

COMMUNITY

Walking Together

Making a Path



St Mary's Matters

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From the Editor

Margaret Clifford sent me a report about the cluster she belongs to just after we had gone to print on the last magazine. Her report was inspiring and reminded me why we began having clusters in the first place.

When we were in the old church and growing as a congregation it seemed to some of us that we needed to work deliberately on strategies to help us become more of a community. We came from all over the city and were unlikely to meet each other outside of celebrations at the church. The normal bonding in parish would not work for us. Thus the Connections group was born and from it the idea of having clusters.

Over the years we have done so many things under each of these headings. Do you remember the dinners in the church, the concerts and the masses in the park? Fun things, but more importantly, community building.

The result has been that we are known to be a welcoming and inclusive community. What we have done in the past has worked and is still working - thanks to people like Bob and Dorothy who organise Connections.

However things can always improve. And it is we the community who can make the necessary improvements. We are all involved in this. How can we make it happen?

Margaret Ortiz (Editor)

Walking Together

Clusters

Our Cluster Group has a wonderful, central gathering place. We meet in one of Micah Projects rooms in Boundary St, and are very grateful for the warm welcome that is extended to us for our monthly meetings.

Four of us have been meeting regularly now for over 2 years although I am aware that the group has been meeting for many, many years before I joined them. We come from very diverse backgrounds and we may have very different beliefs about many things. Our group meetings are testimony to the claim by Peter Kennedy that “What people do is more important than what they believe.”

help each other grapple with the most profound questions that life throws at us

So what do we do? We gather in our little community and help each other grapple with the most profound questions that life throws at us.

How do we do this? We have viewed films that present perspectives on spirituality from other cultures and spiritual traditions; we have listened to taped presentations by some of the great mystics, past and present; we have read and discussed poetry by some of the great mystical poets; we have



This is the elusive Margaret Clifford, whose poems we use in our liturgy and who wrote this piece.

shared the new and challenging ideas from the latest book that one of us has read; we have discussed the ideas that some of the homilists at St Mary’s in Exile have presented to the community; we have shared views on many spiritual and psychological topics and we have discussed some of the current issues that are facing the Church and our local, national and international community.

There are other times when there are bigger things going on in our lives and discussing ideas is not an appropriate response. These are sacred moments when people share the challenges and blessings of their lives. It is a time of listening and being fully present. Sometimes it is a matter of being silent and still during meditation. It is a time that reminds me of our deep connectedness to one another, to all people everywhere and to all living things.

It is also a reminder that gathering in communities, like faith cluster groups is essential for our spiritual and personal growth. I am deeply

enriched by the wisdom and sharing of my fellow “clusterians”.

I think it is very appropriate that we are meeting in the rooms belonging to Micah Projects. As we enter and leave the premises for each meeting, we encounter staff working late and we are constantly reminded of the realities of life that they deal with. On a much smaller scale and in our personal lives, we are endeavouring to live their Mission Statement “to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly”. The Central Cluster Group supports us in this challenge.

Others are welcome to join. We usually meet on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact Mike Spiller on 0449884324.

Margaret Clifford

Making a Path



The Community gather together at a Cafe Conference to discuss a matter of importance to them all; the formation of a Community Faith Council

Last Sunday at the beginning of his homily, Terry made a comment about the fact that he needed to wear glasses to read the Gospel and in the same breath he mentioned Julia Gillard's new glasses. Someone from the community felt comfortable enough to speak out for Terry and all of us, saying he looked better in his that the PM does in hers.

I'm not so sure about that. I think hers make her look rather stylish, but the point I want to make here is that such happenings, and they are not infrequent, are indicative of a certain confidence that we have as a community, a certain easy-going-ness, if there is such a word, about the community which to my mind is a real positive.

Both Terry and I, because we are at every liturgy each Sunday are in a privileged position to gauge the overall spirit of the larger community of SMX. And we would say that this community, while there will always be negatives, is robust and alive, nearly four years down the track of exile. We feel today that this

is quite a different community in many new and positive ways than we were back in the church at the corner of Merrivale and Peel streets. I don't think I need to list the differences as they are obvious every Sunday.

It must have been about this time four years ago that we refused to hand over the keys, which put us on a collision course with the Roman Catholic Diocese. We are today, I believe, a more ecumenical, even to some extent an inter-faith community. While the new Catholic Archbishop Mark Coleridge is suggesting another step, it does seem to Terry and I and many of you, that going back under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese is increasingly remote. That doesn't mean that we can't be on amicable terms.

Terry will be 25 years ordained on Monday. I was his spiritual director in the Seminary for some years – he was my only failure – the rest left. On Monday of last week at the Manly Pub some of the Catholic priests from this

archdiocese, including Bishop Bill Morris, Terry's bishop for most of his priesthood, and always supportive of him, thanked Terry for his work in the Catholic Archdiocese. There was certainly a warm sense of camaraderie toward both Terry and myself.

Which brings me to a further point, while we are seen by some religious people to be a dissident Christian community, the interesting fact is that we have within our community quite a number of people who are working in 'the system' but have bravely chosen to stay with or to join this community quietly. Some even judge it prudent to disclose this to some colleagues and the response it appears is mostly positive. The new head of the Catholic Education Office has known Terry for many years and in response to a letter of congratulations to her, we received only last week a warm letter of thanks.

In a way we have become a bridge, rickety though it may be, between a Christianity which is



Walking to the TLC from St Mary's Church.

are all the richer for that. It is in this context this quotation from Carl Jung is appropriate. *'Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakes.'*

thing that we did as a community undertaking. But for me this song spoke of the love Terry and I have and our commitment to the community. You responded in kind, but for each of you, as it is for people who have joined us since that day, it was and is your considered decision.

'Jesus said to Simon Peter', so the Gospel tells us, "Do not be afraid, from now on it is people you will catch". Then bringing their boats back to land they left everything and followed Jesus.'

Peter Kennedy

Homily 10th February 2013

So to celebrate our four years

no longer tenable for many who are searching for a spiritual non-patriarchal community which has something to say to people about today's world. For example, you may not agree with everything that Terry said in his homily on the mining industry; nevertheless he spoke to issues that concern us all in today's Australia and today's world.

of journeying – it was the first Sunday after Easter that we walked down Peel Street crossing over Hope Street and entering the upper room of the TLC where I think we have continued to be a 'tender loving community'. I have been cajoled, the last time I promise you, to lead you all in singing the Eriskay Love Lilt at reflection time today. You will remember I sang it first at a time of tumultuous happenings. It was indeed a risky

Increasingly many people from within the community and some from outside offer us a wide variety of topics in homilies that challenge our complacency and offer us a glimpse into the wisdom of their own spiritual journey. We



Arriving at the TLC for the first time.

Margins and Unexpected Places

God will be Found

In this homily of December 2012 Terry spoke about the role of John the Baptist, the great teacher and preacher from the desert, who baptized Jesus in the River Jordan.

There was once a travelling evangelist, a bit like John the Baptist, who always put on a grand finale at his revival meetings. When he was to preach at a church, he would secretly hire

a small boy to sit in the ceiling rafters with a dove in a cage.

Toward the end of the sermon, the preacher would shout for the Holy Spirit to come down, and the boy in the rafters would dutifully release the dove. At one revival meeting however, nothing happened when the preacher called for the Holy Spirit to descend. He again raised his arms

and exclaimed: "Come down, Holy Spirit!" Still no dove.

The preacher then heard the anxious voice of a small boy call down from the rafters: "Sir, a yellow cat just ate the Holy Spirit. Shall I throw down the yellow cat?" So if a yellow cat ever appears during my homily you will know what happened.

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Margins and Unexpected

Places

God will be Found

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Peter Kennedy often speaks about the Literary Jesus. The Literary Jesus, and not the Historical Jesus, is the Jesus we know. And each portrayal of the Literary Jesus is different for each of the New Testament writers. All of them bring their own agendas, writing to entirely different audiences, for different purposes.

Luke, the great Social Justice evangelist, is believed to have been writing to a largely cosmopolitan, international, highly literate, Greek and Gentile audience. Therefore, they would have been aware of previous literary characters, forerunners of Avatars. They would recognise the role of John the Baptist who was a forerunner of the Christ figure.



John the Baptist baptising Jesus with the dove in close attendance.

In the stories from the ancient Egyptians, a character such as Anup (also known as Anubis) took upon himself to prepare the way for Horus (Egyptian Christ figure) to make a path ready for him; we are told he lived in the dark and empty reaches of Amenta –the Egyptian term for “earth”, until the day of his manifestation, and like John the Baptist, is said to have dwelt in the wilderness. Anup was said to “*be the preparer of the way of the other world*”. He is the power “*making straight the paths to the upper realms of heaven*.” This instantly calls to mind Luke’s description of John the Baptist, quoting the prophet Isaiah “*the voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare a way for our God – make straight the paths.*”

So when the readers of Luke’s Gospel hear this same story of Horus, for Jesus, they know Jesus will be special and that they were tapping into an ancient universal wisdom.

Later on when Jesus was baptized by John, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove (not a yellow cat). Luke’s audience may have been aware of the ancient Egyptian symbol of the dove symbolizing Tef, the breathing force or the divine energy of the soul. In the Egyptian chart of the heavens, the star called Phact, which was the dove, was in position to announce the coming of each new

Solar Year, and hence the Sun God Horus. Therefore, the descending of the dove in the Gospel story, to announce Jesus as the Beloved Son. Horus, we know, also rose from his baptism as the dove, for he exclaims “*I am the Dove. I am the Dove!*”

The symbols and stories told by Luke and the other Gospel writers were often not new to their audience. They resonated deeply with them and they understood their meaning and significance in this new context. The context in which the story is told is also important. Luke deliberately places John the Baptist and Jesus in the context I will describe to highlight his central message to his literate and maybe wealthy audience.

The mistake that many Christians have made is to believe that the real concern of John the Baptist was to bring Jews to repentance so as to release them from the impact of ORIGINAL SIN.

(Judaism did not and still does not acknowledge any sense of ORIGINAL SIN, for all are born free and responsible for the choices that are made in life.)

Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan believes that the driving issue for John the Baptist was Herod Antipas’ privatization of the fishing on the Lake of Galilee. The Jews believed that their God had given the land, including the lakes, to them as their birthright and the actions of Herod Antipas were profoundly disturbing acts of personal and religious disinheritance.



Anubis purifying (baptising?) Osiris

Antipas was a collaborator with the Roman occupation military and economic forces, ruling Galilee from 4 BCE to 39 CE (Common Era) as a client state of the Roman Imperial Empire. In 18 CE Antipas built a new capital city for Galilee, the city of Tiberias, on the shores of Lake Galilee, a city he knowingly built over Jewish tombs which angered the Jews even more, for it was against the Torah and oral traditions of the Jews. In order to pay for its construction, he privatized the Lake of Galilee and levied a tax upon all the fish caught. John the Baptist's message and ministry were directly related to the abuse of privilege and power that resulted in the privatization of the Lake of Galilee.

Therefore he condemned the tyrant Herod Antipas explicitly, and by implication, the oppression by the military might of Rome. For from the great non-political 'spiritual' leader and forerunner of Christian tradition, John the Baptist was in fact, leading a highly politicized religious movement against the Roman appointed tetrarch Herod Antipas.

This radical political agenda of John the Baptist was taken up and developed by his former disciple, Jesus of Nazareth.

The readers of Luke's Gospel are challenged to do likewise, to take up political agendas like John the Baptist and as Jesus of Nazareth does, to become the voice of the voiceless, to challenge those who oppress the poor and exploit those who are most vulnerable.

Only in Luke's Gospel does John the Baptist respond to the multitudes with this strong sense of Social Justice. From the Gospel of Luke (3.10-14) we read: *And the multitudes asked John the Baptist, "What then shall we do to repent?" And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed to you." Soldiers also asked him, "And what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with*

your wages."

And this Jesus did not disappoint Luke's audience. He came to champion the poor. The very opening of Jesus' ministry in Luke's gospel he enters the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did and stood up to read. They handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written, and this becomes for Luke a summary of Jesus' whole message, "The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me to bring Good News to the Poor, Liberty to Captives, Sight to the Blind, to set the downtrodden free and proclaim the Lord's year of favour (Lk 4; 18-19).

The radical message of Christmas from the Gospel of Luke is that God incarnate comes as one of those exploited and exiled, as a refugee, one without a home, born into a simple manger and stable.

From these margins and unexpected places (voices in the wilderness) the presence and voice of God is manifested.

It is where God will be found.

As Mary the mother of Jesus prophetically proclaims early in Luke's gospel before her child is born, heralding Jesus this new champion of the poor, *Yahweh has looked with favour on his lowly handmaid... Yahweh has pulled princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry s/he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.* (Lk 1; 46- 55)

Terry Fitzpatrick

What does 'community' mean to you?

I absolutely love this topic and I am very passionate about it. It has been one of my own life's lessons. As well I personally believe that building community is of integral importance in our world today. So when I saw this was the topic for our next issue of St. Mary's Matters I felt called to share my thoughts on the same. So here I go...

I was born and brought up in Mumbai, India. I was more or less brought up in community and I realize now that those were my most formative years of who I am today, contrary to what I had thought before. My dad was in the Indian army. We only visited him in our school holidays. My mum worked very long hours from 7am to 7pm to help with the living expenses as army wages were not that much. So I hardly ever saw my mum too much either. So I guess it was the other members in our community and my grandmothers that helped shape my thoughts and views on life. As a young girl, I was very much a loner and was very shy compared to my brother and sister. People don't believe me when I tell them that today.

There was one family whom I considered my second family. They had five children and I really got on well with all of them. They treated me like I was part of their family. I could literally go to their place at any time of the day or night and know that I was always welcome. In many ways, I think they know me better than my own family does.

I married at the age of twenty-three and came here to Australia. And due to the nature of my relationship, I inadvertently let myself get isolated for twenty two years (the duration of my marriage). This was not difficult for me as I am a loner first at my core. It was only when my marriage broke down that I realized that I did not have the support I was going to need to face the challenges that go with a marriage breakdown.

'I needed to step out of my comfort zone and connect with people'

Well.... It was at this point in my life, I realized that I needed to step out of my comfort zone and connect with people. I remembered my childhood and realized that I was supported by community as I grew up and it was time for me to now return. I made a conscious decision to reach out and connect with people as it is so easy for me to slip back into loner mode. I realize now that a good balance of the two is what really supports my journey in life. And the more I read and understand our world the way it is today, the more I realize the importance of building community as being an integral block in the rebuilding of our world the way it was meant to be. For we are all connected



Carolyn Vincent shares more than just a beautiful smile

to each other as we are to every other living creature, even the plants and animals.

Every indigenous culture has community as one of its core concepts. So where and when did we come to believe that we had to teach our children to be independent instead of being interdependent?

I personally believe that teaching our children to be independent has been the root cause of most of the current crisis that we are facing as a global family today. Think about it; independence fosters competition whereas interdependence fosters cooperation. Competition instills fear in people and fear of something or other has caused every crisis we face today.

How can we make it work better and what sort of path are we making together?

As a community I believe we do so much already and I personally believe there is so much more we can yet do. The possibilities are endless.

One of the things I do myself on a regular basis is to consciously have a conversation with someone new each time. This is not easy for me, given my core nature.

**‘
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However I realize that I walk away feeling so much more enriched for having done that. And as I continue to do it, it becomes easier for me. Sometimes I might have a conversation with someone I already know and so I endeavour to really listen to what they are saying with my whole being and I find that I often hear what they are not saying too. I have been using these opportunities to hone my own listening skills. It is not easy as my mind wanders off while the other person is talking sometimes, but I am loving it, none the less

We all have a story to tell, we all have learnt something or the other from our lived experiences and when we share our lived experiences with each other we learn from each other and we realize that we are all in it together.

I believe that as we continue to just love one another by having meaningful conversations, slowly but surely we are building a path for our children that we can be sure will help them cope with any challenges that life may throw them.

I would like to stress the word ‘meaningful’. There is a beautiful book titled “Ripples from the

Zambezi” by Ernesto Sirolli. It is about a small town where a lot of the people had lost their jobs. Everyone was depressed and this air of sadness hung over the entire town. One gentleman decided he was going to set up a small table with an umbrella and a chair in a prominent position and all he did all day long was sit there and say hello to people as they walked past.

Sometimes he would sit them down and have a meaningful conversation with them. His question to them was something like “What is your dream?” “What do you want most in your life”? And he just listened. After a few weeks, he soon got to know the entire town and was able to match people that could help each other achieve their dreams. The town was soon buzzing again as people started connecting with each other and fulfilling their dreams through cooperation and collaboration with each other. Every time I share this story, I get goose bumps myself. That is the power of true community.

“The future of every community,” Sirolli writes, “lies in capturing the energy, imagination, intelligence and passion of its people.”

How would our community look if everyone’s energy, imagination, intelligence and passions were captured? How would we be interacting with each other? What kind of meaningful conversations would we be having?

So my question to each of us is, what can I do today to build a stronger community? For there is always place for growth; we don’t have to be sick to get better. And we have all heard the words “If we are not growing, we are dying”.

I would like to end with a beautiful quotation by Jean Houston:

“To really be there with another is to see greatness”.

Carolyn Vincent



Community building is actually good fun. This is attested to by a bunch of 9amers who share a post-Eucharist coffee.

The Forgotten Ones

I wonder ...is 'community' a creation of the values and qualities that connect its members in togetherness?

These values and qualities are much like the colourful bunch of people, who together make up community. There are, of course, the well-known members, the ones we love to have around, we embrace, and of whom we speak highly. Unity is one of these respected members, often heard talking about the importance of working collaboratively and the power of standing together as one. Belonging, a good mate of Unity, is always thinking of others and making sure no one gets left out. Then there is Happiness, Positivity and Zest; they are the life of the party...anything is possible when they're around. The siblings Sharing, Caring and Helpful bring warmth and safety, making everyone feel valued and comfortable. And you must have heard of Communication, who always has something to say, even if it goes against what everyone else thinks. Diversity often hangs around with him, adding his two cents and inciting the different views of members. Vision is an inspirational eccentric; she spends most of the day dreaming and scaring the rest of the community with her talk of seemingly inconceivable future goals.

These are the members you may be well acquainted with, the golden children of community, who receive a lot of attention. However, there exist also some lesser known members, those often left out...the Forgotten Ones

of community. Everyone would prefer to turn a blind eye to these members because they are not glorious, glamorous or even a little appealing. In fact, on the whole, they just make people feel uncomfortable.

The first of these forgotten ones is Conflict. While there are those who would like to pretend he doesn't exist as part of community, and would instead prefer to focus on those 'life of the party' members, like Happiness and Positivity, Conflict is an essential part of community. He just wants to be heard, understood and treated in a respectful way. What amazing potential he has to offer community by continuing to challenge members on their views, encouraging open minds and promoting ongoing growth in ever changing times.

a sign that things are moving in a positive direction, that growth is occurring and goals are being achieved

Next there is Awkwardness... everyone wishes she just wouldn't show up at all. She seems to go out of her way to attend all the new meetings and events, and loves being around when people take risks to step out of their comfort zones, face fears and work towards goals. She is an interesting character because while people would prefer she wasn't around, her presence can be a sign that things are moving



The colours at the top represent the colourful bunch of people within community (rainbow colours), the circle represents oneness, and the stem represents the community blossoming to its fullest potential.

in a positive direction, that growth is occurring and goals are being achieved. The key to Awkwardness is to just accept her as she is, to allow her to tag along, even though we wish that some days she would just stay at home.

Imperfection is a rather large fellow, often disregarded in this world of deadlines, expectations, order and control...despite the fact that his presence is overwhelmingly obvious. Imperfection quietly reminds people that members of community don't fit into unrealistic moulds; they are all different, and at times, weak and vulnerable. He often expresses his emotions in public, including those meant to be hidden behind closed doors. People believe he should know better than to show his sadness, loneliness, doubt and fear. But Imperfection yearns to be heard and acknowledged. He experiences

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Terrorism in Australia

I heard an interview of Bill Gates some time ago, when he was asked what he thought was the biggest problem facing the world today. I listened closely for the answer. Bill Gates is clearly a very clever person and a responsible, engaged citizen, so his answer was worth listening to. He answered "Terrorism."

I must say I was surprised. We have over-population, billions living below the poverty line, millions in refugee camps; we have thousands of nuclear warheads controlled by anonymous officials of regimes like Pakistan and North Korea, and he saw terrorism as the main threat.

I did some research on the subject, and discovered that approximately 7473 people were killed throughout the world by terrorists in 2011. Which is terrible, although in the same period 458,605 people were killed by 'ordinary' murderers. (Corresponding Australian 2011 killings: 0 and 229)

To give Bill Gates his due, it is a genuine worry that terrorists could become more dangerous in the future. As the world's weapons become more lethal, easier to conceal, easier to target and control, there is a real worry that they will fall into the hands of terrorists. But with countless thousands of these weapons already in the hands of Middle Eastern dictators, aggressive Americans and crazy Koreans, I feel more concerned about the here

and now, rather than what could possibly happen in the future.

In the months following the day the world changed, 11 September 2001, Australia passed new anti-terrorism laws. These laws give the police more powers when investigating terrorism than they have when investigating 'ordinary' crime. The correct extent of police powers is always a difficult question, with no clear answer. Too few powers, and the police have no chance of convicting sophisticated, organized criminals; too many powers, and the police force starts attracting psychopaths and sadists, trying to get paid for what they enjoy doing.

These new laws only give the police more powers when they are specifically investigating terrorism. So a well known underworld figure, with vast wealth from no visible source, and suspected of

murdering some police informant, is entitled to the full protection of the system; while someone who is distantly related to a known terrorist, and who has a 6 month period 5 years ago where ASIO is not confident they know where the person was living, can be secretly detained for a week without his family knowing where he is.

If these additional police powers are effective, why are they not extended to police investigating murder, drug importation, public corruption? The statistics show that common murderers and drug pushers are much more dangerous than terrorists, so why do these laws apply only to terrorists?

The answer may be found in the legislation, oddly enough.

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Healing of Memories

We have all been challenged to look closely at what we really believe. We no longer accept our beliefs on a platter but feel the need to think things through for ourselves. As I have often pointed out we did not follow Peter and Terry down the road – we went with them only after looking closely at our own beliefs and deciding for ourselves that we needed freedom from the escalating constraints of Rome to continue to develop our spirituality and our relationship with the Divine.

It is this need to really accept responsibility for our own lives and beliefs that make our community different. We share an exciting journey of faith as we seek to understand more fully our place in the universe and who or what God is. The findings of science in every field from sub-atomic particles to the idea of multiple universes, to say nothing of the growing understanding of our bodies and how our brains work, force us to rethink who we are and how we fit into this new but very exciting picture. You cannot put new wine in old jars! We needed and have begun the task of looking for the insights of those thinkers and prophets of the past who described what they had glimpsed in words that made sense to those of their era but are quite inadequate today. I think is important though that we do not discard their experiences because they lacked the knowledge and language that today can make their insights real in the 21st century.

When we left the old church up the road, many of us carried with us a load of disappointment and indeed anger with the institutional church. Thankfully time has helped us to discard most of this baggage. But what has happened in our lives in the past does often limit our actions and reactions in the present.

time has helped us to discard most of this baggage

One exercise I was led to in the 1980s was The Healing of Memories. This entailed us looking carefully at our own past and trying to discern what still limits our thinking and actions in the present. It was pointed out that people who did this with a willingness to listen in their hearts found, even in the most painful situations, that Jesus (LOVE) was really present- though at the time we did not recognise this.

Telling my own story may help you to understand.

I thought of the time I answered the phone as a toddler and was roared at by an elderly man who wanted to speak to my grandfather. I would not go near the phone for years after – but that incident did not seem to raise any deep feelings. I discarded the time I was not picked for the basketball team in my last year at primary school, the time I was talked into selling my school badge to a hobo, or



the time my maths teacher put me down when I pointed out a mistake on the board, and even that occasion when I was told I was kept in the choir for my facial expression. None seemed to be that important.

A few days later though, I was driving home from Kenmore when I remembered a silly little incident when I was about 8. We were at a CWA fete and my friends talked me into competing in a singing competition. I paid my penny, went on the stage and not only didn't carry the tune but went completely blank and forgot the words. I ran off the stage crying.

As I parked the car at home nearly 50 years later I sobbed and sobbed. Every emotion I had endured at the time swept over me. I had "made a show of myself" to use the words of an aunt who stopped me as I was fleeing out the door; I had brought shame on my parents, my grandparents. (We were at their home in Clifton at the time.) I had disgraced my classmates and

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The Forgotten Ones

Continued from page 10

freedom through expression and having a voice. People are frightened that Imperfection will cripple community; however, his presence actually has the opposite effect. Recognising Imperfection within community connects members in their brokenness, encouraging people to come together to achieve something great... humanity.

Deception is a shady character, often unrecognisable due to his disguises. He sometimes appears as 'us' then other times appears as 'them'. He confuses people when he is around. He is believed to have the power to divide, to make people believe there are greater and lesser individuals. Some say he creates the illusion of the existence of many communities. He tries to convince people to see themselves as members of different communities, so while they speak of being a community, in actuality they

live divided, as true community is 'one'. However, Deception is greatly misunderstood. He is angry at the contradiction and inconsistencies within community. He wants to remind members to be ever vigilant, to not become complacent and to be introspective so not to be fooled.

Moment is an allusive character. With the many time pressures and desires to do things, have things, consume things and fix things, as soon as possible, Moment speaks of living in the now. She claims if we live in this now we possess all we need to be. Many fear she is not enough to have around. They believe if she is going to be a member of community she needs to contribute more by providing thoughts, plans and material possessions. But Moment is very powerful; when she is around all we need to do is 'let go' and trust.

Commitment and Hardwork are also forgotten ones. While many people have heard of these two, some members only

have time for them when it is convenient or when other people are watching. Commitment and Hardwork are the enduring and resilient members of community. They go about their business, contributing wholeheartedly, without expecting recognition or recompense. They know what they do is important. They just wish and hope other members would spend more time with them.

Acknowledging, accepting and valuing the contributions by all these members are the foundations of community spirituality. It is the meaning of community, the purpose, the reason we come together. For the spirituality of community to flourish, we need to embrace all these members in our daily life, the golden children and the forgotten ones. By doing this, we will fulfil the spiritual potential of our community...the spirituality of our universe...the living awareness of all things as one.

Juanita Lynam

Terrorism in Australia

Continued from page 11

Section 100.1 of the Criminal Code defines a terrorist act as 'an action or threat of action' which is done or made with the intention of:

- advancing a political, religious or ideological cause; and
- coercing, or influencing by intimidation, the government of the Commonwealth, State or Territory or the government of a foreign country or intimidating the public or a section of the public.

So, by definition, terrorism is a political crime which is (generally)

directed at our political leaders. When the terrorist kills the security guard outside the embassy, the real target is the government represented by the embassy. If the security guard were shot by bank robbers, the politicians would not be particularly bothered; but outside the embassy, it is an attack on them, and they are going to get tough. Of course they tell us they are getting tough for our benefit. We should be worried, but thankful that they are going to look after us. The media love

stories about 'beefing up' security, and about terrorists, especially if they can show file footage of an explosion, so they are happy to go along with it; and if some civil rights group issues a press release disagreeing with it, they can include that at the end of the story if it is starting to sound a little bland.

It is all mindless stuff. Surely we can do better than what we have at the moment.

Peter Brown

Eucharistic Prayer

Words making meaning

Last year there was discussion arising amongst community members about the wording of part of our Eucharistic prayer. Some felt it harked back to the belief in transubstantiation and all that entailed.

After much reading and thought Peter gave his considered opinion in a homily. This point of view was welcomed by many. Some were not so sure. The premise that the words were necessarily an expression of transubstantiation was questioned. Much interesting debate followed.

I am presenting the homily that Peter gave on the subject and a couple of letters from a community member which counters his argument. The liturgy group decided to return to the old words, at least until the matter resolves itself.

I find the discussion really interesting with much to be said for all the points of view. I particularly rejoice at the fact that we can discuss issues such as this, without acrimony or heavy handed autocracy and be comfortable with a variety of opinion

Editor



Kevin presides at our Eucharist - his son and daughter assist.

Professor Robert Crotty has spent a lifetime studying the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures. In his book, *Three Revolutions, Three Drastic Changes in Interpreting the Bible*, he speaks candidly and authoritatively about the drastic changes that took place in his understanding of the Bible. His conclusions deeply resonate with me. However for some Christians they may be too challenging.

The purpose of this homily is to suggest that we of the St Mary's in Exile community need to change a few words in our Liturgy of Eucharist in order to make sense of what, in my opinion, it is really about. To make a meaning that is consonant with the Gospel stories of table fellowship that was central to Jesus' ministry.

For the moment we have to go back to one of these 'drastic changes' that Robert Crotty talks about in his book. 'Undoubtedly' Crotty says 'there was an historical Jesus'. However the Christian faith is not based on history – history in

fact is a distraction for the biblical interpreter. It is the literary Jesus that is of importance. This is the figure that challenges Christians, determines their faith, that controls their belief. The literary Jesus never existed but the construction of a mediator is common practice for all religions. 'Christian believers', says Crotty 'from their leaders to the people in the pews must give up the conviction that their religion is based on history'. It is based on a story, a very clever story. Importantly, the sacred story will only work if its basis is accepted as a story and not mined for history.

If you follow the conclusions of Robert Crotty, you come to see that the search for the historical Jesus is as valid as the search for Julius Caesar. It can tell us many things about our past and how we came to be the sort of people we are. All sources must be carefully assessed by an historian, but the Gospels are not primarily historical documents contributing to this historical search; they have been manipulated.

They can only be used by the historian with the greatest care and in fact very little can be said about the historical Jesus, apart from extraneous nuggets of historical fact, usually handed on by chance. In the end they have no importance for the final product.

Now, if you accept the conclusions of Robert Crotty that the historical Jesus is a distraction and that it is the literary Jesus that undergirds our Christian faith, then it follows that the event we describe as the Last Supper is not historical but is part of the story concerning the literary Jesus.

a meaning that is consonant with the Gospel stories of table fellowship that was central to Jesus' ministry

The Gospel stories portray the literary Jesus as one for whom table fellowship was an essential part of his ministry. In fact it was central to his ministry. His table fellowship was inclusive of all but

especially inclusive of people who were considered as outsiders, sinners and ordinary people who were despised by the religious elite; the poor, the homeless and the victims of injustice.

When you come to John's Gospel which was much later than Matthew, Mark and Luke, there is a story of a Last Supper but no mention of changing bread and wine into his body and blood – rather, a very symbolic event happened – a humble washing of the feet of the disciples and a command to do likewise. In other words, the Eucharist is not about transubstantiation (the Real Presence of Jesus in the bread and wine: eating his body and drinking his blood which is the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist). No, the Eucharist is about identifying with the broken, the rejected, the poor and being of service to them. For we are all the body of Christ but especially those with whom the Literary Jesus identified himself – the victims of injustice.

These words capture that sense: *Long ago, our tradition says, on*

the night before his death, Jesus came to table with those he loved.

Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it: he said it was like his body, an offering of self, broken... And he handed it to his friends inviting them to eat.

Our tradition also says, that when supper was ended, Jesus poured a cup of wine, offered thanks for it: he said it was like his blood, a pouring out of his very being. And he gave it to his friends.

Let us receive what we are: let us become what we receive, The body of Christ.

Matthew's Gospel sums it up: the Literary Jesus says *'Come, possess the kingdom because when I was sick you visited me, when I was in prison you came to see me, a refugee and you welcomed me.'*

That is how we live the Eucharist in our daily lives.

*Peter Kennedy
Homily – 2nd December 2012*

Eucharistic Prayer

An alternate point of view

2nd December, 2012

Dear Peter,
Thanks for your thought provoking and heartfelt homily this evening, Peter. You asked for feedback. I probably need to put my thoughts in writing anyway, as I need to think them through.
I certainly am in accord with the idea that biblical texts are

story, works of literature of different genres, including use of symbolism, and need to be interpreted that way. Part of that use of story includes that of the Last Supper in the gospels, and yes, the words are not meant to be taken literally. It is this use of symbolism that I think is very powerful. I said to Terry this evening that a reading that was

part of a unit I did for my Masters through ACU, Women and the Church, included the concept of transformation - that the story of Jesus is about the flesh becoming word. This is a symbol of transformation from physical to ultimate existence that Jesus shows is possible for all of us, for all of creation. Ever since reading that, during the Eucharistic

Prayer I have committed myself consciously and specifically to bringing that transformation into reality, to bringing about the 'kingdom', where, as Ghandi said, 'love will prevail,' and all will be transformed. Flesh will become word.

I think this direct symbolism is very powerful, whether it symbolises brokenness, as you saw it, or the transformation that will occur as the result of that giving in love. I think that the use of indirect comparison in the simile – 'it was like his body' is not nearly as powerful, and even seems to misunderstand the symbolism of the original. The direct metaphorical imagery – 'this is my body' is a more powerful symbolism of the brokenness and transformation it represents. Flesh will become word, not just 'be like' word. In short, I think the symbolism loses effect by the use of simile rather than metaphor. So therefore I do like 'Let us receive what we are: let us become what we receive - the body of Christ'. Note it doesn't say 'let us become like what we receive'!

Another thought was to do with the connection between history and scripture. I accept that the biblical texts are not history, but I think there is a strong connection between the writings and the context in which they were written – their historical context. This year one of the great books I read was Karen Armstrong's A History of God. An understanding of the historical context of the texts, particularly of the Hebrew Scriptures that I probably knew less about than the Christian scriptures, was enlightening, fascinating, and helped my understanding tremendously. So I wouldn't say that history has nothing to do with the texts. And I agree that theologians and teachers in a Catholic context need to be circumspect, but these ideas form part of study through ACU and in senior classes in schools.

Anne

15th January, 2013

Dear Peter,
Your request for me to explain the concept of transformation that I used in my response to the changes you made to the Eucharistic prayer gives me a

chance to think this through more clearly for myself too, so thank you for that. I have decided to respond personally in a letter to you, as this is not an academic exercise for me, but an expression of a personal understanding still in progress. The underlying principle of 'the flesh becomes word' was a reading as part of a Masters Theology unit I did, and, as did all the immensely satisfying theology units, it helped me not only in my academic understanding, but in my own spiritual journey. The references relate to this particular text (referenced in full at the end of the letter), and I intend to send you both a hard copy and an electronic version of the whole chapter, which I think you will enjoy reading if you haven't done so already. Note that the unit was Women and the Church, so the context is feminist.

The foundational concept of my belief in transformation is that of incarnation. My idea of the link to the divine revealed in the physical was very much enlightened by the reading from Lisa Isherwood 'The Feminist Future: Jesus Christ or Sophia's Empowered Daughters?' and in particular the section titled



Joan and the choir lead the music in our celebration of Eucharist.



‘The Flesh Becomes Word’ (p.124). Jesus is seen as ‘a very earthy man’ making political statements through the ‘symbolic use of food’ and even using his bodily fluid to heal (e.g. Mark 8:23). Christ ‘enables the flesh to become word’ (p.125) active and physical. Incarnation was not a ‘once and for all event’ (p.128), but something that is within all which can ‘burst out and transform’ (p.128). We incarnate ‘the transgressive Christ’ (p.127). The Christ is ‘radically immanent’ and available in all times and places (p.129).

This presence of the mystical, the divine within the physical, has the power to transform. Bodies, flesh made word, this ‘embodied power in all creation’, make Christ ‘a transforming reality’ (p.125). One of my memories of this journey into understanding transformation came in a meditation from Richard Rohr’s CAC: ‘Do you transform your pain, or transmit it?’ This opened up for me the idea that suffering had the power to transform, and that the figure of Jesus is an ultimate example of this. Somehow, if I accept suffering I can bring about the presence of

the divine and mystical, which is transformative. This links for me with the reading from Eckhardt Tolle you read to us last weekend, where the acceptance of suffering reveals the true self, which for me is the divine within me. This then does not affect just me, but

we find the invisible through the visible, the mystical through the physical in our lives.

reveals and makes active God’s presence within creation – a transformation. We should ‘fully embrace the power that lies within the fibre of our beings’ (p.129) and transform ourselves, injustice, suffering, and ultimately, creation, making ‘empowered living the reality for all’ (p.129). This then will bring about the ultimate reality, the kingdom, where love will prevail.

The bread and wine are symbolic for me of this incarnation and transformation, the metaphor

expressive of the real power within the physical. Thus ‘this is like my body’ – a simile – is not as powerful, and doesn’t express the immanence of the divine. The metaphor ‘this is my body’ leads beautifully into ‘Become what you receive, the body of Christ’. Incarnation and transformation!

By the way, the last section of the reading, ‘Forever and Ever?’ urges us not to give up. The Schussler-Fiorenza text referred to was also one of the readings of the unit, and after reading that I had the sense of remaining on what she calls ‘the inside edge’ of the evolving tradition of Christianity. Part of my grief when our community was excluded was the feeling that we had been tipped over to the outside of this edge, but I have come to realise that this is not so in reality, as members of our community are also involved in other communities on the ‘inside’ within Catholic education in various roles, including educators and parents.

I hope this brief description of a very complex spiritual faith holds some clarity for you. Maybe this should be the topic of my doctoral thesis! Or maybe I should just keep trying to live that empowered reality of the radically immanent Christ and God.

Thanks for the challenge!

Anne

Reference:
Isherwood, Lisa
Introducing Feminist Christologies Chapter 7: ‘The Feminist Future: Jesus Christ or Sophia’s Empowered Daughters?’, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001

Cana

- from Rosa Mundi – Lynn Roberts

**He did not want to use his father's skills;
to show that he was (beyond expression)
differently abled:**

he was human, after all.

**Yet it was her cousin's cousin's son -
a poor wedding - and the wine ran out.
She could not help but look at him; just a
quick glance, seeing that saving face matters,
illuminating in a tiny flash skeins of the
complex webs which hold us up,
so that his gaze fell on the water jars
with their dark liquid circles where he saw
her glance again.**

**It was only a question of moving a few
electrons sideways -
not a great task –**

**and yet there was a great shift of empathy
and love.**

the secret water

It is in John's Gospel, in the story of the Wedding at Cana, that we are reminded that the ministry of Jesus is of this world, at water wells, in the markets, in everyday places, and everyday events such as weddings. For the Jewish people, wine in the Old Testament symbolized divine abundance; the Kingdom of God being that realm of abundance.

John's gospel is filled with the language and imagery of Communion in what might be considered unexpected places. There is no direct account of Jesus sharing bread and wine with the disciples at the Last Supper. However the allusion to Communion is throughout his Gospel.

The miracle of wine at Cana parallels another miracle, that of the loaves and fishes near Bethsaida. Abundance for all and one that reaches beyond that of having a frivolous or ostensible gathering. The wine of Cana and the bread of Bethsaida relate to a Communion, abundance for all.

As instructed six stone jars were filled brimming with cold, clear water which when dispensed becomes the spiritual abundance that sustained a gathering at a time of unexpected change. Unexpected things happen to all of us. They have happened to me personally and to this community.

The unexpected is referenced in one of the most recited lines in western literature, Dante's Divina

Commedia's first tercet,
*Halfway through the journey we
are living
I found myself deep in a darkened
forest,
For I had lost all trace of the
straight path.*

Translation James Finn Cotter

Just before Christmas, following on from head injury, vision loss and other physical damage from an accident some years ago, I required a further surgical procedure. This resulted in an unexpected change in my life, a darkened forest, as I developed septicaemia. My stay in hospital for a week on intravenous antibiotics had me consider the unexpected changes in life.

Some years ago we as a community faced an unexpected change. Something of this is reflected in *The Well of Grief*, a poem by David Whyte:

*Those who will not slip beneath
the still surface on the well of grief
turning downward through its
black water
to the place we cannot breathe
will never know the source from
which we drink,
the secret water, cold and clear,
nor find in the darkness
glimmering
the small round coins
thrown by those who wished for
something else.*

*David Whyte from Where Many Rivers
Meet ©2007 Many Rivers Press*

Jesus responded to the unexpected lack of wine or spiritual abundance



at the wedding in Cana by instructing that six stone jars be filled with cold, clear waters; the source from which we drink.

What might this source be? What sustains life and enables communion in everyday places? A source relevant to the ministry of Jesus.

The first jar is of the realization of spiritual loss.

Is it that the most tragic and stressful situations can provide important insights previously unconsidered? When things are falling apart, are they actually falling into place and is it that until we are lost we can't begin to find a truth of self? Is realizing we are lost the first step towards living the life we want? A step that leaves behind the life we don't want and not to act results in regret. Vision without action is a daydream and action without vision is a nightmare. Taking things for granted is to lose the desire for that which we most need. *Drink of the recognition of loss, need and action.*

The second jar is of spiritual pain.

Deep pain empowers growth and the difficult choices become those of greatest worth; without pain, there is no change, no gain. Pain is to be learned from and

then released. Choosing whether to step away or to take another step forward is one of the hardest decisions in life. The pain of being caught in the cycle of trying to change someone or something or of defending yourself against that which is trying to change you requires the taking of a first step. *Drink of pain, its gain and the taking of a first step.*

The third jar is of spiritual self-balance.

Taking care of self first before becoming a friend to others is to seek balance. To be your own friend first and foremost you have to correct yourself before correcting others and before making others happy we need to make ourselves happy. This is not selfishness but a need for personal development. *Drink in personal development and self-balance.*

The fourth jar is spiritual ownership.

To worry about what others think of you is to give away ownership of self. Self-ownership requires no approval from others. Owning our issues and dealing with them makes for real happiness and is greater than owning anything else. How can we stand confidently alone without realizing which broken pieces belong to us? *Drink to ownership of our brokenness of self.*

The fifth jar is spiritual control.

Whilst we cannot control all that happens to us, can we control how we react to it? Adapting to situations in life enables us to more fully experience its highs and to bounce back from its lows. Put another way, being at peace means being able not to judge ourselves by our past failings; we

don't live there anymore. Because we are not where we want to be today doesn't mean we won't be there someday. We choose to stand back up again, to try again, to love again and to dream again. *Drink in self-control and the ability to dream.*

The sixth and final jar is spiritual happiness.

Is an honest enemy is better than a friend who lies? By paying less attention to what a person says and more attention to what they do are we able to better measure the truth in our long-term relationships? To concentrate on what we don't have is to never have enough and thankfulness for what we do have is abundance. Happiness resides not in possessions or what is said; it's how we feel about it and what we do with it; to take happiness away we need only to take things for granted. *Drink of the fullness of our actions and true happiness.*

Let us all drink of the six jars,
-the recognition of loss, need and action,
-of pain, its gain and the taking of a first step
-of personal development and self-balance
-the ownership of our brokenness and our selves
-self-control and the ability to dream
-and the fullness of our actions and true happiness.

*Life is no passing memory of what has been
nor the remaining pages in a great book
waiting to be read.
It is the opening of eyes long closed.
It is the vision of far off things
seen for the silence they hold.*

*The Opening of Eyes extract David Whyte
Songs for Coming Home ©1984 Many
Rivers Press*

*David Whyte goes on to share that, "In three brief lines Dante says that the journey begins right here... Right beneath our feet. This is the place. There is no other place and no other time. Even if you are successful and follow the road you have set yourself, you can never leave here. Despite everything you have achieved, life refuses to grant you, and always will refuse to grant you, immunity from its difficulties." The Heart Aroused.
Currency Doubleday, ©1994, 1996*

Be aware in the moment. Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us to, "Breathe and Smile", thoughts like breaths, come and go; continue breathing and let the thoughts go, then it is that you are back in the present, back in this very moment.

For myself and for this community the need to be in the present is ever more pertinent to our sustaining Communion and more so that Communion to which John alludes.

This stone jar is filled with cold, clear water; water from all six jars and just as Jesus invites us into the fullness of life, you are invited to look into its depth, to touch its clearness and coldness, to slip beneath its still surface and to contemplate that source to which we all seek. You are invited, as in the wedding at Cana, to *Step toward the cold surface, say the old prayer of rough love and open both arms.*

*Tilicho Lake extract -- David Whyte Leave
Everything You Know Behind*

John Fitzwalter

Six Stone Jars

**Jesus said:
Fill the six stone jars
with water
to the brim
draw out
taste
the wine of divine abundance
for all, for all time.**

**Slip beneath
the still surface
to that deep place
drink
the secret water
with open eyes
open arms
right here, right now.**

Margaret Clifford

Based on John Fitzwalter's Homily at St Mary's in Exile

**Six stone jars
still brimming
with cold, clear water
full of spiritual abundance
plenty
to sustain life
communion
anywhere, anytime.**



Healing of Memories

Continued from page 12

the whole Catholic school; yes the church too and just to show how self important that young lady felt, I knew I had disgraced the entire Catholic Church- even the Pope was somehow belittled! Pride is the deadliest of sins and I was indulging in it on a grand scale.

It was not until a week later, as I drove home from a meeting where I had shared this experience, that I remembered something that until then I had entirely forgotten. The lady had

given me back my penny! At the time that was the last straw and only emphasised how bad I was. As I relived the experience I remembered she suggested I go and buy an ice cream. Here was love and concern for an obviously upset youngster. LOVE was indeed present at the very heart of the experience and the recognition of that was the most healing experience I have ever felt.

Don't wait – go home and ask for the healing of memories that will

open your heart and mind more fully to Truth and Love – to God.

Let us all recall our reactions as a community that could limit our efforts to be authentic. Love is truly there in even what felt like the worst of experiences.

Come Lord Jesus.

Heal those scars that still have us limping.

May all at SMX leap with the joy of our Faith.

Shar Ryan

Letters, Emails, Comments

”

You've done it again!!!! "What you do is More Important than What you Believe". We never cease to be amazed at the marvellous content of St Mary's Matters. Peter's article goes right to the heart of the matter. Terry Fitzpatrick's "Peace is the way" is also compelling. Thank you Peter and Terry for your continuing inspiration.

How amazing to see Peter, Terry and some of the community having morning tea with Archbishop Coleridge. Was he open to a few new ideas, or is this the toe in the water so to speak?

It seems to me that there is a quiet tsunami developing in the Christian world. Ecumenically speaking we are all joined; it only remains for Christians to let the Vatican know that we have gone too far away from what Jesus Christ asked and intended for us. Peter your mission is already showing the light; there are thousands of other Catholic Christians who feel as you do. Witness the other priest in Melbourne who has done a similar thing, only much smaller and without the good publicity of your own journey.

That all said, I think you are in the middle of the beginnings of hopefully a true reform in the way we practise our Mass and our lives. Many thousands of congregations

are doing great jobs in their discipleships, things are happening that Rome has not yet heard about, or if they have, just maybe a new Pope John X X111 will make it all happen, because we the people must demand reform.

With warm affection.

*Lorraine and Peter Walker
Kew, Vic.*

The Editor
St Mary's Matters

Dear Marg,

I am a nine o'clock liturgy person. I was delighted to hear that beautiful poem by Margaret Clifford, the same one that I had read in the magazine, as a prayer at the start of our celebration.

This made me start thinking about our liturgy. I realised just how important it is to me. It really is our gift to each other. So many in the community have input into the celebration. During the prayers of the faithful people clearly feel free to speak from their hearts and often this is clearly quite difficult for them. How generous they are to allow us into their space.

I don't think I have ever said thank you to anyone for our liturgy. So I will now. Thank you to the people who put the prayers, readings and music together. Thank you to those who sing and read and concelebrate Eucharist. And thank you to those who stand

around the table and celebrate this Eucharist with such enthusiasm and joyfulness. There is often fun and laughter as well as sadness and tears. What a blessing this is to us all.

Jean

The Editor

I do like the Orthopraxy edition of the magazine. Can't say I'd ever heard that word before. But I use it all the time now. Makes me sound so erudite.

You have good writers in your community. Peter Brown is someone I do enjoy. He has a whacky take on politics that actually makes great sense.

Keep it coming and please keep sending me a copy. I'll enclose some money for postage etc.

*George Beecham
Bicester, UK*

*The people
The heart
St Mary's
Ted*

Feet

*I'm proud of my feet.
Not because they are Phryne Fisher elegant
Narrow with high arches.
Nor are they Pavlov competent
Pirouetting and pointing
Or doing a pas de deux with another set of equally
competent toes.*



*No, they are none of these things.
They are somewhat misshapen and rather wide.
I'd say ugly but I wouldn't want to offend them.*

however



*They have carried me for seventy five years.
Not without complaint I must admit.
They seem to complain rather often these
days.
But they have never let me down,
Have never said 'enough' and hung up their
boots.*

*So I feel I should honour them in some small
way.
Say 'thank you' and maybe throw a small
party.
You can come if you want.
But be sure to invite your feet.*

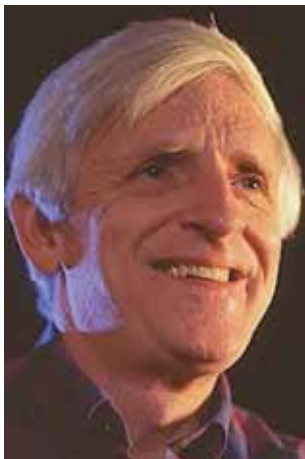
Marg Ortiz

What People are Reading

The Pope's War:

Why Ratzinger's Crusade has imperilled the Church and How it can be Saved

By Matthew Fox



Matthew Fox

I first encountered Matthew Fox in the early 1990s when I read *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. He was then a priest within the Catholic Dominican Order, and already a prolific theologian whose special interest was named "Creation Spirituality" (an amalgam of mysticism, liberation theology and eco-theology). Personally, I was greatly enriched by his writings.

Matthew Fox is well placed to critique 'the war' which has raged within Roman Catholicism under the past two popes. Fox's teachings drew the ire of the Vatican, in particular, Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict) who was then head of the Congregation of Faith and Doctrine – formerly known as 'The Inquisition'. I followed closely the saga which led to Fox's silencing by Rome and eventual

expulsion from his Order. He is now an Episcopalian priest, though essentially non-denominational.

Published attacks on organised religion are not uncommon. Rightly or wrongly, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church, in particular, has been a target. *The Pope's War* by Matthew Fox adds significantly to the case that the Vatican bureaucracy, under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, has reversed the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (first convened by John XXIII) and thereby entrenched an anachronistic medieval institution. Moreover, he demonstrates how, in the process of defending the Roman Curia's version of orthodoxy, the present Pope and his predecessor have failed to deal with the institutional disease of sexual abuse of children perpetrated in the ranks of the celibate clergy, while, at the same time corrupting the

'the author's passion is inspiring'

church by supporting what many allege are secretive (and 'fascist') organisations within the church (e.g. Opus Dei).

At the same time, these Popes, says Fox, have waged war against prophetic and progressive voices



by officially silencing scores of theologians and pastoral leaders. As always, the author's passion is inspiring, especially as it rightly honours those many 'saints', living and from the past, who have been formed in the crucible of a truly catholic (diverse and inclusive) Christianity whose priority is justice for the most disadvantaged.

The book is in four sections: The first three - Ratzinger's life story; Ratzinger's chosen enemies; Ratzinger's allies – including a psychoanalysis of Ratzinger himself, as well as the dangerous groups within the church fostered in recent decades and, the Roman Curia itself. It is not a pretty picture. But, significantly, the final section is constructive, titled "The End of the Catholic Church as we know it and the Birth of a Truly Catholic Christianity". As the foreword by the Episcopalian biblical scholar, Bruce Chilton affirms: "Matthew Fox is not merely a pundit, content to analyse the gravity of our predicament. As a prophet he sees the way forward and articulates that way." (p. xi)

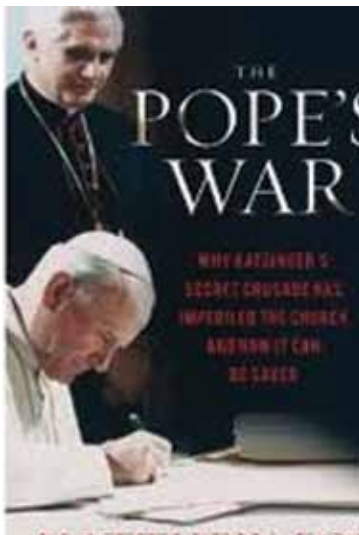
The Pope's War should not be read as a personal attack but as a readable analysis of the backward looking ideology (hardly theology) which has governed those exercising Vatican power in the past thirty years. This is a book for a wide readership

The Pope's War:

By Matthew Fox

including non-(roman) catholics who recognise the importance of the concerns raised for all humanity; it should certainly not be overlooked by those in other Christian churches charged with fostering ecumenical dialogue.

Post Script: In an appendix to the paperback edition Fox lists 101 names, "A Wailing Wall of Silenced, Expelled, or Banished Theologians and Pastoral Leaders under Ratzinger". The later edition adds a further 10 names to the list compiled first in 2010, including Bishop William Morris.



There are three other Australians on the list – Michael Morwood, Paul Collins and Bishop Geoffrey Robinson. Well might it be asked "Why are Peter Kennedy and

Terry Fitzpatrick not listed?" Is the assumption that Pope Benedict had nothing to do with their exclusion and silencing? Does anyone believe that the Archbishop of Brisbane was acting alone without the urging of some close to the former Inquisitor? It is a significant oversight because the case of St Mary's is the story of a local faith community not just that of the banishing of an individual. That said, Fox acknowledges the list is "partial" just as he observes (p.238): "It is a strange organization indeed that fires its thinkers and leaders, those who respond to the 'signs of the times'"

Noel Preston

In God's House

by Ray Mouton published by Head of Zeus

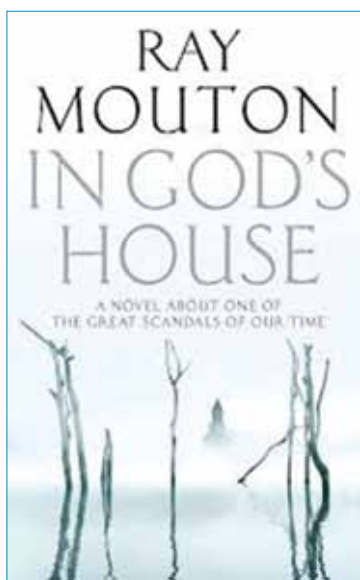
This extraordinary book keeps you mesmerised until the last page – and it's a very long book, but so riveting that it's hard to put down.

Now I thought I knew a bit about the clerical sexual abuse scandal in the US, but this novel showed me just how little I did. The truth being stranger than fiction or vice versa? Mouton claims that it is a work of fiction despite the obvious parallels with his own life – as a young lawyer in Louisiana he represented the first Catholic priest to be charged with sex abuse crimes. The novel is about – yes you've guessed.....

It is not an enjoyable book as 'enjoyable' is normally interpreted, but it is a "must

read" book and so gripping you will have difficulty putting it down.

Beware, some of the descriptions of abuse are very unpleasant. Not gratuitous and perhaps necessary, as abuse is sometimes whitewashed, as though a little "feeling-up" doesn't really matter. What the young Catholic lawyer, Chatterlault, discovers is far far worse than that.



There are two issues highlighted in the book that I hadn't fully taken on board before and provide an insight into the minds of clerics. Firstly, Pope John XXIII's declaration that bringing scandal to the Church was a sin and must be avoided at all costs and secondly "mental reservation". This latter construct is truly awful – the ability to lie under oath in court while reserving the truth for God – the secular court is unimportant.

The questions the book raises are too vast for here but we in CWO are only too aware that the Church will stop at nothing to protect its status quo.

Amanda R

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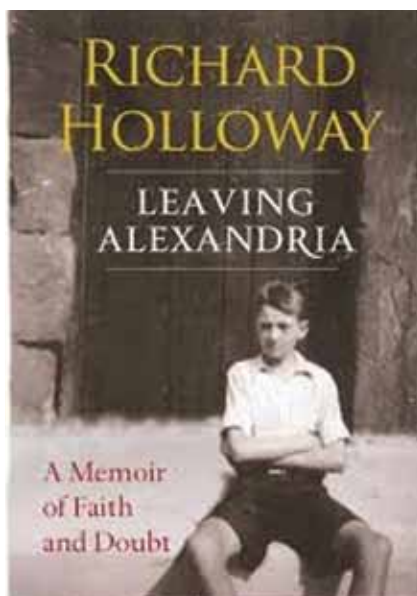
What People are Reading

Two Odd Memoirs

These are memoirs by two pillars of society – a bishop and a general. But they are not the pillars you might expect – the bishop doubts that there is a god, and the general has post traumatic stress disorder.

Leaving Alexandria by Richard Holloway

There are many at St Mary's in Exile who have travelled the difficult path from a literal view of religion to a metaphorical view. Richard Holloway writes about his journey along this path with great intelligence, learning and feeling. The writing is as skilful as you would expect from someone who has had 28 books published. The atmosphere is reflective, as you would expect from an author approaching 80 years of age. If I have one criticism, it is that Richard Holloway is so regretful and apologetic. Not since I read Kerry O'Keefe's memoirs have I heard someone express so many regrets. Not that we want a boastful list of achievements (see Benito Mussolini's Memoir), but



his spiritual insight and honesty is sure to attract plenty of criticism, without him having to join in.

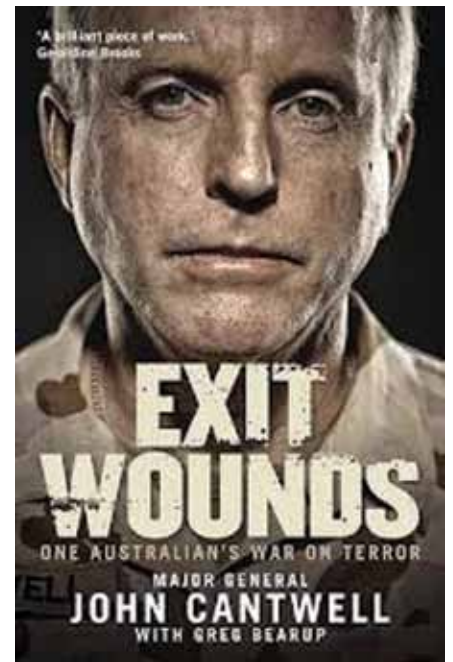
Richard Holloway's story has an interesting parallel to that of Peter Kennedy and Terry Fitzpatrick and St Mary's. In their case, the priest drifted away from the literal view of religion, and was pulled up by the bishop. In Richard Holloway's case, he was the bishop, the Bishop of Edinburgh, the primate of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. So did he try and impose his view on his flock, and kick out those who would not toe his line? Not at all – he was happy for everyone to live as they saw fit. The literalists however could not deal with it, and protested loudly against him in the church and in the secular media. Eventually, seeing that there was a significant group within his church who could not accept him as leader, he resigned from his position as bishop. So these conflicts were both 'won' not by the powerful group, as one might expect, but by the intolerant group.

Exit Wounds

by John Cantwell with Greg Bearup

This is a great book, apparently written largely by Major-General Cantwell, and tidied up by Greg Bearup. Cantwell can really write: he has the knack of getting the reader involved, so at times it is hard to put the book down.

The book has several parts. John



Cantwell's adventures in the 1991 Gulf War read like an adventure novel, due to his clear memory and vivid prose. One thing about this episode that makes it more real is that he is not ridiculously brave or tough (see Bravo Two Zero by Andy McNab), and you can almost imagine yourself there.

Then there is his time in the US army administration in Baghdad during the US occupation of Iraq. It sounds like just another desk job, but in fact he was wounded during this deployment (while standing on the steps outside the Iraqi President's office.) This part, and the part about his spell as the commander of Australia's Middle East Operations are very interesting to those interested in current affairs.

Finally there is the part about his sufferings with post traumatic stress. This part must have been excruciatingly difficult to write, but it is so valuable. I knew

nothing about PTSD before I read this book, and now I know something. If the book had been about nothing else, you might be left with the unspoken suspicion in the back of your mind that he was a difficult person looking for an excuse, or a whinger after compo. But when you read this memoir, you see the all too common picture of a person who is tremendously confident and successful in public, but who suffers secretly the private pain of psychological problems that even our sophisticated society wants to sweep under the table.



Model major-general ... John Cantwell sits down with a village chief in Afghanistan.

Summary

Reading these two memoirs has

made me feel optimistic. They show that in spite of all the failings of our social system, admirable, sincere, intelligent people can

(occasionally) rise to the top of our institutions, and provide real leadership.

Peter Brown

The Community Is Our Body

Community building is the most important action of our century.

As individuals, we have suffered tremendously.

Due to the predominance of individualism, families are breaking down, and society has become deeply divided.

For the twenty-first century to be a time of spirituality, the spirit of togetherness must guide us.

We should learn to do things together, to share our ideas and the deep inspiration in our hearts.

We have to learn to see the sangha, our community of spiritual support, as our own body.

We need each other to practise freedom, and compassion so that we can remind each other that there's always hope.

*Extract from FEAR
By Thich Nhat Hanh*



(Above) Its all fun when the Children dance for us after their own Liturgy.

(Right) At Christmas Sophia and Jack dramatised a parallel to the Jesus story entitled 'Jesus was once a Refugee' They did it so well and it reminded us all of our need to make that connection in our own attitudes to 'others'.



Our Young People Our Future

A Final word from Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

We must all learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we will all perish together as fools.

We are tied together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.

And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

This is the way God's universe is made.

This is the way it is structured.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

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