

# LEPANTO

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*At a time when new questions are being put and when grave errors aiming at undermining religion, the moral order and human society itself, are rampant, the Council earnestly exhorts the laity to take a more active part, each according to his talents and knowledge and in fidelity to the mind of the Church, in the explanation and defence of Christian principles and in the correct application of them to the problems of our times.*  
Decree of the Apostolic of Lay People, 18.11.'65

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## SORRY, POPE BENEDICT!

*Dear Pope Benedict XVI, sorry that you went to all that trouble over that Motu Proprio on the Latin Mass. As far as the Brisbane Archdiocese is concerned you were just wasting your time!*

The above is a fair assessment of the reception the *Motu Proprio* on the Latin (Tridentine) Mass received at the hands of the Brisbane "Catholic Leader" since it was published on the 7th of the 7th month 2007. This was a long-awaited event, on and off again for a year or more as the Holy Father consulted widely and finally in this document published "on his own initiative" reflected the mind and the heart of Mother Church.

It will have a dramatic impact on Catholic liturgical life world wide – it could perhaps in small measure, help bring to an end the sad schism of the Society of St Pius X. I suppose in any unblinkered assessment of what it may achieve, what the Brisbane Archdiocese does or does not do matters very little, except, of course, what Brisbane does the other Queensland dioceses follow in step. (For example, the letter of Bishop Heenan to the priests of his Diocese of Rockhampton on this matter saying: (quote) "I see no immediate change to our current practice". As far as Bishop Morris of Toowoomba is concerned he has made it a trifle more complicated. *Will he ask those Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Church ministers he proposed could carry out the duties of Catholic priests to now learn Latin?*

What it does do, however, is to still keep isolated the vast majority of this generation of Queensland Catholics from opportunities to experience and participate in the celebration of the Latin Mass of 1962 as proclaimed by Pope Blessed John XXIII. And in so doing the entreaties of Pope John Paul II and now Benedict XVI to

learn and explore Gregorian Chant, Polyphony and the vast treasury of Sacred Church Music are thus studiously ignored.

However it would have been gracious if something other than a negative spin on the document was expressed by the "Catholic Leader" with the words: "Pope reaffirms Latin.....but it's not for the masses" *Sorry to disagree but the Latin Mass IS for the masses if the masses request it!* Then there is Elizabeth Harrington of the Liturgical Commission of the Archdiocese who downplays as a virtual "non-event" the impact that the Papal *Motu Proprio* on the Latin Mass will have on the Archdiocese. In one way she is correct. It would be hard to find a parish with an existing strong, stable group of people who are still attached to the Latin Rite of 1962. It is worthy of note that the number in such a group has not been defined in the Papal document. Unless there has been some continuity of celebration of the Tridentine Mass in a parish or centre it can be expected that there will not be, in the beginning anyway, a great flocking of parishioners to their parish priest requesting a regular Latin Mass. This is simply because those who grew up with the Latin Mass in their youth are now elderly. Many, saddened and upset by liturgical abuses, by "wreckovated" churches, and stripped sanctuaries have sadly joined the ranks of non-practicing Catholics. One of the gravest impediments to the celebration of the 1962 Rite is the fact of the 'wreckovation' that has occurred in most churches: where the High Altar has disappeared, the new Altar turned around, the Altar Rails removed and the general ambience is hardly compatible with the liturgical requirements for the proper celebration of the Latin Mass.

*That the Latin Rite has survived at all is the remarkable reality.* On a political level it can, perhaps, be compared to the situation that existed for such parties as Australia First and before them, the DLP. They had loyal



adherents scattered all over the place but not enough in any one place to make an overall impact. It is worthy of note that the number of persons in any one parish who wish to have a 1962 'Latin Mass' celebrated was not defined in the Papal document. There is no minimum number specified. The parish priest is required to respectfully consider such requests and do what is possible and practical to meet them,

It must be remembered that there is a sizable, active Latin Mass community in Brisbane. It is not a refuge for elderly folk with nostalgic attachments to the Old Rite but a vibrant, active group composed more and more of young families (*who don't leave as soon as the 'novelty wears off' as Elizabeth Harrington claims*) who make up a fast growing proportion of regular attendees. With the greater flexibility available under this new *Motu Proprio* this Brisbane Latin Mass community may have the opportunities for the celebration of weekday Masses and to openly publicise their activities.

There are also Latin Masses said on a regular basis in every Queensland diocese. There still are a number of priests with the knowledge of Latin and the rubrics necessary to celebrate the Mass in accordance with the Rite of 1962. They can teach others.

With some little encouragement, what is now happening spontaneously in the US could easily begin to happen here. Many priests, particularly younger priests, are signing on for classes to gain a workable knowledge of Church Latin and of the rubrics necessary to celebrate the Mass of 1962. It should be realised that Pope Benedict XVI – when Cardinal Ratzinger and Head of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments – has always maintained that any liturgical change should always be a flowering and development from the past not a discontinuance from it. This was a strong motivation for him to use every possible endeavour to reach an understanding with the Society of PiusX.

Would be just too much to hope and pray that the Brisbane Archdiocese would accede to the heartfelt aspirations of the Holy Father expressed in this *Motu Proprio* and take this opportunity to invite the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter to extend their apostolate to Brisbane. Perhaps even give them a parish where the church interior is more or less intact with High Altar, Sanctuary and Altar Rails still in place. One such that comes to mind is St Patrick's, Fortitude Valley where the removal of the ugly, existing attempts of 'wreckovation' would be an immediate and welcome blessing. Another, of course, is St. Mary's South Brisbane. This is a beautiful church where the traditional Sanctuary and High Altar have somehow survived the modernist antics of the present incumbents. *Such an invitation, if accepted by the Priestly Society of St. Peter, would no doubt startle the existing congregation but it would rid the Archdiocese of ongoing scandal.*

Referring again to the comments of Archdiocesan Liturgy Office Education Officer Elizabeth Harrington, the dismissive tone of her remarks speaks more loudly than her words, she says: "The first requirement is a stable group of the faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition" "This does not mean" she explains to us ignoramuses, "a group in a diocese that goes around to different parishes telling them that they need to introduce a Tridentine Mass, or a few young people who

suddenly discover the 'wonders of Mass in Latin' – until the novelty wears off!"

So now you know what's good for you! Ignore Pope Benedict XVI and his thought provoking *Motu Proprio* that has received critical acclaim from theologians, bishops and laity from around the world. Elizabeth Harrington has spoken!

So also has Fr John Kilinko PP of Zillmere Parish, Brisbane and Fr Kevin Ryan (see his column "Vatican II called for a big change in our worship" CL August 19, '07). Both, by implication, called into question the action of Pope Benedict XVI in even considering the publication of this *Motu Proprio*. *They appear to be all players in what is nothing more than a concerted archdiocesan-wide campaign to convince the ever diminishing number of pew warmers that Pope Benedict and his instruction that the Latin Rite now comprises the 'ordinary' Novus Ordo celebration of Holy Mass and the 'extraordinary' celebration in accord with the Missal of 1962, is nothing less than a dangerous mistake that puts the whole of Vatican II in dire jeopardy!*

In his *Catholic Leader* article, Fr Kevin Ryan's spin on the Council of Trent is a masterpiece of selectivity. He completely ignores the actions of Pope St Pius V who, against all the odds and extraordinary practical difficulties, saw the Council through to reach its far reaching conclusions; saw that, as a result, the Catholic Church and the Patrimony of St Peter survive the Protestant 'Reformation', the religious wars in Germany and northern Europe and then launch the Counter Reformation and eventually gain more in the New World than it had lost in the Old; he energises a few Catholic princes and states to cobble together the fleet that defeated the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, and so prevented the Mediterranean from becoming a Muslim lake threatening all Italy and Spain; he left the Church strong enough to survive the French Revolution and the so-called 'Enlightenment' ; a Church that in the 18th and 19th centuries was vital enough, faith-filled enough to see the birth of great new teaching and missionary orders, many of which have survived and whose influence is still strong to this day. *All this while Holy Mass was being celebrated in Latin and in accord with the authority of the Council of Trent as approved by the great Pope St. Pius V. It encompassed the lives of such great saints and Catholic figures as St John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, St. Therese of Lisieux, St John Bosco, St Bernadette of Lourdes, St Padre Pio, Cardinal Newman, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc and many, many others.*

It was never abrogated and despite the crude endeavours of Fr Kevin Ryan and Elizabeth Harrington of the Brisbane Archdiocesan Liturgical Office *it must have something going for it.*

(FOOTNOTE: LATIN-ENGLISH MISSAL BOOKLET IS AVAILABLE: THIS EAST-TO-FOLLOW ILLUSTRATED MISSAL-TYPE BOOKLET IS IDEAL FOR ALL LATIN MASS 'GOERS' WE KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO ACQUIRE AN OLD ORIGINAL ENGLISH-LATIN MISSAL PUBLISHED PRIOR TO 1962. THIS MISSAL BOOKLET OF OVER 70 PAGES IS ALL YOU NEED TO FOLLOW AND PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MISSAL OF 1962. AVAILABLE AT ONLY \$5 EACH + POSTAGE. ORDER NOW FROM:

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Be it in the political or social arena – even in the context of family life - there can hardly be a circumstance more destructive, more damaging to the fabric and continuing life and health of any particular social entity than the dead hand of uncertainty.

In the political world we all can recall occasions when a government, a prime minister or president has lost control of the process and continuity of governing and in common parlance has become a “lame duck president”, a “lame duck prime minister” or “caretaker government”. If it goes on too long it is fraught with the potential for social disorder and political disintegration. In the family unit when there is no discipline, no exercise of proper authority bedlam is the result. The current TV series “Brat Camp” dramatically presents the sad antics of the dysfunctional children from such families. In the US the period of Richard Nixon’s presidency after ‘Watergate’ and Bill Clinton’s after his impeachment are examples.

In the governance of the Church, its hierarchical structure leaves little room for manoeuvre if there is any serious disruption for one reason or another. *After all, diocesan bishops are not branch managers of a multinational corporation.* They are shepherds of a flock that is theirs to teach, govern and guide to eternal life. It is an awesome responsibility. When it breaks down the results can be devastating, both for the Church, the Body of Christ and for individual souls. Several examples come to mind. One. This, of course, was the situation that occurred in England when Henry VIII broke with Rome, and executed Bishop John Fisher, who was the only English bishop to stand up to his threats and blandishments. The whole structure of the Church in England soon disintegrated in chaos and took centuries to recover. Great suffering and loss of the Faith resulted. Two. In more recent times the Diocese of Boston, US was the source of the breaking of the news of the sexual abuse scandal that has cost the Church in the US so dearly materially and, more significantly, in standing and reputation. One result in Boston was the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law. Boston was the most Catholic of Catholic seats of prestige; powerful Catholic families in public life made it their headquarters. Cardinal Law had the perceived reputation of being a ‘conservative’ certainly not a ‘progressive’ or so-called ‘middle of the road’ bishop such as Cardinal Bernadine of Chicago. However it soon became reasonably to believe, true or not, that Cardinal Law had not exercised due diligence in the matter of discipline of priests known to be deeply involved in sexual abuse matters or had taken inadequate and ineffective remedial action.

The hierarchal structure of Church governance does not allow for the luxury of a ‘lame duck’ head of diocese hanging around. A shepherd is a shepherd, responsible for souls, not a politician angling for votes. No matter what other qualities he may have as a churchman and person his position had now become the focus for deep and hurtful scandal. It could not persist.

As all the sexual abuse scandal news mounted and unfolded week after week, the worst possible scenario would have been if nothing was seen to have been done; that

Cardinal Law remained in place as Archbishop of Boston; that the Church, the Vatican had chosen to ignore the magnitude of what was happening.

**Is there not a similar situation existing now in an Australian diocese – perhaps in even more than one?** Not a matter of sexual abuse scandal, magnified by secular enemies of the Church, but deep concerns relating to doctrine, discipline and, ultimately **obedience**. Pope Benedict XVI did not spend his time as Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, without knowing of situations that existed in various dioceses in Australia. These are matters about which the Vatican has full knowledge, about which it has already taken certain steps in the past. As someone in this issue of *Lepanto* has pointed out, the ‘Statement of Conclusions’ issued by John Paul in 1997, after the *Ad Limina* visit of the Australian Bishops, became the first time in the history of the Church where a whole national hierarchy was reprimanded as a result of representations made and submitted by the laity to the Vatican.

Now however, to the Sunday churchgoers in the dioceses that may be specifically concerned, those who, against all the odds, have remained loyal, it would appear the status quo remains. Heretical views have been publicly expressed. Nothing has been seen to have changed. There are no obvious signs of remedy or reform. The sheep are scattered. The Faith is in danger of being lost.

There always exists the reality that, for the Body of Christ, His Church, certain circumstances are not so much about the saving of reputations but the ultimate salvation of souls.

Maxwell Lynch

This may be of interest:

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2007/08/beware-of-australians-bearing-grenades.html>

## Thanks!

*“The Future of Lepanto”.*

*I wish to thank all those many readers and supporters of “Lepanto” who wrote since the last issue wishing me well, who indicated real appreciation for the role “Lepanto” is fulfilling in the Queensland Catholic scheme of things.*

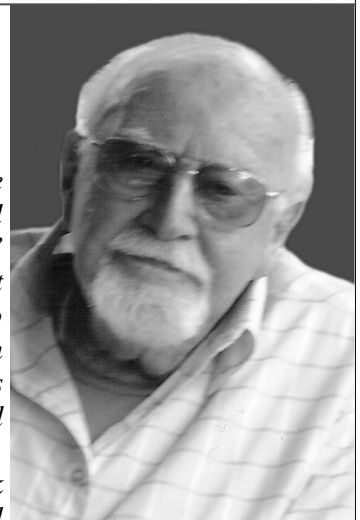
*Particularly I wish to thank those who have offered*

*prayers and have Masses offered for my intentions. This is the ultimate gift beyond compare.*

*Our plans to carry on with the publication are moving ahead (slowly) and hopefully without any disruption to the quality, the content and the continuity of “Lepanto”.*

*I repeat: thank you.*

Maxwell Lynch



## Letters to the Editor:

### TRUTH IN AUSTRALIA

I was somewhat taken aback by Roy Harty's letter. It was rather like being tackled without the ball, insomuch as I had been approached by Ray after Mass one morning. He mentioned that he thought that 472, Catholic Catechism, negated my questioning of Archbishop Bathersby's statement about Christ "growing in knowledge". In fact the quote I questioned was, "He only gradually realised His Messiahship". My response was to draw his attention also to 473 et al, which includes. ""The human nature of God's Son, not by itself but by its union with the Word, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God." I do think Ray might have in fairness reported that also. Nor did he mention that he thought my letter "mischievous".

My knowledge of theology is basic and confined to the teachings I received in the 30's and 40's from home and school. This knowledge has of necessity been checked and re-learned to withstand the flooding of heresy into the Church, see Paul VI, and into the Catholic education system, the subversion of which has produced the demonstrable apostasy of tens of thousands of ex-Catholic school students. I know some things for certain which every genuine Catholic must hold. 1. There are objective truths which we can know. 2. Catholic dogma states these truths, not exhaustively but perfectly accurately, and their meanings cannot be changed.

Here are some reasonable questions arising for Ray: Can anyone say of Christ that He did not fully realise the He was God? What ought to be the reaction of a Catholic when schism or heresy is not only encountered but rammed down one's throat? If you spent 32 years raising these issues with Archbishops Rush and Bathersby without receiving even one substantive answer, would you give up? When you ask in Christ's Name that your archbishop explain some seeming error, is his "avoidance of argument" laudably Christian" or a cowardly and dishonest abnegation of the exact task for which Christ designated him a direct descendant of the original Apostles? Do you just deny the possibility of any bishop being derelict in his duty?

As a general aid in answering these questions, the following data should help (a) the Statement of Conclusions signed in Rome by the Australian Bishops in 1998 is unique. It is the only time in the Church's existence that the collective episcopate of a country has been publicly rebuked as a result of representations by the laity. (b) Pope Benedict was not joking when he said that the mainline churches of the West were dead or dying. "This is true above all in Australia."

Christ will conquer, but will we be with Him?

*Don Gaffney, Tarragindi, Qld*

### MILLENNARIANISM

This letter is about "millenarianism" – a concept so often misunderstood both inside and outside the Church - at the price of apostasy from the truth (CCC 675). To understand more fully what the Scriptures and Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says about millenarianism, it is good to divide man's time on earth into "eras": 1st era is 2000 years from Adam to the "The Great Flood"; 2nd is the 2000 years from the

"Flood" to the coming of Christ; 3rd era is the 2000 years that we are in now, waiting for the "Last Day". As the "day" with the Lord is 1000 years (Psalm 89:4, 2 Peter 3:8), this 1000 years is called 'millenarianism, which is a conceptual term.

The 4th era follows the first three and is sometimes referred to as "The Last Day". It is the 4th era which is to be the 'New Heaven and the New Earth'. It is the 7th day, the day that God rested (Gen 2:3), enjoying the Paradise He has created for man. The Paradise that, after Adam's sin, was locked up and guarded by the Cherubims with a flaming sword to keep the way of the 'Tree of Life' (Gen 3:24).

With the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth (CCC671), the martyrs will rise to the first resurrection (Apoc 20:6). When the Lord says that, "I will raise him up on the Last Day" it means to the 'millenarianism, i.e. the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Apostles Creed says "... He shall come again to judge the living and the dead" and "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting". This was taught by the Apostles in the first century and could be restrictive to mean just the 'Last Judgment' at the "end of Times".

When St John received his Revelation towards the end of the first century the teachings were to embrace the new revelation of the 2nd coming of Christ (not physically) to the 'Last Day', the last 1000 years period of time fulfilling the old prophesies of Isaias (CN 65: 17.25 = CH 66: 22-24. Also see (2Peter 3 7-13 on New Heaven and New Earth.)

In addition to the Apostles Creed it was necessary to have the Nicean Creed (325AD) to accommodate the resurrection of the body (first resurrection (Apoc 20:4-6).... and life in the world to come (the New Heaven and the New Earth which will last 1000 years and there will be no death).

This "millenarianism" was taught by the Early Fathers of the Church as Public Revelation and constitute part of "Sacred Tradition of the Church" in an infallible way.

The writings of the Early Fathers are still available. Some, like St Papias and St Polycarp, had already been taught by St John. St. Papias writes (6:10): After the resurrection of the dead (not all) there will be a period of 1000 years when Christ's Kingdom will be set up on earth (new earth) in a material form. Paragraphs 671 and 672 of CCC provide statements relating to Our Lord's return to establish this reign during the time of the New Heaven and the New Earth (millenarianism).

Though already present in His Church, His reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled with power and glory by the King's return to earth which will not take place until there be realised New Heaven and New Earth in which justice dwells.... which, according to the prophets, was to bring to all men the definitive order of Justice, Love and Peace.

It is in reference to the above coming of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, in fulfilment of the 'Our Father', that Jesus stated: "I will not reign in my body, only spiritually will I be present". This cancels out any heresy or falsification of "mitigated millenarianism". How Our Lord shows Himself to us will be like the scriptures say: "Lord show His Face to thee" (Numbers 6:22-27) and "they shall see His Face (Apoc 20:4) There are many other scriptural metaphors regarding the seeing of God's Face. Even Moses saw God "face to face" – but he did not see an 'old man with a beard'. This simply means we can see not just by our physical sense of eyesight but more – and much

more – like the saints who perceived God with their heart, mind and spirit. They saw God face to face in the Eucharist. They will teach us and lead us when they are resurrected in the ‘first resurrection’ (Apoc 20:6) to the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Maybe I should have started with the Catechism of the Catholic Church 676, where all the trouble really starts.

It says “The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realise within history (present) that messianic hope which can only be realised beyond history (future) through eschatological judgment (theology of the end of heaven and earth as we know it).

The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the Kingdom and under the name of “millenarianism” (576 Footnote), especially the intrinsically perverse political form of secular millenarianism. The footnote 576 is given as: (cf DS 3839) D.S. means ‘Danzinger Schanzwitzer (?). It is an encyclopedia of official pronouncements of the Catholic Church which are recorded in “ACTA”: *Apostolicae sedis commentarium officiale*. Dated *Annus XXVI series II Vol XI typis policottis Vaticanis M, Dcccc XLIV pg 212*. Translation:

The Decree: In the last times not once has it been asked from this Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy office, what is to be taught of the system of mitigated millenarianism, teaching namely that Christ the Lord before the final judgment, whether previous or nor previous to the resurrection of many of the just, will come visibly in to this earth for the sake of reigning. Therefore when the matter was subjected to examination in a plenary session of day 4 the 19th of July 1944, the Eminent and Most Rev. Cardinals of the Lord, ... entrusted with safeguarding matters of faith and morals, when a vote of the Right Rev. Councillors was held, have agreed that it must be responded: “The system of Mitigated Millenarianism is not able to be taught safely”. And ... on the following day 5, the 20th of the same month and year, Our Most Holy Pius XII by Divine Providence in his usual audience assigned to the Most Excellent and Most Rev Lord Asseso, approved this response of the Eminent Fathers, he can confirm this and ordered this to become the public law....Dated and signed at Rome from the rooms of the Holy Office on the 21st July 1944. I,PEPE, notary of the supreme Congregation of the Holy Office.

The resurrection of the dead on the “Last Day” and in the Life Everlasting (CCC988) are not the same resurrection, although those resurrected to the “Last Day” will go through to Life Everlasting (Apos 20:6). In these the “second death” has no power.

To confirm the truth as to what I have written, read what St Ireneus teaches (Against Hereries Book 5 Ch 28). St Barnabus is much the same, as are the writings of early Fathers of the Church. They are infallible and part of the Sacred Tradition of the Church. To get the true word and meaning use only the Duay-Rheims Bible.

*W Włodarczyk, Castle Hill, NSW*

## VATICAN II AND INFALLIBILITY

In a letter to AD2000 (September), Dr Frank Mobbs gives two reasons for claiming that no developments of doctrine in Vatican II are infallible.

Dr Mobbs states that Vatican II doesn't define anything because the words "definitive" and "define" are not found therein. He suggests that this is because of Canon #1323 (1917) which is footnoted in Lumen Gentium(LG) , 25, and which limits the meaning of a teaching understood as declared or dogmatically defined, to when this fact is manifestly established. (AD2000, September).

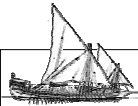
In this reasoning there seems to be two prevalent misconceptions.

1) There is no stipulation for the actual words "define" or "definitive" to be a necessary part of infallible doctrine in the 1870 Vatican I dogma, which linked papal infallibility to that of the Church. [Cf Religious Liberty and Contraception, Fr B Harrison, p 172]. Indeed, LG 25 affirms that bishops in an Ecumenical Council "proclaim infallibly" the doctrine of Christ when they agree that a "teaching is to be held definitively and absolutely."

2) Canon #1323 (1917), did not limit per se infallible doctrine to dogmas, only that dogmas must be manifestly made clear to be so. But, in the Code of Canon Law, 1983, "dogmatically declared or defined"(1917) has been replaced by "infallibly defined" in #749.3. Thus doctrine given definitively and absolutely is infallible in any Ecumenical Council approved by a pope, or in any papal doctrine given from the Supreme Pastor on faith or morals to the whole Church.

So neither of these reasons are valid. Why should these errors not be exposed?

*Peter Howard, Springwood, Qld*



### LEPANTO LEAGUE OBJECTIVES :

- 1 Uphold & promote the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- 2 Be Loyal to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and to the teachings of the Holy Father.
- 3 Oppose the teaching of the so-called Personal Development/Sex Education in the class room environment.
- 4 Foster vocations to the Priesthood and to the religious life by personal and formal group devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and by the support of seminaries, whose formation and training is in accord with the guide-lines and directions of the Holy See.
- 5 Foster devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and daily praying of the Holy Rosary.
- 6 Provide active support for other groups and organisations who are loyal to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.
- 7 Support parents as the prime educators of their children.
- 8 Insist that Catholic schools teach the full content of the Catholic Faith without compromise.
- 9 Foster love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to actively work for the fulfillment of the legitimate aspiration of having the traditional Latin Rite (Tridentine) Mass available regularly.
- 10 Advance these objectives & to defend them with vigour from all attacks no matter from what source they may arise, & to provide mutual support & assistance amongst members.

# Reclaiming our Catholic Mission

Address by Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap  
Archbishop of Denver  
to the National Conference

of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy,  
Melbourne, Australia, July 4-5, 2007

( [http://www.archden.org/images/ArchbishopCorner/ByTopic/AustraliaTalks/renewingthechurch\\_melbourne7.04.07.pdf](http://www.archden.org/images/ArchbishopCorner/ByTopic/AustraliaTalks/renewingthechurch_melbourne7.04.07.pdf) )

*Renewing the Church, converting the world:  
Reclaiming our Catholic Mission*

I'd like to start with a proposition. Here it is: To be a Christian is to believe in history.

Now, what do I mean by that? Well, I can tell you what I don't mean. I don't mean the history of progress, which has been the guiding faith in the West for many years. The cult of progress claims that things are getting better all the time. That thanks to science and technology, the human condition is constantly improving. That our future is open to unlimited material achievements.

I have real problems with that sort of myth. I don't see any evidence that it's true. But that's another talk for another time.

To be a Christian is to believe in history. I mean that in the way the great Catholic historian, Christopher Dawson, meant it. Dawson wrote: "Christianity, together with the religion of Israel out of which it was born, is a historical religion in a sense to which none of the other world religions can lay claim."

Think about the Bible. All the great world religions have sacred books. The Qu'ran, the Bhagavad-Gita; the analects of Confucius. What all the sacred texts of other religions have in common is that they're essentially wisdom literature. They're collections of often wise and noble teachings aimed at helping believers live ethically and find the right path to peace of happiness or enlightenment.

The Bible also aims to make people wise. But it also seeks to lead them to salvation, which is much more than enlightenment. Its starting point is totally different. The first words are: "In the beginning ..." The Bible begins with a step-by-step report of the first day in the history of the world. The entire Old Testament is like that. After telling us about the first man and woman and their descendants, it proceeds to present a historical account of God's chosen people, the children of Israel. We read about their captivity in Egypt; their deliverance and wandering to the promised land; the rise and fall of their kingdom; their exile and restoration. The biblical narratives are filled with dates and geography, even the names of foreign rulers.

The New Testament continues that history, focusing on one particular child of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, and the community he founded, the Church. The story is told with lots of references - some direct, others subtle - to that earlier history. Jesus is portrayed as fulfilling all that God promised in the Old Testament. The Church is described as the new people of God, the final realization of Israel's calling to be God's light to the nations.

Again, throughout the New Testament, we're given precise historical markers. Here's how the Gospel of Luke introduces the ministry of John the Baptist: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip tetrarch of ..." You get the idea.

To be a Christian means believing very definite things about history and about our won respective places in history.

We don't just profess belief in the Incarnation. We say we believe that God took flesh at a precise moment in time, and in a definite place. That's the reason for that odd detail in our creed. Think about it: We're the only religion to remember our founder's executioner by name every time we profess our faith. In fact, I don't think there's another profession of faith in any religion that mentions specific historical personages.

Pontius Pilate and Mary are mentioned by name in the creed. Why? The reference to Mary, his mother, guarantees Christ's humanity. The reference to Pilate, who condemned him to death, guarantees his historicity. It ensures that we can never reduce the Incarnation to an abstract concept, a metaphor, a pretty idea. It ensures that we can never regard Jesus Christ as some kind of ideal archetype or mythical figure. He was truly a man and truly God. And once he had a place he called home on this earth.

Something else, too. We believe that this historical event, which happened more than 2,000 years ago, represents a personal intervention by God "for us and for our salvation." God entered history for you and me, for all humanity.

These are amazing claims. Again, all of them are unique to Christianity among the world religions. The four noble truths of Buddhism don't have anything to do with history. The Muslim profession of faith, the shahada, testifies simply that there is no God but God and that Muhammed was his messenger. To the degree that Islam has a historical narrative, it was arguably borrowed from and built on the Jewish-Christian narrative that came before it.

That's my first point today. To be a Catholic is to be very unique among the world's believers. To be Catholic means believing that you are a part of a vast historical project. And it's not our project. It's God's. Being Catholic means believing that since the beginning of time God has been working out his own hidden purposes in the history of nations and in the biography of every person. He's still unfolding his purposes today, and each of us here has a part to play in his divine plan.

"He chose us before the foundation of the world, to be holy. In love, he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ." St. Paul wrote that to the first Christians. He meant those words for us, too. Before the foundation of the world, God had each of us in mind. He made us out of love. He made us for a reason. To be holy, to be his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. To help him in his plan to share his love with the whole world.

In his first homily as Pope, Benedict XVI said the same thing. He said: "We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of

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God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary." This is a wonderful truth. Each of us is the result of an act of the creative imagination of God.

Again, no other religion makes anywhere near these kind of claims about the meaning of human life - and not just "human life" in general, but each and every human life. God willed each of us to be here. He loves us personally. But how can the pope say are we necessary? What does God need or want us to be doing? Let's go back to the creed for a minute.

We believe the Incarnation was a real historical event. For our salvation, Jesus came down from heaven at that point in history when Pilate was Caesar's man in Judea. And we believe that event changed everything. It's the center and meaning of history. Everything before that was but a prologue and a prelude. But what about everything after that? Well, that's where we come in.

The creed not only tells us about the past. It also speaks of the future. We believe Jesus Christ will come again in glory to usher in a kingdom that will have no end. We anticipate that kingdom in every Eucharist, when he comes to us in bread and wine. We live in joyful hope for the coming of the "end" of history - when "time no longer shall be," as the Book of Revelations says.

Until that day, we live in the ear of the Church. If the Incarnation represents the past and the second coming represents the future, the Church is always the "present" tense of God's plan for history and for each of our lives.

Now, there's a lot of confusion about the Church - about what it is and what it's for. That too, is another talk for another time.

But simply put, the Church is Jesus Christ risen and alive and working in the world through me and through you. Paul said Christ is "one flesh" with the Church, like a man and woman become one flesh in marriage. We are the Church. In a mystical unity with Christ, we make up the family of God and the kingdom of God. And the Church we see on earth is united inseparably to the Church we can't see in heaven, the communion of saints.

What's the Church for? To continue Christ's mission on earth, the mission of his Incarnation. The mission of love. We're here to proclaim God's love and the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. We're here to make disciples of all nations.

In all this, we have Christ's promise that he will be with us until the end of the age. And he is. Through the Holy Spirit that guards the truth of what the Church teaches. Through the Eucharist and sacraments that sustain and sanctify us on our

journey in this world.

A lot of people don't "get" these connections between the divine and the human, the invisible and the visible, the spiritual and the material. And that leads to a lot of problems. We hear people all the time saying they're upset with "the Church/" Or that "the Church" has let them down. Or that "the Church" has distorted Christ's message and needs to be reformed.

I agree with these people. I'm not satisfied with the Church either. I want the Church to be more holy. I want the Church to purge all the corrupting influences of sin, temptation, and worldliness. I want the Church to be fearless in love, courageous in confronting evil, and eloquent in bearing witness to the Gospel in a culture of greed and despair.

But what those people are really complaining about is the clergy. Their definition of "the Church" includes only the visible leadership of the Church; the pope, the cardinals, the archbishops and bishop, the priests. That's the Church they want to criticize, shake up and turn around.

I'm glad they hold bishops and priest, including me, to high standards. We should be leading holy lives that are an

example for the Church. I only wish these people would remember that the Church includes them, too. When Christ said, "Be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect," he wasn't talking only about the clergy. When he said, "Go and preach the Gospel to all nations," he wasn't talking only about religious professionals. The demands of holiness and radical discipleship apply to every one of us. No excuses. No exceptions.

One of my inspirations was the French Catholic writer, Georges Bernanos. He's most famous for a great novel that I strongly recommend to you, the *Diary of a Country Priest*.

Bernanos was a true prophet of the last century. One of the many things he got right was his thinking about the Church and what it means to be Catholic. He knew the Church in this world was never meant to be a society of the perfect.

He wrote: "The visible Church is not only the ecclesiastical hierarchy. She is you, she is me - which means the Church is not always a pleasant thing. At times it's even been a very unpleasant thing to have to look at the Church up close."

Bernanos knew that if the Church was already holy and perfect, there'd be no place in it for sinners like you and me. He wrote: "Instead of feeling at home, you would stop at the threshold of this congregation of supermen, turning your cap in your hands, like a poor beggar at the door of the Ritz."

The Church is always going to look messy if you only look at the human element. Parliament looks messy. Corporate boardrooms look messy. But remember, unlike those human institutions, the Church is also supernatural and divine. In the

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Church we encounter Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. We hear his word of forgiveness in the confessional. We have communion with his body and blood in the Eucharist.

The whole edifice of the Church - her structures, her teachings, her devotions and sacraments - exists to bring us into contact with Jesus Christ. And through that contact, to transform us into the people that God has created us to be. The Church exists to transform sinners - ordinary men and women like you and me - into saints. This is no ordinary human institution. In fact, there's never been anything like the Catholic Church in the history of the world. And there won't be.

No question about it: the Church needs to be renewed, revitalized. That's why we're here today. We need to understand what Jesus Christ wants from us. What I suggest to you is this: the renewal of the Church begins inside each one of us. If the Church isn't what we want the Church to be, it's because you and I aren't yet the people that Jesus Christ has called us to be.

All of this leads to my second point today. As Catholics, you have an "ecclesial" being and identity. The Church is where you belong. It's where God has called you to be. In the Church you will find God's will for your life.

St. Maximilian Kolbe said that "Every man and woman in this world is assigned a mission by God."

That's true. It's the teaching of the apostles, popes and saints. But can we really believe it? Do you really believe that God has a mission, some special task that he has given you - and only you - to carry out in this world? Do you really believe that you are necessary to God's plan for human history?

What possible divine mission could St Maximilian have been fulfilling in giving up his life for a Jewish prisoner in the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz? Well, the same mission that God gives to each of us: to be holy. To live as children of God. To love as Jesus loved, in all of the unique circumstances of our individual lives. And by our love to spread the love of God to the ends of the earth.

That brings us to my third point: to be a Catholic is to be a missionary. A missionary of God's love. We think of missionaries as people like Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit who sailed off to evangelize China in the 16th century. But most of us are called to be missionaries in a much more ordinary and local way - in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces. We're called to be what Madeleine Delbr el used to call "missionaries without a boat".

Madeleine Delbr el is a great story. As a teen-ager she was a militant atheist who with great seriousness wrote manifestos like: "God is Dead. Long Live Death!" But through reading and later, prayer, she came to understand not only that God is real, but also that he had a plan for her life. She returned to the Church.

In the years before World War II she went to live in an experimental communist city outside of Paris, known as Ivry-sur-Seine. Madeleine lived there the rest of her life, working every day shoulder-to-shoulder with avowed atheists who despised the Church. She became famous for her love and sacrifices for the poor. And she never tired of talking to people about the source of her great love - Jesus Christ.

Madeleine said: "Mission means doing the very work of

Christ wherever we happen to be. We will not be the Church, and salvation will not reach the ends of the earth, unless we help save the people in the very situations in which we live."

That's your mission. To help save the people you come in contact with in your everyday lives - your spouses and children, your coworkers, neighbors and friends.

We're not living in an atheist environment like Madeleine Delbr el. We're living in an environment that's much worse. In fact, in your society and in mine, and throughout Western Europe, we hear talk that this is a "post-Christian moment" in history. That's a polite, academic way of saying that most people go about their days as if the Incarnation never happened.

In his last book, *Memory and Identity*, which he finished shortly before his death in 2005, Pope John Paul II warned about this. He wrote: "Again and again we encounter the signs of an alternative civilization to that built on Christ as 'cornerstone' - a civilization which, even if not explicitly atheist ... is built upon the principle of thinking and acting as if God did not exist."

That's what we're up against. An alternative civilization. The most powerful nations on earth are organized and operating as if they have no need for God. "Practical atheism" has become a world religion.

So what are you going to do? How are we going to convert this world? To get to my last point, I want to suggest an answer from history.

Did you ever wonder how the early Church did it? I mean, how did a handful of men and women, disciples of an obscure man executed as a criminal, wind up changing the world - conquering an empire and founding a whole new civilization on the cornerstone of that executed man's life and teachings? In just a few centuries, without firing a single shot?

I was talking to priests earlier about a little book called *The Rise of Christianity*. It's by one of the world's leading social scientists, Rodney Stark. What's interesting about Stark is that he's a self-professed atheist. Unlike a lot of atheists, he's got no axe to grind against the Church. That's refreshing.

But he's also not about to buy the idea that the Church was successful because it was God's will for the world. Those are claims he can't prove as a scientist. So he set out to study the material, historical and sociological "reasons" for Christianity's success.

Do you know what he concluded? That the Church conquered the empire by the force of her beliefs and teachings. Because people practiced what the Church preached. It was that simple. People lived out their faith. And that living out of their faith had revolutionary consequences.

The most radical Christian belief, Stark said, was the belief in God's love and the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. Today, we take these beliefs for granted. They're clich es today. But originally they marked something very new in the history of religion.

Stark puts it this way: "The simple phrase, 'For God so loved the world ...' would have puzzled an educated pagan. And the notion that the gods care how we treat one another would have been dismissed as patently absurd."

Never before had a religion taught that God loved people

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personally, and that God's love began before the person was even born. Abortion and birth control were rampant in the Roman Empire. Christians rejected it all from the beginning. Why?

Athenagoras, a Christian layman, explained why in an open letter he addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He said: "For we regard the very fetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care." He wrote that in the year 176. Can anyone have any doubt about what he might write to your Parliament today regarding embryonic stem cell research? Can anyone have any doubt about what you should write to them?

Before Christianity came on the scene, no religion had ever taught that God could be found in our neighbor. The world ignored the poor, the hungry, the stranger and the imprisoned. It still does. And yet Jesus said that we find God in our love for these least brethren of ours.

Stark shows how the early Christians' love had concrete consequences that enabled the faith to spread and grow. And I want to leave you today with my last point: that divine love remains the most revolutionary idea in the world today.

Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement back in the States, said God became man to show men and women a new way to be human. "He came to serve," she said, "to show the new Way, the way of the powerless. In the face of Empire, the Way of Love."

We are not powerless in the face of today's unbelieving and alternative civilization. We can turn this world upside down if only we're willing to love - the kind of Christian love that is vastly more than just a warm felling; the kind of love that breaks us open into something entirely new; the kind of love that bears fruit in our personal zeal, courage, justice, mercy and apostolic action.

So I leave you with this: Love well. Put your belief into practice. Do everything for the love of God, even the little things you have to do each day. Love those who don't love you. Love expecting nothing in return. Love and you will find Jesus. Love



and those you love will find Jesus, too. Love, and through your actions, God will change this world.

One of my favorite stories about Mother Teresa is about the time she found a woman on the streets who was covered in sores that were dirty and infected and crawling with insects. Mother Teresa took her in and began cleaning her up. All the while, the

woman was screaming at her, showering her with curses and insults. At one point the woman screamed: "Why are you doing this? People don't do things like this. Who taught you?" Mother Teresa said, "My God taught me." The woman quieted down and asked who her god was. Mother Teresa responded: "You know my God. My God is called love."

My friends, our God is called love. And our God is calling you to follow Him in remaking the face of the world.

# Call to Holiness 2007

## *moves to new venue*

The 9th Annual "Call to Holiness" Conference will be held this year at a new venue - the St Ignatius Church Hall in Kensington Terrace, Toowong, Brisbane. This Hall is easily accessible by train from the City to Toowong Station. Map Reference is UBD Map 158. Tell your friends of this change.

Catechesis (or instruction and teaching of the Faith) will be the theme. This is based on the Pope John Paul II document *Catechesi Tradendae* issued in 1979. The usual variety and standard of the speakers can be anticipated. These include Dr John Fleming President of Campion College Sydney, the first Catholic liberal arts college in Australia as well as two speakers from the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office: Anthony Cleary, now Director in charge of RE and Evangelisation - a dynamic speaker who has spoken at a Call to Holiness Conference before; and Sue Moffat, a highly experienced educator and administrator. Pope Benedict XVI has voiced his concern that the role of Sacred Music in catechesis is often neglected: Rev Fr Peter Brock from Newcastle is an expert in this field. Fr Greg Jordon SJ, well known to us all, will speak on the hot-button subject of liturgy in catechesis.

Date is the Saturday 13th of October. Conference brochure is enclosed.

### **PRAY FOR VOCATIONS:**

Please offer Masses and pray the Rosary for our Bishops, Priests and religious; for our organisations; and for more vocations to the Priesthood and religious life.



*Loving God, each member of our family is a special gift from you. You have given each of us gifts and talents so that we may enjoy life but also so we can share with others. Generous and loving people are needed for service and leadership in our Church.*

*Help us to know how to encourage and support each other so that we can respond generously to this need. We know that you will be with us, invite us to become the kind of people you desire us to be. Help us to trust in you and in each other. Amen.*

# OBSERVATIONS

- *Pope Benedict XVI*

Meeting of the Holy Father Benedict XVI  
with the clergy of the Dioceses of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso,  
Church of St Justin Martyr, Auronzo di Cadore  
Tuesday, 24 July 2007

**Fr Claudio:** *The question I wanted to ask you is about the formation of conscience, especially in young people, because today it seems more and more difficult to form a consistent conscience, an upright conscience. Good and evil are often confused with having good and bad feelings, the more emotive aspect. So I would like to hear your advice. Thank you.*

**Benedict XVI:** ... I offer my heartfelt thanks to all of you who have come here in such large numbers during the holiday season. To see a church full of priests is encouraging because it shows us that there are priests. The Church is alive, despite the increasing problems in our day and especially in the Western hemisphere. The Church is still alive and has priests who truly desire to proclaim the Kingdom of God; she is growing and standing up to these complications that we perceive in our cultural situation today. Now, to a certain extent, this first question reflects a problem of Western culture, since in the last two centuries the concept of "conscience" has undergone a profound transformation. Today, the idea prevails that only what is quantifiable can be rational, which stems from reason. Other things, such as the subjects of religion and morals, should not enter into common reason because they cannot be proven or, rather, put to the "acid test", so to speak. In this situation, where morals and religion are as it were almost expelled from reason, the subject is the only ultimate criterion of morality and also of religion, the subjective conscience which knows no other authority. In the end, the subject alone decides, with his feelings and experience, on the possible criteria he has discovered. Yet, in this way the subject becomes an isolated reality and, as you said, the parameters change from one day to the next. In the Christian tradition, "conscience", "conscientia", means "with knowledge": that is, ourselves, our being is open and can listen to the voice of being itself, the voice of God. Thus, the voice of the great values is engraved in our being and the greatness of the human being is precisely that he is not closed in on himself, he is not reduced to the material, something quantifiable, but possesses an inner openness to the essentials and has the possibility of listening. In the depths of our being, not only can we listen to the needs of the moment, to material needs, but we can also hear the voice of the Creator himself and thus discern what is good and what is bad. Of course, this capacity for listening must be taught and encouraged. The commitment to the preaching that we do in church consists of precisely this: developing this very lofty capacity with which God has endowed human beings for listening to the voice of truth and also the voice of values. I would say, therefore, that a first step would be to make people aware that our very nature carries in itself a moral message, a divine message that must be deciphered. We can become increasingly better acquainted with it and listen to it if our inner hearing is open and

developed. The actual question now is how to carry out in practice this education in listening, how to make human beings capable of it despite all the forms of modern deafness, how to ensure that this listening, the Ephphatha of Baptism, the opening of the inner senses, truly takes place. In taking stock of the current situation, I would propose the combination of a secular approach and a religious approach, the approach of faith. Today, we all see that man can destroy the foundations of his existence, his earth, hence, that we can no longer simply do what we like or what seems useful and promising at the time with this earth of ours, with the reality entrusted to us. On the contrary, we must respect the inner laws of creation, of this earth, we must learn these laws and obey these laws if we wish to survive. Consequently, this obedience to the voice of the earth, of being, is more important for our future happiness than the voices of the moment, the desires of the moment. In short, this is a first criterion to learn: that being itself, our earth, speaks to us and we must listen if we want to survive and to decipher this message of the earth. And if we must be obedient to the voice of the earth, this is even truer for the voice of human life. Not only must we care for the earth, we must respect the other, others: both the other as an individual person, as my neighbour, and others as communities who live in the world and have to live together. And we see that it is only with full respect for this creature of God, this image of God which man is, and with respect for our coexistence on this earth, that we can develop. And here we reach the point when we need the great moral experiences of humanity. These experiences are born from the encounter with the other, with the community. We need the experience that human freedom is always a shared freedom and can only function if we share our freedom with respect for the values that are common to us all. It seems to me that with these steps it will be possible to make people see the need to obey the voice of being, to respect the dignity of the other, to accept the need to live our respective freedom together as one freedom, and through all this to recognize the intrinsic value that can make a dignified communion of life possible among human beings. Thus, as has been said, we come to the great experiences of humanity in which the voice of being is expressed. We especially come to the experiences of this great historical pilgrimage of the People of God that began with Abraham. In him, not only do we find the fundamental human experiences but also, we can hear through these experiences the voice of the Creator himself, who loves us and has spoken to us. Here, in this context, respecting the human experiences that point out the way to us today and in the future, I believe that the Ten Commandments always have a priority value in which we see the important signposts on our way. The Ten Commandments reinterpreted, relived in the light of Christ, in the light of the life of the Church and of her experiences, point to certain fundamental and essential values. Together, the Fourth and Sixth Commandments suggest the importance of our body, of respecting the laws of the body and of sexuality and love, the value of faithful love, of the family; the Fifth Commandment

points to the value of life and also the value of community life; the Seventh Commandment regards the value of sharing the earth's goods and of a fair distribution of these goods and of the stewardship of God's creation; the Eighth Commandment points to the great value of truth. If, therefore, in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Commandments we have love of neighbour, in the Seventh we have the truth. None of this works without communion with God, without respect for God and God's presence in the world. In any case, a world without God becomes an arbitrary and egoistic world. There is light and hope only if God appears. Our life has a meaning which we must not produce ourselves but which precedes us and guides us. In this sense, therefore, I would say that together, we should take the obvious routes which today even the lay conscience can easily discern. We should therefore seek to guide people to the deepest voices, to the true voice of the conscience that is communicated through the great tradition of prayer, of the moral life of the Church. Thus, in a process of patient education, I think we can all learn to live and to find true life.

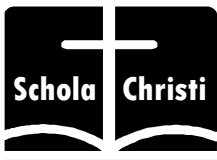
**Fr Mauro:** *Your Holiness, in exercising our pastoral ministry we are increasingly burdened by many duties. Our tasks in the management and administration of parishes, pastoral organization and assistance to people in difficulty are piling up. I ask you, what are the priorities we should aim for in our ministry as priests and parish priests to avoid fragmentation on the one hand and on the other, dispersion? Thank you.*

**Benedict XVI:** That is a very realistic question, is it not? I am also somewhat familiar with this problem, with all the daily procedures, with all the necessary audiences, with all that there is to do. Yet, it is necessary to determine the right priorities and not to forget the essential: the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. On hearing your question, I remembered the Gospel of two weeks ago on the mission of the 70 disciples. For this first important mission which Jesus had them undertake, the Lord gave them three orders which on the whole I think express the great priorities in the work of a disciple of Christ, a priest, in our day too. The three imperatives are: to pray, to provide care, to preach. I think we should find the balance between these three basic imperatives and keep them ever present as the heart of our work. Prayer: which is to say, without a personal relationship with God nothing else can function, for we cannot truly bring God, the divine reality or true human life to people unless we ourselves live them in a deep, true relationship of friendship with God in Jesus Christ. Hence, the daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist is a fundamental encounter where the Lord speaks to me and I speak to the Lord who gives himself through my hands. Without the prayer of the Hours, in which we join in the great prayer of the entire People of God beginning with the



Psalms of the ancient people who are renewed in the faith of the Church, and without personal prayer, we cannot be good priests for we would lose the essence of our ministry. The first imperative is to be a man of God, in the sense of a man in friendship with Christ and with his Saints. Then comes the second command. Jesus said: tend the sick, seek those who have strayed, those who are in need. This is the Church's love for the marginalized and the suffering. Rich people can also be inwardly marginalized and suffering. "To take care of" refers to all human needs, which are always profoundly oriented to God. Thus, as has been said, it is necessary for us to know our sheep, to be on good terms with the people entrusted to us, to have human contact and not to lose our humanity, because God was made man and consequently strengthened all dimensions of our being as humans. However, as I said, the human and the divine always go hand in hand. To my mind, the sacramental ministry is also part of this "tending" in its multiple forms. The ministry of Reconciliation is an act of extraordinary caring which the person needs in order to be perfectly healthy. Thus, this sacramental care begins with Baptism, which is the fundamental renewal of our life, and extends to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. Of course, all the other sacraments and also the Eucharist involve great care for souls. We have to care for people but above all - this is our mandate - for their souls. We must think of the many illnesses and moral and spiritual needs that exist today and that we must face, guiding people to the encounter with Christ in the sacrament, helping them to discover prayer and meditation, being silently recollected in church with this presence of God. And then, preaching. What do we preach? We proclaim the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God is not a distant utopia in a better world which may be achieved in 50 years' time, or who knows when. The Kingdom of God is God himself, God close to us who became very close in Christ. This is the Kingdom of God: God himself is near to us and we must draw close to this God who is close for he was made man, remains man and is always with us in his Word, in the Most Holy Eucharist and in all believers. Therefore, proclaiming the Kingdom of God means speaking of God today, making present God's words, the Gospel which is God's presence and, of course, making present the God who made himself present in the Holy Eucharist. By interweaving these three priorities and, naturally, taking into account all the human aspects, including our own limitations that we must recognize, we can properly fulfil our priesthood. This humility that recognizes the limitations of our own strength is important as well. All that we cannot do, the Lord must do. And there is also the ability to delegate and to collaborate. All this must always go with the fundamental imperatives of praying, tending and preaching.

*With acknowledgement to  
Zenit News Service*



## About Fasting

*How to Think Properly About Fasting by  
Bro. Ignatius Mary (Hermit of St. Michael)*

The subject of fasting is one that causes much confusion and even guilt which Satan can then use to beat over our heads. Offered here, therefore, are guidelines on how we should think about fasting.

The purpose of fasting is to participate in the saving mysteries of Christ, to share in His suffering, to express our commitment and devotion to God.

First, let us review the precepts of the Church concerning fasting and penance in relation to food.

There are three mandatory fasts and four mandatory acts of abstinence the Church requires.

The Church requires that we fast on:

1. Ash Wednesday
2. Good Friday
3. days in which we receive communion - a one hour fast before receiving our Lord.

The definition of a fast under current legislation for #1 & #2 above is "one main meal and two lesser meals which together do not equal an amount of the main meal." This requirement is for all baptized and confirmed Catholics from the day after their 18th birthday to the day after their 59th birthday.

The drinking of ordinary liquids throughout the day is permissible.

These Days of Fasting are matters of serious obligation unless one receives a dispensation for some good reason. Good reasons include special dietary requirements, requirements of medication or medical conditions, pregnant or nursing mothers, the need to maintain strength for certain types of work that must be performed on fasting days, etc.

Certainly, one should ask their physician if there is any question at all of a fast being contraindicated by one's personal health or medical condition.

When a dispensation is needed, it must come from one's pastor, confessor, or priestly spiritual director. One cannot give oneself a dispensation. Many Pastors will give a blanket dispensation for the sick or to pregnant and nursing mothers, for example, posted in the parish bulletin. When such dispensation is given, either individually or communally, some other means of doing penance must be substituted (i.e. works of charity, alms giving, prayer).

The definition of fast for #3, the Eucharistic Fast, is a TOTAL fast of all food and liquids (except water). This fast may be reduced to 15 minutes for those who are sick or who must eat before receiving the Eucharist for some good reason.

The Church requires that we Abstain from meat on:

1. Ash Wednesday
2. Good Friday
3. All Fridays of Lent
4. all other Fridays of the year (however, on Fridays other than Good Friday and Lenten Fridays, an alternate penance may be performed, such as works of charity, alms giving, or prayer).

All Catholics from the day after their 14th birthday to the end of their lives are required to observe these rules of abstinence. This is a serious obligation.

In this abstinence, the law forbids the use of meat; but fish, eggs, milk products, condiments made of animal fat are okay. Also permissible are soups flavored with meat, meat gravy, and sauces.

The obligation to abstain from meat is not in force on days celebrated as solemnities such as Christmas, Sacred Heart, etc.

Dispensations may be given under the same conditions as specified in the section above on fasts.

These are our obligations as Catholics. ALL OTHER FORMS of fasts for whatever reasons are purely voluntary. Only the above is required.

Now what about devotional fasts? What if we do feel called to perform some devotional fast?

The devotional fast called for by our Lady - the bread and water fast on Wednesdays and Fridays - is also purely voluntary in nature. If one feels called to do it, then one should do it, as long as it is remembered that this fast, and all other devotional fasts, are purely voluntary and thus is not required to be a good Catholic.

Since we in this country are not used to going without, it is also suggested that we not beat ourselves up if we cannot live up to such dramatic fasts and bread and water. For those interested in the more severe fasts it is suggested that one start with a less severe fast and work their way up to the more severe forms ...

Guiding points to consider when fasting:

1. Devotional Fasts are VOLUNTARY and one can be a good Catholic without doing some particular voluntary fast no matter how others might promote them. Though a devoted Catholic should be doing something more than the minimum requirements.
2. One can work up to the full bread and water fast, or other fasting formula, without feeling like they are cheating. God understands. He understands that those of us not used to such sacrifice must work into it.
3. We should NEVER forget that fasting should certainly not interfere with our health or with any medical treatment. One would be wise to consult with one's doctor if ANY kind of medication is taken, or if one has any sort of medical condition.
4. Fasting should not cause those around us to suffer. The rest of the family should not be affected and should be able to enjoy full and normal meals even if the "cook" in the family, or any other member of the family, is on a fast. If this cannot be done, then it calls into question the prudence or even the calling to do the fast.
5. A fast must be a joyful fast. If it makes us grumpy or places us in any other form of a bad mood, then again it calls into question the prudence or the calling to do the fast. This sort of thing could also be a sign that we are being too severe on the fast. Lighten up a little and see if we still have the negative attitudes.

The point is the devotion, not a legalistic adherence to a formula of fasting. ...

If God is calling us to a regular devotional fast such as the Wednesday/Friday fast, this is wonderful and is a great spiritual discipline. But do not feel obligated to this "particular" fasting formula. Do whatever we are called to do, whatever that is. ►

# Eucharistic Adoration

My child, you need not know much in order to please Me; only love Me dearly. Speak to Me as you would to your mother, if she had taken you in her arms.

*Have you no one to recommend to Me?* Tell Me the names of your relations; of your friends; after each name add what you wish Me to do for them. Ask a great deal: I love generous hearts that forget themselves for others. Tell me about the poor whom you want to help, the sick whom you have seen suffer, the sinner whom you would convert, the persons who are alienated from you, and whose affections you wish to win back. For all recite fervent prayer that comes from the heart; and surely the prayers are heartfelt which we say for those whom we love, and who love us.

*Have you no favours to ask for yourself?* Write, if you like a long list of all your wishes - all needs of your soul - and come and read it to Me. Tell Me simply how self-indulgent you are, how selfish, how cowardly, how idle; ask Me to help to you improve. Poor child! do not blush! There are in heaven many saints who had the same faults as you; they prayed to me, and little by little, they was cured. Do not hesitate to ask for the goods of body - for health- for memory, for success. I can give you everything, and I always give when the gifts make souls more holy. What do you want today, My child? Oh, if you knew how I long to do you good! Have you no plans to interest you? Tell Me all about them. Do they concern your vocation?

What do you think of? What would you like? Are you planning some pleasure for your mother, for your family, for your guardian? What do you wish to do for them? And have you no thoughts of zeal for Me?

Are you not anxious to do a little good for the souls of your friends, for those whom you love, and who, perhaps, forget Me? Tell Me who interests you, what motives urge you, what means you wish to take.

*Confide to Me your failures; I will show you the cause.* Whom do you wish to see interested in your work? I am the Master of all hearts, My child, and I lead them gently where I please. I will place about you those who are necessary to you; never fear!

*Have you nothing to annoy you?* My

child, tell Me your annoyances, with every detail. Who has pained you? Who has wounded your self-love? Who has treated you contemptuously? Tell Me all, and then say that you forgive and forget; and I will give you My blessing.

*Do you dread something painful?* Is there in your soul a vague fear which seems unreasonable, and yet torments you? Trust fully in My providence. I am here, I see everything; I will not leave you.

Are there about you friends who seem less kind than formerly, who neglect you through indifference or forgetfulness, without your having consciously done anything to wound them? Pray for them, and I will restore them to you, if their companionship is good for you.

*Have you no joys to tell Me?* Why not confide to Me your pleasures? Tell Me what has happened since yesterday to console you, to make you happy, to give you joy. An unexpected visit has done you good; a fear has suddenly dispelled; you have met with unlooked-for success; you have received some mark of affection - a letter, a present; some trial has left you stronger than you supposed. All these things, My child, I obtained for you. Why are you not grateful? Why do you not say, "I thank You"? Gratitude draws benefits, and the benefactor loves to be reminded of his bounty.

*Have you no promises to make Me?* You know I read the very bottom of your heart. Men are deceived, but not God; be frank.



Are you resolved to avoid that occasion of sin, to give up the object which leads you astray - not to read that book which excites your imagination; to withdraw your friendship from that person who is irreligious, and whose presence disturbs the peace of your soul? Will you go at once and be kind to that companion who annoyed you?

Well, My child, go now and resume your daily work. Be silent, be honest, be patient, be charitable, love very much the Blessed Mother of Jesus; and tomorrow bring Me a heart even more devoted and loving. Tomorrow I shall have new favours for you.

*Blessed Sacrament Pamphlet,  
P.O. Box 640358, Kenner, LA 70064*

◀When we do a fast, we shouldn't feel guilty because we cannot do it in its fullness right away. God understands if we need to work our way into it slowly.

A final note: As consecrated and devout Catholics we should be going the extra mile or two or three. We are not the "Church of the Minimum Standards". The precepts of the Church enumerated at the beginning of this essay are only "minimum" standards that anyone who claims to be Catholic must follow.

As devout Catholics we should be doing more. It doesn't have to be the Wednesday/Friday formula, but we should be doing

something more than the Church's minimum expectation. If medical or other reasons make fasting too difficult, impossible, or imprudent then we ought to do some other form of mortification.

The goal of our fasting, abstinence, and mortification in whatever form it takes is to participate in the saving mysteries of Christ, to share in His suffering, and to express our commitment and devotion to God.

*St. Michael Cyberspace Scriptorium & Library  
<http://www.saint-mike.org/library/ahermit/fasting.asp>*

## The Transfiguration of Jesus on the Mountain

*EDITORS NOTE: THIS REFLECTION BY THE LATE TIM PICKFORD REMINDS US THAT POPE JOHN PAUL II, IN GIVING US THE FIVE MYSTERIES OF LIGHT TO ADD TO THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY, INCLUDED THE "TRANSFIGURATION". HOW RARELY DO WE HEAR A HOMILY ON THIS EVENT. HOW OFTEN DOES IT RECEIVE EVEN A PASSING REFERENCE? IT IS A DAUNTING SUBJECT FOR MOST OF US AND ITS INCLUSION BY JOHN PAUL II IS, FOR MANY, THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE GIVEN THIS PIVOTAL EVENT, THIS MANIFESTATION OF THE BLESSED TRINITY, THIS FULFILMENT OF THE OLD LAW IN THE NEW, THE EXTRAORDINARY SIGNIFICANCE IT DEMANDS. - ML*

The fourth Mystery of Light centres on the 'transfiguration' (in greek: 'metamorphosis') of Christ – a term which signifies a change in form or appearance. In the context of the Gospels, it refers to that vision which was given to Peter, James and John of Jesus in his glorified form.

The account of the Transfiguration is given in all three synoptic gospels – Matthew 17: 1-13, Mark 9:1-9 and Luke 9: 28-36. There we are told that Jesus took with Him three apostles, Peter, James and John – the apostles that were chosen to accompany Jesus on three separate occasions; when He raised the daughter of Jarius to life (cf Mk 5: 35-43); now at the Transfiguration and finally in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf Mk: 14-35).

The deliberate choice of these three companions has something to tell us of the structure of the Church that Jesus was founding. We know from St Luke's Gospel that Jesus had 72 disciples whom He sent out two by two to prepare for His coming among the people (cf Lk 10:1) Only twelve of them were chosen to be apostles (cf Lk 9: 1-6) and of the twelve only Peter, James and John were chosen to come with Him on these special occasions already mentioned, and of these three, only Peter was chosen to be the foundational Rock of the Church (cf Mt 16: 16-20). In other words, Jesus had in mind an hierarchical Church in which the members had varying degrees of responsibility in the Kingdom. All of us, like the 72 disciples, are bound to prepare the way for the Coming of the Lord in their own lives and in the lives of others, but only some of us are chosen to be priests, fewer still are chosen to be bishops, and only one can be recognised as the visible Head of the Church – the Vicar of Christ on Earth.

On this particular occasion of the Transfiguration, Jesus not only manifests His glory but also meets two key Old Testament figures – Moses, who represents the Law, and Elijah, who represents the Prophets (which are the Old Testament equivalents of our Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition). In this we find Jesus establishing beyond any doubt the fact that His mission is one of fulfilling the Law and the Prophets and not of creating a new religion. Hence it is that the Church's beginnings are to be found in the calling of Abraham. St Peter reminds us that we in turn are a chosen people (cf 1P 2:9) – the younger sons of Abraham. If we examine the three different accounts of the Transfiguration we find that the Gospel writers provide us with three different ways of viewing the same event. St Matthew tells us: "He was transfigured before them. And His

face did shine as the Sun; and his garments became as white as snow" (2). In this the parallel with Moses is established, for when Moses spoke with God on the mountain, his face also shone so brightly the people did not want to look at him, forcing him to wear a veil in their presence (cf 2Cor 3: 12-16). So also the cloud which covered Jesus and the voice coming from the cloud drive home the parallels so that we can look on Jesus as the Second Moses – the New Leader who will take His people from the wilderness of this life to the Land which flows with Milk and Honey which is Heaven. If we turn to St. Mark however, we

find that the Gospel writer highlights the changed appearance that came over Christ "And his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow so as no fuller on earth can make white". In other words, this glorification of Christ is no mundane metamorphosis but something which points to the heavenly glorification of the Lord.

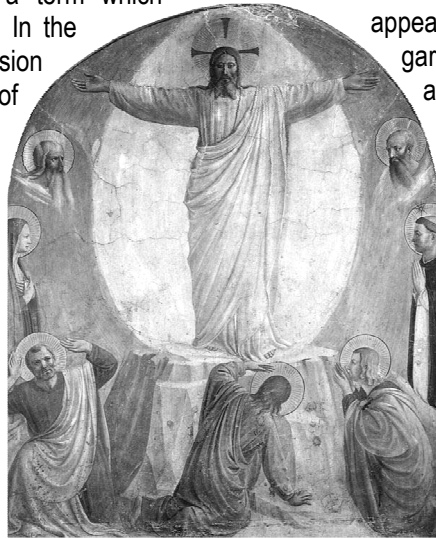
Finally St Luke speaks of the change which occurred in Christ's countenance and His clothes but mentions a detail that neither of the other two includes: "And behold two men were talking with Him. And they were Moses and Elias appearing in majesty." "And they spoke of his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem" (30-31, my emphasis). In other words Luke

recognises the essential link between this event and the sacrifice that Christ was about to make in giving up His Life for the salvation of the world.

Apart from these finer points of emphasis, we find that in other respects the three Gospels agree remarkably: the three apostles are shown as unable to recognise what is going on – they are afraid and sleepy and speak without knowing what they are saying, wanting to detain the heavenly visitors and Christ by offering to build them tents. Yet, in all this, Jesus is teaching them a lesson which will take on a great importance in their later lives – and not just for the three but for all of us. The one unmistakable message we can all hear, however, is the recognition of the Father of Jesus Who not only tells the apostles He is well pleased with His Son, but that they (and we) must also **listen to Him**. This 'listen' is the root of 'obey' (Latin *audire* 'to listen' and *obedire* = *obaudire* 'to obey'). Obedience therefore implies not only listening but also doing what is told.

In this theophany, then, God prepares His bishops and pope for their mission which is to be Christ's continuing presence in the world. He confirms the command of Mary (at Cana in Galilee) to "Do whatever He tells you" and He provides us with a glimpse of the destiny that is ours. In His Transfiguration, He shows briefly the divinisation of our human nature that we can all look forward to – when our own faces will shine, and our own clothes will be made white as snow (cf Rev 19:8;22: 14) This sight can strengthen us in times of trial; it can become a point of reference when we begin to lose our way and, above all, it is a reminder of the coming Passion and Death of Christ which we participate in by taking up our cross daily and following Him.

- Tim Pickford





# Date Claimers:

## LATIN MASS

### QUEENSLAND

**Buranda:** St Luke's, Taylor St - Sunday, 9.30am  
**Fortitude Valley:** Legion House, St Paul's Tce - Wed. 7.30pm  
**Rockhampton North:** St Mary's, Nobbs St - 2nd Sundays, 7.30am  
**West Mackay:** St Francis of Assisi Chapel, 1st Saturdays, 9am  
**Cairns:** Our Lady Help of Christians, 18 Balaclava Rd.  
 - First Saturday of the month, 10.30am

### VICTORIA

**Geelong:** info at [http://www.geocities.com/geelong\\_latin\\_mass](http://www.geocities.com/geelong_latin_mass)

### ACT

**Canberra:** John XXIII Chapel at Australian National Uni  
 - Sunday 11.30am: Missa Cantata

### PRAY FOR AN END TO ABORTION

**Spring Hill:** 383 Wickham Tce, outside clinic - Saturday am  
 Enquiries: ph. 3324 2575

**Bowen Hills:** 8 Campbell St, outside clinic - Fridays 7-9am  
**Salisbury:** Hayling St, outside clinic - Every Friday 7-8 am  
**Morayfield:** 40 Cresthaven Dve, outside clinic - Tuesday am.s  
 Enquiries: Bob 5496 7884

**Rockhampton:** 123 Bolsover St, outside clinic  
 - from 7.30am, alternate Fridays  
**Cairns:** Day Surgery, Cnr Florence & Grafton St.s  
 - Friday 12.30 - 1.30pm  
**Red Hill:** St Brigid's - Vigil Mass for Life -  
 - 2nd Saturday of every month, 7.30am  
 followed by prayer vigil opposite abortuary in Wickham Terrace.

### RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES

**EWTN** - **Brisbane:** BRIZ31, Sundays, 10-11am *and now*  
 Monday to Friday 12.30 - 1.30 pm  
 - **Perth:** TV Channel Access 31, Sundays 1-2pm

### "The Gate of Heaven"

on Radio Fremantle, 107.91FM, Sundays, 7.30pm.  
 Hosted by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate  
 - now featuring EWTN Radio Programmes.

### GROUPS

#### **Apologetics Study Group**

**Banyo:** Parish Centre, 352 St Vincents Rd  
 - every Friday night (except school holidays)  
 Enquiries: Vince McHugh - 3267 0265.

#### **Toowoomba:**

four Apologetics Study Groups.

Details: Mavis Power - 4632 5523



SEND DETAILS OF YOUR EVENT TO THE EDITOR.  
 EVENTS MUST BE IN ACCORD WITH OUR OBJECTIVES

## EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

**Brisbane:** St Stephen's Cathedral - Mon-Fri 10.30am-12.15pm  
**Dorrington:** St Michael's, 250 Bank St  
 - Mon, Wed 7pm-12mn; First Fridays 7pm-1am Sat.  
**Fortitude Valley:** Villa Maria Chapel, 123 Warren St  
 Mon-Fri 6.30am-4pm, Sat-Sun: 10.30am-4.30pm  
**Geebung:** St Kevin's, 251 Newman Rd -  
 Monday after 8.40am Mass - 10am (except school holidays)  
**Marian Valley, Canungra:** Monday - Friday, 10am - 3pm  
**Toowong:** St Ignatius' - Saturday 7-10pm  
**Toowoomba:**  
 Sacred Heart Church, 302 North St, Wilsonton,  
 - every First Friday 11am-12.10pm  
 'The Shrine', Ruthven St - Mon-Fri 9am-4.30pm  
**Woodford:** St Mary's - Fridays after 8am Mass  
**Nambour:** St Joseph's, Currie St  
 - 2nd & 4th Sundays, 11am-4pm  
**Clear Island Waters:** Sacred Heart Church  
 Tuesdays 9.30-11.30am; Fridays 7.30-9.30pm  
 ALL NIGHT ADORATION: First Friday, 7.30pm - 7.30am Saturday.  
**Surfers Paradise:** St Vincent's Church  
 Mon, Wed, Fri, 5.20-6.30am; Tues, Thurs, 6-6.30am;  
 Thursdays 9.45-11am.

### Mass and Adoration

#### **New Farm:**

Holy Spirit Church, Villiers St  
 - Every Friday, 8pm

#### **Bray Park:** Holy Spirit, Sparkes Rd

- Wed after 8am Mass 'til 9pm;  
 - 1st Friday after 7 pm Mass until 8 am Saturday

#### **Rockhampton North:**

St Mary's, Nobbs St  
 - Thursday 10.00 am - 10.00 pm weekly

#### **Clermont:** St Mary's, Capricorn St

- Thursday 9am - Friday 9am before First Friday each month

### Mass, Rosary, Benediction & all night Adoration

**Bowen Hills:** Our Lady of Victories, Roche Ave  
 - Every 13th of the month, from 7.15pm

#### **Coorparoo:** St James', 165 Old Cleveland Rd

**Gordon Park:** St Carthage, 115 Beaconsfield Tce  
 First Friday/Saturday from 7pm in honour of the Sacred &  
 Immaculate Hearts. Also confessions.

**Gordonvale:** St Michael's, every First Friday - Mass 7pm,  
 Adoration vigil from 7.30pm through to Saturday 7am Mass.

#### **Jindalee:** Twelve Apostles Church, Valambee Rd

- 1st Saturday after 5pm Mass through to 8am Mass Sunday  
 Contact: Sue Martin 0418 792 021

**New Farm:** Holy Spirit Church Villiers St - Fridays - Mass 8pm,  
 followed by Adoration till 6am Mass Saturday

#### **Toowoomba:**

Sacred Heart, 302 North St, Wilsonton  
 - Tuesday 6.30am Mass then Adoration (& Mass 12.10pm)  
 until Wednesday Benediction 6.20am, Mass 6.30am  
 - Friday Adoration until Sat. Benediction 8.20am, Mass 8.30am



I reckon ...

## WE'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH

- Kathleen Ashworth

Talk about splinter groups.

In 1519, rebel Catholic priest Martin Luther started "The Reformation" and the Lutheran Church. In 1534, King Henry VIII threw a tantrum about not being given an annulment by Pope Clement VII, and proclaimed himself head of the Church of England. Despite this, Anglicans were still claiming to be the Catholic Church in England so the actual Catholics in England were officially branded as Roman Catholic in 1623. (Tony Hadland, "Thames Valley Recusants" <http://www.hadland.me.uk/>)

In 1559, another rebel Catholic priest, John Knox, jumped on the reformation bandwagon and started the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. In 1581, Robert Browne and Robert Harrison split from the Church of England to start Congregational Churches. John Smyth fled to Holland to escape the persecution of 'separatists' by James I and started his Baptist Churches in 1608. In 1650, at his trial for blasphemy, a judge called George Fox's followers 'Quakers'. In 1784, John Wesley's 'Methodist Society' separated from the Church of England. In approximately 1820, Brethren churches started, mainly by people leaving the Church of England. Then, the Exclusive Brethren churches separated from them in 1848.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) was formally organised in America on April 6, 1830 under the leadership of Joseph Smith Jr.

William Miller, a Baptist preacher, calculated that Jesus would return to Earth sometime between 21 March 1843 and 21 March 1844. His teachings precipitated the Adventist movement that spawned the Seventh Day Adventist church and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Pentecostal churches started in America in 1900 and the Independent Charismatic churches started in the U.K. around 1960.

These are just some of the splits and schisms that have happened in Christianity's history. Each one was started by human beings - some, I'm sure, convinced they were doing the right thing - others patently had a personal agenda.

It beggars belief that, in this 'information age' when a quick internet search can reveal so much, people can remain defiant and committed to - say - a church begun by an uxoricidal megalomaniac who died, stinking and screaming, of syphilis? Or a religion where the founder was able to 'miraculously' translate an ancient document as the writings of Abraham while in Egypt - only to have it properly translated later as part of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead", dealing with ancient funeral rituals and pagan gods, etc.

And to continue to follow a religion whose founder has definitively - and wrongly - predicted the second coming of Christ two or three times ... well, that takes a real leap of faith!

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." (Matt25:13)

Of course, there is always a fair bit of detritus to sift

through. Amongst the debris are websites swearing to the existence of 'Pope Joan'.

Pope Joan is the story of a girl who pretended to be a boy in order to get an education, entered the priesthood and ended up a pope ... until one day, when mounting a horse, went into labour and delivered a baby. The story is feted by protestants and feminists; feminists love the idea of a woman pulling one over on the male hegemony. The fact that there is no evidence to support the story is, of course, proof that the Church has 'hushed it up'. (Just like the "Da Vinci Code" I guess.) Now, apart from the fact that there is plenty of documentation of the lineage of the Popes - Joan doesn't fit in - I have problems with a couple of details. Being of child-bearing age would place her at a fairly young age for a pope, even for back then, one would think. And, really - horse-riding while in labour? I'm guessing this one was made up by a man!

As Philip Jenkins suggests, "*this "anti-papal legend" has more to do with feminist and anti-Catholic wishful thinking than historical accuracy*" ("The New Anti-Catholicism", 2005, pg. 89, ISBN 0-19-515480-0)

Similarly, "*it is this post-Reformation anti-Catholic "black legend" that created the myths surrounding the Spanish Inquisition. Serious historical studies in the 20th Century have debunked these myths, but they continue to persist in popular imagination.*" (The "Black Legend": The Spanish Inquisition by Robert P. Lockwood, from Catalyst 4/2001)

But, despite the bad press; despite the (in)humanity of English persecutors, Spanish Inquisitors and paedophile priests, despite our secular hegemony and "culture of death", "... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt16:18)

And who started the Catholic Church? Jesus Christ. God Himself. Not some flawed human being. And why does the Catholic Church remain strong and steadfast despite human error and constant attacks? Because, apart from being the "One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church", in His wisdom, Christ left someone to guide us - a 2IC (second-in-charge), as it were.

"I ♥ MY GERMAN SHEPHERD" (bumper sticker).

Someone in a website forum asked: "Why be a Catholic?" The following answer sums it up beautifully and succinctly:

"*There is only one reason to be Catholic: because it is true.*

*Once a person has perceived that the Catholic Church, in her history and doctrine, IS the Church Jesus Himself promised to build upon the rock of Peter and the Church that Christ promised the Holy Spirit would guide "into all the truth," then you have no option but to embrace the Church.*

*Once you understand and believe that the Catholic Church really is Christ's Church, you would deny your faith in Jesus Himself and imperil your soul by failing to act upon your conviction.*" ( 'Mercygate', 21.06.'04

- <http://forums.catholic.com/showthread.php?t=183123> )

✠PRAY FOR OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE BENEDICT XVI - MAY THE LORD PRESERVE HIM AND GIVE HIM LIFE, MAKE HIM BLESSED UPON THE EARTH AND DELIVER HIM NOT INTO THE WILL OF HIS ENEMIES. AMEN.

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