

## THE HARMLESS OLD MAN

It seemed good to the cardinals and to the Holy Spirit to elect someone who would be a good, convenient, transitional Pope, a harmless old man, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. The Cardinals were right on one of them. In taking the name John, Roncalli joked that not many of that name occupied the chair of Peter for very long. He was 77 and died at the age of 83. On the second count, harmless he was not as he would demonstrate before very long.



From his ordination as a priest in 1904 until his death as Pope John XXIII in 1963, Angelo Roncalli experienced a life of extraordinary service, as parish priest, seminary educator, assistant to his bishop, work in the Curia, Vatican diplomat from 1925 to post WWII, and finally as Cardinal Patriarch of Venice. Roncalli's motto was *Obedientia et Pax*. Obedience was not simple docility but an active listening and service to truth. Peace, for him, was the fruit born of unity in essentials and harmony in difference. By the 50s the world and Christianity were beset with pressing questions in search of real answers. Answers, an observer remarks, are a mechanism for avoiding questions!

John XXIII convened Vatican II as a pastoral Council, an ecumenical assembly of broad representation. He invited the Church to ask the tough questions, to examine itself with honesty and courage, to re-imagine and re-express itself in the modern world; to re-enflesh the mystery of Christ

and his Gospel with renewed evangelical vigour. In a sense, the Pope was putting the Church on notice that its credibility would stand or fall on these. This was not welcomed by everyone.

A resistant Curia went to enormous lengths to promote its own predetermined, entrenched and self interested agenda. When, for example, John insisted on inviting Protestant observers, Cardinal Ottaviani complained that they were heretics and in league with the devil! John's response was that they should be recognised as separated brethren and separated angels.

But the Pope called for more than minor adjustments in attitude. He wanted Catholics to rethink, re-imagine and re-express the faith in ways which would be more readily comprehensible to modern humanity. The vision and legacy of Vatican II involved the re-inspiration of the Tradition and attention to the movement of the Spirit over ecclesiastical stasis and stagnation. The priority of the Council was to ensure that the incarnation and the Kingdom of God were not compromised by the creations of a lesser, self interested 'deity.'

A CathNews blog in April stresses that these concerns continue to be of enduring and critical importance. As a commentator pointed out, the Church is not an end in itself but the servant of Christ and the Gospel. There are clear and evident signs that this image of the Church as the living incarnation and presence of Christ in the world is being inverted. I think this distortion started in earnest and quite consciously so over thirty years ago.

While John Paul II spent most of his pontificate on the road being the great communicator between the Church and the World, he demonstrated little interest in administration. The Curia increasingly set in place policies to re-establish Vatican centralism, to dis-empower national episcopal conferences, effectively to muffle the voice of the Laity, to extend the power and control of Vatican departments, and to mask all of this by promoting the celebrity cult of the papal personality. Much of this has been accomplished by stealth, by the gradual affirmation of now three sources of divine Revelation: Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium - increasingly appropriated conveniently by the Curia!

The last of these is really what many call creeping infallibility. At core, it is largely about centralised

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bureaucratic power and control. This has resulted in Episcopal collegiality and authority being eroded, compromised and devalued globally.

Bishops seem to have become alienated from one another and lost their collective nerve and confidence. They have been domesticated and reduced to Confucian compliance. There is, as well, little evident respect for or regard given to the legitimate Sense of the Faithful across Church life. Catholic laity in their millions over the past thirty years, long rendered voiceless and ignored, have taken a walk, maybe for ever! Sadly, I think, the Curial underlings, the managerial class, really don't care a damn! What a paradox that these people are, in reality - sine cura - care free!

This kind of contempt for God's People leads to inertia, despondency, loss of Spirit and connectedness with what it's all about, faith in Jesus Christ and the power of his Gospel. John XXIII's garden is re-

morphing into a museum. The Church is badly, almost terminally, divided and in rapid decline right now especially in the West.

It's about time we invoked the historian's fifty year criterion and do a serious reassessment of where we are. We need the re-inspiration of the Tradition again and urgently ask of it some 21st Century questions. At our peril we might ignore the counsel of Bernard Lonergan SJ: "Bad insight leads to bad policy which in turn leads to worse insight which then leads to worse policy until change becomes the preserve of the violent" (*Insight*, 1957).

Maybe that 'Harmless Old Man' long, long time ago read about Jesus saying something like this about people taking the Kingdom by force! (Mt 11: 12-15).

First published on CathBlog on May 30, 2011, by David Timbs who blogs from Albion, Victoria.

## Speaking the Truth

*By Elizabeth Price*

October 14th was our Golden Wedding anniversary. Five years before that, driven in conscience by the suffering I saw as a nurse, which church teaching caused to devout Catholic women whose health precluded further pregnancies, I had started a lifelong study of magisterial understanding of sexuality in marriage. I see a terrible fault line in that understanding which has led worthy people like Mr. Cowie to consider the use of contraception within marriage as breaking the 6th Commandment. I note that throughout the years we have both been writing, he has never once answered my arguments themselves, but attacked me for disloyalty because I contradict "official Church teaching". I hope I will be given space to answer his personal attack on my probity, and with it that of all those Catholics who use contraception in good faith, or who feel themselves driven from the Church by so doing. I do so because I

believe this teaching does not accord with Scripture. Instead it derives from another theory which was substituted in the early Church. This taught that all intercourse which was not procreative in intention or form was mortal or venial sin.

The 1960s Pontifical Commission on Birth Control were told by John XXIII to examine the question in depth. Their number was increased by Paul VI. All of them, including the dissenting Minority Four, said they could not state why contraception was contrary to Natural Law. Of 16 bishops added to that Commission at its end, 9 voted that on the evidence given contraception was not "intrinsically evil", 3 abstained, and only 3 curial members voted for the status quo. (These same curial men had always formed the out-voted minority on the floor

of Vatican II. I do not doubt that if all the bishops had been allowed to vote, the majority would have followed this small sample).

Since I was born on October 15th 1934, I am one of a diminishing number of Catholics who lived through and read the debates on the theology of marriage, seen as defective and altered by the Council. I still feel the shock of *Humanae Vitae*, which continued to bind under sin where no guilt could be proven. This injustice caused many dissenting theologian priests at the time to be driven from their priestly office and others assiduously silenced thereon after.

The Catechism 1605 states the truth: "Man and woman were created for one another". "It is not good for man to be alone. The woman, flesh of his flesh, i.e. his counterpart, his equal, his nearest in all things, is given by God as a 'helpmate'; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they two become one flesh". The Lord himself shows that this signifies the unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been 'in the beginning': "So they are no longer two but one flesh".

Many millions of couples have lived out this life of conjugal love throughout the ages, and many millions are doing it today. Alas, the catechism does not state this. Instead 1607 states "As a break with God, the first sin had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman. Their relations were distorted by mutual recriminations, their mutual attraction, the Creator's own gift, changed into a relationship of domination and lust."

It is imperative to remember that in Mt. 19 4-6, where Christ quoted Genesis 2.16, he never mentioned such a change. This was the later invention of St. Augustine. Prior to his conversion he lived in fornication with a slave girl. He made a mistake which has perverted Latin Christianity's understanding of marriage ever since, and is partly responsible, I believe, for the demand for mandatory celibacy of priests. He saw, and dared to teach, that the marvellous "mutual attraction, God's own gift" that through the centuries has caused young people to leave father and mother etc, thus entering upon a lifetime of love as spouses and parents, was the pull of lust resultant upon the Fall, So much so that he dared to change those all-telling words of Scripture into "In intercourse a man becomes ALL flesh", and say that "I feel nothing more turns the masculine mind from the heights than female blandishments and that contact of bodies without which a wife may not be had". He mistook the feelings of guilt at his own actual sin of fornication as the universal result

of original sin. Hence he, and the celibate clergy following him, have seen frequent intercourse in marriage, not as a rightful part of being one flesh, but as lustful enjoyment of the physical pleasure put in intercourse to make sure procreation occurred. Conjugal chastity was seen as continence, not mutual sexual fidelity.

The catechism 1606 states of married couples "Their union has always been threatened by discord, a spirit of domination, infidelity, jealousy and conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation." In Mt. 19, Christ was talking specifically about divorce being impossible in a relationship which God, our loving Father, had himself had created. Not that he, the Son, had come to restore a relationship that at its core had been vitiated by a vengeful God. Surely if this were the case he would have said so? Dare I say it in this context - Augustine's whole doctrine of original sin, including limbo, is now being questioned by some theologians.

The other crucial factor in the debate is physiological misunderstanding. The ovum was not discovered till 1845, so sperm was thought to contain the whole embryo. Thus coitus interruptus, the most usual form of contraception, was seen as the spilling and killing of something live, hence like abortion a sin against the Fifth Commandment. This ignorance, accompanied by Augustine's invention of the damage done to marriage by the Fall, is that fault-line in Magisterial teaching, which fifty years of marriage and almost sixty years of study impel me to try to rectify, by stating this truth over and over again. Alas listening in the Church today is one way only – loyal assent to any teaching coming from above, whilst any questioning from below is seen as nefarious rebellion.

I unite myself with the priests of Austria and Ireland, and all the lay organizations pleading for reform. Will our voices ever be heard? I am standing as sponsor to my eldest grandson being confirmed today (October 16th), I hope into a Changing Church!

In view of my Golden Wedding, and the wider interest of Gospel truth, I hope readers will forgive the Editor if he prints my letter in full. It is written from the depth of what I hope is not a perfidious heart.

Editor's Note: This letter was published recently in the CATHOLIC TIMES. It is an excellent statement of what the author has been saying to the institutional Church and catholic couples since 1968. Our sincere congratulations to Elizabeth and Vivien upon their Golden Wedding anniversary. Elizabeth's letter is a solid, stolid testimony of loyalty to the Church and fidelity to the Gospel.

# The Vatican's Tahrir Square?

By Kevin T Kelly

I may be wrong, but I have the impression that at least some, perhaps many, of the bishops share the unhappiness about the new translation which is felt by many priests and lay Catholics. Yet the new translation is being promoted as a precious gift. Let me quote from a suggested insert for parish newsletters for the coming weeks sent out by Liverpool Archdiocese. "The new translation brings with it a deeper and more profound meaning of the mystery we have gathered to celebrate at Mass." This is because "we have grown as a Church over the last 40 years in terms of understanding how to better translate our Latin texts into the vernacular language of the people". Consequently, "the changes also bring us a wonderful opportunity as a Church to delve more deeply into the mystery of Christ Jesus and the praise and thanksgiving we offer to God, our Father, during Mass".

I love the liturgy, I really do. I find it a rich source for my own devotional life. But I find those quotations deeply disturbing, arousing the same feeling of uneasiness I experienced with the Bishops' telegram to the CDF. I simply cannot identify myself with what is being said. It smacks too much of a 'double-speak', not the straightforward 'Yes' and 'No' that Jesus urged us to follow.

On the Sunday following Mubarak's stepping down as President of Egypt, I made the following point in my homily to the community of Notre Dame Sisters with whom I am privileged to share the Eucharist each day.

"Re-reading the first paragraph of Benedict's 2009 social encyclical, 'Caritas in Veritate', has helped me to see beneath the surface of what has been happening in Tahrir Square. Benedict writes: "Love is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of Justice and Peace." He goes on to stress that this force "has its origin in God" and is a "vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person." The crowd in Tahrir Square were mainly Muslims but also included many secularists and Coptic Christians. They showed "courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace" in their peaceful demands for a peaceful, non-violent transition to genuine human freedom and justice. Benedict's amazing words applied to them and made me very conscious that what I was seeing on TV was God's spirit present and active in these people."

I am sure many people felt that same "extraordinary force" was tangible in the crowds during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the UK. I certainly felt that at Evensong in Westminster Abbey.

However, I also feel that this "extraordinary force" is also manifesting itself in the growing unease about the imposition of the new translation of the Roman Missal. A grass-roots resistance seems to be growing

among ordinary Catholics who are deeply concerned at the impact this new translation will have on their Sunday Mass. They had no say in what is happening. They feel disempowered. To my mind, their instinct is right. The New Missal imposition is just one instance of the abuse of power in our Church. It is just the tip of the ice-berg. I sense a growing discontent among many very committed Catholics who have a deep love for the church. They feel it is losing touch with the Spirit-inspired vision of Vatican II and its hope for the future. They want to mount a protest against this but there seems no appropriate channel for such protest.

Vatican II placed collegiality at the very heart of church governance. Implied in that teaching is the involvement of all the faithful through collaborative ministry and co-responsibility. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales made that abundantly clear in *The Sign we Give*, the magnificent 1995 Report from their Working Party on Collaborative Ministry. Sadly, these developments in church governance have never been properly implemented. That continues to this very day. Until recently most Catholics have felt they had no choice but to tolerate this abuse of power.

The flagrant misuse of power involved in the new translation of the Roman Missal is not just about its pastorally disastrous kind of language. It is also about the serious disregard for Vatican II's teaching on collegiality in the process leading up to the New Missal. The original International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) was set up after the Council and was a fine example of the implementation of collegiality, since it was answerable to the English-speaking bishops conferences throughout the world. ICEL's only link with the Congregation of Divine Worship (CDW) was the requirement to obtain a 'recognitio' (a kind of 'rubber stamp'!) for its proposed texts and translations. ICEL was also true to Vatican II's ecumenical spirit since it worked with the liturgical agencies of other Christian churches to ensure that the common texts and the cycle of biblical readings would be shared in common by the churches. Moreover, it tried to avoid as far as possible exclusive language which might be offensive to women. These original ICEL texts were carefully vetted and voted upon by all the English-speaking bishops' conferences and are still used today throughout the English-speaking world. However, from the start ICEL had been aware that the need to provide English texts as soon as reasonably possible after the Council inevitably meant that their texts were far from perfect. In fact, Archbishop Denis Hurley, a major figure at Vatican II and first Chair of ICEL, immediately set in motion the work of revising and refining these texts. He gathered together a team of liturgical and literary experts to undertake this task. The guiding principle for their work was based on Vatican II's insistence that the

“full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else” (Liturgy Constitution, n.14) Consequently, this team was commissioned to produce texts which, while not being literal word-for-word translations, should be faithful to the meaning of the original, as well as being simple, dignified and easily understandable.

By 1998 ICEL’s revised version of the Roman Missal was complete and had been examined and approved by all the English-speaking bishops’ conferences. It was then sent to the Congregation of Divine Worship (CDW) for its formal ‘recognitio’. This was refused, completely disregarding the key Vatican II principle of collegiality! Moreover, without any consultation, the CDW brought out an entirely new set of guidelines, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which insisted on a much more literal fidelity in translating and actually warned against any ecumenical involvement in the process. Moreover, it showed total insensitivity to women by ruling out any use of inclusive language! Archbishop Hurley, by then no longer Chair of ICEL, is reported to have said: “I find the attitude reflected in the proposed change in translation practice a distressing departure from the spirit of collegiality in favour of authoritative imposition”.

A radically reconstituted ICEL set out to produce a new Roman Missal following the new guide-lines. In due course this was sent out to the English-speaking bishops’ conferences. They could have rejected this new Missal but instead chose to approve it. It looks as though they had given up hope of any genuine collegiality. The earlier revision of the Missal which all the Bishops’ conferences had approved in 1998 was virtually binned, despite being the fruit of years of dedicated expertise and ecumenical cooperation by the commission set up by the original ICEL.

This new Missal has provoked widespread dismay and disquiet, especially among many clergy, fearful of its negative impact on parishioners. For instance, in January of this year the eminent US liturgical scholar, Anthony Ruff OSB, withdrew from a commission given him by the US bishops to help prepare people for the new translation of the Roman Missal in dioceses across the US. In his letter of withdrawal he wrote:

*“...my involvement in that process, as well as my observation of the Holy See’s handling of scandal, has gradually opened my eyes to the deep problems in the structures of authority of our church. The forthcoming missal is but a part of a larger pattern of top-down impositions by a central authority that does not consider itself accountable to the larger church. When I think of how secretive the translation process was, how little consultation was done with priests or laity, ... how unsatisfactory the final text is, how this text was imposed on national conferences of bishops in violation of their legitimate episcopal authority...-and then when I think of Our Lord’s teachings on service and love and unity...I weep.” (America, 14/2/11)*

Anthony Ruff is not a lone voice. On 3 February the Irish Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) issued a press release entitled “New Translation of the Missal Unacceptable”. They described the texts as “archaic, elitist and obscure and not in keeping with the natural rhythm, cadence and syntax of the English language” and say: “from the few available samples of the new texts, it is clear that the style of English used throughout the Mass will be so convoluted that it will be difficult to read the prayers in public.”

Two years earlier, an article appeared in *America* (14/12/09) entitled *What If We Said, 'Wait'?* The case for a grass-roots review of the new Roman Missal, by Fr Michael G. Ryan. He spoke out of his experience as Pastor of St. James Cathedral, Seattle since 1988 and board member of the national Cathedral Ministry Conference. He tells of the reactions of “disbelief and indignation“ of his friends to some of the translations; and of “audible laughter in the room” at a diocesan seminar for priests and lay-leaders. One reaction will strike chords with many:

“with all that the church has on its plate today - global challenges with regard to justice, peace and the environment; nagging scandals; a severe priest shortage; the growing disenchantment of many women; seriously lagging church attendance - it seems almost ludicrous to push ahead with an agenda that will seem at best trivial and at worst hopelessly out-of-touch.”

He also notes that when the new translations were mistakenly introduced ahead of time in South Africa they “were met almost uniformly with opposition bordering on outrage”. Fr Ryan makes a gentle “What if?” challenge to his fellow priests:

“What if we, the parish priests of this country who will be charged with the implementation, were to find our voice and tell our bishops that we want to help them avert an almost certain fiasco? What if we told them that we think it unwise to implement these changes until our people have been consulted in an adult manner that truly honours their intelligence and their baptismal birthright? What if we just said, “Wait, not until our people are ready for the new translations, but until the translations are ready for our people?”” I recommend Ryan’s article very highly, especially to priests.

Many Catholics seem to have mixed feelings about the church at present. At one level they really do love the church and, in the UK at least, felt boosted by the Pope’s visit. Yet they also agree with Tina Beattie’s comment that the problems have not gone away. A lot of these problems are related to the way the authority of God is being used to shore up teaching which, at the very least, is open to debate and, in some instances, rejected as inadequate by many theologians and most people in the church trying to be faithful to the spirit of Vatican II. I am thinking, for instance, of the rich understanding of human sexuality found in current Catholic and

Christian theology, revealing to women and men, gays and lesbians, the depth of their God-given dignity and the ultimate foundation for their sense of self-worth. The same is true of developments in liturgical and Eucharistic theology with its emphasis on full participation, so crucial to the spirit of Vatican II. Using authority to close down these legitimate debates paralyses pastoral imagination from exploring new ways of coping with such down-to-earth issues as the sacraments to the divorced-remarried, Eucharistic hospitality in an ecumenical context, general absolution's highlighting the social dimension of sin, as well as stifling the much-needed debate on contraception, the ordination of women, and the presence of God's love in the faithful love lives of gays and lesbians,

It seems to be increasingly recognised that abuse of power is also a key factor lying at the heart of the scandal of clergy sex-abuse and Episcopal cover-up.

For some readers this article might seem too negative and disturbing, especially as coming from a 77-year old retired priest and emeritus ("past it") moral theologian. I hope and pray that what I have written is empowered by the same "extraordinary force" of God's love referred to by Benedict XVI which I mentioned in my opening paragraph. God alone can judge that. Certainly it is what I pray for each morning with the words, "Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in us (and in me) the fire of your love".

Kevin T Kelly is a retired parish priest and emeritus Research Fellow in Moral Theology at Liverpool Hope University. The author has sent this text to all the bishops of England and Wales. Shortened for reasons of space. The Editor.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE OPTION FOR THE POOR?

*By Julian Filochowski*

In 1979, asked to explain the option for the poor, El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero answered: "a preferential option for the poor is calling without exception to all classes to become truly committed to the cause of the poor as if it were our own cause". He subsequently gave his life in that cause - a martyr to the evangelical option for the poor.

At the founding of Vocation for Justice 25 years ago, the energising spirit of Vatican II, full of joy and hope, was still the dominant driver in the life and growth of the Church. For many reasons that spirit is fast evaporating. But ditching the option for the poor cannot be part of any 'retreat from the Council' - simply because the option for the poor was not some time-conditioned pastoral strategy devised at Vatican II, as many erroneously believe. The option for the poor is as old as the hills. It is theo-centric; as theologian Jon Sobrino puts it: "Long before Vatican II, long before there was a Church, God and Jesus of Nazareth made the option for the poor. When we are asked to do likewise, strictly speaking, there is no other reason but that 'this is how God is'. God is not to be understood as power but compassion."

By 'option' we mean a fundamental choice which

At the opening of the 2nd Session of Vatican II, Paul VI spoke of the church as "the Bride of Christ looking upon Christ to discern in him her true likeness" and reminded the bishops that: "If in doing so she were to discover some shadow, some defect, some stain upon her wedding garment, what should be her instinctive, courageous reaction? There can be no doubt that her primary duty would be to reform, correct and set herself aright in conformity with her divine model". Yves Congar, Hans Kung & Daniel O'Hanlon, *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (Sheed & Ward, London, 1964) p.51. Paul VI was not encouraging a spirit of negative criticism at the Council. He was inviting the bishops to show their love for the church by facing up to its need for healing and renewal. Positive criticism should be loving, inspiring and life-giving. I believe, with many others, that the church needs this kind of love more than ever at this point in time - not a soft love but a courageous reforming love. Henri DeLubac is reported to have said: "If we do not learn to love the church in its sinfulness, we will not love the church loved by the Lord but, rather, some figment of our romantic imagination." cf. George B Wilson SJ, *Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood*, (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2008) p.x. As members of this sinful church, each of us, myself included, needs to ask the Spirit to help us discern how we are part of that sinfulness and especially in this Lenten season ask for forgiveness and healing.

colours all our other choices. The recovery and the rearticulation of the option for the poor, which Gustavo Gutierrez spoke of in his 2005 Paul VI Lecture for CAFOD, was a great gift from the 20th century Latin American Church and the theology of liberation to the worldwide Church. Through the poor and in them, history uttered a word after centuries of silence. The qualitative leap to this option for the poor was taken once it was realised afresh that God is the God of the poor and that God is recognised through the poor.

Hauled in from the margins of the page of Christian life and ministry, the poor are, first of all, the headline text for our social and pastoral commitment; second. they are the preferred locus for our theological discourse and enquiry; and third, they are a fundamental element for our spirituality as disciples of Jesus. Put simply, in the words of the 4th century Father of the Church, John Chrysostom, the option for the poor means you "look after the poor first". It is as stark and simple as that. The poor came first on our agenda, first in defining our priorities, first in the call on our resources, first in the focus of our mission. But more than that: the first place of our theological reflection is standing alongside the poor, looking at the world from the underside of history,

and the first focus of discernment for our spirituality and lifestyle is there too.

We are evangelised by the poor. Not only must we make an option to save the poor; we must also make a choice to let ourselves be saved by them. The gospel is good news for us, the rich, when we become good news for the poor. Remember the parable in Luke 16 of the rich man who 'lived in sumptuous luxury every day' and the poor man, Lazarus, 'lying at the gate covered with sores'; we might say that we save Lazarus: and we are saved by Lazarus.

At the 1968 Medellin Conference the Latin American bishops declared they would take the side of the poor in their struggles for rights and dignity and liberation from the enslavement of abject poverty. The expression 'the option for the poor' then began to emerge as the synthesising idea for the life of the contemporary Church in Latin America at least. Ten years of social change, ecclesial engagement with the poor and movements of the poor, violent repression and martyrdom followed. The theology of liberation was attacked as Marxist Leninist ideological indoctrination: the option for the poor was written off as divisive and promoting class hatred. Nevertheless, ten years later, when the bishops met at Puebla, the option for the poor was re-affirmed as a gospel imperative which does not divide the Church. The universality of the love of God and the preferential option for the poor are truths held in tension, much like our spirituality and discipleship have to hold in tension prayerful contemplation, on the one hand, and action for justice and peace on the other.

The battle over liberation theology was played out in the 1980's and the present pope was the author of two 'Instructions' regarding liberation theology in 1984 and 1986, the second less harsh than the first. In retrospect these seem to have been the indigestion of the universal Church as it absorbed and took on board this kernel of Latin American theology that is the option for the poor. Then in 1987, in the papal encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Magisterium tentatively embraced the option for the poor. Later there was strong affirmation in John Paul's apostolic

letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. In fact, there was a gradual osmosis of 'the option of the poor' terminology into ecclesial vocabulary as it became increasingly recognised as a legitimate component of Catholic Social Teaching. In his February 2008 address to the Jesuits at their 35th General Congregation, Pope Benedict said: "The preferential option for poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty. It is natural that those who truly want to be a companion of Jesus really share in his love for the poor. For us the option for the poor is not ideological but is born from the gospel. Situations of injustice and poverty in today's world are numerous and tragic .... it is necessary to understand them and to fight their structural causes...".

Nevertheless, a recent powerful exposition of the historical Jesus, a meticulous work written by the Basque priest José Antonio Pagola, which sets out the explosive good news Jesus brought to the marginalised, was withdrawn from Spanish bookshops after selling some 80,000 copies. *Jesus: An Historical Approximation* had seemingly threatened the faith - and certainly the composure - of Spain's bishops. The book and its author are now under investigation at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. Equally disappointing, there are still no signs of movement in Rome towards the beatification of Oscar Romero, a martyr for the option for the poor, despite worldwide clamour for his canonisation, and ignoring the global recognition and honour he has won far beyond the Christian community.

In the end, of course, the real cutting edge of the teaching on the option for the poor is the prophetic witness and committed pastoral action that flow from it - and that is down to ourselves, the pilgrim People of God. For us in the Justice and Peace movement an option for the poor is a way of looking at actual events, responding to them and becoming actively involved in them; but it is also a means of becoming more human. It is our rescue too, our being made whole, our salvation.

Julian Filochowski, a former Director of CAFOD, is Chair of the UK-based Archbishop Romero Trust.

## Vatican II themes: The Church as communion

*By Richard McBrien*

The late Cardinal John Dearden, Archbishop of Detroit, noted at the University of Notre Dame some years ago that many of the bishops appointed after the Second Vatican Council never had the opportunity of experiencing the transforming effect of Vatican II.

For those bishops, like himself, who directly participated in the council, it was as if they had gone on a four-year retreat, a retreat that changed and enriched their understanding of the church.

Most of these bishops emerged from the council as new men, ready to serve their dioceses with deeper

dedication than before.

What was true of the pre-Vatican II bishops was also true of the pre-Vatican II laity. A layperson today would have to be over 60 years old to have any meaningful memory of the pre-Vatican II church. Without that memory, one would find it very difficult - not impossible, to be sure - to appreciate what the council did for the church.

That is why mainly older Catholics are drawn to lay organizations such as Call to Action and Voice of the Faithful. It is not that younger Catholics have no

interest in church renewal and reform, but they have never personally experienced the pre-Vatican II church nor the achievements wrought by the council itself.

Older Catholics - in their 60s, 70s, 80s, and some few in their 90s - know what the pre-Vatican II church was like and how much better it became because of Pope John XXIII and the council he convened. That is why many of them have been disheartened by what they regard as a kind of retrenchment under Pope John Paul II and now Benedict XVI, and many of the bishops they appointed.

Many younger Catholics - at least those who care enough to remain more or less active in the church - do not appreciate why many older Catholics are so unhappy with the state of the church today.

For the past several weeks this column has been underscoring some of the most important ecclesiological principles espoused by the council. This week the emphasis is on the council's teaching that the church is a communion - a communion between God and ourselves (the vertical dimension) and a communion of ourselves with one another in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (the horizontal dimension). Because the church is a communion, its institutional structure is collegial rather than monarchical.

Understanding the church as a communion also means that the church is not a single international parish under the pastoral leadership of the pope, subdivided into dioceses and parishes for administrative efficiency only. The church is a communion of local churches, or dioceses, each of which is the Body of Christ in its own particular place (*Lumen gentium*, n. 26).

Together these local churches constitute the

The author writes a regular column for the National Catholic Reporter. Our thanks for permission to reproduce.

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## A Christian Worthy of the Name

*By Phillip Binding*

There can be little doubt about it - the attempt to promote Christianity by attracting people into buildings where they can be preached to is an abysmal failure - at least in the West: feelings of awe, reverence and worship are not easily aroused in these places with "flummery" and ritual practices, so out of tune with modern life that they seem almost irrelevant (the Book of Common Prayer is a good example, worthy though it is in its content once you are skilled in interpreting it). No, the battle for "teaching all nations" the fundamentals of Christian understanding has to be out there on the streets, taken to people of all conditions, and who are best suited to do this other than us? - lay people who can find common ground with hundreds of people - not all certainly - but a large number whose circumstances are so similar to

universal church. Their unity one with another is rooted in the presence and sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit, manifested especially in the celebration of the Eucharist.

This communal notion of the church underscores the traditional importance of councils, synods, and conferences of bishops in the life and structure of the church, operative especially during the first Christian millennium and in the East generally throughout both millennia.

Especially in those areas of the world like our own, in the United States and Canada, where democratic, collaborative, and participatory forms of governance are taken for granted, the church, too, needs to act in an increasingly collegial and collaborative manner. Presbyteral councils, in union with the bishops, must exercise deliberative as well as consultative authority, but always in collaboration with other conciliar or synodal expressions of the local church, including in particular the diocesan pastoral council.

The church's mode of activity will necessarily differ from region to region. It will take longer, for example, in some regions of the world to accept a married clergy or the presence of women in positions of real pastoral authority than in other regions, like our own.

But such developments as these are inevitable, even though some bishops, such as William Morris of Australia, have been sacked for even raising the possibility.

No one can hold back the future - or the irrepressible work of the Holy Spirit. For it is the Holy Spirit, not the hierarchy, not even the pope, who governs the church and leads it through all of human history to its final destiny in the Kingdom of God.

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our own and who can benefit from the Christian Gospels being revealed as intimately connected with the management of their own lives. This is an apostolic venture open to all who have the confidence of their faith and the knowledge to propound it in terms simple, humble and digestible. Does the "Church" train us in these matters? - No! Why not? - dare I suggest it doesn't like competition from unauthorised persons?... "Lord, there are some of our company who have been casting out devils in your name... what shall we do with them?"... etc..

The "Presence" of the "Saviour" knows none of the boundaries to which so many titles limit him; for me that is the meaning of the stranger encountered on the road to Emmaus, that other

stranger who strode to the shore of the Sea of Galilee and the one mistaken for the gardener. Jesus' followers did not recognise him at first and only in conversing together did they realise it was "him" - he is, quite literally, the archetypal "Everyman"! Wherever the Spirit imbues people with his charisms, there "he" is! Contrary to expectation he is - wonder of wonders - to be most frequently encountered in the lowest state of dereliction in which one can find oneself: when all else has perished, all support gone, all hope on the verge of expiry, he "comes into being" and comes alongside us. Such is the nature of the "suffering servant", the "man of sorrows", the "least of all", the mugged Jew on the road to Jericho who was rescued by his religious foe - a Samaritan. None of the pomp and circumstance, glory and honour etc. which is attached - more often than not falsely - to people we look up to. Why do we look up to them? - it is a primitive yearning I suppose to draw sustenance for ourselves from an Overlord and a profound and natural instinct - we look to the powerful to advantage us, not to the powerless. This surely is totally at odds with true Christianity - you win your life by losing it, you love your enemies, the poor and the down-trodden. That will never do for those who seek worldly power: their power, if it is to be kept, has to be flaunted and benefices need to be distributed to the crowd followers (the Maundy Money is part of the same theme: how different that is from Judas flinging away the pieces of silver, declaring in his mental agony that he had betrayed an innocent man for money).

Nothing much is going to change this base attitude of humans as long as everything is going well for them: it's when it all proves utterly worthless under the onslaught of circumstance that we are, like the prodigal son, brought to our senses and look to God in our desperate state, not to powerful people or institutions to save us. Thank God - literally - that the Christian revelation is of a kind so different from that of all other religions which pander to human cupidity and greed for fame. Here it is worth remembering how State and Church have worked and still work to create a duopoly, each propping up each other for the sake of its own survival and enhancement. Part of this was the insistence upon regular attendance at "worship" allied to great works of art and architectural piles of dramatic beauty calculated to strike awe and submission into all those who attended. Henry VIII passed laws obliging people to attend Church every Sunday<sup>1</sup>; powerful formulae were devised for securing obedience of practice if not of disposition. It is precisely that setup which Jesus railed against and for which he paid with his life... "What did you go out into the desert to see? A man in fine robes etc.?".

I claim that any Christian worthy of the name would be completely at home with these notions and would be able to promote them amongst his circle of friends and acquaintances as circumstance indicates their applicability. No special training is needed because the Spirit gives us the words we need - what a marvellous promise that is!

<sup>1</sup>To be abolished later when the Monarch decided it was foolish to infer that loyalty to one's faith automatically meant disloyalty to the Crown thus leaving the Crown 'established' yet disabled.

## Encouragement For Those Disappointed with the Church

*By Leonardo Boff Theologian: Earthcharter Commission*

There is great disappointment with the institutional Catholic Church. A double emigration is happening: one is exterior, persons who simply leave the Church, and the other is interior, those who remain in the Church but who no longer feel that she is their spiritual home. They continue believing, in spite of the Church. It's not for nothing. The present pope has taken some radical initiatives that have divided the ecclesiastic body. He chose a path of confrontation with two important episcopacies, the German and the French, when he introduced the Latin Mass. He articulated an obscure reconciliation with the Church of the followers of Lefebvre; gutted the principal renewal institutions of Vatican Council II, especially ecumenism, absurdly denying the title of "Church" to those Churches that are not Catholic or Orthodox. When he was a Cardinal he was gravely permissive with paedophiles, and his concern with AIDS borders the inhumane.

The present Catholic Church is submerged in a rigorous winter. The social base that supports the antiquated model of the present pope is comprised of conservative groups, more interested in the

media, in the logic of the market, than in proposing an adequate response to the present grave problems. They offer a "palliative Christianity" good for pacifying anxious consciences, but alienated from the suffering humanity. It is urgent that we animate these Christians about to emigrate with what is essential in Christianity. It certainly is not the Church, that was never the object of the preaching of Jesus. He announced a dream, the Kingdom of God, in contraposition to the Kingdom of Caesar; the Kingdom of God that represents an absolute revolution in relationships, from the individual to the divine and the cosmic. Christianity appeared in history primarily as a movement and as the way of Christ. It predates its grounding in the four Gospels and in the doctrines. The character of a spiritual path means a type of Christianity that has its own course. It generally lives on the edge and, at times, at a critical distance from the official institution. But it is born and nourished by the permanent fascination with the figure, and the liberating and spiritual message of Jesus of Nazareth. Initially deemed the "heresy of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24,5) or simply, a "heresy" (Acts 28,22) in the sense of a

“very small group”, Christianity was acquiring autonomy until its followers, according to The Acts of The Apostles (11,36), were called, “Christians”. The movement of Jesus is certainly the most vigorous force of Christianity, stronger than the Churches, because it is neither bounded by institutions, nor is it a prisoner of doctrines and dogmas. It is composed of all types of people, from the most varied cultures and traditions, even agnostics and atheists who let themselves be touched by the courageous figure of Jesus, by the dream he announced, a Kingdom of love and liberty, by his ethic of unconditional love, especially for the poor and the oppressed, and by the way he assumed the human drama, amidst humiliation, torture and his execution on the cross. Jesus offered an image of God so intimate and life-friendly that it is difficult to disregard, even by those who do not believe in God. Many people say, “if there is a God, it has to be like the God of Jesus”. This Christianity as a spiritual path is what really counts. However, from being a movement it soon became a religious institution, with several forms of organization. In its

bosom were developed different interpretations of the figure of Jesus, that were transformed into doctrines, and gathered into the official Gospels. The Churches, when they assumed institutional character, established criteria of belonging and of exclusion, doctrines such as identity reference and their own rites of celebration. Sociology, and not theology, explains that phenomenon. The institution always exists in tension with the spiritual path. The ideal is that they develop together, but that is rare. The most important, in any case, is the spiritual path. This has a future and animates the meaning of life. The problem of the Roman Catholic Church is her claim of being the only true one. The correct approach is for all the Churches to recognize each other, because they reveal different and complementary dimensions of the message of the Nazarene. What is important is for Christianity to maintain its character as a spiritual path. That can sustain so many Christian men and women in the face of the mediocrity and irrelevancy into which the present Catholic Church has fallen.

## Perception Management and the Vatican

by Terry Swales

Judging from record sales, the general public loves to read crime fiction, psychological and political thrillers. Three titles, *Absolute Power*, *Total Control* and *The Whole Truth* are from the pen of best selling novelist David Baldacci. The last brings the concept of perception management forcibly to the forefront of attention. The plot involves an arms manufacturer who hopes to make his fortune if there is a war involving Russia, China and America. An expert is hired to sell a very big lie to the world to cause behaviours that will be favourable to the originator’s objective.

own credibility. Sadly Vatican officials and the Roman Curia with important Congregations and Committees under the present Pope and his predecessor appear to have taken an obdurate stance: why waste time seeking the truth when it can be so easily created? It is clear that Perception Management is a powerful instrument of deception. Was it used to convince everybody, even the US Secretary of State and the British Prime Minister about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?

As far as can be ascertained, the term perception management first appears in US military dossiers, defence department documents and later in leadership/political manuals. It is thought likely that Republican Presidents at the time employed the military’s psychological expertise to control information about the decline of Russia and exaggerated the danger from left wing rebels in South America especially those in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Key supporters, including the Vice President, later helped to influence events leading to the Iraq war. This kitchen cabinet shared with John Paul II hatred of Communism, a very strange holy alliance. Additionally the Pontiff saw the tyrant Pinochet and other right wing juntas as bulwarks against Communism. Further he misrepresented liberation theology comparing it to the Marxism of Eastern Europe. But it was left to Joseph Ratzinger, head of the CDF, to silence its theological proponents. Neither was supportive of Oscar Romero’s analysis of what was happening before his very eyes.

Over the centuries the Church has changed direction on some major issues but finds it incredibly difficult to admit this. Use is made of obscure language or prefaced, “As we have always maintained”! Advocates of change have inevitably been pilloried on route to becoming heroes. Some of these heroic heretics, men and women ahead of their time, risked everything to bear witness to their beliefs. Among them were those deserving canonisation rather than the 1,300 plus beatifications and nearly 500 saints created by the last pope. One recent historian of the Popes, J J Norwich, describes these actions of Blessed John Paul II as “berserk.” Future historians may not be so kind. The Pontiff clearly displayed his prejudices. In early March 2001, L’Osservatore Romano reported that 233 Spanish martyrs were beatified.

From the words of Augustine, “the Church persecutes out of love”, through to Pope Innocent III, beginning of the 13th century “The goods of heretics are to be confiscated and their children are to be subjected perpetually to punishment for the sins of their parents”. The famous American Jesuit John Courtney Murray was one such hero. Separation of Church and State was his goal. He battled for fifteen years despite ill-health with senior members of his own order and the Vatican hierarchy notably Cardinal Ottaviani. Murray

Membership of CCC in its Quarterly Renew has not been alone in advancing closely argued articles seeking truth on all the issues that a caring Church should embrace in justice or at least re-examine for its

triumphed in 1965 when the Vatican Synod signed the Declaration of Religious Freedom. He was to die within two years but in a posthumous article regretted that the Church was so opposed to society's historical journey to freedom.

Religious freedom, together with human rights, remains a major issue today but its choice of illustration here has also a secondary purpose. The Vatican has always favoured, on all religious matters, the subservience of the State to the Church where the population is predominantly Catholic. When this does not prevail there would be delay to await a population growth! Spain was the Vatican's prime example of best tradition and allowance was made for the agreement with General Franco's regime and the sensitivity of the Spanish Hierarchy in Synod

deliberations. Alarm bells should be ringing if the recent allegations of up to 300,000 babies stolen from their young mothers are justified, regardless of the actual number. The reasons, finance apart, advanced for these inhuman crimes of kidnap/abduction are a mixture of social, religious and political.

With the clerical child abuse scandal still very much haunting Catholics, will the Vatican again be in denial, blame tittle-tattle, the media or employ cover up? If the Church has expertise in Perception Management is it mobilised already to eliminate this potential threat to its very credibility? Will theologians in the future be weighing the greater evil of malevolent, illegal theft of a newly delivered baby against the legal destruction of a foetus for an impeccable motive?

**“Accept God’s message for what it really is:  
God’s message and not some human thinking.”**

*From the Chair:*

Upon taking up office as your Chair I refrained from the usual speech and shared with the assembly three readings from Scripture that have always spoken to me. The first, Ezekiel 34: 1-16, was read at the inaugural Mass for the International Movement We Are Church in November 1996. The second, Micah 6:8, succinctly sums up God's requirement of us. The third, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18 gives us the three pillars of our faith which form us to be brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. We closed the assembly by praying together the prayer Jesus taught us.

Over the years that I have been privileged to read at Mass I have taken the choice of the Gospel Acclamation very seriously. Many, like the one that heads this article, speak to me about what is expected of me as one of the people of God. The word of God is alive and active, it is truth, and one of the Acclamations from St Luke's Gospel exhorts us to stand erect, hold our heads high, because our liberation is at hand.

I know that many of you have a far deeper prayer life than I do but I ask you all to take it deeper. God does answer prayer; sometimes not in quite the way we would wish but we need to believe that God has the ultimate good and welfare of His people in mind. I think especially of the turmoil in our Church at the moment, and it seems to be getting worse, with many people abandoning hope that the Church, as an institution, really is the seed and beginning of the Kingdom of God.

If you do not already do it, I invite you to start each day by praying the daily Mass Readings. Prayer and reflection on Scripture is spiritual nourishment. You might even like to pray the whole Mass privately using a text that speaks to you. I am conscious though that we all live very busy lives and we must pray as we can, rather than impose upon ourselves a discipline that will be hard to maintain. Make the daily Mass

Readings, or just the Gospel, an 'all day breakfast': something to savour in those moments during the day when there is a hiatus in activity. These days I find myself much more patient while waiting in a queue or when held up in traffic because I can spend the moments savouring texts read earlier. I also reflect that institutions are human inventions which change according to the interests of the ruling regime whereas God's realm is timeless and rooted in the relationship we build with the One in whom we believe.

Many years ago some friends in the parish I was in asked me to lead a prayer group. I was keen that it was part of the parish and so met with the Parish Priest to discuss the proposal. His immediate reaction was to say that we needed his permission to pray and he was glad I had called to ask for it. To give him credit, he did change his view when I advised him that the Sacrament of Baptism calls us to 'lift our hearts and minds to God' whether a member of the clergy approves or not. Accepting that it is our responsibility to nurture our spiritual health is an important step on the journey to realising that we are one of the people of God, the Church. We are not slaves, second class citizens or 'simple faithful'. We are sons and daughters of God, made in God's image, and we are worthy to stand in God's presence and give Him praise and thanksgiving.

Let us go forward together in faith to build a united Christian Church of which we are truly proud!

You may wish to discuss or even challenge what I have written. Now that CCC is in association with We Are Church (UK) there is opportunity to do so through the WAC-UK on-line discussion group. It is free to join and more information may be found at [www.we-are-church.org/uk](http://www.we-are-church.org/uk) under 'Discussion'. One subscribes by entering one's e-mail address in the box at the bottom of that page.

Valerie Stroud [chair@ccc4vat.org.uk](mailto:chair@ccc4vat.org.uk)

# On the Recent Beatification of John Henry Newman

By Pam Wearing

Having witnessed the recent events leading up to the beatification of Cardinal Newman, I wonder how those who went to see it were aware of just who he was and what he stood for. He is undoubtedly the theologian whose work led to the Second Vatican Council and above all its acknowledgement of the role of the laity in the Church.

Part of his vision for the future of the Church was to foster the education of the laity. He became a Catholic during decades which saw the restoration of the hierarchy and a rise in ultra-montanism. He was no revolutionary but he saw no conflict between the necessity for authority and the necessity for academic freedom, together with the best possible education for the laity. He saw the plain historical fact that in the church as a whole, even on occasions without the episcopate, there was a fundamental sense of the faith.

He had learned as a young clergyman in a poor parish in Oxford to understand, care for and respect the souls in his charge. Likewise among the poor in Birmingham: The humblest and meanest among Christians may defend the faith against the whole church if the need arises. He has as much stake in it and as much right to it as Bishop or Archbishop and has nothing to limit him in his protest but his intellectual capacity for making it.

He had noted in his work on the Arians of the 4th century, St Hilary's charge that as heresy raged, 'the ears of the laity were holier than the hearts of the priests'. (deleted in the 1871 edition!) That sense of a necessity for order, what Shakespeare called degree, the 'tuned string of society', with a responsible hierarchy fending off chaos, is always balanced in Newman's work by a realisation that humanity has a sense of faith and morality which must not be under-estimated. The tradition of the Church had two strands: the episcopal - preserving and handing on the deposit of faith; and the prophetic which was the living pulse of that faith, powered by the Holy Spirit.

In 1859, prompted by a contretemps between the bishops and some prominent Catholic laymen over the question of the government inspection of Catholic schools, Newman published 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine'. It launched the question of the laity's role in the Church into deep theological water. The recently restored hierarchy were not however ready to see responsible laymen as co-workers in the Church. Feeling his efforts thwarted, Newman hoped that a hundred years later he would be vindicated. In Rome however, he was supported by Giovanni Perrone, who had written on the Immaculate Conception. He cited in evidence of tradition, Gregory of Valencia, and St Paulinus who both wrote about the Holy Spirit breathing through the faithful. Newman

explained five ways in which the consent of the faithful played a part in the tradition of the Church:

1. As a testimony to the fact of apostolical dogma.
2. As a sort of instinct<sup>1</sup> deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ.
3. As a direction of the Holy Spirit
4. As an answer to its prayer
5. As a jealousy of error, which it at once feels as a scandal.

<sup>1</sup>phronesis = the illative sense which is the power to arrive at real assent in matters of faith and conscience.

The Papal Bull declaring the Immaculate Conception provided an example of the faithful being consulted prior to a definition which had waited for centuries. In Newman's greatest contribution to theology, the theory of the development of doctrine, his ecclesiology and the laity's role therein are fundamentally important. In his researches as a young don into the early Church, he drew lessons about the role of the laity and the charisms they were capable of exercising.

To illustrate his fifth point: "We know that it is the property of life to be impatient of any foreign substance in the body to which it belongs." Naming the great doctors of the 4th century, all but one of whom were bishops, Newman insists that, 'in that day, the divine tradition committed to the infallible Church was proclaimed and maintained far more by the faithful than by the episcopate. The dogmas in question being the divinity of our Lord, the significance could not have been greater. The Arian heresy was resisted in the face of persecution for nearly 60 years.'

Things were different in the nineteenth century, but even so, he wrote, 'each part of the Church has its proper function, and no portion can be safely neglected, there is something in the pastorum ac fidelium conspiratio which is not in the pastores alone'. He called for collaboration - "...requiring from the faithful a *fides implicita* in her word ... in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition".

That the elements in the Church should exist in unity was central to Newman's vision: in the Apostles and the early Fathers such as Athanasius he saw a readiness to die for the faith and the writings of the early Fathers strongly influenced his concept of ecclesial community. It was the claim of the Church to be a real community and not the claims of the Pope which was responsible for his conversion. The ecclesial community had to be capable of producing religious communities which

were microcosms of the whole. In any group which Newman established it was always his policy to give people freedom that they might learn to use it and to see every member's contribution as valid.

Today, we might ask whether the voice of the laity, as expressed on rare occasions such as the Liverpool Pastoral Congress, or in numerous polls on subjects

such as clerical celibacy, general absolution, women's leadership in the church, or intercommunion, is given any respect outside academic circles. If Newman's ideas, which seemed to flourish at Vatican II, are to be taken seriously, it will not be enough to canonise him as a pious saint, but to listen to his analysis of the church, to implement it and to recognise him as one of its Doctors.

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## Praying the Magnificat

*By Ann O'Connor*

I've always struggled with the 'traditional' Catholic attitude towards Mary. Perhaps because I wasn't born a Catholic so to me the prominence given by some to Mary, rather than to God, verges on idolatry; perhaps because I was given up at birth by my own mother so found the notion of a loving mother hard to accept. But whilst my own story may have influenced my views, I feel my take on Mary has as much validity as the traditional presentation of her as an iconic figurehead. For me she is a young woman with a profound understanding of, and response to God's message, not only for her but for all humankind. And so I offer these reflections on the Magnificat, Mary's prayer of praise to God: Picture this: a small village community where everyone knows everyone else's business. Gossip runs rife; bad news spreads like wildfire. Here's the latest scandal: an unmarried teenage girl is pregnant; worse still, her fiancé's not the father! No one will blame him if he washes his hands of her for bringing shame on his family.

Picture this: a refugee couple, the man older than the girl, desperately searching for a place of shelter for her confinement. Tired and hungry in a strange land, the people here cold and unfriendly. Overwhelmed by the pains of childbirth, writhing in agony, fearful, exhausted, she collapses on a pile of straw and gives birth in a cowshed.

Picture this: a lost child, his mother frantic with worry, searching for him everywhere, drawing on the support of family, friends and neighbours, all manner of nightmare scenarios racing through her mind until at last he is found, safe and unharmed.

Picture this: an innocent man, hounded by the religious authorities, branded a trouble-maker, falsely accused by an angry mob, jeered and mocked, condemned to die an agonising death whilst his distraught mother can only watch and wait, powerless to save him.

Or picture this: a beautiful, serene woman in a

flowing blue gown adorned with gold braid, veiled in white, a coronet of stars encircling her head, a fragrant bouquet of lilies in her hands.

Which picture is easier to live with? Do we prefer the sanitised, idolised image because it doesn't prick our conscience; doesn't challenge our comfortable lifestyle; doesn't ask us to get involved? If we are to understand Mary's Magnificat we must first enter into her story and be willing to journey with her. And this means journeying alongside our brothers and sisters who share Mary's journey and who know her pain. Only then will we be able to help build the kingdom that is promised in Mary's great hymn of praise. Rather than envisaging a sacred statue on a pedestal, far removed from human experience, we must picture Mary as real flesh and blood, a mother to the motherless who inspires and encourages us to follow a better way.

### Praying the Magnificat

My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.  
The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him.  
He puts forth his arm in strength  
and scatters the proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty from their thrones  
and raises the lowly.  
He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy,  
the mercy promised to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his sons for ever.

*Luke 1: 46-55*

Mary, humble and lowly, we raise up to you: the lonely, the frightened, the stigmatised, the scarred	
Mary, homeless and vulnerable, we raise up to you: the stranger, the rough sleeper, the rejected, the outcast	
Mary, scared and helpless, we raise up to you: the persecuted, the refugee, the asylum seeker, the detainee	
Mary, grief-stricken and desolate, we raise up to you: the degraded, the tormented, the desperate, the powerless	
Mary, poor and uneducated	Pray for us
Mary, teenage single parent	Pray for us
Mary, mother of the neglected and the unloved	Pray for us
Mary, mother of the lost and the disappeared	Pray for us
Mary, mother of the the unwanted, the abandoned, the friendless, the motherless	Pray for us
Mary, raised high above the wealthy and the mighty	Pray for us
Mary, hope for the hope-less	Pray for us
Mary, voice for the voiceless	Pray for us
Mary, advocate for those who are vulnerable, neglected, despised, cast out	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are economically deprived, socially excluded, politically oppressed	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are undervalued or disregarded by society	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are cast down to the bottom of the pile	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are marginalised and disadvantaged	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who suffer prejudice due to ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or creed	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are displaced, dispossessed, forced to flee, living in fear	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who have to rummage through dustbins to find food	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who do not know where the next meal is coming from	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who lack clean water and proper shelter	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who sleep in shop doorways	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who do not know whether they will wake tomorrow	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are in debt to loan sharks	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who know only poverty and despair	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who are ground down, isolated, depressed	Hear our prayer
Mary, advocate for those who find each day an unbearable burden	Hear our prayer
Mary's Magnificat – a joyful song of praise to God – announces a better way	Blessed be God
Mary's Magnificat reveals the Kingdom right here and now on earth as God planned it	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God whose mercy is boundless	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who is constant in his love from generation to generation	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who has a special love for the poor and lowly	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who understands the true value of a humble, faithful heart	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who is not impressed by boastful self-importance	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God who has promised to love and care for his people	Blessed be God
Mary sings praise to God for whom nothing is impossible	Blessed be God

## OLD FART PRIDE:

I'm passing this on as I did not want to be the only old fart receiving it. Actually, it's not a bad thing to be called, as you will see. Old Farts are easy to spot at sporting events; during the playing of the National Anthem, Old Farts remove their caps and stand at attention and sing without embarrassment. They know the words and believe in them.

Old Farts remember World War II, Battle of Britain, North Africa, Burma, Normandy and Hitler. They remember the Atomic Age, the Korean War, The Cold War, the Jet Age and the Moon Landing. They remember the 50 plus Peacekeeping Missions from 1945 to 2010.

If you bump into an Old Fart on the sidewalk he will apologise. If you pass an Old Fart on the street, he will nod or tip his cap to a lady. Old Farts trust strangers and are courtly to women.

Old Farts hold the door for the next person and always, when walking, make certain the lady is on

the inside for protection.

Old Farts get embarrassed if someone curses in front of women and children and they don't like any filth or dirty language on TV or in movies.

Old Farts have moral courage and personal integrity. They seldom brag unless it's about their children or grandchildren.

It's the Old Farts who know our great country is protected, not by politicians but by the young men and women in the military serving their country.

This country needs Old Farts with their work ethic, sense of responsibility, pride in their country and decent values.

We need them now more than ever.

Thank God for Old Farts !

Pass this on to all the Old Farts you know.

# NEWS

## Speaking Personally:

*John and Audrey Marshall*

*With thanks to the National Justice and Peace Network.*

### ***Where do you think your commitment to justice and peace comes from?***

We were both born on council estates in Newcastle in 1935. Audrey's was a typical Irish/Tyneside Catholic family while mine tended to be either communists or Co-op Society. We both went to Secondary Modern Schools. After leaving school at 15 both of us became apprentices, Audrey as a Tracer and myself as a Fitter and Turner. We both joined trade unions and both of us held office in the T.U. movement, which is where we first learned about the importance of solidarity, of giving time to justice issues, and working with and on behalf of others. We met at 16, I became a Catholic at 19 and we were married at 21, when I began National Service in the R.A.F.

After our children were born we both decided to become Catholic teachers. Audrey eventually became head of the parish primary school and I was housemaster of a diocesan secondary school. Soon after teacher training we set up a youth club in our local parish hall and lead this popular inner city club for 30 years. We also ran a YCW group in the club, which helped us to understand young people and their problems, including unemployment, poor wages and bad working conditions. At an early age we joined the Labour Party and are still active members. I was a City Councillor for 19 years and had terms of office as Sheriff and Lord Mayor, giving us an unique opportunity to see the vast amount of voluntary work going on in the community.

After retiring we set up a Fairtrade Shop in an affluent area of Newcastle. It failed after just one year - maybe we are not too good at business! I was General Secretary of the movement Christian Workers for two years. After I retired from this post we both became interested in J&P and I spent 14 years as diocesan Chair. Three years since I stood down as Chair, we are both still active on the Diocesan Co-ordinating Council. Our commitment to Justice and Peace comes from all of these life experiences, giving us so many opportunities to explore Catholic Social Teaching and put it into practice in our own way. We almost always work as a team.

### ***What for you are the most important areas of concern today?***

Inequality has to be a huge area of concern - inequality of opportunity, racial and gender inequality, economic inequality with the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor, leaving many with little or no hope. In the current economic climate it is those who can least afford it who suffer most, through government cuts, unemployment, and

a feeling that things are not going to improve. We have become familiar with poverty in developing countries and do what we can through agencies such as CAFOD to promote justice abroad, but here among us we are now seeing real poverty, and sometimes this can be harder to deal with. Sometimes J&P seems to pull us in many directions. However, we recall the words of Oscar Romero: "We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well."

In this spirit the work we have decided to engage in is destitution among asylum seekers, including some migrants and a few local people who are experiencing hard times. At our Justice and Peace Refuge Project (JPRP) we befriend around 150 clients who rely on us to provide them with £5 and a bag of groceries each week, together with three hot meals and somewhere to be during the hours of 11.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m., Monday to Friday. This project has been running successfully for ten years. Our only concern is that at 3.00 p.m. we have to send some of these people out to sleep rough or to find a bed with friends who are not yet destitute. We have yet to find a solution to this.

### ***What sustains you in your commitment?***

We are kept going through our work with like-minded people of goodwill, Justice & Peace groups, colleagues and friends, those who tirelessly volunteer at our asylum drop-ins and day centre, who organise parish food collections or who deliver these to our centre. Also those who send us cash to keep our asylum fund afloat. All of these people are an inspiration to work alongside. We are also sustained by our prayers answered, and those of everyone associated with our work. We confess that we thoroughly enjoy taking part in demonstrations, local, national, and international - standing in solidarity with people sharing a cause. We love walking proudly behind, from time to time, the Labour Party banner, the NUT banner or the J&P banner. There's no feeling like it!

### ***What are your hopes for a Church like ours in the 21st Century?***

We would like our Church to be an example of justice and fairness, seeking to vocally and actively redress the balance between the overly rich and those in poverty. We would like to see the Church working alongside others on campaigns such as "Closing the Gap" and "Live Simply", while continuing to unstintingly support, through CAFOD, Progressio, etc., the needs of the developing world. Within the Church, we'd like to see those in positions of

authority listening to the voices of women, and treating them with more justice. Similarly to take notice of the views of lay people, and not just expect blind obedience. We think that, perhaps, the Church is starting to move in this direction. We certainly

hope and pray that it is.

John and Audrey Marshall are NJPN members and active on the Diocesan Co-ordinating Council in Hexham & Newcastle.

## Award for Sean Fagan:

At a recent meeting the newly founded Association of Irish Priests awarded to Father Sean Fagan a goblet of fine crystal to express their recognition of Father Sean's long years of service to the renewal of the Catholic Church, especially in the area of moral theology and social ethics. His commitment has cost him dearly in terms of ecclesiastical harassment and ostracism and in terms of his own

physical and emotional health.

The inscription reads: Courageously Serving the Truth.

We of CCC heartily endorse those sentiments. Fr Sean has been a great friend of CCC and we hope to bask in the light of that friendship for many years more.

*The Editor*

# LETTERS

Dear Sirs:

I hope that writers like Elena Curti will not let the issue of the Ordination of Women go away. The recent crises of the Church, both cultural and institutional, have fostered a policy of "creeping infallibility". The corrosive effects of gerontocratic patriarchy are now keenly felt.

I was struck by Curti's mention of how Pope Benedict has separated the issue into Story and Confession. Woman is excluded from Confession yet included in Story. Ingenious? Or coldly rational and oh so male?

An Irish grandmother called for a one-off boycott of a Sunday Mass last September by all Irish women. I surmise that she merely wanted to say 'no' to the lie that women are not like unto Christ. Women must insist on proclaiming the good news and truth of their Christ-likeness. An old and haggard patriarchy will not do it.

Beyond all that there is a bottom line to all the discussion. It has two parts:

1. We know that Woman is every bit like unto Christ as Man and may stand at the altar.
2. The church has complete power over the Discipline of the Sacraments. In virtue of the authority given by Jesus to his church, the church may institute the ordination of women.

Frank Regan  
Unpublished letter to *The Tablet*

Dear Editor,  
I should like to commend Frank Regan's insightful reflection ("Here, there and everywhere") in the March issue of *Renew*. Every paragraph possesses depth, understanding and spiritual inspiration and is succinctly expressed. What he may not have been aware of is that, to my knowledge at least, several of

his reflections have an affinity with scientific understanding which, by being so analogous, show how closely related scientific understanding and spiritual inspirations happen to be. For instance, he brought to our notice the writings of Trismegistus (thought by some to be contemporary with Moses) who wrote that "God is a being whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere". This immediately reminded me of the science to do with the theory of the "Big Bang" at the start of creation following from the discovery that the Universe is expanding in all directions, and that it is what scientists call isotropic, which is to say it has no centre and is unbounded: the energy which drives this is omnipresent and heavenly bodies are in a continual state of extinction and creation. It is a pity that it does seem to be widely known by scientists that there are such startling parallels between what we know - or rather suppose - to be scientific facts and those spiritual inspirations which defy human analysis and codification which are too easily dismissed as "religious truths". I dare say that "cosmic truth" is in a state of eternal expansion alongside the relegation of portions of it, along with the birth of new understandings of what it consists. Frank's article reveals his acceptance of uncertainty, especially in matters which are relatively unimportant, coupled with his confidence in asserting that "love cannot die" as an incontrovertible core of his faith. Yes, faith and doubt are twins and have to be for anyone searching after a better understanding of those fundamental truths which stand beyond human understanding, parts of which are always accessible, through revelation or inspiration, to those who seek it - "Seek and you will find" - and go well with everyone who tries their best to emulate Micah's injunction that we should "Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God" [pride and ignorance are twins too!].

Philip Binding

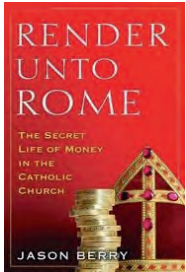
## Render unto Rome:

The secret life of money in the Catholic Church

Jason Berry

*Reviewed by*

*Martin Pendergast*



No amount of financial compensation can restore the destruction of the human body and spirit endured through the experience of sexual, physical, emotional, or spiritual abuse. Similarly, increasingly vast payments in litigation processes can neither replace nor remove the guilt and responsibility of those who perpetrate such crimes. In some sense, both the abused and perpetrators are victims of the macro-level dysfunctional power system which has been identified in so much global analysis of the sexual abuse crisis within the Catholic Church.

All abuse at its most fundamental level is an abuse of power, be that emotional, spiritual, physical, or sexual. These latter words are deliberately placed in that particular order since my own experience of working in the fields of child protection and sexual abuse, mostly beyond a church context, suggests that there is often a progression through the different forms of abuse, although this may not necessarily be an inevitable process in all cases.

Much research has been conducted at the personal level, investigating causal factors that incline certain individuals to perpetrate different forms of abuse, and we are well aware of their colossal impact on the lives and future well-being of victims. But what of institutions? What factors come into play as we seek to understand how and why certain social systems provide a systemic context for multiple levels of abuse to occur? What oils the machine of our social institutions, and not least the Church, so that such abuse can flourish all too easily? What is the interaction between social and religious values such as truth and honesty, transparency, integrity, repentance, healing, and reconciliation?

Jason Berry's epic book, *Render unto Rome*, flows from his milestone work, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*, exposing the extent of the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. Berry sees that money in the Catholic Church has a secret life of its own, functioning as a lubricant for the dysfunctional exercise of an ecclesiastical power machine. He moves beyond the immediate issues of how the institutional Church and its hierarchy can find the financial resources to respond to the demands of litigation in the context of abuse. Berry discovers that this is just the tip of an iceberg, with knock-on effects on the re-organisation and restructuring of the local Church, in the face of decreasing clergy recruitment and increasing aging of those remaining in active ministry.

Berry uses the emerging experience of groups such as Voice Of The Faithful (VOTF) and Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) to dig beneath the surface of the financial and pastoral planning strategies, including parish and church closures, adopted by dioceses across the United States, in the face of the sexual abuse crisis. He quickly realises that as in so many matters, 'all roads lead to Rome'. The issue is not just about fiscal mismanagement or concealment at local diocesan levels, but raises questions about the relationships of financial dependency between the Vatican, the local Church, and figures such as the late Father Marcial Maciel, notorious and abusive founder of the Legionaries of Christ.

The Code of Canon Law requires, as mandatory, each Catholic parish to have a finance committee, whereas a parish pastoral council is only advisory; nevertheless lack of financial transparency is an issue that goes back well before the first signs of the sexual abuse crisis emerged. Reform-minded Catholics in the UK highlighted the lack of financial accountability at parish and diocesan levels in a report, *Treasures in Heaven*, published in the early 1980's, calling for full, annual financial accounts to be published. Even today, there is still not complete transparency and questions remain around issues of ethical investment, use of off-shore financial foundations and trusts. There is a more recent issue as to how diocesan funds, or bishops' 'personal charitable funds' have been used to facilitate the moving around, within and beyond dioceses, of known abusers, buying them property etc.

Berry shows that at the most basic level, ordinary Catholics lack trust in what passes for the Church's 'financial systems' which appear to allow parish and diocesan funds to be creamed off before they are even entered into conventional accounting processes. This can amount to 'pocket money for Father', or bishops building sometimes secret reserves and used to buy favour with Rome in ways that appear little better than bribes. Since end-of-year accounts are impossible to come by, questions remain as to the use of Peter's Pence by the Vatican. How far does it shore up the Holy See's deficit, or is it more properly used for the relief of the world's hungry poor through the Sahel and Populorum Progressio funds established by John Paul II?

Berry clearly finds few heroes amongst the US Catholic hierarchy, past or present, but plenty of villains. He weighs into now retired archbishops such as Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee and Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles as well as Pilla and Lennon of Cleveland, Law and O'Malley of

Boston, and the present CDF Prefect, Cardinal Levada, then of Portland, Oregon. At times, *Render unto Rome*, reads like a catalogue of everyone you wanted to hate in the hierarchy, and only now had the temerity to name. In retrospect, I personally believe that Berry misrepresents the commitment of Benedict XVI to deal with the Maciel case in particular, and the wider sexual abuse crisis in general.

To say that this is a 'curate's egg' of a book is probably an understatement. Sweeping statements sit alongside almost obsessive preoccupations with financial details leaving this reviewer slightly bemused that the cover should feature a wobbly tower of UK pound coins, rather than US dollars. Factual inaccuracies such as suggesting that London's St. Martin-in-the-Fields church is a Catholic parish, minor as that is, distract the reader and call into question the veracity of some of Berry's more important allegations. Sideswipes at Maryland's St. Luke Centre fail to recognise that a good number of priests and religious have benefitted from the therapeutic interventions offered there and at places like Southdown, in Canada.

There are times when the author seems unable to extricate himself emotionally from his past exposures surrounding the abuse crisis, to focus objectively and factually on 'the secret life of money in the Catholic Church'. He allows himself to be taken far too easily down side-alleys that leave the reader bewildered, asking: 'And your point is?' Of course there is an international dimension to much that has happened with the Vatican's response to the global crisis of sexual abuse in the Church, but Berry doesn't seem to recognise when to halt his travels. At times, readers may be unsure whether they are reading a blockbuster novel, or a real attempt to mark a crucial chapter in the Church's contemporary history.

Berry's observations around the role of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, not least in protecting Marcial Maciel, as well as the financial dealings of the latter's nephew, Andrea Sodano with the Follieri Group, are important in understanding the level of

dysfunction which was allowed to thrive during the pontificate of John Paul II.

Gaining contracts for the acquisition of over \$100 million of church property in three US cities, Follieri's business-director was able to write to one religious order: "because of the Follieri family's long-standing relationship with senior members of the Vatican hierarchy, the Follieri Group understands very well the imperative of the church and is sensitive to its needs." Essentially, this entailed purchasing properties from diocese and religious organisations, renovating and converting them to new uses such as housing or profitable commercial development. With this back-drop, it becomes easy to see how the disposal of redundant churches can offer readily available solutions to the demands of litigation-strapped dioceses.

It is a pity that Berry did not wait a little longer before publishing *Render Unto Rome*. As well as exercising much more judicious editing, further developments in the Maciel saga could have been included, not least that legal recourse seems to have succeeded in forcing the Legionaries of Christ, and the Vatican itself, to be accountable to a US court in some aspects of the case. If the author had wished to pitch the book's context beyond that of the American Church, as it so often appears from the international snapshots he gives, then the Vatican's response to the Apostolic Visitation of the Irish Church, due to report shortly, could well have been relevant.

If nothing else, *Render Unto Rome* should remind bishops, religious superiors, the Vatican itself, as well as reforming activists, that the days are long gone when holy veils can be drawn over, not just dysfunctional systems, but the structural sin, even within the Church, which enables such horrendous levels of abuse to persist.

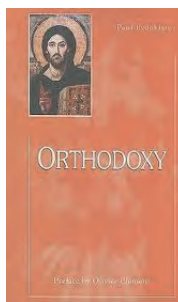
*Render unto Rome: The secret life of money in the Catholic Church*, Jason Berry, Crown Publishing Group, Random House Inc. 2011, 420 pp, \$25.00, ISBN 978-0-385-53132-0

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## Orthodoxy

### Paul Evdokimov

*Reviewed by*  
**Frank Regan**



Eastern European Orthodoxy evokes a feeling of vague mysticism alongside images of long-bearded priests dressed in ornate robes, swinging huge thuribles emitting thick wedges of smoke, singing in a basso profundo voice, hidden behind an icon-laden screen. We know little about it as a church which traces its roots, spiritual, liturgical and evangelical to the "forefathers of God", St Simeon, St Anne, St Joseph and St John the Baptist. The Orthodox understand history differently. Their way of Faith was at one time the way of Faith of all Christians before the emergence of the Roman way with its legal structure, its rationality and its formal logic. Its centres are Jerusalem, Antioch, Athens and Byzantium. Western Christianity's centres are Rome,

Hippo, Geneva and Augsburg.

Over the centuries points of divergence have emerged: the most remembered is probably the Filioque debate. Is the Holy Spirit a gift given by the Father or, a gift given by the Father through the Son? The doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility of the Pope are also neuralgic points. Those are the divergences with Rome. There are also differences with Geneva and Augsburg. They look at Orthodoxy and see the hierarchical priesthood, the Apostolic Succession, the synergy of divine grace and human will, and the holiness of the new creature. Yet Orthodoxy does not see itself as a middle way between the two. Rather it claims to be spiritually complete in itself, non-prescriptive, homogeneous and true to its traditions. It further

claims that it has never suffered any internal dissension, thus escaping the trauma of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Indeed, the Church is the same in its organisation, spirituality, prayer and teaching as it was at the time of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787.

At the still centre point of Orthodox theology and spirituality is the experience of Tabor where the glory, the Shekinah of God was made manifest in the flesh of Jesus. Orthodoxy's greatest theologian, Gregory of Palamas, points to the distinction between the utterly unknowable and transcendent essence of God, and the uncreated grace or 'energies' which permeate and deify creation. It is by these energies that we come to know God. As we enter by prayer, practice and grace we begin a process of theosis by which we become, in God, all that God has meant us to be. As the Son became human, so we are destined to become divine. Orthodox thought is more characterised by analogy, simile and metaphor than by logical and rational analysis.

The great divide between East and West occurred in the eleventh century when the West opted for a theological universe of sufficient causes, logical argumentation and scholastic analysis. For the West the approach was more intellectual and rational, a step by step approach to the knowledge of God. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "If the only way open to us for the knowledge of God were solely that of

reason, the human race would remain in the blackest shadows of ignorance." The Orthodox tradition is more steeped in a belief, in contemplation, in theology and philosophy, which all tend to converge, to seek synthesis. It is more poetic than logical.

I found this book a fine introduction to a tradition which I knew little about. It is divided into five Parts which cover Anthropology, Ecclesiology, Doctrine, Prayer, and Eschatology. For the Catholic Westerner Orthodoxy is a different, not to say, alien universe of Faith. I found it fascinating, perhaps because I tend to the apophatic (imageless) in my own approach to Faith. Reading it will not have made me a 'one book expert'. I would like to go more deeply into the effects of modernity upon a tradition which has escaped an experience of Reformation and, further on, an experience like that of Vatican II.

The late author published this book in 1979. It is republished today as a fairly complete presentation of the faith of the Orthodox tradition of Christianity. It is slightly dated and there are a few allusions to Muslims and Catholics that would be subject to emendation. Nonetheless I welcome it and derived great profit from reading it. Anyone wanting an explanation of Orthodoxy, its history, its theology and spirituality, its major figures, in one volume would do well in obtaining this book.

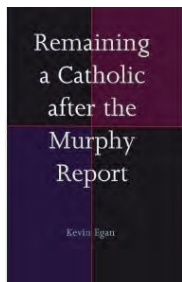
The book's value is enhanced by a detailed index.

Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, New City, 2011, 375pp, £19.95

## Remaining a Catholic after the Murphy Report

Kevin Egan

Reviewed by  
Frank Regan



The very title must strike one in the eye. This is a serious subject. Catholics all over Europe are leaving the Church. Others are holding on by a thread. The persons who are leaving, some with anger, others with regret, do so to save their souls, their integrity, and their very identities. Now it is Ireland's turn to undergo the purgation that

mass abandonment will bring.

The Catholic people of Ireland have suffered a heavy blow to their Faith and to the trust they had in their priests and bishops. As understanding as they have always been regarding the faults and foibles of their clergy - whether he was overly fond of a drink or went on and on every Sunday - a line has been crossed. These last almost twenty years - since the fall of the Reynolds government - have been traumatic for the ordinary Catholic in the parish. Even the eldest have been hard hit and have had to rethink their loyalty. The youngest have cleared out. Most of the clergy, loyal, overworked, dedicated, are suffering a sense of loss and betrayal. In many cases they are scapegoated for the criminality of a few. Indeed the Body of Christ in Ireland has been sorely wounded.

Kevin Kelly is Head of the Department of Behavioural Sciences at All Hallows College, Dublin City University. Since the mid-90s he has studied and lectured on the question of clerical sexual abuse. He has worked professionally with victims and perpetrators.

His book gives an account of the sad and tragic saga of clerical sexual abuse up to and shortly after the Murphy Report. It is well documented, clear, dispassionate, sensitive to the sufferings of the victims and dedicated to finding a way forward towards forgiveness and closure.

The depth of the scandal has been well expressed by a Catholic bishop, Howard Hubbard of Albany, New York. He has said: "There is the two-fold scandal of the breach of trust by individual priests, and the way bishops like myself have mishandled such misconduct, because of ignorance, fear or the misguided attempt to protect the church from scandal."

The question for many has now presented itself: Do I stay or do I leave? As of February 2010 more than 7000 have formally left the Church. No one has expressed more beautifully the religious sensitivity fostered by the Church than John McGahern, himself hounded by the authorities some years ago. He wrote that his religious faith accorded him 'an

awareness of mystery and wonderment, grace and sacrament, and the absolute equality of all women and men underneath the sun of heaven.' He goes on to say that those are the only remnants of faith which remain.

Perhaps the most appalling feature of this story in terms of the institutional church has been its unaccountability. Even here in Britain the Church is striving to remain unaccountable. There have been hearings in the Old Bailey between July 5 and 7 regarding the relationship of diocesan priests and their bishops. Is the relationship between the two akin to that of employer/employee, or not? If the relationship is indeed akin, then the bishop, who has assigned the priest, who pays his upkeep, who determines the length of term, who determines when he comes and goes, and when he retires, then the bishop is responsible for the behaviour of his priests. Up to now the priest is not recognised as an employee of the bishop. In the light of events, it is a wide legal loophole. The National Catholic Board of Safeguarding has reported that since the visit of Pope Benedict the number of reported allegations of sex abuse has gone up by one-third.

A fundamental feature of the Murphy Report is that it is from an outside source. Any attempt to sort things out from the inside would have been futile, laughable and a gigantic fudge, not to say lie. The Report speaks of two scandals: the sexual abuse of children and the attempted cover-up by church authorities. Very importantly the Report says that the reasons for the cover-up are systemic, the very organisation and its culture are the hothouse where the evil incubates.

Pope Benedict has been very forthcoming to apologise for the sins of the Church. His pastoral letter to the Irish bishops contains a very sincere apology, the most direct ever issued. As Kelly says it gave the victims a voice and the scandal has been exposed. But Kelly also says that the apology does not go far enough. The Pope could have acknowledged his own and his predecessor's failings in leadership and, I would add, example. Pope John Paul utterly failed to listen to advice regarding his friend and protégé Fr Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ. The Pope proposed him as a model for youth. He was a criminal and pervert who died in disgrace, rejecting even the last Sacraments of the Church. The drama of Maciel will continue when journalists complete their researches into how money is handled inside the Vatican. Therein lays a tale with sting and venom.

The rot which has invaded the soul of the institutional church stems from its abuse of power. It is clear that Jesus himself has shared his authority with his disciples, the church. From that authority emanates the power to forgive and to retain, on heaven and on earth. The institution has lost the sense of its relationship with Jesus the Servant, the Pastor who lifts burdens impossible to bear. It has lost sight of what is central to the Law: compassion,

mercy and faith (Mt. 23.23). There is something tragic here: most of our priests are good, dedicated men under a great deal of stress. Why must they be obliged to support and sustain an institution which has destroyed the very souls they are called upon by God to defend?

Can we explain how the practice of child molestation grew in the Church? Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Australia worked for five years in the Vatican. There he began to wonder whether or not the abuse crisis was cultural in the church. He asked how was it that this cancer was allowed to grow in the body of the Catholic Church, not just here or there but more broadly.

Dr Kelly presents several possible explanations. He rightly, in my view, disregards all of them except the endemic, systemic one. The very way the institutional church is made makes it all but inevitable that abuses of power arise. According to Fr George Wilson, cited by Kelly, a culture is a power-filled reality which has a strong influence on how people think and behave. Donald Cozzens, priest/psychologist, says the ecclesial world is a world of "preference, exception and privilege". The Murphy Report calls clerical culture a 'culture of secrecy'. Only recently the Taoiseach Enda Kelly, himself a devout Catholic, said of the Cloyne Report that it "...excavates the dysfunction, disconnection, elitism, the narcissism, that dominate the culture of the Vatican to this day...."

Other reports and studies also refer to the Church's culture of denial, this at various levels: the denial of damage done to victims, the denial of criminal activity, the denial of legal responsibility, denial of cultural factors which contribute to abuse and cover-up and Vatican denial. The Vatican has been most reluctant to admit that there is a serious problem and radical action must be taken. Officials like Cardinal Sodano have blamed the media for attacking the Church. Cardinal Bertone has blamed homosexuals in the priesthood.

Archbishop Coleridge points to a complex set of factors which contribute to a culture and system of abuse. There is a poor understanding of human sexuality and a rigorist attitude to the body and sex. Seminaries are often breeding grounds for immaturity. Seminary training for a sexually adult priesthood is sadly lacking. Triumphalism feeds into power. Discretion and secrecy are fundamental. There is an underestimation of the power and subtlety of evil. In the particular case of Ireland there are also complex historical reasons dating back to the influence of Jansenism on clergy formation. That influence passed on to the Irish diaspora, even to the Antipodes.

Dr Kelly gives us an interesting chapter on the profile of a sexual abuser. As a result of numerous clinical studies he says that the typical sex offender is male, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, heterosexual, married and has a history of physical or sexual abuse in childhood. If statistics from the United States are anything to go by, about 5% of the

priesthood there have been accused of sexual abuse between 1950 and 2000. Figures for Ireland are not available but it seems from one source that 4% of priests in Ireland have been accused over a period of fifty years. He goes on to other clinical studies which make more precise the description of paedophiles. They are not a homogeneous group.

I think that perhaps the most important chapter Kevin Kelly has given us is titled, *Forgiveness: The Last Step*. He reminds the reader that forgiveness is a misused grace and can be employed to gloss over the reality of abuse. He mentions some frequent misconceptions: that forgiveness is to forget, that it dissipates feelings of anger, that it is appropriate in every relationship, that it is a moral obligation, that it is a wifely duty. There are others, but Kelly says that we can forgive only when we are ready. We cannot be manipulated into granting it.

According to one study from the University of Wisconsin, USA, forgiveness is: "A willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behaviour toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love toward him/her." Worthy of note are the right to resentment, the undeserved qualities of compassion etc. and willingness to abandon etc., that is to say the free option to forgive.

The victim of abuse has a lot of forgiving to do and can feel wary because forgiveness might let the offenders off the hook. They must work toward forgiving the perpetrators, the leadership, the institution at all levels from parish to Vatican, and the most difficult of all: forgiveness of self. All this does not imply the abdication of the pursuit of justice. Indeed, Kelly says, it works best in combination with justice.

There can be no healing without a full apology. This is still wanting in many local churches. Nevertheless there are some excellent examples of a local church giving a full apology in a liturgical context. This

happened in Vienna, Austria, and the liturgy was presided over by Cardinal Schonborn. The Liturgy had a title: *God, I am Furious*. The victims were to have an opportunity to express their feelings and their fury. The Cardinal began with a confession, long and dramatic. It said in part: We confess that some of us are guilty of causing the inner death of others...We confess that some of us are guilty of sexual violence...We confess that some of us stole the childhood of boys and girls.... A similar ritual took place in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral. Its title was: *Service of Lament and Repentance*.

As I was finishing this harrowing book - harrowing yet hopeful - the image came to me of a many-footed dinosaur. Each foot was a bishop, the body was the church's structural machinery and bureaucracy both local and central, and the head was the Pope. The dinosaur had a tail, long and spiny, able to inflict injury. Pope Pius XI already described the church as a 'monster', too big and unwieldy above where the clergy are, and too skimpy below where the laity are.

The Vatican has acted with the dinosaur's reptilian brain, the part which asks about another creature: do I kill it or mate with it? It is the 'me first' part of the brain, the part which puts survival first. It is far from the neo-cortical, the part which can contemplate reality and respond in a human, compassionate way. The institutional church has a long learning and evolutionary curve to negotiate. It will be the work of grace to bring about conversion and metanoia.

This is not summer reading for the beach. Dr Kevin Kelly has written a most important and significant book for this time in the life of the Irish Church. He knows his subject, is experienced and is not judgmental but clear in the presentation of facts. He is low-key and dispassionate. It could be read with profit all over the English-speaking Church. I have read it attentively and suggest that the book be given a wide circulation, even beyond these shores.

Kevin Egan, *Remaining a Catholic after the Murphy Report*, Columba, 2011, 168pp, £10.99.

## I am so blessed

I am so blessed  
Being a Palestinian,  
Being a refugee  
For over Fifty years.  
I am so blessed  
I wasn't in the tank  
With an army uniform  
Killing and destroying  
To frighten people away.  
"It was a barren land"  
Later on to say.  
I am so blessed.

Being under curfew  
For most of my life.  
I am so blessed  
I wasn't with the army;  
Erecting high walls  
Shooting at civilians.  
I am so blessed.

Losing my father  
in one of their raids.  
I am so blessed.  
That it was not I  
Fixing planes of terror,  
Firing that missile;  
Then laughing and  
rejoicing  
The mission was a success.  
I am so blessed.

Watching my brother  
Being taken away  
I am so blessed  
I wasn't one of those  
Kicking 'til he bled  
From his nose and head  
I am so blessed

Burying my baby  
with a bullet in her heart.  
I am so blessed

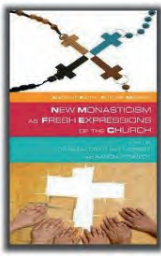
I wasn't that soldier  
Who took a baby's life.  
Nor was I his mother  
Who welcomed him a hero  
When coming back home.  
I am so blessed.

Sleeping in a UN tent  
Shivering in the freezing  
cold.  
I am so blessed  
I wasn't that settler  
Who occupied my home  
Justifying the massacres  
with a  
"PROMISE SO DIVINE".  
Then, tossing and turning  
all night long  
Wondering what's wrong.  
Haunted by his deeds  
Searching like mad  
For a long lost peace

Which he can't find.  
I am so blessed.

Holding David's stone  
In my little hand  
I am so blessed  
I wasn't giant Goliath  
With mass-destruction  
might  
Seeing himself invincible  
With no hope in sight  
I am so blessed

*Nahida Yastin*



This book situates itself in a context of cultural upheaval in which the culture of Modernity, with its rage for order based on rationality, is giving way to a culture of (so called) Post-Modernity, with its suspicion of order, certainty and grand narratives, such as Progress, Democracy, Market Forces, Universal Salvation etc.

We live in a post-Beatification church. Pope John Paul II began the work of restoring to the Church its pre-Vatican II order and balance. Scarcely five years after his death he has been beatified by his successor. The church Pope John Paul II bequeathed is more highly centralised and is characterised by a narrow moralism, strict “infallibilist” dogmatism and a rigorous authoritarianism.

In an era marked by an unstoppable decline in Church attendance the title of this book might seem an exercise in desperation or blue sky thinking. Nevertheless I found it surprisingly upbeat about an experience of church which thinkers like Karl Rahner and Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw as necessary. Even before them Karl Barth wrote in 1935: “The restoration of the church will surely come from a new kind of monasticism...a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ. I believe the time has come to rally people together for this.”

Amidst the decline of our churches there keep appearing streamlets and buds of renewal. More women are studying theology and scripture, young people are seeking safe communities which can support them in their own groping for a meaningful way of living, and lay people in general are seeking a more adult Faith.

This book taps into an early current of church renewal which occurred under the inspiration of figures like Benedict, Columbanus and Columba. These leaders lived through an historical epoch in which most of culture and civilisation lay in ruins. Their apostolate was to build something new on the ruins of the old.

We live in an era which is characterised as Post-Modern. This refers to a situation in which most of what we received as truth, as the way we think and do things, are in question. Many things have come crashing down in ruins: our trust in banks, in politicians, in royalty, in clergy and in many of our institutions which before we accepted unquestioningly. We are in a new dark age. Consumerism, individualism and materialism have corroded our souls.

In response to this various Christians have been meeting to essay forms of ‘deep church’ (C.S. Lewis). There are different formats, from the enclosed to the missionary. There is a form or rule of life, community living of differing frequencies, a routine of prayer and the adoption of different traditions of monastic life. The prevailing dynamic is of *Missio Dei*, a phrase which tries to point to a God active in the world, doing new things, inviting all to join with her in bringing about the Reign of God. The Mission goes on whether we join in it or not.

We are in a prolonged Kairos moment not perceived by our leadership. As a result many Christians are leaving the warmth of their sanctuaries and are braving the cold of the periphery where they are creating forms of community which want to be as mustard seed, salt and light. This phenomenon goes back to Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement. More recently the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania announced the launching of Monasteries of the Heart.

Some of the principal characteristics of this broad-banded movement are in the first place a secular spirituality based on the prophetic Jesus who walked among his people and at the same time maintained an intimate relationship with his ‘Abba’. Mission is at the core - not Mission as conversion to a church. Rather it is a Trinitarian energy which sends out persons who love the world and who want to transform it. Hospitality is at the core of Mission.

Another characteristic is Discipleship which locates the pilgrim where Church and culture clash. The disciple is called on to question the Church’s acquiescence in cultural values at odds with the Gospel. There is a need to detox Christians, not only from the ‘accepted’ addictions, but also from the toxic allurements of acquisition, consumption and hyper-activity.

This book is full of hope. Wonderful things are occurring. A different church is possible — one responsive to the signs of our times, compassionate, inclusive and passionate about God’s Reign of Peace, Justice, Reconciliation and Wholeness. We need a book like this in a moment in which the forces of retrenchment are prevailing. The church will not be renewed from the top down. We can no longer, Moses-like, strike the rock of Peter for the living water to flow. The rock is turning to lead. The Spirit is winging over the accumulating chaos. Grain by grain, stone by stone, seed after seed a different church is growing like a foetus in the womb of the chaos. Perhaps the big question for us is that of Jesus: when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Lk 18.8).

Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby and Aaron Kennedy, editors, *New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church*, Canterbury, 2010, npg.

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## The unbearable gravity of stasis.. cont

Stasis as a preferred way of existence is an invitation to a living death. The exterior will be pomp and circumstance, Disney-style international Youth encounters, Eucharistic mega-meetings and papal decrees and audiences. But what is there but a hollow body and a dispirited soul? Therein lays the tragedy of our institutional church.

*Frank Regan November 2011*

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CCC is a Catholic organisation, but open, independent and critical. We aim to present our views without any bitterness, sourness or personal attacks but with respect and compassion for all. Contributions should be reasoned rather than polemical. Space being limited, 850 words is the usual maximum for articles, rising just occasionally to above this figure. Reviews and reports should be nearer 500 and letters even shorter.

Contributions, including letters to the editor, are welcomed and should be sent to the editor, preferably by email to [frankregan@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:frankregan@hotmail.co.uk), or in clear typed copy that can be scanned into a computer.

Material is edited for length, clarity and accuracy of detail, but with minimum interference. The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for what is published in RENEW but views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy of Catholics for a Changing Church. We aim to correct any errors subsequently.

Please contact the editor in advance if you would like advice. The Editor-in-Chief is Frank Regan and production by Colin Close.  
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## The Unbearable Gravity of Stasis

Cardinal Raymond Burke recently gave the De Lubac lecture at Manchester University. In the course of the lecture he stated that stasis is to be preferred to change in the Church. Friedrich Nietzsche, father of post-Modernity, wrote in *The Gay Science* that he could not believe in a God who did not know how to dance. He went on to say that in looking at the church all he saw was gravitas and by gravitas all falls down.

Our institutional Church has lived in a post-Trent, post-Vatican I mode for the past 400 years. The official Church struggled to remain in a permanent state of stasis. It had not promoted the formation of a laity able to explain and give witness to the person of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church. It had given itself a clergy attuned only to the life of the Church, not to the life of the world, not to the poor of the earth.

The bishops of Vatican II tried to open the Church to the needs of a wounded world. To do that an alert, articulate and committed laity was an essential necessity. That laity came forward, men and women who wanted a church for the world, able to be salt, light, leaven and mustard seed. It was an adult laity who wanted to assume adult responsibilities in the pastoral mission of the church according to the charism and vocation of each; but that was going to mean that the laity would exercise its baptismal powers of priesthood and mission. Generally speaking, bishops and priests felt threatened and moved to curb an ebullient energy generated by the Spirit who wanted to dance, to move mountains, to bring joy - in a word, to renew the face of the earth.

Sadly, our Church leadership is opting for stasis and gravitas. It is reaching out to the most reactionary forces in its fold to forward a march to the past when everything appeared as God wanted: static, uniform and patriarchal.

Our Church is losing its soul because it cannot hold opposites in creative tension. Those opposites are: male/female; heterosexual/homosexual; lay/cleric; married/divorced; leader/led; secular/religious; have/have not and others. Our leadership is resolving those tensions in favour of its own institutional needs; thus it relegates huge numbers of talented and committed persons to the margins.

The Church cannot be a Good Samaritan sort of neighbour to the divorced and remarried, to the abused child and its family, to the single parent, to the homosexual et al because it is incapable of crossing the frontier of exclusion and woundedness to become healer and pastor. The present church wants only the "pure", the docile, the infantile and the co-dependent. From a culture of change, openness and hope we are reverting to a culture of fear, suspicion and reactionary conservatism.

We want a church in the spirit of Vatican II's *Gaudium Et Spes*. That church will be engaged in the struggle to nurture and conserve our planet against a man-centred exploitation. It will be concerned with poverty global and local which lacerates the human spirit and threatens human life. It will be a Peace church which ceases to bless tanks and bombs. It will be person-centred able to accompany those on the spiritual journey in their search for depth, meaning and identity.

The institution wants to inaugurate a New Evangelisation. That will not happen because the church rejects inclusivity, transparency and accountability. These so-called modern values are the hallmark of an institution which has credibility and which deserves the trust of souls given into its care.

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