

LEPANTO

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The Divine as Land, Source and Mother

In examining the malaise affecting the Catholic archdiocese of Brisbane, *Lepanto* has naturally directed the attention of readers towards the more open, more public and better documented examples of Neo-Gnosticism in the archdiocese:

- St Mary's of South Brisbane, now "St Mary's in Exile", operating in the TLC building;
- the Goddess-worshipping Womenspace; and
- the rustic companion organisation Earthlink at Four Winds, a retreat centre operated by the Sisters of Mercy.

In turn, Frs Kennedy and Fitzpatrick of St Mary's have directed our attention towards the alleged Buddhist enthusiasms of Archbishop John Bathersby; Womenspace has introduced us to what a behind-the-scenes communication refers to as "Wicca friendly priests and bishops". For his part, it seems the archbishop prefers not to respond.

There are some who suggest that "St Mary's in Exile", having left the official Church, is now passé like yesterday's fish and chips: old news. Any such suggestion does not withstand scrutiny. "St Mary's in Exile" remains plugged into the Church on any number of levels, not the least of which is the broad sympathy for Frs Kennedy and Fitzpatrick to be found around the archdiocese and beyond, as the example of the Jesuit publication *Eureka Street*, covered elsewhere in this issue, attests.

The key public issue involved in the departure of St Mary's into exile was whether or not Fr Kennedy would sign up to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This, Fr Kennedy would not do. Another issue, just as central but less remarked on, has been: if not Jesus Christ as Son of God, then what is the prevailing spiritual paradigm at "St Mary's in Exile"? This has been the unmentionable question right through the ongoing saga of St Mary's; that is, Lepanto 13:2

what is the world view or 'cosmology' on offer at St Mary's?

FR TERRY FITZPATRICK

Our examination begins with the Banyo educated Fr Terry Fitzpatrick whose interest in the divine feminine and in nature appears to be if anything more overt since the formal breach with the archdiocese. In his homily on Easter Sunday, 04.04.2010, Fr Fitzpatrick refers to the mythical "God-Men" and "saviour" types in and around Jesus' time, "In Egypt, he was known as Osiris, in Greece he becomes Dionysius, in Asia Minor, he is known as Attis. In Sumeria, and am very pleased to announce, she is known as Inanna. Great to have a woman in there..." (Fr Fitzpatrick does not mention that Inanna, the ancient Sumerian Mother Goddess, was identified with ritual prostitution, human sacrifice and mother-son incest.) In the Easter video on the "St Mary's in Exile" website, Fr Fitzpatrick's homily was followed immediately by a short prayer around a cross decorated with cloths and the seemingly inevitable pentagram stars and butterflies - butterflies being one of the more recognisable symbols of the divine feminine.

In his homily (video and transcript per the "St Mary's in Exile" website) of July 3, Fr Fitzpatrick says, "The realm of God is very near to you, for in God we live and move and have our being. Indigenous peoples were very aware of this. God was everywhere. The sacred infused all of life; this is reflected in this Native American Navajo chant. 'The mountains, I become part of it... The herbs, the fir tree, I become part of it. The morning mists, the clouds, the gathering waters, I become part of it. The wilderness, the dew drops, the pollen... I become part of it.' Our collective sense of being a part of nature, our world, our environment was lost somewhere in our move to go indoors, building bigger and more elaborate buildings - filling them with



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more and more things – Symbolically, removing ourselves from nature, from Mother Earth, from the source of our life. The rhythm of life, the movements of nature, the cycles of the moon, the rise and fall of the tides, the gathering of clouds, the direction of the wind, become insignificant, unimportant, along with so much which connected us to our fragile planet.”

In his NAIDOC homily of July 11/12 2009, Fr Fitzpatrick declared: “Stories passed from generation to generation, speaking of the spirit of the land, the spirit of country. The cinematography and the sound-(s)capas were superb. Truly magical. The land spoke to them, it held their dreaming, their very spirits. As I watched I longed for that same connection to land, to country...”

FR PETER KENNEDY

As *Lepanto* indicated in February 2009, it seemed that “Fr Kennedy has come out into the open with clear and explicit New Age, neo-gnostic statements on the public record only subsequent to his realisation that the game was over.

In his letter of 22 August 2008, the Archbishop had asked a direct question: “At St Mary’s is Jesus Christ accepted as Lord and Saviour, Son of God, or is Jesus regarded as just another Holy person like Buddha or Mohammed?...”

Fr Kennedy’s answer came in his letter of 30 November and it appears evasive: ‘You asked about our position on the Trinity and other dogma. As we have already said, we cannot state the exact beliefs of every community member, moreover we believe this is a question that is not asked of other parishes. We can say, however, that prayers within our liturgies reflect a Triune God and our prayers are enthusiastically expressed by the community. Like other churchgoing Catholics, many believe without question in the Triune God whereas others struggle with the concept, and some may even reject it. We do not ask people to sign a pledge or nominate to which ‘team’ they belong.”

There are further clues to Fr Kennedy’s concept of the divine. For example, in his ABC radio interview with Richard Fidler, Fr Kennedy said, “There is a philosopher, Quentin de Quincey, and he talks about consciousness going right down into the deepest, right down into the merest atoms, like there is a consciousness that the world is sacred, nature is sacred and the human species as part of that, is sacred. So who I truly am is, is, like it really is quite radical really, it’s that consciousness, that awareness, that spirituality, that, you know it’s the God thing, call it spirit, call it soul.”

As *Lepanto* previously pointed out in February 2009, Fr Kennedy’s kind of radical “oneness”, as expressed above, appears to represent a world view or cosmology in which we are all “God”, the Christian God no longer being seen as separate from and above the universe. This, of course, is both an effective denial of the core Christian understanding of the Trinity and Jesus Christ as well as a classic statement of New Age perspective, more than a little reminiscent in fact of the views of the dismissed American Dominican Fr Matthew Fox

and his New Age, Goddess-friendly, effectively pagan “creation spirituality”.

Fr Kennedy has favourably mentioned a range of spiritual paths at different times, including Gnosticism, Advaita Hinduism and the Kabbalah, among others. While Fr Kennedy has, to *Lepanto*’s knowledge, stopped short of publicly invoking “the Goddess” as such, he has endorsed the traditions above where the divine feminine - singular, plural, however conceived - is very much part of the spiritual landscape.

The view of Aboriginality at “St Mary’s in Exile” also offers a similar outlook. At the “Peter Kennedy: The Man Who Threatened Rome” Brisbane book launch, Fr Kennedy spoke about the Aboriginal understanding of the land and in particular referenced Martin Flanagan’s “introduction” (in fact, foreword) to Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody’s book “From Little Things, Big Things Grow”. Fr Kennedy indicated he had used it as a reading, the point being, as Kennedy maintained and as Flanagan had written, that the land was to traditional Aborigines “source and mother”.

COMMUNION WITH THE EARTH

A significant factor which has sometimes been overlooked appears in the St Mary’s Mass Newsletters where “all” recite, “It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified himself. It is the table of communion with the earth in whom Christ became incarnate.” The key words here are “communion with the earth in whom”. Note that earth is personified - “in whom” - and the communion is “with the earth”.

CONCLUSION

Fr Peter Kennedy’s concept of the divine appears essentially the same as the slightly more “out there” Fr Terry Fitzpatrick and that of ex-Dominican Matthew Fox - the divine as land, source and mother, of whom we are all a part. Such a perspective fits within what are often referred to as Mother Earth or Goddess religions - “earth-based” spiritualities if you like, whose inspiration comes more from Jung, Wicca and eastern religions than from the Australian Aboriginal tradition.

The divine as “land, source and mother” locates Fr Kennedy, Fr Fitzpatrick and many of their followers on pretty much the same page as Womenspace, Earthlink and other groups within the Church. The other groups include those who provided the resources to make Womenspace and Earthlink possible such as the local Mercy and Presentation orders, or at least influential groups within those orders.

Naturally, little if any of this will be particularly new to Brisbane’s Archbishop John Bathersby, who has often proclaimed in an unqualified way the need for a “radically inclusive” church and who for so long played the role of protector of St Mary’s, Womenspace and Earthlink.

Lepanto renews its previous offer to Fr Peter Kennedy: Should he have an interest in further clarifying his position or in responding, *Lepanto* is prepared to print anything he may have to say.

- Tim Pemble-Smith



Editorial: 'SPIRITUALITY' AND DEVOTION TO CHRIST: ONE AND THE SAME?

In this issue of *Lepanto*, we take another and closer look at the world view proposed at Fr Peter Kennedy's St Mary's and at controversial artist Fiona Foley and her "Human Search for God" shrine which was removed from St Stephen's Cathedral a few years ago. We again raise a number of matters on which Archbishop Bathersby chooses not to respond, in particular the apparently credible Kennedy / Fitzpatrick claims concerning the archbishop's own alleged Buddhist involvements. The more obvious conclusion open on the uncontested evidence before us is that the archbishop's private religious position is not so far removed from that of Fr Peter Kennedy, Fr Terry Fitzpatrick and their followers at "St Mary's in Exile".

It could perhaps be said that an understanding of these matters might lead some Catholics to lose trust and confidence in the faith. This is not a perspective shared by *Lepanto*. As the Son of God once said, "the truth will set you free." Despite the nature of the situation, ultimately it is better these things are brought to light. As with the paedophile problem in the Church - "filth" in the church, per Cardinal Ratzinger as he then was - the Church will not be reformed and will not prosper again until all the dimensions of the problem are recognised, named and publicly and honestly dealt with. This would naturally involve repentance and moral reform.

With so much of the paedophile problem in the Church involving a man-on-boy element - anything from sixty to eighty percent - there can be no credible denial of the homosexual dimension of the crisis. But, why has there been as much abuse as there has? The answer, of course, lies in the question of spirituality. Aberrant spiritualities lead to aberrant behaviour. Good spirituality leads to good behaviour. The aberrant spiritual practices need to be eliminated and replaced by the tried and tested spiritual practices of the Church. This is not a time for further "experimentation" in matters spiritual; it is time for a return to the known and the true, the kind that rebuild the virtue of hope and the practice of Christian asceticism. This means a prayer life built on such things as the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God, not a prayer life built on New Age or pagan approaches divinizing nature or the self.

We note also the words of paragraph 2113 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, Satanism) power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, 'You cannot serve God and mammon.' Many martyrs died for not adoring 'the Beast' refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is

therefore incompatible with communion with God."

Conspicuously absent in too much of the spirituality on offer around the archdiocese of Brisbane is a full, proper and reliable consideration of the question of spiritual discernment. In order to partly address this deficiency, in this issue (p11) we reproduce Fr John Dreher's article, "The Danger of Centering Prayer". Those interested in building robust, authentic prayer lives and well formed consciences would do well to spend time reading such sources as the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Vatican document "Jesus Christ, The Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian reflection on the 'New Age'" and the former Cardinal Ratzinger's 1989 Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on "Some Aspects of Christian Meditation". Those attracted to 'eastern methods' might find the advice set out in the 1989 letter to be of use.

In *News From The Pews* in October 1999, I noted:



"Archbishop Bathersby is a former spiritual director of Banyo seminary. He enjoys a reputation for being something of an expert in matters of spirituality. Few would understand better than he the need for clear guidelines in spiritual matters.

The fact that such guidance is lacking can only amount to a serious dereliction of duty on his part as Archbishop of Brisbane. It is difficult to overstate the level of irresponsibility involved in the

promotion of the 'spirituality' agenda in this archdiocese.

... For Archbishop Bathersby, the excuse of ignorance or naivety in such matters is simply not open. The reasons why His Grace prefers the term 'spirituality' to simply devotion to Christ are plain enough."

Lepanto suggests that readers avoid in particular those who engage in high risk spiritual activities like contemplating nature, emptying the mind or practicing or teaching meditation, even to children, without, as Fr Dreher indicates, a rigorous scriptural, moral and ascetical foundation.

- Tim Pemble-Smith

LINKS:

- "The Danger of Centering Prayer", <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1997/9711fea1.asp>, by Fr John Dreher
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church, <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/cc.html>
- "Jesus Christ, The Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian reflection on the 'New Age'", http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html, Pontifical Council for Culture, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.
- Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on "Some Aspects of Christian Meditation", 1989, <http://www.cin.org/users/james/files/meditation.htm>, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions." - GK Chesterton, *ILN*, 4/19/30

"There are those who hate Christianity and call their hatred an all-embracing love for all religions." - GK Chesterton, *ILN*, 1/13/06

The Human Search for the Divine - Tim Pemble-Smith

About 10 years ago in the *News From The Pews* series, www.nftp.org.au, I chronicled the curious case of Fiona Foley and her mystery "Human Search for God" shrine which was then in St Stephen's Cathedral. Despite significant controversy, it took nearly eight years before the "shrine" was quietly removed and relocated to a usually locked section of the Francis Rush Centre next door. *News From The Pews* had called for the Archbishop to establish an inquiry, without success and, for that matter, without response.

Mixed race, "urban" Aboriginal contemporary artist Fiona Foley is well known as a "culture warrior" and as a "guerrilla" or "stealth" artist. She is also known for the way she "layers up" meaning in her art, her insider references, her robust sense of humour and her barbed, often controversial art practice.

News From The Pews detailed at some length the hidden content Foley - a "conceptual" artist - had coded into her St Stephen's shrine: how she had included earth, air, fire and water panels - the occult elements of alchemy; how the seven panels could be read to spell "Lucifer"; that she had coded in a reference to Kunapipi, the Aboriginal 'Earth Mother'; the fact that Ms Foley's shrine was in breach of Aboriginal law; how she had coded in numerology and wordplay from the white, western, indeed Aleister Crowley occult; her genital references; her trademark cockatoo ("cock or two") jokes; and how she had in St Stephen's used Aboriginality as a masking device for what was first and foremost a shrine to the white, western occult.

While Foley's shrine was ultimately removed from St Stephen's, the Church held no public inquiry and there was no accounting for how the shrine got there or what had inspired it. The artist's design brief, it was said, could not be found. One of the things which stands out in retrospect about the "Human Search for God" shrine was the extent to which its identified content mirrored concepts which were to surface later at St Mary's, Womenspace and Earthlink - parallel themes, for example, including the divine feminine, the land and various notions of Aboriginal spirituality. To this extent, all four of St Mary's, Womenspace, Earthlink and St Stephen's Cathedral can be seen at one time or another as having shared a common, Neo-Gnostic undercurrent.

Ms Foley was reported in the *Courier-Mail* as saying that her artwork in St Stephen's was just landscapes, a surprising claim for a conceptual artist. At the time, the statement was allowed by the *Courier-Mail* to go effectively unchallenged

even though art critics at the *Courier-Mail* must have known how odd Foley's claim appeared. A relevant question to understanding Ms Foley's artwork in St Stephen's relates to where Ms Foley herself stands spiritually - as she would say, "who you are and where you're coming from". There have long been useful clues to that question available and on the public record. One of them was supplied to Archbishop Bathersby over ten years ago. It is taken from words penned by the critic Martin Thomas in a brochure produced for Foley's 1993 "Lick My Black Art" exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art:

"...just as her installations are shaped by the architecture of the gallery, she draws attention to structural parameters and locates her own expressive voice within. The effect that emerges is perhaps typical of our changed local circumstances where the Mabo judgement has necessitated a profound redefinition of how this country is to be physically occupied and spiritually inhabited. Australia, in this era, can be seen very much as a nexus of competing boundaries."

"The effect that emerges", then, from Ms Foley's art "is perhaps typical of our changed local circumstances" involving "a profound redefinition of how this country is to be physically occupied and spiritually inhabited", "a nexus of competing boundaries". Such words do not come from a perspective which sees inter-faith or inter-religious activity as a friendly, warm-and-fuzzy activity but rather from a view of spiritual competition involving "a profound redefinition of how this country is to be physically occupied and spiritually inhabited". Not a lot of nice "kumbayas" round this particular camp fire.

Applying Martin Thomas' perspective of Foley's art to the context of Ms Foley's former shrine in St Stephen's cathedral, what we have is "a profound redefinition" of how the Cathedral was to be "physically occupied" and "spiritually inhabited". Hence, Foley's encoding of "divine" names into her St Stephen's artwork and hence Foley's otherwise inexplicable use of the term "shrine". If Martin Thomas' analysis of Foley's art is reliable, what we see is "Lucifer" and "Kunapipi" "physically occupying" and "spiritually inhabiting" Foley's shrine and hence St Stephen's. This is precisely the kind of thing a "guerrilla" or "stealth" artist would do.

The question arises: was Brisbane's St Stephen's Cathedral canonically profaned by Foley's shrine? Reason enough, one would think, for an inquiry into how Ms Foley's shrine got into St Stephen's in the first place.



October 7 is the anniversary of the Battle of Lepanto, and the feast of the rosary.

Throughout the sixteenth century, naval clashes with the Turkish fleet had been increasing. Having taken Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Turks were building a fleet (in the modern Gulf of Corinth) with the intention of conquering all of Europe, first by sea, then by land. ...

Pius V, besides his personal penances, enjoined the entire Catholic world to pray the rosary and organized processions throughout Rome for the Marian prayer. On October 7, 1571, while working

with his cardinals, Pius V looked up and said, "A truce to business; our great task at present is to thank God for the victory which he has just given the Christian army."

Indeed, in a few short hours Don Juan of Austria, commander of the Holy Alliance, had won the day, not only defeating the Turkish fleet but also freeing over 12,000 Christian galley slaves from the Turkish ships.

Thus began the feast of Our Lady of Victory, later changed by Pope Gregory XIII to the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and extended to the whole church by Clement XI in 1716. (from Zenit, 05.08.06).

St Mary's in Exile: Interview Video

Somehow, there always seems to be additional material on Frs Peter Kennedy and Terry Fitzpatrick and "St Mary's in Exile" as St Mary's now style themselves. This is reflective of an on-going process of self-revelation of what appears to have been kept in the background before the decision to leave the institutional Church. An item of interest:

➤ EUREKA STREET: "PETER KENNEDY'S FIRST YEAR IN EXILE"

This excerpt comes from Peter Kirkwood and the Jesuit publication Eureka Street:

"This interview with rebel Catholic priest, Peter Kennedy, took place almost exactly 12 months after his departure from St Mary's Parish in South Brisbane. Since leaving, he and his followers have formed a congregation outside the Catholic Church that they call St Mary's-in-Exile... On this anniversary of the split, he (Fr Kennedy) reflects on the state of his community, how he views his priesthood, whether a return to the Catholic fold might be possible, and the importance to him of the mystical approach to religion.

The interview was recorded for Eureka Street at a conference called Common Dreams, a meeting of religious progressives held over four days at St Kilda Town Hall in Melbourne in mid-April 2010.

Interview video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9JbJpFws70&feature=player_embedded

This forum is indicative of where Kennedy sees his new spiritual home. As he says in the interview, one of the first groups he connected with after his departure from the Church was the Progressive Spirituality Network in Brisbane, and St Mary's-in-Exile will probably continue to be part of the progressive Christian movement... It straddles denominational divides, and is probably most clearly seen in its intellectual leaders, the chief one being retired US Episcopalian bishop, John Shelby Spong.

... In the video, Kennedy refers to a book of essays recently published about him and his falling out with the Church. Called Peter Kennedy: the Man who Threatened Rome, it is no mere hagiography. While most writers - and it includes heavyweights like Paul Collins, Martin Flanagan, Hans Kung and Joan Chittister - are in sympathy with him... As the video shows, he (Fr Kennedy) is a man of some eloquence, conviction and charisma, well able to communicate to the broader culture. In these days of shortage of priests, and crisis in the Church on a number of fronts, there is an urgent need for people with his abilities."

(Source: <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aid=21150>)

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

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.



ST THÉRÈSE'S PRAYER FOR PRIESTS
St Thérèse's devotion to the Priesthood is to be found in all its fullness in a prayer which she used to say daily and which she learnt off by heart; this is all the more remarkable in view of her known distaste for lengthy set forms of prayer.

'O Holy Father, may the torrents of love flowing from the sacred wounds of Thy

Divine Son bring forth priests like unto the beloved disciple John who stood at the foot of the Cross; priests: who as a pledge of Thine own most tender love will lovingly give Thy Divine Son to the souls of men.

May Thy priests be faithful guardians of Thy Church, as John was of Mary, whom he received into his house. Taught by this loving Mother who suffered so much on Calvary, may they display a mother's care and thoughtfulness towards Thy children. May they teach souls to enter into close union with Thee through Mary who, as the Gate of Heaven, is specially the guardian of the treasures of Thy Divine Heart.

Give us priests who are on fire, and who are true children of Mary, priests who will give Jesus to souls with the same tenderness and care with which Mary carried the Little Child of Bethlehem.

Mother of sorrows and of love, out of compassion for Thy beloved Son, open in our hearts deep wells of love, so that we may console Him and give Him a generation of priests formed in thy school and having all the tender thoughtfulness of thine own spotless love.'



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 \raying 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 and to defend them with vigour from all attacks no matter from what source they may arise, and to provide mutual support and assistance amongst members.

Womenspace and Sr Anne McLay

In previous issues, *Lepanto* has brought to readers the “evolving” story of Womenspace, the Mercy and Presentation sponsored Gnostic front group whose web blog site has since carried the following:

➤ **“Womenspace – The Next Chapter**

Womenspace is Changing

We have come to a time in the life of Womenspace where we are acknowledging that there is a change in the energy of Womenspace. The loss of our long term home at Kedron last year had a significant impact on all of us and while we said that Womenspace is more than just the buildings, everyone recognised that the Bakery in particular was a special, magical place.

We have not been able to find a new place that is both suitable and affordable. Women need a sense of place and without a home of our own, many women have obviously felt disconnected - many of the events we have held at Heritage Hall, Woolloowin have not been well attended, in spite of a lot of hard work by the Committee. (The exception to this is the Wise Women’s Circles and interestingly, the majority of women attending these are new to Womenspace). At last Sunday’s Winter Solstice, it was a joy to see a mix of long term Womenspace members and newer women who have only recently discovered what Womenspace can offer.

This is a time to recognise the change in energy - to wind down the old Womenspace and let it go. Until we do this, we cannot be open to new ideas and opportunities and move forward. This is now a time of releasing, a time of waiting – a fallow time after which a new Womenspace will evolve. The cycle has moved to a waiting time – the time before regeneration. How appropriate that it’s now Winter – a time of dormancy.

As part of the winding down and letting go, we will be withdrawing Sacred Hour, which has been held continuously since our beginnings over ten years ago. We will continue to use Heritage Hall at Woolloowin as our main meeting place for events but daytime openings on Wednesday and Friday will be discontinued.

... With a change of focus, we don’t know yet what a new Womenspace might look like. The Committee and Crone Council is inviting you to give some thought to how the next stage of Womenspace might evolve and what the new model might become...”

➤ **The Keys To Feminine Power**

Elsewhere on the Womenspace web blog site, Mercy nun Sr Anne McLay is acknowledged for supplying an article by Jean Houston extolling “The Keys to Feminine Power”. In the article, Houston says, “I highly encourage you .. to experience this groundbreaking work first hand by registering now for this special event “The Keys to Feminine Power: Awakening the 3 Power Bases of the New Co-Creative Feminine.” The “Feminine Power” referred to is the “Creative Force of Life”, a sometime euphemism for the Goddess. The article provides a link to the “Feminine Power” website (<http://femininepower.com/teleseminar/>) which talks about “how every woman can activate its (the feminine) energy within her, thereby releasing her authentic gifts into her own individual life and into our world, and

contributing to a cultural shift of literally cosmic proportions.” As the presenters of “The Keys to Feminine Power” say on their website, “Something big is happening for us as women. We’re on the brink of an evolutionary shift with the potential to alter the course of history. Millions of us around the world are feeling a calling to reclaim the feminine, and in so doing, to awaken our authentic power to co-create the future of our lives and shape the future of our world.”

➤ Finally re Womenspace, the web blog site presents the following from the ubiquitous Sr McLay:

“Womenspace – An Evolutionary Tale

I keep on coming up, recently, with the concept that everything is in evolution and that we, as women, are evolutionary women. It can be a very freeing concept.

Gretta Vosper, a United Church pastor and founder of the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity, recently spoke at St Mary’s in Exile, South Brisbane, on the evolution of Christianity, away from dogmas set in concrete for centuries. At Four Winds, centre of Earth Link which has helped a great deal in the evolution of my ecospirituality, I have watched DVDs by Barbara Marx Hubbard opening up the world of conscious evolution. (Years ago, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin captured my imagination with his theory of our evolving consciousness). My email box has currently been receiving numerous reminders of ourselves as women on the edge of evolution with notices of the dialogues on the web taking place right now with a series of women leaders in the field.

Here are some of the influences on my thinking at this stage of my own growth as an evolutionary woman:

- The new story of creation, as being revealed by the quantum physicists and other scientists
- A developing understanding of our interconnectedness with all beings, human and otherwise, animate and inanimate
- The burgeoning evolutionary cosmology as well as that of morphic fields and morphic resonance being developed by biologists such as Rupert Sheldrake
- A developing understanding of “God”
- Social change movements for justice, peace, care for creation, multi-faith dialogue
- The effects of some natural therapy based on vibrational connectedness operating over a distance.

What has all this to do with Womenspace? Well, after my initial feelings of devastation calmed down when our beautiful soul space at Kedron collapsed, I began to wonder if these traumatic events were offering an opportunity for Womenspace to evolve, not so much in a new vision or direction as in a new way or style of operating. Perhaps we might be able to evolve now into more of a virtual community, brought together at times by some significant events and gatherings and other offerings from Womenspace and/ or its members, but also linked together by important connections on the web. I think, for example, of the global community of Gather the Women, among others, or of Jean Shinoda Bolen’s promotion of the Millionth Circle.

What do you think? Have you any ideas to flesh this out? Is it practical? Desirable? Workable? Please put your ideas on the blog.

Anne McLay Womenspace Crone Council”

Lest We Forget: unanswered material from previous Lepanto Issues

➤ Archbishop's 'Buddhist' Involvements: Fr Peter Kennedy and Fr Terry Fitzpatrick

(*Lepanto*, March 2010)

"For Archbishop Bathersby personally, the most challenging aspects of the book are contained in Michele Gierck's chapter on Fr Terry Fitzpatrick, where Fitzpatrick elaborates on comments previously made to ABC radio by Fr Peter Kennedy, "John Bathersby himself, as spiritual director in the seminary, some of the Masses he said with them, today he would say that they're wrong. He introduced Terry and many people to Buddhism, John Bathersby did."

In her chapter on Terry Fitzpatrick, Gierck writes "A week-long Zen Buddhist retreat for seminarians. Fitzpatrick sat on his mat, incense wafting, listening to the eastern bells being rung, and bowed as he had been taught. The sacredness of the practice enthralled him. He was immediately drawn by the contemplative aspect of Buddhism, captured by its beauty. It was unlike anything he had experienced."

But perhaps what is more surprising, in the light of recent events at St Mary's, is that the man he sat next to for eight days on that retreat was the spiritual director of the seminary, Fr John Bathersby, now the archbishop of Brisbane.

After the retreat, Fitzpatrick set up his own Zendo place in the seminary, in a spare room downstairs – a place used for private Masses. The Zen practice had opened a door to contemplation, to being present in any given moment. He learnt how to really sit for meditation, how to empty the mind. He also discovered the concept of embracing paradox. He couldn't help reflecting on it, and continues to do so decades later. The Zen experience also taught him to respect diversity."

What Terry Fitzpatrick is claiming here is that John Bathersby's Zen Buddhist involvements went beyond mere use of Buddhist spiritual techniques and included:

1. involvement in Buddhist ritual;
2. an initiatory and/or transformatory aspect - the retreat being "unlike anything" Fitzpatrick "had experienced" before;
3. acceptance in a seminarian of Buddhist philosophy and belief; and
4. Fitzpatrick being allowed to set up his own Zendo place in the seminary.

Fitzpatrick's claims clearly present John Bathersby as instrumental in the genesis of his own Buddhist practice and ultimately in the destruction of his own vocation as a Catholic priest, with his transformation from Christian to syncretic Buddhist practitioner being directly traceable back to his formation under Bathersby in the seminary. Further, Peter Kennedy has separately gone on the record stating that John Bathersby "introduced Terry and many people to Buddhism".

In lodging these allegations in the public domain, Kennedy and Fitzpatrick appear to be responding at least in part to

Archbishop Bathersby's own comment concerning the famous Buddhist statue at St Mary's, "A Buddhist statue in a Catholic Church or sanctuary just does not make sense ... only extreme recklessness would place a Buddhist statue in a Christian Church. No matter where that takes place there is every possibility it would arouse angry feelings, particularly with Christians from different religious cultures."

Fitzpatrick and Kennedy no doubt fully understand the import of their claims. The words they have used appear carefully chosen. If true, they would amount to a damning indictment of the archbishop.

Response to Fitzpatrick's and Kennedy's claims has been sought from Archbishop Bathersby. There has been no reply."

➤ "Wicca friendly priests and bishops"

(*Lepanto*, March 2010)

"Below is an excerpt from an internet based communication from behind the scenes at Womenspace, dated November 2007. Apologies for the spelling and grammar, which have been left in their original state. The emphasis has been added by *Lepanto*.

'Right now I'm active in political agendas and promoting **feminist Goddess theology or New Age Catholicism**, we will have an upcoming Womenspace conference and believe it or not the **Sisters of Mercy, yes they [are catholic nuns]** will be there and Sr. Anne McLay, RSM **promoter of goddess spirituality, witchcraft, and other pagan New Age occultic practices**. The co-chair of Womenspace is Patricia Rose, who holds a doctorate in "goddess worship." Little by little **progress is being made in Goddess Theology within the Catholic faith**, there are some **Wicca friendly priests and bishops**. Womenspace is growing rapidly last year almost 5000 women showed up this year it may be almost double. Women are so tired of a male dominated patriarchal dictatorial misogynistic form of catholicism, we are now **angry and demanding priestesses and Goddess worship be inclusive at least strides are being made at the local levels and there may be risks involved for the clergy, but I see the movement as a strong one.**'"

➤ Earthlink, Per AD2000, February 2008

(as reported in *Lepanto*, March 2010)

"Meanwhile this writer has approached Archbishop John Bathersby seeking a response to the following queries on Earth Link and Four Winds:

- How is it that this openly neo-pagan, gnostic operation has been allowed to function?
- What is his position as Archbishop of Brisbane in relation to Earth Link and Four Winds?

To date no reply has been received."

Eucharistic

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

You loved me from all eternity,
therefore You created me.
You loved me after You had made me,
therefore You became man for me.
You loved me after You became man for
me,
therefore You lived and died for me.
You loved me after You had died for me,
therefore You rose again for me.
You loved me after You had risen for me,
therefore You went to prepare a place for me.
You loved me after You had gone to prepare a place for me,
therefore You came back to me.
You loved me after You came back to me,
therefore You desired to enter into me and be untied to me.
This is the meaning of the Blessed Sacrament.
The mystery of love.

- Archbishop Goodier

Christ became the Bread of Life. But it seems that this act of self-giving wasn't enough for him. He wanted to give something more. He wanted to pass on to us the opportunity to give of ourselves to him, so we could turn our love for him into living deeds after eating the Bread of Life.

Jesus is the Bread of Life that the Church offers me. Only through him, in him and with him can I live. Her said, "If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life within you." I know that he made himself the Bread of Life in order to satisfy my hunger for him and for his love. He, in turn, made himself the hungry one to satisfy my hunger for him through my love and service. He gives me the opportunity to feed him by feeding those who are hungry, to clothe him by clothing those who are naked, to heal him by caring for those who are sick, and to offer him shelter by housing those who are homeless and unwanted.

... Christ when he took bread said; Take and eat, this is my body delivered for you." By giving himself, he invites us to grow in the power of his love to do what he has done. ...

Like Mary, let us be in full zeal to go in haste to give Jesus to others. She was full of grace when, at the annunciation, she received Jesus. Like her, we too become full of grace every time we receive Holy Communion. It is the same Jesus whom she received and whom we receive at Mass. ...

Our lives must be woven around the Eucharist. Ask Jesus to be with you, to work with you that you may be able to pray the work. You must really be sure that you have received Jesus. After that, you cannot give your tongue, your thoughts, or your heart to bitterness.

Put your sins in the chalice for the precious blood to wash away. One drop is capable of washing away the sins of the world.



Adoration

The Eucharist is connected with the Passion. If Jesus had not established the Eucharist we would have forgotten the crucifixion. It would have faded into the past and we would have forgotten that Jesus loved us. There is a saying that to be far away from the eyes is to be far away from the heart. To make sure that we do not forget, Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a memorial of his love. ...

We must be faithful to the smallness of the Eucharist, that simple piece of bread which even a child can take in ... We have so much that we don't care about the small things. If we do not care, we will lose our grip on the Eucharist - on our lives. The Eucharist is so small.

... Try to realize that Jesus allows himself to be broken. Make yourselves feel the need of each other. The passion and the Eucharist should open our eyes to that smallness: "This is my body; take and eat" - the small piece of bread. Today let us

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and we would have
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Jesus loved us.*

realize our own littleness in comparison with the Bread of Life. Now more than ever we need to live out the teaching of Jesus; "Love one another, as the Father has loved me." We have to love as the Father loves his Son, Jesus, with the same mercy and compassion, joy and peace. Try to find out how the Father loves his Son, and then try to love one another in the same way. Find out in all humility how much you are loved by Jesus. From the time you realize you are loved by Jesus, love as he loves you.

In each of our lives Jesus comes as the Bread of Life - to be eaten, to be consumed by us. That is how he loves us. He also came as the Hungry One, hoping to be fed with the bread of our life, with our hearts that love and our hands that serve. In so doing, we prove that we have been created in the image and likeness of God, for God is love. When we love we are like God. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

That you may know each other at the breaking of the bread, love each other in the eating of the Bread of Life, and serve each other and him in his poor by giving whole-hearted service.

When communicating with Christ in your heart - the partaking of the living Bread - remember what Our Lady must have felt when the Spirit overpowered her and she, who was full of grace, became full with the body of Jesus. The Spirit in her was so strong that she immediately rose in haste to go and serve.

Each Holy Communion, each breaking of the Bread of Life, each sharing should produce in us the same, for it is the same Jesus who came to Mary and was made flesh.

- Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

*Text and excerpts from
"Adoration - Eucharistic Texts and Prayers Throughout Church History"
Compiled by Daniel P. Guernsey 1999 Ignatius Press, San Francisco*



Vale Fr William Ross

Fr Ross died peacefully on the 20th August, 2010, at Holy Spirit Home, Carseldine. He was formerly a priest of the diocese of Townsville. A Vigil Mass was celebrated at the Holy Family Catholic Church, Indooroopilly, on Thursday, 26th August, at 7pm. Father Ross' requiem mass was held at the Cathedral of St. Stephen on Friday, 27th August, 2010, at 10am, followed by burial in Nudgee Catholic Cemetery.

The Homily - Vigil Mass

For The Late Father William Matthew Macpherson Ross

Celebrant: Fr William McCarthy, Adm.

Homilist, Fr Gregory Jordan, S.J.

In this Vigil Mass we prepare for the Requiem Mass of Fr William Ross at St Stephen's Cathedral tomorrow morning, to be celebrated by Bishop Michael Putney, Bishop of Townsville, as Fr Ross canonically belonged to that Diocese.

From school the young William Ross joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and taught at Chevalier College at Bowral, but ordination in the MSC's was not to be, though in his heart he retained an enduring love of the order of his choice. In the end he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Hugh Ryan for Townsville. He served many years there in parishes and as Secretary to two Bishops, first Bishop Leonard Falkner, then Bishop Raymond Benjamin, who also has a connection with this parish.

The unexpected death of his brother-in-law brought him back to Brisbane (which was in any case the city where he grew up), to a flat under the Kedron house of his sister, widowed with several children, where he established himself with his magnificent library.

Since he was not charged with parish responsibilities, he was free to engage in a wide range of ministries in the Archdiocese and beyond, for many years zealously teaching and devoutly serving the parishes where he was needed to supply.

Father Ross was a faithful priest. He was faithful to the Catholic faith, which he championed vigorously, with a grasp of doctrine that was firm and clear - as it should be for all of us. This did not endear him to those whose bent is towards dissent, and towards challenging due authority; but Fr Ross courageously adhered to Catholic truth and tradition, in which he was so well grounded, through thick and thin.

This style became the hallmark of all his ministries, and they were many. It took him to the United States over the years to a diocese in Connecticut, where a Bishop Egan would have liked to keep him - better known later as Archbishop Egan of New York; but Father's heart was in his native land and he always returned.

Before he did so however he always visited Alabama to record appearances - Mass, or talks - on Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network, which may still be seen from time to time. This connection proved invaluable when Father was instrumental in introducing EWTN programmes on Bris 31 through the Rosary Christian Tutorial Association of which he

was President, and Spiritual Director, thus introducing it to Australia.

Devoted to Our Lady, Father served for over ten years as Chaplain to the Legion of Mary. The younger members were gathered into the Patricians with whom he had many a session, being prepared to travel good distances to meet their needs. One of them went on to be ordained priest last year, namely Fr Michael Grace, who showed his gratitude to Father Ross by crossing Brisbane on his day off to celebrate Mass in his room for him where he retired at Holy Spirit, Carseldine. This was not just an occasional gesture but an abiding appreciation of how his priestly vocation derived from that of Fr Ross.

When the Traditional Latin Mass began to reappear Fr Ross was quick to assist, even when I was appointed Chaplain to our Latin Mass Community, and we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for that. He loved this Mass, and delighted in celebrating it in my place when I was absent, and in assisting in the Easter Ceremonies, which we revived after they had lapsed for some thirty years. He was immensely appreciated by that early congregation, rather different from what it has grown to be now, something that would have pleased him no end had he been able to come and see it.

There is a sadness about Father's passing, the sadness of family like his cousin Father Bill McCarthy, tonight's celebrant himself, or his sister Margaret, who knew her brother from childhood, and saw his bravery in the face of his disability, one that he overcame with characteristic courage, to the degree that he could compete in the national Ballroom Dancing competition, surely a first. There are many friends and admirers who have had to get along without hearing his voice asserting or defending orthodoxy - and what a voice it was! - whenever orthodoxy was challenged, or speaking for loyalty when disloyalty appeared.

It is also sad that he did not live to participate in more recent years as the Holy Father was opening windows to new opportunities for the Catholic tradition to flourish, something Father would have relished. Alas it was not to be. What he did do was remain faithful in times he found grievously difficult.

We pray the prayer of the Liturgy for a priest who has died:

✠ O God,

listen favourably to our prayers

offered on behalf of Fr William Ross your servant and priest,

and grant that having committed himself zealously

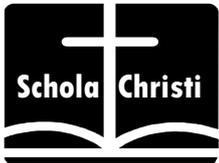
to the service of your name,

he may rejoice for ever in the company of all the saints.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen

His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you are faithful in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." Matthew 25:23



Christ-Centred Spirituality

- Fr Terry Hoare STL

The spirituality of the Church comes in numerous forms but principally through the Word of God and the sacraments. Like the Church Itself, these are cemented in the Person and Mission of Christ. It is He Who is the beginning and end of all things; He is the source and goal of all holiness. If this is not a living fact then the Catholicity of any form of spirituality departs from this primary and essential norm for Christ is the Word made Flesh and also the Head of the Church. When Spirituality is clearly seen to be derived from Christ the identity of the Church and Its members as a bonded unit is at its best. Conversely, when the members of the Church fail to place Christ as the source and goal of Christian spirituality, the Church will lose Its identity as a worshipping and serving people: true disciples of Christ and of the Church He founded.

When this occurs, confusion is inevitably sown and wicked duplicity in the Judas mode strangles the gift of faith, for the resulting errors cause the Christian conscience to become anaesthetised and the human will has no input from the Shepherd of souls; even sacramental spirituality cannot be fully expressed within the heart. Consequently, the Heart of Jesus and the heart of the disciple grieve for where the Way, the Truth and the Life once reigned, errors now abound as the human ego assumes a "wisdom" which is all too human.

For a Christian, baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life. This we know from St. Paul who tells us important, sacramental facts regarding one's personal and corporate involvement in the mysteries of God. It would be good to turn to Romans, 6:3; Colossians, 2:12; and Ephesians, 4:1-7; and to ponder on the importance of St. Paul's statements. For now, this is what that great and elect missionary Saint Paul wrote:

"Don't you know that so many of us who were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death that in the same way that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, in a similar way also we should walk in the newness of life. Although buried with him in baptism, you are risen with him through faith in the operations of God, Who has raised Him from the dead.

I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation to which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit just as you were called with one hope of your calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Lord and Father of us all Who is above all and through all and in you all. And every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

We can see from these words the importance of the Sacraments as going beyond having a 'sign-value' to being a spiritual dynamic which bonds us intimately into the Person and redemptive acts of the Redeemer.

Moreover, the simple act of reading the Scriptures is a key to understanding by the Divine Light intended for Man, that He has provided all the proximate means to a more perfect unity and incorporation into the mysteries of our salvation than a social interpretation of Catholicism could ever give. When in the world, the world and its fruits are the goal of our immersion but buried into Christ the fruits of our burial will be our resurrection but until then,

the redemption of souls.

Many forms of spirituality abound but those which have their origins in a spirituality which is consistent with the Dogma, Doctrine and Tradition of the Catholic Church cannot be bettered. We know this from the canon of scripture instituted by the Church itself.

To build a spirituality based on the New Testament with Its antecedents and associated Tradition brings us into God's Plan for Salvation through Christ and the Mission of His Church. Is there a better spirituality than one which gives the Spirit of God by the power of Christ's Word? A spirituality built on the New Testament has Its origin in the Person and Word of Christ and consequently its active and contemplative mission.

The same is taken up by the apostles; they lived and taught what they had received from the Lord, infusing it into the assembly. Therefore, a spirituality built on the Word and His Teachings with the apostolic letters contains all factors sufficient for our salvation and which is in accord with the nature of the Church and the Spirit which animates It; it is a Spirit which intends to make holy and to redeem, making of the Church a chaste bride.

It is good to contemplate the words of Isaiah, the Prophet, when he says, "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom who decked himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Is.61:10)

For this reason the comment by St. Irenaeus on the above mentioned passages from St. Paul, offers guidance against heresy; and so there is yet further confirmation that a biblical spirituality also embraces the Traditional thinking of the Church. We can contemplate the Church father's words:

"Since the Church has accepted this preaching (ie, that of Jesus Christ) and this faith which we have outlined, despite its spread throughout the world, it keeps carefully, as though it lived in one's house only. The Church believes these Truths as if it had but one soul and heart; it preaches them and hands them on as if it had but one mouth..."

"The man who is eloquent among the leaders of the Churches will not preach anything different from this (for no man is above his Master), nor will a less eloquent man diminish the Tradition. Since faith is one and the same, the man who has much to say about it does not add to it and the man who has less to say about it does not subtract from it..." (St. Irenaeus, 'Against the Heresies' Bk.1,10,1-3)

The beginning of the spiritual life involves a fervent "desire" for it, as St. Catherine of Sienna would insist, and further to this, tracing the development of spirituality is best when it investigates its canonical origins, for they come from God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is these factors which makes such a spirituality perennial and immutable. Neither man nor the religious fashions of a given age nor the most sublime ideologies will provide a Spirit more direct and salvific than a spirituality built on Christ and His Word. His Word is infallible and intent on the work of sanctification and redemption, just as the Dogma of the Church declares; for this reason, St. Paul states, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor.14:37)

The Danger of Centering Prayer

- Fr John D Dreher (<http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1997/9711fea1.asp>)

In the mid-seventies, Trappist Abbot Thomas Keating asked the monks, "Could we put the Christian tradition into a form that would be accessible to people . . . who have been instructed in an Eastern technique and might be inspired to return to their Christian roots if they knew there was something similar in the Christian tradition?" (*Intimacy with God*, 15). Frs. William Menniger and M. Basil Pennington took up the challenge, and centering prayer is the result. In a few short years it has spread all over the world.

Centering prayer originated in St. Joseph's Abbey, a Trappist monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts. During the twenty years (1961–1981) when Keating was abbot, St. Joseph's held dialogues with Buddhist and Hindu representatives, and a Zen master gave a week-long retreat to the monks. A former Trappist monk who had become a Transcendental Meditation teacher also gave a session to the monks.

Many people assume centering prayer is compatible with Catholic tradition, but in fact the techniques of centering prayer are neither Christian nor prayer. They are at the level of human faculties and as such are an operation of man, not of God. The deception and dangers can be grave.

Centering prayer differs from Christian prayer in that the intent of the technique is to bring the practitioner to the center of *his own being*. There he is, supposedly, to experience the presence of the God who indwells him. Christian prayer, on the contrary, centers upon God in a *relational way*, as someone apart from oneself. The Christian knows a God who is personal, yet who, as Creator, infinitely transcends his creature. God is wholly other than man. It is also crucial to Christian prayer that God engages man's whole being in response, not just his interior life. In the view of centering prayer, the immanence of God somehow makes the transcendence of God available to human techniques and experience.

Centering prayer is essentially a form of self-hypnosis. It makes use of a "mantra," a word repeated over and over to focus the mind while striving by one's will to go deep within oneself. The effects are a hypnotic-like state: concentration upon one thing, disengagement from other stimuli, a high degree of openness to suggestion, a psychological and physiological condition that externally resembles sleep but in which consciousness is interiorized and the mind subject to suggestion. After reading a published description of centering prayer, a psychology professor said, "Your question is, is this hypnosis? Sure it is." He said the state can be verified physiologically by the drop in blood pressure, respiratory rate, lactic acid level in the blood, and the galvanic conductivity of the skin. Abbot Keating relates that, when they began doing the centering prayer workshops in the guest house, some of the monks and guests "complained that it was spooky seeing people walking around the guest house like 'zombies.'" They recognized the symptoms but could not diagnose the illness.

In order to see clearly that centering prayer departs from

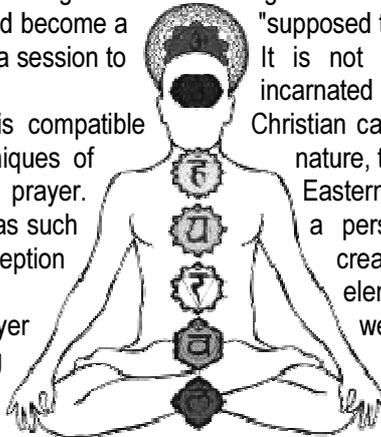
Catholic tradition, let us review the differences between Christian spirituality and that of Eastern religions. These differences flow, above all, from their concepts of God, of man, and of their relationship. In light of this contrast, we should be able to see more clearly from which of these centering prayer draws its approach and techniques.

In Catholic teaching, all men are creatures, called out of nothingness to know God. All men are also sinners, cut off from God and destined to death. A Christian is one whose life has been reconstituted in Christ. He is no longer in the place and stance of a sinner, that is, apart from God, acting as if he were the ultimate source, measure, and goal of his own behavior. He is *in Christ*. Henceforth, his life is supposed to originate in Christ and to be directed to God the Father. I say "supposed to" for it is a possibility that must be acted upon. It is not automatic. The grace of baptism must be incarnated in obedience, and, even after baptism, the Christian can choose to conform to Christ or to his fallen nature, that is, to sin.

Eastern religions, in contrast, lack revelation of God as a personal Creator who radically transcends his creatures. Though possessing many praiseworthy elements, they nonetheless seek God as if he were *part of the universe*, rather than its Creator. This is because they are monistic, seeing all reality as one. Thus, God is a dimension, though hidden, of the same reality of which man is a part. The goal therefore is to peel away the exterior world to get to the spiritual reality beneath it. God is conceived of as an impersonal state of being. In contrast, for Christians, God is the Real, and the whole of the universe exists by God's free choice; creation is a second, contingent reality—and, in Christian thought, did not need to exist. Moreover, this contingent universe is the result of a God who is vastly more than mere being; he is a loving Father.

These differing conceptions of God issue in different approaches to God. In the East, human means are necessarily relied upon to come to God. The goal is not to seek God as an Other, but to achieve an altered state of consciousness. Where a Christian seeks dialogue and interaction with God and, with his help, the "restoration of all things in Christ," by a certain "participation in the divine nature" (2 Peter 4:4), the East seeks God in the self and seeks escape from the distractions of the outer world. The "experience of God" is essentially achieved by psychological and physiological *technique* rather than by *encounter*.

The confusion of technique over encounter arises from a misunderstanding of the indwelling of God. The fact that God indwells us does not mean that we can capture him by techniques. Nor does it mean that we are identical with him in our deepest self. Rather, God indwells us by grace which does *not* blend human and divine natures. On the contrary, it perfects and empowers our limited human faculties, so that we can relate to him. We can no more manipulate this indwelling of grace by psychological techniques than we can manipulate our existence.



Analogously, children do not come to know the parents who gave them existence by going deep inside themselves or back to the moment of their conception. They come to know their parents by interaction with them. As children use the faculties given them at conception to grow and become like their parents, so we use the faculties given us by the indwelling Spirit to interact with God and to put on Jesus Christ. As children speak to their parents, so we speak to God by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

This is what the Catholic tradition means by the term "sanctifying grace." Sanctifying grace is the grace of union with God. By it, we are given a share in the very holiness of God. Sanctifying grace is God's communication of himself to man. As such, it cannot be experienced by human faculties. However, Sanctifying grace gives us the "faculties" to relate to God. By it, we are given a new and additional "divine nature" and are made "sons and daughters" of God. With childlike simplicity, we can say "our Father." By incarnating this grace through acts of obedience to God (what the Church calls "actual graces") we are progressively converted from our sinful nature and "put on Jesus Christ," participating in the life of Jesus Christ as members of his Body. In the religion of Christ, the Incarnate Lord, there is no disengagement from the external, but rather a dedication of one's life and the world to God. The goal is not merely a deep inner peace but a sanctification of body, mind, and heart—indeed, of the whole world.

Centering prayer claims for itself the experience of God, while setting aside external realities and overcoming the "otherness" of God. It takes these characteristics not from Christian tradition but from Hinduism, through the medium of Transcendental Meditation. TM is Hinduism adapted by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a Hindu guru, for use in a Western cultural setting. Fr. Pennington, one of the authors of centering prayer and an ardent supporter of TM, says, "Mahesh Yogi, employing the terminology of the ancient Vedic tradition, speaks of this [practice of TM] 'to plunge into deep, deep rest for fifteen or twenty minutes twice a day' as experiencing the Absolute. The Christian knows by faith that this Absolute is our God of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. When he goes to his deepest self, he finds in himself an image and participation of God, and he finds God himself."

Fr. Pennington approves a Christian's participation in TM, despite the fact that the introductory ceremony to TM, the Puja, involves worship of a dead Hindu guru and that the mantras given those being initiated are in fact the names of Hindu gods. For a Christian knowingly to participate in TM is a violation of the Second Commandment against false worship.

What is to be said of this claim? Archimandrite Sophrony of Mount Athos and an authority in Orthodox spirituality, speaks from his own personal story. He was for years involved in Eastern religions, before he returned to the Orthodox faith of his youth. I quote him at length, for he speaks with clarity and power:

"In advising against being carried away by artificial practices such as Transcendental Meditation I am but repeating the age-old message of the Church. . . . The way of the Fathers requires firm faith and long patience, whereas our contemporaries want to seize every spiritual gift, including even direct contemplation of the Absolute God, by force and

speedily, and will often draw a parallel between prayer in the Name of Jesus and yoga or Transcendental Meditation and the like. I must stress the danger of such errors. . . . He is deluded who endeavors to divest himself mentally of all that is transitory and relative in order to cross some invisible threshold, to realize his eternal origin, his identity with the Source of all that exists, in order to return and merge with him, the nameless transpersonal Absolute. Such exercises have enabled many to rise to suprarational contemplation of being, to experience a certain mystical trepidation, to know the state of silence of mind, when mind goes beyond the boundaries of time and space. In such like states man may feel the peacefulness of being withdrawn from the continually changing phenomena of the visible world, may even have a certain experience of eternity. But the God of Truth, the Living God, is not in all this.

"It is man's own beauty, created in the image of God, that is contemplated and seen as divinity, whereas he himself still continues within the confines of his creatureliness. This is a vastly important concern. The tragedy of the matter lies in the fact that man sees a mirage which, in his longing for eternal life, he mistakes for a genuine oasis. This impersonal form of ascetics leads finally to an assertion of the divine principle in the very nature of man. Man is then drawn to the idea of self-deification—the cause of the original Fall. The man who is blinded by the imaginary majesty of what he contemplates has in fact set his foot on the path to self-destruction. He has discarded the revelation of a personal God. . . . The movement into the depths of his own being is nothing else but attraction towards the non-being from which we were called by the will of the Creator" (*His Life is Mine*, 115–116).

In short, true prayer goes to God *from* the center of one's being, not *in* the center of one's being. In authentic contemplation, our faculties are brought to God, not disengaged as they are in TM. Christianity seeks to redeem and restore man and the world in Christ. To seek *escape from* rather than *to redeem* the world is to set oneself against the mission of Christ. That is why even the Jesus Prayer and the rosary (often cited as Christian "mantras") are deeply charged with basic Christian theological content; they are used *to relate* in an interactive and personal way to the Lord and to the Virgin Mary. For a similar reason, Catholic spiritual writers consistently insist a person must have a moral life and spiritual maturity before entering upon a life dedicated to contemplation. A person who seeks contemplation must first steep his mind in the word of God, conform his behavior to the moral law, submit his body to the spirit by asceticism, subjugate his will in humility to the will of God, and take on a heart given over to the love of God and neighbor. These means are *incarnational* and *redemptive*.

The book often claimed as a precedent for centering prayer is *The Cloud of Unknowing*, by an unknown fourteenth-century English author. But the claim is in vain, for *The Cloud of Unknowing* clearly repudiates the emphasis given in centering prayer to techniques: "I am trying to make clear with words what experience teaches more convincingly, that techniques and methods are ultimately useless for awakening contemplative love." *The Cloud* must be seen in its historic context. Though its emphasis is on the "negative way," we must remember that it *presupposes* its reader is well grounded

in the "positive way" to God by means of the word of God, creation, and sacramental means. When this prerequisite is met, a book like this can help prayer to go beyond creatures to the Uncreated God. But to see *The Cloud* as pointing us to technique (as centering prayer does) is profoundly to misread the text.

Some of those who promote centering prayer employ questionable practices. For example, I first experienced centering prayer during a retreat whose announced topic and method had nothing to do with it. Without explanation, the director conducted us into centering prayer. At first I followed the instructions, but, not liking the feel of it, I made the decision to ignore the instructions. The retreat master, even by secular standards, acted unethically in not giving us an understanding and choice in the matter.

Nor is this uncommon. I know of an incident where several thousand people attending a charismatic conference were brought into centering prayer, again without explanation or choice. This incident was particularly objectionable, because the priest who was leading the session did not even bother with a Christian "mantra" but used an explicit hypnotic technique (e.g., "Imagine you are on an elevator. You begin going down, down inside yourself. The twenty-first floor, the twentieth floor," etc.). In many Catholic schools, teachers and officials have made centering prayer part of religious exercises without parental notice, understanding, or choice. Equally questionable is the setting aside of traditional safeguards. Centering prayer is often offered to large groups, where there is no way of knowing the psychological and spiritual problems some people may have. And this can be very dangerous indeed, leading to any of the following: (1) The delusion that one has found and pleased God, when in fact he has not. God is not *part of* the universe. The attempt to reach God by human technique is not only futile, but objectively sinful. (2) A self-absorption which forgets that life in the Triune God is *relationships* and that we have been inserted into these relationships through Christ. People who come out of this type of prayer often express it as coming into a freedom they did not know that they had lost. (3) The danger of opening oneself to evil spirits. Such techniques can bring people in touch with the spiritual realm. But the spiritual realm includes not only God but human and angelic spirits. A person with a problem in a moral or psychological area can open himself to some degree of demonic influence.

A mother wrote to ask me for advice: "In the Catholic school in [name of town], Sister has been using this [centering prayer and use of the Jesus Prayer] in the religion classes. My ten-year-old daughter took to it right away. This was about two-and-a-half years ago. The things she shared with me that Jesus had told her didn't appear to me to be imagination. They made her feel very close to Jesus. About six weeks ago, Kristy started having difficulty going to sleep. She didn't want to stay in her own room and would lie there afraid to close her eyes, until I would let her go into her sister's room and sleep with her. Finally she confided in me that she would see something scary if she closed her eyes. A few days ago, she confided that it laughed. Kristy had used the centering prayer on her own at bedtime for sometime before this fear started."

What happened to Kristy? The laughter is very characteristic of evil spirits. It would have taken personal

contact and prayerful discernment to know for sure. From the description, I would suspect an evil spirit is harassing her. I would doubt that it has any serious hold on her, unless there was immoral behavior or a special vulnerability in her psychological state. I suspect that her use of centering prayer opened her to evil spirits and such harassments.

The past several decades have seen an explosion of groups and movements involved in spiritual and psychic pursuits. Some of these no doubt are of God; some clearly are not. The New Age Movement, which is actually as ancient as the Eastern religions from which it draws its resources, has shown a phenomenal growth. A materialistic civilization is trying to find what it threw away. I believe that the interest is more than a sociological phenomenon and that it is part of a conflict of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

I see the springing up of so many spiritual and psychic movements as part of the rebellion of man and evil spirits against God. The totalitarian movements of the twentieth century managed to capture the major sectors of society, and what destruction they brought on the world! But they fell short of total possession of man. In his interior life, man remained free. Nazism and Communism had some success in penetrating the interior life of man by persuasion, by socioeconomic pressures, and even by the violence of brainwashing.

But the vulnerability of man today to manipulation is today much greater than it was even a half-century ago. The moral order and faith in God have drastically declined. Man's technology and managerial abilities have increased. Tyranny has better tools to dominate others and, more and more, a ripe situation in which to do so. The restraining influences on the work of evil spirits are being stripped away: loss of moral standards, breakup of family life, uprootedness, merely functional relationships, emptiness of meaning. In this context, what centering prayer does, at a minimum, is make respectable the false spiritualities that are rushing in to fill the spiritual void.

My hypothesis is that it is Satan's strategy, in all these things, to strip away the physiological and psychological forces that, in our fallen state, are a fail safe protection for the human spirit. (This is a possible interpretation of Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:6–10 about the lawless one and the force that restrains him.) Thus, he can hope to capture the spirit of man worldwide and establish a kingdom of darkness.

The Catholic Church is the major obstacle to the Devil's plan—and the Lord of it the only hope of mankind. Hence the Church has been the special target of today, as indeed it has been since Pentecost. The rapid spread of centering prayer in the past decade into so many areas which are at the very heart of Catholic faith is, I believe, part of the Devil's strategy against the Church.

Yet none of this has escaped God's hand. As I see it, he has given us the modern world's problems right in the very heart of the Church, so that, when we get our own house in order, we will be in very good shape to bring the gospel to every nation. No Christian can read the Great Commission and fail to have hope for the future. "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. And behold I am with you always" (Matt. 28:18–20).

OBSERVATIONS Pope Benedict XVI

Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, 19th September 2010 Beatification of Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman

... England has a long tradition of martyr saints, whose courageous witness has sustained and inspired the Catholic community here for centuries. Yet it is right and fitting that we should recognize today the holiness of a confessor, a son of this nation who, while not called to shed his blood for the Lord, nevertheless bore eloquent witness to him in the course of a long life devoted to the priestly ministry, and especially to preaching, teaching, and writing. He is worthy to take his place in a long line of saints and scholars from these islands, Saint Bede, Saint Hilda, Saint Aelred, Blessed Duns Scotus, to name but a few. In Blessed John Henry, that tradition of gentle scholarship, deep human wisdom and profound love for the Lord has borne rich fruit, as a sign of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit deep within the heart of God's people, bringing forth abundant gifts of holiness.

Cardinal Newman's motto, *Cor ad cor loquitur*, or "Heart speaks unto heart", gives us an insight into his understanding of the Christian life as a call to holiness, experienced as the profound desire of the human heart to enter into intimate communion with the Heart of God. He reminds us that faithfulness to prayer gradually transforms us into the divine likeness. As he wrote in one of his many fine sermons, "a habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world in every season, in every place, in every emergency – prayer, I say, has what may be called a natural effect in spiritualizing and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before; gradually ... he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles" (Parochial and Plain Sermons, iv, 230-231). Today's Gospel tells us that no one can be the servant of two masters (cf. Lk 16:13), and Blessed John Henry's teaching on prayer explains how the faithful Christian is definitively taken into the service of the one true Master, who alone has a claim to our unconditional devotion (cf. Mt 23:10). Newman helps us to understand what this means for our daily lives: he tells us that our divine Master has assigned a specific task to each one of us, a "definite service", committed uniquely to every single person: "I have my mission", he wrote, "I am a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do his work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place ... if I do but keep his commandments and serve him in my calling" (Meditations and Devotions, 301-2).

The definite service to which Blessed John Henry was called involved applying his keen intellect and his prolific pen to many of the most pressing "subjects of the day". His insights into the relationship between faith and reason, into the vital place of revealed religion in civilized society, and into the need for a broadly-based and wide-ranging approach to education were not only of profound importance for Victorian England, but continue today to inspire and enlighten many all over the world. I would like to pay particular tribute to his vision for education, which has done so much to shape the ethos that is

the driving force behind Catholic schools and colleges today. Firmly opposed to any reductive or utilitarian approach, he sought to achieve an educational environment in which intellectual training, moral discipline and religious commitment would come together. The project to found a Catholic University in Ireland provided him with an opportunity to develop his ideas on the subject, and the collection of discourses that he published as *The Idea of a University* holds up an ideal from which all those engaged in academic formation can continue to learn. And indeed, what better goal could teachers of religion set themselves than Blessed John Henry's famous appeal for an intelligent, well-instructed laity: "I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an

account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it" (*The Present Position of Catholics in England*, ix, 390). On this day when the author of those words is raised to the altars, I pray that, through his intercession and example, all who are engaged in the task of teaching and catechesis will be inspired to greater effort by the vision he so clearly sets before us.

While it is John Henry Newman's intellectual legacy that has understandably received most attention in the vast literature devoted to his life and work, I prefer on this occasion to conclude with a brief reflection on his life as a priest, a pastor of souls. The warmth and humanity underlying his appreciation of the pastoral ministry is beautifully expressed in another of his famous sermons: "Had Angels been your priests, my brethren, they could not have consoled with you, sympathized with you, have had compassion on you, felt tenderly for you, and made allowances for you, as we can; they could not have been your patterns and guides, and have led you on from your old selves into a new life, as they can who come from the midst of you" ("*Men, not Angels: the Priests of the Gospel*", *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 3). He lived out that profoundly human vision of priestly ministry in his devoted care for the people of Birmingham during the years that he spent at the Oratory he founded, visiting the sick and the poor, comforting the bereaved, caring for those in prison. No wonder that on his death so many thousands of people lined the local streets as his body was taken to its place of burial not half a mile from here. One hundred and twenty years later, great crowds have assembled once again to rejoice in the Church's solemn recognition of the outstanding holiness of this much-loved father of souls. What better way to express the joy of this moment than by turning to our heavenly Father in heartfelt thanksgiving, praying in the words that Blessed John Henry Newman placed on the lips of the choirs of angels in heaven:

Praise to the Holiest in the height
And in the depth be praise;
In all his words most wonderful,
Most sure in all his ways! (*The Dream of Gerontius*).





Date Claimers:

Contact the Editor to have your event listed here
- events must be in accord with Lepanto objectives

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
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
Also - **40 DAYS FOR LIFE** - 24hrs from 25th Feb - 5th April
details: www.40daysforlife.com/brisbane ; see p.11

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

Virtue is its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasure; but if we cultivate it only for pleasure's sake, we are selfish, not religious, and will never gain the pleasure, because we can never have the virtue. - John Henry Newman

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Brisbane: St Stephen's Cathedral - Mon-Fri 10.30am-12.15pm
Dorrington: St Michael's, 250 Bank St
- Mon: 7pm-12mn; First Fridays: 7pm-12mn;
Wed: 9am Mass, Benediction, Adoration to 12mn
Fortitude Valley: Villa Maria Chapel, 123 Warren St
- Perpetual Adoration -
enq.: Keiran & Kate Hobbs: 0414 258 996; 07 3278 1404

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 ...

WHERE HAVE ALL THE CATHOLICS GONE?

- Guest Author: Kathleen's Sister

During the last election, I was astounded to see Julia Gillard promising millions of dollars towards celebrations for Blessed Mary McKillop's canonisation to 'woo' Australia's five million Catholics. Why? I couldn't believe Australia has five million Catholics!

Where are we?

Consistently I read the news and become more and more depressed. I thought I must be the only fringe dweller horrified by the proposed or introduced legislation of unrestricted abortion, euthanasia, gay marriage, gay adoption, removal of funding to Catholic schools, etc, etc.

Then I find out that five million of us have formally identified ourselves as Catholic. Not just Christian, but Catholic. That's roughly a quarter of our population. Why, then, do I feel like I'm in a tiny marginal fringe group of thought? (Oh, that's right - the media.)

Statistically speaking, we can reasonably expect that a quarter of the people in any Australian school/workplace/restaurant/train/street/etc to be Catholic.

Where are we? Why are we not more visible? What can we do about this?

I reckon we need to 'normalise' Catholicism. My initial plan was to become Prime Minister myself, but then realised I would never cope with the political cartoonists' caricatures of me. As often happens, plans start out world-conquering and overly ambitious, until reality steps in and creates something a little more workable.

I do already work within my parish which has me in contact with 'the ninety-nine sheep' - the tried and true Catholics. But I have also been working on a stunningly effective approach for more secular situations.

I have begun dropping into conversations the fact that I am Catholic. Nothing confrontational or controversial - just thrown in - and not the actual topic of conversation. For example:

"I was walking home from Mass when I ran into Fiona ..."

"My two-year-old had a tantrum and threw the rosary beads all over the floor, then started on the paint that was left out ..."

"We were saying the Rosary when this salesman knocks on the door at 8 o'clock at night - 8 o'clock! Can you believe it?"

"Oh I love that restaurant! We went there for my son's First Communion in June - the food was fantastic!"

This has the dual purpose of letting people know I'm Catholic (without providing an opening for any anti-Catholic sentiment) and also makes being Catholic seem perfectly normal. Judging by the open mouths, this has come as a great shock to some.

I am far from ashamed of being Catholic, but I have found to my great surprise that not one person has converted on account of my locking horns with them and ranting about how a particular action will see them burn in hell. (I learnt a lot at University!)

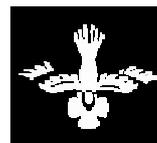
Conversely, my current project has seen two friends approach me to ask more about being Catholic, or to get a Catholic perspective.

Furthermore, I have had huge gratitude shown to me by four acquaintances who are Catholic and similarly felt like 'the only one'.

I know it's baby steps, but at least it's in the right direction. And I figure if every one of our five million Catholics followed this lead, once a day, then half our Country's population would be making or listening to some mention of being Catholic every day. I have been amazed at the impact it has had already. Try it! It's empowering. In the paraphrased words of St Patrick, "I feel sorry for them. They think they'll win, but they have no idea who they're really up against."

Call to Holiness

CONFERENCE 2010



12th Annual Conference
Saturday, 9th October, 2010
St. Ignatius Parish Hall,
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Conference theme

Love in Truth

Five talks on the pathways to holiness based on Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*.

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"Caritas in Veritate"
- Bishop Basil Meeking DD
"Who is Jesus Christ?"
- Babette Francis
"Openness to life - True Human Development"
- Helen Naug
"Science and Faith"
- Bishop Basil Meeking DD
"How do we know Him?"

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