 6 children. It was a traditional Irish Catholic family whose political allegiance lay with Joh Bjelke Petersen. I'm ashamed to say at one point I was a member of the Young Nationals. Dinner conversation mostly centred on wool prices and the weather – certainly not social justice topics. However, interestingly, all of us have a social justice conscience and our Catholic beliefs obviously influenced that.

I believe that my 12 months travelling in India and Nepal was the beginning of my cultural awareness and certainly influenced my life journey. Calcutta especially left an indelible mark and contributed to my pursuing a meaningful working life. My attendance at St Mary's since 1990 also greatly influenced my need to always work with a marginalised group. Listening to the passionate homilies of Peter, Terry and at times Karyn Walsh and others stirred within me a passion to act justly and to stand with the poor.

It was actually Peter in the early 90's who introduced me to my first Refugee family – Amhala and Slobadan and at the time their 2 daughters. They were newly arrived from Bosnia. Peter asked me to teach them English. Not sure how much English they learnt from me but we had a lot of laughs. It was Peter's kindness to this family over many years that allowed them within a few short years to buy their own home and to settle so

wonderfully into the community. The older girls have completed school very successfully. Amhala is still trying to match Peter up with a good woman.

It was my career as an ESL teacher that led me to intensify my community work with people of a refugee background. I began this career firstly at Milpera High School where I met Adele Rice, the school's principal and passionate refugee advocate. After a couple of years I moved onto Brisbane Catholic Education where I spent 13 years teaching mostly new arrival refugee children. It was while I was teaching at St Brendan's at Moorooka that I began a more personal association with the families arriving as refugees to the school and assisted in settling these families. I will never forget the first time I took Sophia to visit a new arrival family from Sudan, her exact words being "Mum, they have nothing." She couldn't believe there were so many children in the family

**"Mum,
they have
nothing."**

and not one toy in sight. She consequently went home and packed up her dolls to deliver to the family.

So often we would visit new arrival families who virtually arrived with only their clothes – no photos, nor memorabilia of childhood because of course all of that was lost during their escape. It's important to understand that refugees don't



make a decision about where they will escape to and then where (if they are lucky) their future will be. Much of that is left they would believe to God. Many a new arrival refugee will say, "Thank God, God Bless you" and "It's only by the Grace of God that I am here safely in Australia". Despite what life has dealt them, their faith in God is unfailing.

In 2006 after being unable to assist a friend again financially to raise the airfare to bring family members to Australia, The AFAR fund was set up. In collaboration with 6 socially active friends and neighbours, we raised 80 000 dollars to lend in a no interest airfare loan scheme. This is a revolving fund where the loans are repaid in a very affordable way once the new arrivals have been here at least 3 months. AFAR has been a huge success (as my insightful 9 yr old neighbour pointed out – From Little Things, Big Things Grow) and we have assisted approximately 35 families consisting of around 140 people. Unfortunately the government has not been granting many family reunion visas. This past 18 months has mostly been 'last remaining relative visas' which has mostly meant children separated from parents for prolonged periods of time being granted visas.

Just this week Jack and I had the privilege to witness the most emotional reunion between a mother and 3 of her 4 quadruplets from whom she was separated in 1997. Yes quadruplets who Aisha had naturally delivered over 4 days just with a birth attendant in her village home in Sierra Leone. As there is no such thing as scans she was just expecting one baby, but then another came and another one and another and they all survived. No intervention from medical specialists – just all birthed naturally.

At the time of separation the children were only 5 years old. I am unsure how they came to be separated in 1997 however it wasn't until 2004 when Aisha had arrived in Australia with her then husband Tom that she heard the quadruplets were alive. It was then only 2 years ago that Red Cross tracing found them in a refugee camp in Ghana. Aisha then had to spend this past 2 years proving they were her children and finally a visa was granted for them to travel here to be reunited. One of the quadruplets has his own family so he didn't come but hopefully he



The Kimmins Ryan family; Greg, Jenny, Jack and Sophia

and his family will be able to in the future. I met Aisha about a month ago to assist, with her, an AFAR loan.

So on Wednesday we are waiting almost an hour and a half (not to mention the 14 years waiting this mother and her children had done prior to this – Mary and Joseph thought they had a long wait) and then when they walked through the doors I can't tell you the joy one felt for this family. I of course cried and Jack said he wouldn't have missed that moment for the world. When we meet the adult children they are hugging us and saying God Bless you and God is great. I did suggest to Jack that now was not the time to tell them

“I can't tell you the joy one felt for this family”

he was an atheist and what did God have to do with it.

I'm not sure what role God plays in seeing some of the refugee families reunited and others never getting the opportunity to see their children, partners, parents or siblings again. That is the mystery of life. Many of the refugee families here say that is their greatest guilt, that is, they have been given a chance in a country like Australia whilst those left behind still experience prolonged periods of waiting and hopelessness. It's what keeps the families here poor – continually sending money back to family members still in refugee camps.

What I do know though is that my life and those of my children are all the richer for the wonderful people we have met. There are so many stories I could tell you and

so many rich moments I have had when in the company of people of a refugee background. Their view of the world is very different from that of an Anglo Australian's view and there is so much I have learnt and still to learn. I remember Sophia marvelling at how the new arrival refugee kids in her class could make an icy pole go 8 ways. Their ability to share and embrace everyone despite race, creed or colour (just like Jack and I experienced on Wednesday) continues to inspire me.

Postscript:

This piece is from a homily I gave in November. Since then I have found out that Aisha was actually separated from her quadruplets at 2 weeks of age. The fact that all these children survived and stayed together to be then found and reunited with their mother 19 years later is a miracle.

The fourth of her quadruplets has a wife and children and is desperate to come to Australia to join the rest of the family. We are collecting money to help this happen. If you would like to donate, send money to SMX (see details last page) and it will go to that cause.

Jenny Ryan

My Twist on the Subject of Miracles.

In the 1970s we were part of a small group studying theology with a Dominican priest. He introduced us to cutting edge theological writing by both Catholic and non Catholic authors. One little work dissected the meaning of belief by looking at how the word is used in our everyday language. Belief, he said, is quite different from knowing. If we see an accident we know it happened. If we hear about it from a friend we believe because we trust that friend. Believing always depends on our trust in someone and this trust is usually limited. (I may believe in my doctor's medical diagnosis but may not feel the need to follow her advice to improve my golf score.)

**“something
was missing”**

Then the author looked at the term belief in someone - complete trust. Is it really possible to put such trust in any human being? My dilemma was, however, that to put my trust in someone I had to know them. Though I had been told much about God, I was aware that I needed to know him. Saints and mystics had experience of God. But ME! I was feeling a deep dissatisfaction – something was missing.

Then Fr D mentioned the first book arriving in Brisbane bookstores that told of a group of Catholics in Ann Arbor in the U.S. who had gone to a protestant Pentecostal meeting and had each had a charismatic experience of God.

Here I was being told that this experience of God was there for every believer. My prayers began to run on the lines of, “God if you are there, if you can hear me, I need to know you.” One day I prayed the deepest prayer I had ever voiced and quite without thinking I found myself saying, “I’ll give up smoking if you grant me this request.”

The first thing I did on getting up was to light a cigarette! I was not aware that anything had happened except that my prayer was deep and had come from the heart.

I opened my bible at random. One sentence on the page grabbed my attention and stopped me in my tracks. *Pray as if your prayer has already been answered.* Impossible, I thought, I feel no different. I was well aware that if I were to follow this directive it would not be a kind of bribe to influence the outcome but had to be thanks, a celebration of something that I was not aware had yet happened. I continued smoking while I pondered this sentence. (Or should that be message?).

I was a very logical person. To thank God for answering a prayer that I did not think had yet been answered went against my very essence and yet..... I sat there still smoking and considered the God of the Mystics, a God of Truth and Love. I decided this God I wanted to know was fully trustworthy. I had to step into the unknown. I thanked God for allowing me that last cigarette - one I enjoyed far far more than any that I had previously smoked!

The next morning when I went outside I realised that something HAD happened during my prayer that allowed me to step out in faith as the charismatics called it. I could feel the trees and all creation showing by their very existence the wonder and glory of God and was conscious that, just by being, I too was and had always been part of that song of praise that inspired some of the psalms of the Old Testament.

Coincidences - like seeing that one sentence in the bible that I needed to encourage me to lose myself in the divine essence - are quite common and these too I call miracles. The act of a loving presence who knows us to our very core and leads us to what is needed often even before we have become conscious of a lack. Big things do happen in answer to prayer but often it is the small miracles that count. Divinely sent coincidences!

Shar Ryan

*Today I wish you a day of
ordinary miracles,*

*A fresh pot of coffee you
didn't make yourself,*

*An unexpected phone call
from an old friend,*

*Green lights on your way to
work,*

*The fastest line at the
grocery store,*

*A good sing-along song on
the radio,*

*Your keys found right
where you left them!*

Submitted by Julie O'Dea

BIFF

Brisbane International Film Festival shows *The Trouble with St Mary's*

Letter to the Editor

I watched the documentary yesterday at the Palace Barracks, I was invited since a friend of mine had worked on the filmmaking team. I of course knew of St Mary's and Father Kennedy's supposedly unorthodox methods.

I'd like to say that coming from a way of life that isn't Christian or even Western, I applaud his highly evolved spiritual worldview, and I applaud even more his NOT going to another church or starting his own. All of those are just semantics. The external labels don't matter. I personally love going to church, any church, as and when I feel like it, and I don't see the need for me to be deemed a Christian first before I do that; to me that is again just another label.

But I have seen how contentious the different churches here are, especially the Catholic Church, and how that has precipitated a continual loss in followers, due to a myopic exclusivity. In that forbidding context, I think someone like Father Kennedy is sorely sorely necessary. The loss of spirituality, especially for those who grew up with it, is a deep untold tragedy, and maybe Father Kennedy's efforts will help pave a way for contemporary Australians to be comfortable with their personal spirituality as well as functioning as modern, global subjects.

A question - is it possible for me to attend one of your services in the near future?

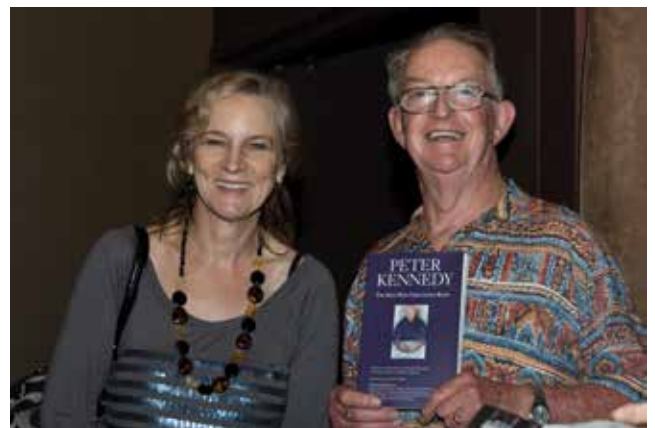
Sreedhevi Ramachandran



Peter, Peter Hegedus (writer/director) and Terry at BIFF.



Claire and Brenda were also seen at BIFF,



Annie Holden (producer) with Doc at Biff

The Trouble with St Mary's DVD

We are proud to present an exciting DVD package! The DVD contains 3 extra chapters that go with the 75 minute version of the film:

1. Discussion following the May 2011 premiere of the film at the Hawthorne Cinema,
 2. A retrospective interview with Peter Kennedy and Terry Fitzpatrick about the film, the community and spirituality,
 3. Peter Hegedus' homily to the St Mary's community regarding the film.
- Each DVD costs \$25. (+postage if required)

Contact Doc if you would like to buy a copy. margdoc@gmail.com or buy one at the Drop Shop at the TLC.

Open Day at Splyard Creek

Bill and Margaret welcomed people to their beautiful garden. Proceeds from the day were shared between the Open Garden Scheme and Micah Projects.



Bill and Margaret
Flamsteed



All too much for
Carolyn



Wes and Graham at the BBQ



A Personal View

Recently I received two pages of *Collected Thoughts* from a friend. The 11th thought read, "For what is it to die – but stand naked in the Wind and melt into the Sun?" I saw 'wind' as a metaphor for Holy Spirit and 'sun' as a metaphor for the Source of all Life – all that is.

I then had a flash back of an event that took place over 70 years ago when I was lying out in the heat-wave sun wondering why it didn't melt me like a pound of butter, down into the crack in the ground beneath me. I put the event in juxtaposition with the '11th thought'. What a miracle! What a change! What gratitude!

Countless number of people have identified with the song, 'Amazing Grace'. Their mind knew its powerlessness to make change yet was overcome with gratitude for the miracle of grace. To feel blind and a wretch was based on illusion. When the Light of Truth awakened them the self naturally could see and shine.

This is the case with every change from illusion to Truth.

I have also experienced miracles after total surrender in complete trust in God. My sister related a remarkable story of when, at a function, she felt she had been given a drugged drink and an inner voice telling her to run. She ran to her car and started driving. A witness reported the suspected drug administrator as saying, "What a pity. She'll never make it you know." Soon after my sister started driving, she felt a dark

curtain falling over her. There was nothing she could do but take her hands off the steering wheel and say without a doubt and in complete trust, "Take over Lord!" before going into unconsciousness. She was found hours later slumped over the wheel in the car parked perfectly outside our other sister's home. The car had come from the other side of Sydney through a complicated route.

When going by myself to India, I was graced with complete trust in God and I was aware of Christ travelling India as me. My

“Joel Goldsmith is reported to have healed many people by simply seeing them whole ”

6 months in India, going with the flow, living in the now, was witnessing continual miracles and it was all the One manifesting naturally.

I am, also, aware of so called miracles when one sees through the eyes of truth. Joel Goldsmith is reported to have healed many people by simply seeing them whole and complete in the truth of who they are.

Adyasanti is convinced that was the way Jesus went about healing people. This energy was transmitted to others in oneness.

Our world becomes a place of beauty, love and wholeness when seen through eyes of truth. At the same time we respond appropriately when there are calls for compassionate love.

I do not focus on a miracle to swap one illusion for a seemingly better one. Rather, to awake from the unreal to the real. There is no thought to ask for miracles when I am aware that there is only God.

Quantum physics explained to me that what we think is solid (in scientific findings) is not solid at all. If we knew the nature of material things and had no doubt, we could walk through walls and walk on water!!! Nothing is impossible.

All is well with what is. Miracles abound and it is all God manifesting naturally!

Barbara Fingleton

Celebrating at the TLC



Terry presides as David is confirmed with sponsors Doc and Marg by his side.



Devitt gave an excellent homily on the reality of Climate Change.



Terry with God parents and parents, Matthew and Natalia all assist in the baptism of baby Samuel..



Phil, Danny, Caresse with Jim Schenk, who gave the homily on 7th January. He spoke about the Eco -village concept.



Claire with the Children's Liturgy young people and the story of the 'Mean King'.



Terry with Cath and Sam celebrate Tina's baptism.



First Communion 13th November 2011

Rose, Trinity, Kamu, Bryn
and Nita



Why Me?

Love is the Reason

Why me? said Mary, as the angel spoke to her, that crazy day.

Why have you chosen me?

Aren't I just a woman, and a very young woman at that?

And aren't I too poor to be a celebrity, someone to receive attention?

And aren't I, as an unmarried woman, a scandalous person to conceive a child?

Yes, said God, but that is the point...

I chose you to tell the meaning of all things, which is Love.

Love is not about the strength of powerful men,
the life of the rich, or the avoidance of scandal.

Love is the strength of struggling women,
the nurture of an ordinary mother, the joy of every human body;
Love is the strength of the poor, the hope beyond hope, the life that never gives in;
Love is the strength of holy scandal, the transforming of shame,
the turning upside down of the values of the world;
Love is the reason.

Why me? said the baby Jesus, as he was chosen to be the Son of God,
the window through which God's Love would shine.

Why have you chosen me?

Aren't I weak and helpless?

And aren't I born in a distant place of little account,
before even television and the internet?

And aren't I, in human form, a strange advertisement of holy wonder?

Yes, said God, but that is the point...

I chose you to tell you the meaning of all things, which is Love.

Love is not about the power of human authority, modern technology and
communications, or the usual ideas of miraculous divinity.

Love is the power of vulnerability;
Love is the power of heart speaking to heart across the centuries;
Love is the power of humans transformed into divine agents by my grace;
Love is the reason.

Why me? say you and I, as we are chosen to receive the good news of Jesus,
and to receive God's Christmas healing and peace.

Why have you chosen us?

Aren't we living too late to see, and know, the baby Jesus?

and aren't we a long way away from Bethlehem in Judaea?

and aren't we too fragile, fallible and foolish to win divine blessings?

Yes, said God, but that is the point...

I chose you to tell the meaning of all things, which is Love.

Love is not about the joy of heaven long away, far away, or going away.
Love is the joy of my presence with you in every day, every hour, every moment;
Love is the joy of my grace available to you, right here where you are;
Love is the joy of my peace among you, for you,
transforming you, whether you deserve it or not;
Love is the reason.

Amen

Jonathan Inkipin

Submitted by Ingerid

Meagher

*(the full text of this
reflection can be found
on his website)*

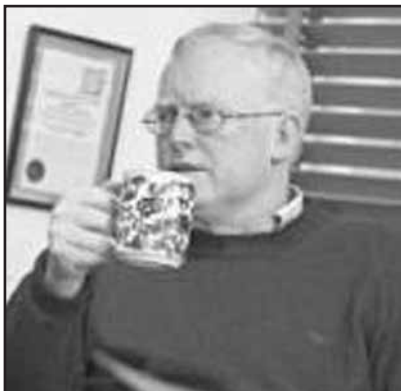
The Catholic Church is a Force for Good in the World

Tuesday 15 November 2011 at Melbourne Town Hall

**Speakers: For: Helen Coonan, Julian McMahon and Sister Libby Rogerson.
Against: Peter Kennedy, Anne Summers and David Marr.**



Helen Coonan (ex-Liberal Senate member)



Julian McMahon (barrister and member of the Catholic Lawyers Association)



Sister Libby Rogerson IBVM (Aid development for Mary Ward International)

Hundreds of people turned up for this topical debate, the splendid Melbourne Town Hall was packed. On entering everyone cast a vote: yes the Church is a force for good in the world or no it wasn't. At the end we would vote once again to see if our minds had been changed.

The evening was articulate and thrilling with speakers well chosen on both sides. The presentations from the opposition (our team) were very well received with arguments delivered with the passion needed to bring about change - many of the audience will now be converted to more action and the idea that the Catholic Church is not the force for good that it could be. The audience loved Peter's humour and the idea that 'Jesus today might be more at home with the Vicar of Dibley' than with the stern and righteous indignation of some of the Catholic hierarchy.

David Marr made a passionate discourse putting the case for the immoral way the church discriminates against those expressing their sexuality and who they are, really are. He got a marvellous ovation. The case for both sides was well put but in the end the majority vote swung to support the team that argued that the Catholic Church is not a force for good in the world. It is hard to say outright that the Church is not a force for good because we are so supportive of so many issues to do with social justice and action on a daily basis; this does not diminish the culpable actions by the powers that be in the curia and in Australia that constantly undermine and distort the good of the churches in exile.



Peter Kennedy (St Mary's Community, South Brisbane)



Anne Summers (writer and thought-leader)



David Marr (writer and commentator).

Report by Lorraine Walker

Climate Change and Problem Gambling

The earth is getting warmer. This is something that can be measured, and there is not much room for doubt any more. The warmer temperatures are causing the sea level to rise. There is perhaps a little more doubt here. Since the land we live on is a thin solid crust floating on a sphere of molten rock, it moves around and makes fine measurement difficult.

Science is good at measurement, but not so good at predicting the future. Will global warming accelerate, or continue at its present rate, or stop, or reverse? If Centrebet takes bets on the question, I am sure they would have continue and accelerate as favourites, but the other two are still in the race.

“

Will global warming accelerate, or continue at its present rate, or stop, or reverse?

”

I know a man who is building a house with a basement on a canal estate. He is clearly backing the long shot. Which is fair enough - it is his money, and sometimes the long shots come home. There is a significant minority of politicians who want to make the same long odds punt on our behalf. Is that also fair enough?

You could say that politicians can make the gamble on our behalf because it is our choice whether

we vote for them or not. But this is not as simple as it seems. The expert scientific commentary on climate has been swamped in the media by 'expert' opinion from economists, politicians, lobby groups and others who really would not have any idea of the facts. And the major parties are both in the thrall of 'post-truth politics', where their public statements are based around what they think people want to hear, and have little relation to either real life or the parties' plans for the future of the country. The coalition climate change policy suffers particularly badly from this.

You could say that many of the great men of history were gamblers. Alexander the Great, Charlemagne and Napoleon could have governed their respective kingdoms in cautious anonymity,

but they challenged numerous powerful foes, overcame them against the odds, and have been celebrated as great men ever since.

More recently, Admiral Tojo, who took a big risk when he attacked the richest, most technologically advanced country in the world at Pearl Harbour in 1941, is remembered as a war criminal with bad judgement. Sadly, the ages of Charlemagne and Napoleon are long gone.

Politicians have data collection, expert advice, risk management etc at their fingertips, and they have a moral duty to use it. That makes politics less exciting, but that is one of the costs of our comfortable, affluent, middle-class lifestyle.

Peter Brown



The Bo

Albert Moran reminisces about his early days living in Dublin.

As a youngster, I had pocket money by dint of doing “messages”. This was simple and only consisted of going to Thornton’s, the small, general store next to where we lived with my mother’s family. My uncles Peter and Dan employed me to do ‘messages’ because their packages of cigarettes were being bought on ‘tic’ before the weekend when, getting their weekly wages, they could settle their debt. The pocket money was not much and could easily disappear on sweets, ice cream, comics and the like.

We had another way to raise some money that involved a few hours work. You needed only your bike and a sack. The sack was necessary as you went from door to door and begged for old newspapers and the bike was necessary to ferry the sack as it filled. Only once was I turned down by a woman who wanted to know which charity we were collecting for. A taboo question because the charity was ourselves. Once the sack was full and heavy, it was time to go to the waste newspaper merchant who was to be found in a small shed in a lane off St. Alphonsus

‘the Bo provided two memorable picture memories’

Road. The dealer duly weighed the paper sack, parted with up to six or eight pennies and gave you back your sack. This effort could



‘The Bo’ as it is now - an Irish Pub.

then be rewarded by a visit to a picture house, including even the Bohemian which was a distance away on Phibsboro Road.

The Bohemian or Bo was a picture palace considerably down on its luck even in the 1950s. It had been one of the first picture houses to be built in the city after the coming of sound and was showing its age by this time. However, a kid could get in for only four pence (about four cents) which left opportunity to buy some sweets and ice cream with funds amassed from a day collecting newspapers. The Bo had several eccentricities. For instance, its main entrance was on the side with everyone appearing to sit in the small balcony, which left us wondering whether the downstairs had any seats at all. Another whimsy of this fading picture palace was the fact that the only session began at the odd time of 6 o’clock in the evening. The Bo only ever showed one feature film although there were various shorts including one series called ‘Crime Does Not Pay’, another one featuring comic figure Joe

McDokes while a third was labelled ‘Pete Smith Specials’.

The Bo was associated with the Grafton Picture House in the city and, like the latter, only showed MGM films. Unfortunately, these were always reissues or revivals rather than first run features. In the 1930s, MGM had marketed itself as ‘the Tiffanys’ of Hollywood, bragging that it had more stars than there were in Heaven. But the company had stagnated in the 1940s and had continued in the doldrums in the 1950s. The upshot was that we visited the Bo far less frequently than we might have. Yet the Bo provided two memorable picture memories, ones that seem to have been completely private on my part because I cannot remember seeing the two pictures with anyone else and also because they were love stories. Boys usually did not take a great deal of obvious interest in love stories but these stuck with me.

The first was a reissue of *Pat and Mike*, a comedy romance from

the mid 1940s featuring Spencer Tracey and Katherine Hepburn. The two are lawyers who end up representing another couple in a divorce proceeding and comically almost wrecking their own marriage in the process. My father loved Spencer Tracey as an actor, not least because of his spare, average-guy minimalism but here Spencer finally seems to blow a fuse with Kate. He produces a small gun from his desk drawer and sticks its end in his mouth. Kate screams with apprehension and so did we. But then Spencer nonchalantly bites off the muzzle from this licorice gun and mockingly chews it in front of her. Kate is surprised and we were delightedly astonished. For many weeks we retold this great visual gag, even stitching it into our play. Repeating its description or mimicking Spencer's actions

‘I loved this film because it told me that life can always change for the better’

caused glee and laughter for a long time afterwards.

My second great picture memory taken from the Bohemian was the light comedy Perfect Strangers that starred Robert Donat and Deborah Kerr. This told of a young, middle-class English couple whose deadly-dull domesticity is interrupted by war. They enlist separately in the services, brighten up as people, fall in love with others and decide to meet again to ask each other for a divorce. Unexpectedly, they like the new person they meet, fall in love again and decide to give their marriage another go. I loved this film because the great playing of Donat and Kerr told me that life can always change for the better.

Unfortunately, the Bo itself seemed to undergo no such change. When I revisited Dublin for the first time in 1985, the Bohemian was boarded up and recognisable at first only because of its position in the street. Therefore, let this piece be its belated epithet!

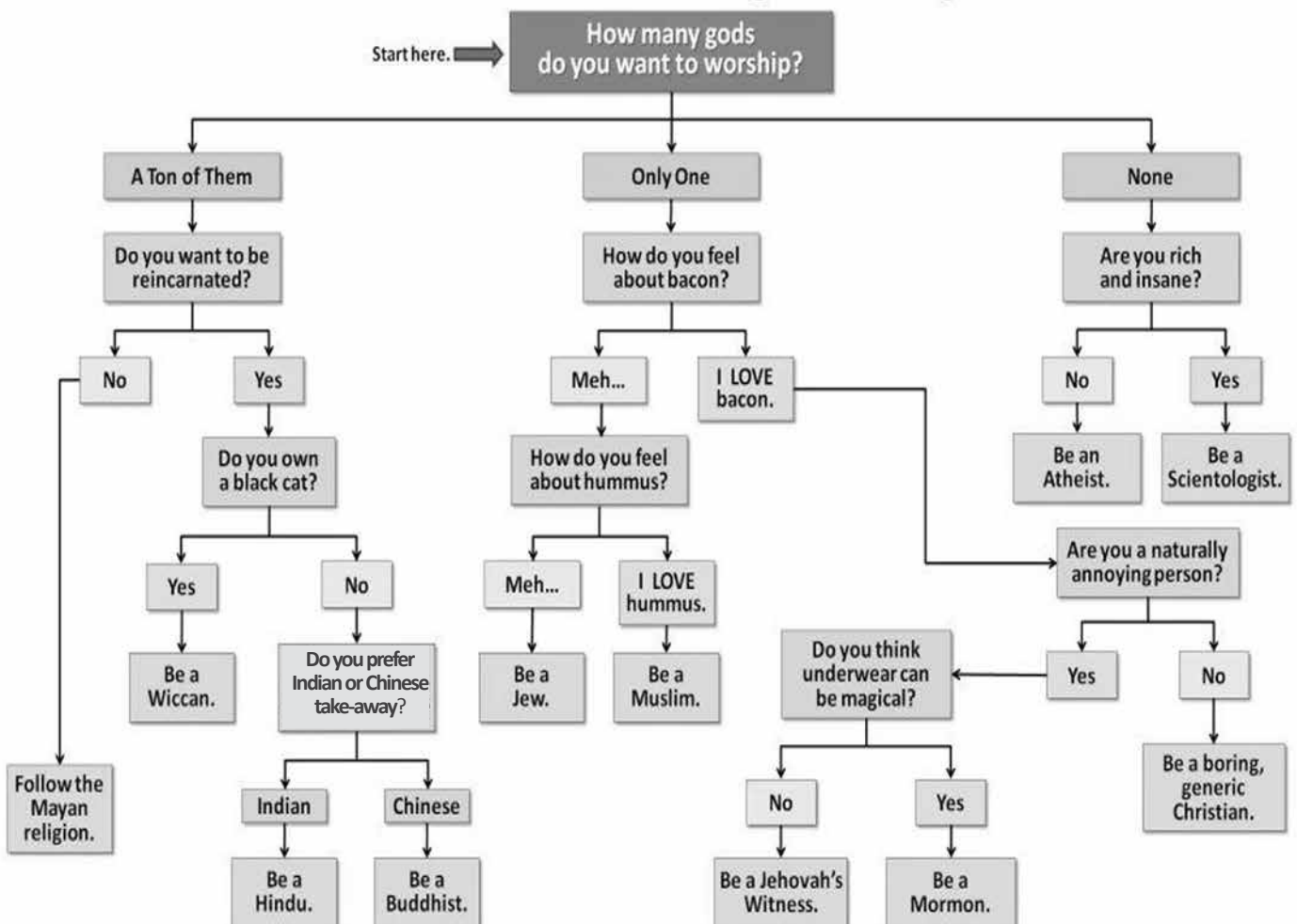
Albert Moran

Miracle
is
St Mary's in Exile.

It happened.

Ted...

A Flowchart for Choosing Your Religion



Who are we?

Last night I saw 'The Trouble with St Mary's' for the second time. What struck me this time was how vulnerable we all were during that time. This was caught well by the filmmaker and it was so clear that our rawness played itself out in a variety of ways for each one of us. And the question of who we are and where are we going was often either said or it was the subtext to our actions.

Now two or so years down the track, we are much more settled and I feel quite comfortable with the ambiguity in which I still find myself. But there are areas about which I feel quite certain. I know we are not a cult – we have far too many differences of opinion with our leaders for that to be true. However, I also know that I would not be able to think so clearly about what I believe if I had not had the encouragement all those years from Peter's homilies. Homilies that were, at first, disturbing to my understandings, but later liberating as I realized that the many things I felt deep down were pretty silly, I could simply jettison. Now I realize dogma is not important. I began reading – Spong, Hellwig, Morewood and Holloway and more recently Cox, Webb and Jenks. I began reflecting and continuously repositioning myself in relation to God and Jesus.

I looked back to what I have read of the early Christians. They walked the 'Jesus way' which seemed to mean they looked after each other and others who needed their help. They certainly did not agree on what they believed –

there was a big stoush between the followers of Peter and those of Paul about what it meant to be a part of the Jesus group. We don't have to agree with either of their positions. That was a different time. But the idea of following the Jesus way appeals to me. He taught forgiveness and love and accepting those we may consider the 'other'.

They celebrated the breaking of the bread together and like the early Christians we need to get together to celebrate. Jesus said 'Do this in memory of me'. We are connected to those early followers of Jesus when we do it too. But there is more to it than that. When we come together around the Eucharistic table we are cementing our relationship with the Jesus way and also with the others who are walking this way with us. We are remembering his death – perhaps he did die for us – not in the sense that he was some sort of sacrifice to God for us but in the sense that he lived his beliefs to absolute fullness – to the point of dying for them.

When we gather around the table at the Eucharist we are making a commitment to remember Jesus by living his way. And that to me is who we are. We are people of the Eucharist.

Who is God? Who is Jesus? What are these names to me in my life? I have been sent the review of a book called *God Is the Good We Do: Theology of Theopraxis*. And even the title speaks to me.

Our brief finitude is but a beautiful spark in the vast darkness of space. So we should live the fleeting day with passion and, when the night comes, depart from it with grace. (Holloway from 'In the Distance')

I still think of myself as Christian, because I want to expand the envelope of Christianity to include people who no longer hold the thing as referring to a supernatural sphere, but who see it as essentially a great poetical, metaphorical narrative that tells us deep things about ourselves. (from Holloway in interview.)

Leo Wright



Epiphany

Last Sunday we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany. In common parlance the dictionary informs us that an epiphany is a sudden Intuitive leap of understanding especially through an ordinary but striking occurrence e.g. 'It came to her in an epiphany what her life's work was to be'.

I'd like to take you on a 'What if?' journey which has the potential to become for you an epiphany – 'a sudden intuitive leap of understanding' - all these words are pregnant with meaning – 'through an ordinary but striking occurrence.'

What if all of what you think you know about yourself is an illusion – a case of mistaken identity? Another way of saying that is, What if you do not know the truth about who you are but remain with the lie or the illusion?

The question you need to ask yourself if you are interested in the 'What if?' journey is: Do I really want to know the truth now or die not knowing? – because it might appear to be easier to stay with the illusion and to die with the lie. At death you will know the truth and then it won't matter that you lived your life in illusion.

So why go on this journey of discovery, what are the rewards? Well if you awaken to the Truth of who you are now there will be a lot less suffering in the time you have left, in fact it may be for you the end of suffering – not necessarily pain – but suffering. Moreover, with the end of suffering comes an unexpected joy, a certain equanimity, a greater

“an epiphany is a sudden Intuitive leap of understanding especially through an ordinary but striking occurrence”

balance in the living of your life situation which, as Eckhart Tolle tells us, is not our Life.

Recently I received a letter, a positive letter for which I was grateful, in which the writer said, *but I don't always agree with everything you say*. Thank God for that – that gives me the courage to talk about the 'What if' journey knowing that some or many may not be open to these teachings but that doesn't mean they will walk away.

May I state at the outset that for me a literalist Christianity can no longer be believed. John Shelby Spong wrote a book entitled *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*. He explains in it why literalism is killing Christianity.

Literalist Christianity, as the book *The Laughing Jesus* tells us, began with the Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicea. It ushered in centuries of belief, not faith, as Harvey Cox in his wonderful book *The Future of Faith* masterfully expounds.

Literalist Religion must have answers. 'Who made the world?' 'God made the world' 'Good boy, undoubtedly you will become a priest one day.'

But the Christian mystical contemplative tradition which Literalist Christianity suppressed down through the centuries is what I am talking about here, and this tradition is present in other religious traditions as well, Indigenous Spirituality, Buddhism, Sufism, Judaism. Here in a nutshell

is that which would give life to the Christian Churches today, for as Karl Rahner famously said on one occasion, *unless we all become mystics there is no future for the church.*

Unlike Literalist Christianity, the mystical/contemplative tradition emphasizes the importance of 'staying with the Questions' not knowing, not understanding, not trying to come up with an answer. As you stay with the Questions, the Heart of Intuition, which is beyond the Mind, enables you to know the truth which the mind cannot understand. In other words an epiphany; a sudden intuitive leap of understanding.

This is obviously a very different way of knowing from that which literalist Christianity has trapped us in for centuries – it's the way of not knowing – it's the way of faith rather than belief. But as Eckhart Tolle tells us, a new consciousness is arising, well it's not new, what is new is that it is now flowering exponentially, because literalist Christianity can no longer suppress it with its threats of exclusion and excommunication, and moreover a literalist Christianity is a lie.

The feast of the Epiphany in the Christian Calendar is the celebration of the Baptism of our Lord. So moving away from a literalist understanding, what is the mystical understanding of this ritual? The Christian Gospel tells us that baptism is the death to the self – we have to die to the self and put on the new person – that is the Christ – not Jesus – but the realization of who we truly are, which Jesus himself understood



In other words to go beyond the illusion of separate self to the experience of mystery – oneness, Christ consciousness. As Paul states, *If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone. The new is here.*

All our life we've been looking for answers and the joke is that answers are not the point of it all; the point is to enjoy the questioning, not to hold back from the mystery in which we are all embedded, just because there is no final understanding. We must stay with the mystery. Along the journey, incredible understandings will come out of the mystery, but the mystery itself will remain a mystery.

There is no little 'me' separate from the mystery. If you sincerely come on this journey of awakening, you will discover that it all turns out to be mystery.

The mystery seems to delight in difference. It extends itself outward into countless forms and doesn't even make two snowflakes alike.

That is how into 'difference' it is, yet when you look with your Heart at any aspect of the Mystery, rather than with your thoughts and your feelings, you will discover the Oneness underlying all the differences. There is something more simple and direct from thoughts and feelings. The heart that knows the oneness – without knowing it.

'A sudden intuitive leap of understanding – an epiphany!'

Recommended reading *Nothing Personal – seeing beyond the illusion of a separate self.* By Nirmala

Peter Kennedy

Four Boys

A Story and a Baptism

My Dad was a Scottish born Catholic and my mum Anglican. We were all baptised Anglican, and yet raised very much more Catholic attending church with our Grandparents etc.

When I had my own children I was very unsure as to where I wanted to baptise them, if at all. When our eldest son started primary school at St Andrew's, the principal there was so inspiring with the way that was taught and encouraged the messages of God and Jesus. I found myself leaving the school each day after their assembly feeling fulfilled and inspired, and decided that I wanted to encourage this more within our family and so made the decision to have the children baptised Catholic. One of our friends who knew Terry suggested that we call him.

He was so welcoming and kind, and very happy to baptise the

boys. When we found St Mary's it was as though we were meant to find you. My Dad, Ray Dempsey had been the General Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council for many years, and had worked in that very building after they had moved from Brisbane city.

On the day we arrived for the Baptism we had more lovely reminiscences when we realised that the very room we were in was the room where we had celebrated

both my sets of Grandparents' 50th wedding anniversaries. It was indeed very meaningful to be there with so many wonderful memories surrounding us, and to be in a place where our Dad was so present, as he passed away nearly five years ago. We are really looking forward to coming back to St Mary's and we are so grateful for the opportunity to be part of something which is so inclusive and welcoming. Thank you.

Kim Rowan



Connor and Ethan Rowan, and Lloyd and Fletcher Dempsey



The families of the boys assist in the baptism. The parents are Kim and Kevin Rowan and Mark and Tanya Dempsey.



God Is the Good We Do: Theology of Theopraxis

Michael Benedikt (2007) New
York: Botting Books ISBN 978-0-
9793754-0-8

Under the Tree

What people are reading



This book is of interest to all those, including my Christian friends, who find the word GOD difficult because people use it in so many different ways and with such contradictory meanings. The author says, “The book is an exploration of Theopraxy, a certain kind of belief in God. We can experience God and we can think of God not as something or someone remote, not as the Creator of the universe, nor as the spirit or principle behind everything, but as something or someone we bring to life, when and as we do good.”

Michael Benedikt is an American architect, “Jewish by birth but not very observant”. He is very familiar with Christianity and both parts of the Bible. There are some wonderful and surprising reinterpretations of a number of central Biblical passages, such as the creation story in Genesis and the Incarnation story. Like so many of us, he is challenged by the perennial problem that evil poses for belief in God (in his case, a Holocaust family background), and his book is part of his response to this challenge.

The book is in four distinct parts, making it easy to read in bits or as a whole. It begins with some beautiful Declarations of Theopraxy in poetic form.

*If God starts in a whisper we hear,
if God starts in a suggestion we take,
if God warms us like a flame,*

*it is because we know the whisper,
the suggestion, the flame to be good .*

How do we know it is good? Benedikt answers with Paul’s poem in the Letter to the Philippians, 4: 8-9.

*Whatever is true, whatever is just,
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
if there is any excellence, if there
is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.
What you have learnt and received
and heard and seen in me, do:
and the God of peace will be with
you.*

An explanations part follows in which he makes the case for his thesis that God is the good we do. In the arguments part he takes his thesis into debate with some theologians, scientists and philosophers, some of whom will be familiar to readers and it is in this part that he returns to the challenge of evil. Finally in Reflections he offers a deeper discussion of theopraxy, its usefulness and for whom it may be a way forward.

Benedikt discusses the tension in the Abrahamic religions between ‘faith’ and ‘works’. Not surprisingly, given his title and thesis Benedikt elevates the Epistle of James from Luther’s derogatory “epistle of straw” estimation, to be the closest to theopraxy, although he finds many other biblical passages of support.

As a scientist, I was particularly struck by the twist Benedikt uses to add merit to the Genesis creation chapters. His attraction to them is not as scientific or as historical, but as a truly human story of work, rest, days, nights and a sense of being good. In comparison, the current scientific account of the universe’s history is ‘so boring’, with none of these human touches to engage most human beings with it.

A shortcoming in the book’s thesis is that the Good We Receive is insufficiently acknowledged as also being God. The author seems to want to contain a God within as our source of goodness, but when we receive good from others (outside of ourselves) the goodness that is part of us as human beings is a shared quality and God of goodness becomes something or someone we can share and celebrate together.

Many years ago in the suburb where we lived in Melbourne, an elderly woman was selling land for subdivision. She wanted to name a road through it, “God Governs Road”. The Council balked at this and the compromise was “Good Governs Road”. I expect Michael Benedikt would be pleased to know this.

Peter J Fensham

What people are reading

***The Naked Now* by Richard Rohr**

The gift of divine presence is already within us as Gnostic philosophy tells us. We simply need to awaken it in us. This book encourages the reader to think outside the square of conventional wisdom, both Church and societal. Dualism is the culprit in this book. Spirituality, in the words of the author, is not a search for perfection or control; it is a search for divine union now. In practical terms Hope and Union are the same thing.

The sub-theme of the author is *Learning to see as the Mystics see*. The Mystics seek and enjoy divine union and a shared knowing. For example, Jesus found God in disorder and imperfection. The author claims that far too many people believe no life journey is necessary, because they think they

already have all the answers. We are introduced to the concept of the 'third eye' i.e. seeking in greater depth the great mystery that is life, true understanding (contemplative) and a grasp of the whole picture. True Mystics see with all three eyes. The author encourages us not to be put off by the word 'Mystic' as it simply means *one who has moved from mere belief systems or belonging systems to actual inner experience*, where he/she knows that he/she does not know. To have the ability to stand back and calmly observe my inner dramas, without rushing to judgement is foundational for spiritual seeing.

The author observes that Western religion became pre-occupied with telling people what to know more than how to know, telling people what to see more than how to see. Certainty of doctrine and dualism dominated.

Chapter five discusses religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are not known for creating 'harmonizing' people, whereas Eastern religions have preserved this value. The author poses the question *Can civilization flourish when so many people are so alienated from their own tradition and religion?"*

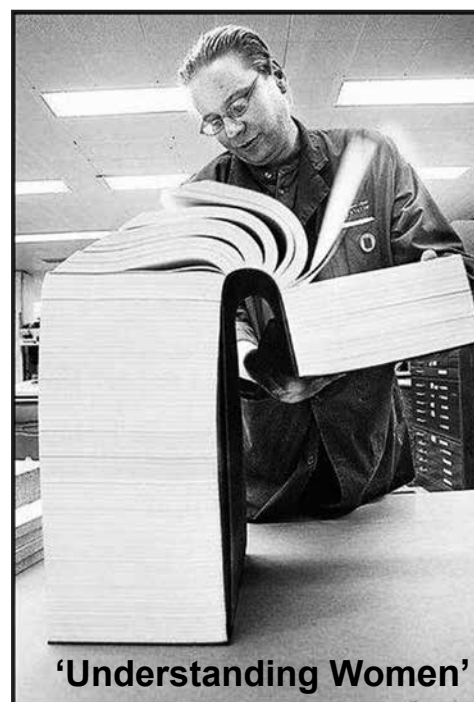
We are encouraged to let 'wondering' (all 3 elements) remain: standing in disbelief, standing in the question itself, standing in awe before something. We should remain open and continue to seek not certainties but possibilities (non-dual thinking) and encourage spiritual curiosity.

Paul Roberts

One of our readers suggested that we publish the list of books available from our library in the magazine. We really do not have room for such a long list but we do have the list on the website and those wishing to borrow need only email the librarian and the books will be delivered to the TLC on the following Sunday.

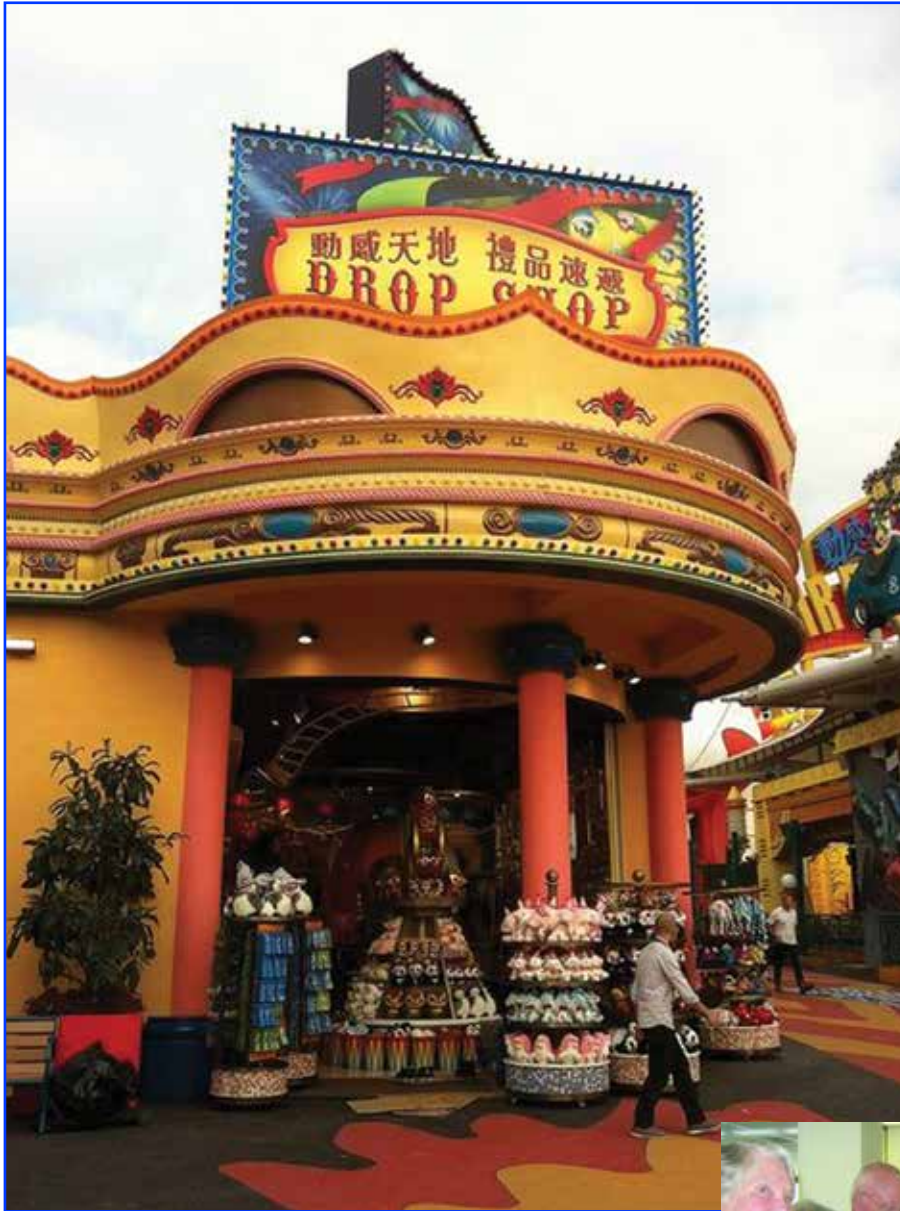
Also suggested was that readers be asked to write short reviews of the books from the library that they have read. This would really help other borrowers to know what to choose. This could be published on our website and in the next edition of the magazine. Contact margdoc2@gmail.com

SMX Community Library



'Understanding Women'

Picture contributed by Kath Reeve



News from the Drop Shop

We are still selling copies of the DVD 'The Trouble with St Mary's'. This has extra features including interviews with Peter and Terry. If you haven't yet got a copy of the popular CD featuring Joan Mooney playing Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin etc and Peter Kennedy singing classic love songs you can buy one from the Drop shop.

We can do mail orders for DVDs (\$25) and CDs (\$20) plus postage.

Doc Ortiz (Drop Shop co-ordinator)

Photos: Below is our Drop Shop in action. Top left is someone else's. We have a long way to go!! Thanks Peter Brown for the top picture.

The Drop Shop is the place to go for your fair traded tea and coffee. We also sell books that are recommended by homilists or members of the community.

From time to time the drop shop acts as a market place for things that are made by members of the community such as the excellent rosella jam made by Margaret Ryan and the ear-rings by Jo Marsh.



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You are invited to contribute financially to the work of St Mary's Community in Exile by donating to:
St Mary's Community Ltd, BSB 064- 131 Account 10339414, Commonwealth Bank, West End.

Celebrating Together At Carolyn's home

The excuse was the Melbourne Cup!

