Vocation

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CHAMPAGNAT

AN INTERNATIONAL MARIST JOURNAL OF CHARISM IN EDUCATION

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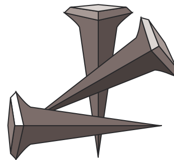
Feature Articles:

Christian attitudes to grief and loss

Richard Leonard Kevin McGovern

Lisa Goertz was a Jewish lady
who lost most of her family in the Nazi holocaust.
At a point when 16 members of her family had disappeared,
she decided to end it all.
In her book, *I Stepped into Freedom*,
she relates an experience that led her to faith and personal freedom:

*I walked out into the night,
feeble with hunger, half crazy with fear and fatigue,
and made my way down to the river Neisse.
In a few hours all would be over, I told myself.
What a relief!
And there it happened.
Across the dark river I saw the Cross and Jesus Christ on it.
His face was not the face of a victor; it was the face of a fellow-sufferer,
full of love and understanding and compassion.
We gazed at each other, both of us Jews, and then the vision disappeared.*



*'There cannot be a God of love,' people say,
'because if there was, and he looked upon the world,
his heart would break.'
The church points to the Cross and says, 'It did break'.*
(William Temple, former Archbishop of Canterbury)

Champagnat

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Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education aims to assist its readers to integrate charism into education in a way that gives great life and hope. Marists provide one example of this mission.

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an
EDITOR'S
this & that

Beginnings

WELCOME TO *Champagnat* for 2011. We are looking forward to bringing you stimulating articles on how charism brings our educational programmes to life. In our August 2009 edition we published Maureen Kurzman's award winning account of the Victorian bushfires and the impact they had on her life as a leader at Assumption College, Kilmore. As I write, Australians in many areas of our country are passing each day enduring the appalling experience of death and destruction caused by ravaging floods. While tragedies such as these can bring great grief and loss, as they did to Maureen, her husband and family, they also can reflect the strength of our communal bonds and the extent to which we rely on these bonds, particularly at times of crisis.

Charisms bring a range of graces. Some emphasise one particular Christian virtue more than another. Moments of grief and loss bring these emphases into sharp relief and can provide us with key learnings about the nature of each particular charism. This edition of our Journal provides us with an opportunity to share our learnings from such experiences of grief and loss and, in so doing, learn how to understand our charisms at a deeper level.

One such virtue is exemplified by the Abbot of the Benedictine Community in New Norcia Western Australia, Fr John Herbert, in his 2011 New Year message. Here he espouses the virtue of stability, making reference to George MacKay Brown's insight: 'Some kind of ancient wisdom whispers always: Stay where you are. What is good and necessary for you will be brought or you will be led to it. Wait, have patience. What has been written down for you will happen when the time comes.'

Our Journal provides us with the opportunity to share such ancient wisdom and to interpret it in our contemporary society. In the way that 'it takes a village to raise a child' so too can it take a community of writers, readers and those who help by critiquing,

to interpret the Word of God for a world where suffering is an ever-present reality. May you be richly blessed as we venture together into this 'glimpse of paradise'. Thank you for participating in our journey.

John McMahon

In this issue

A number of distinguished writers introduce *Champagnat's* thirteenth year to our readers. We begin with *Michael Elligate's* thoughtful reflections on the Passion of Christ as recounted in the four Gospels. Feature writers *Richard Leonard* and *Kevin McGovern* then offer compelling perspectives on the attitudes Christ's followers may bring to personal grief and loss. In his usual forceful fashion *Joel Hodge* rounds off the theme as he challenges the difficulty experienced by modernity in making any sense of suffering.

Drawing on views that shaped early Marist aspirations, on more recent thinking within the Marist Brothers, and on the nature of some of the current ecclesial movements in the Church, *Michael Green's* article is a stimulus to constructive thought on how the Marist organisation of the future might be constituted. *Timothy Radcliffe* engagingly invites us to give practical acceptance to the fact that the Word of God has the nourishing power to foster our spiritual vitality.

In an inspirational meditation on the legacy of Mary MacKillop, *Max Vodola* portrays her as an outstanding exemplar of how the power of the Spirit can touch minds, hearts and souls, and lead to a truly Christian preoccupation with the material and spiritual wellbeing of others.

Early in his 2010 visit to the United Kingdom, *Benedict XVI* addressed teachers and pupils in Catholic schools. In our Education section we include the text of his constructive and supportive remarks as he emphasised the larger spiritual context in which teaching and learning take place. *Brian Jacka* reviews the phases evident in the practice of developmental psychology over the last 100 or more years. He explains how a traditional bias towards pathology as a key determinant of behavior is being superseded in a number of areas by an emphasis on positive emotional growth achieved through a 'broaden-and-build'

model of development. The noted Jesuit author and speaker, *Peter Henriot*, examines the attitudes of prosperous nations like the United States to climate change, the primacy of the free market and the cultural crisis impacting on those societies. He draws on examples from African life to urge a timely rethinking of the values prevalent in wealthier countries.

Book reviews by the distinguished Marist Brother, *Seán Sammon*, and by *Berise Heasly* provide a rewarding final section.

The recovery of the broader ministry of baptism involves a growing understanding and acceptance of the many gifts and the diverse circumstances in which we live.

We continue to reflect seriously on ways to make church ministry an effective and flourishing enterprise.

We also need to acknowledge and take responsibility for the ministry in the marketplace.

- Earth Crammed With Heaven, Elizabeth A Dreyer, p.111

Contributors

Michael Elligate for 23 years has been Parish Priest of St. Carthage's University parish, in the Melbourne suburb of Parkville. He chairs various committees in Human Ethics Research at the University of Melbourne, is deputy chair of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research Ethics Committee, and has maintained a keen interest in scriptural research over many years.

Michael Green fms is National Director of Marist Schools Australia and is based at the Montagne Centre in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick. His experience of Catholic schools has included secondary school teacher, principal, supervisor of schools and researcher. His studies, including doctoral research, have been mainly in the areas of curriculum, organisational culture and spirituality.

Berise Heasly has had lengthy experience in Catholic and Independent education, also has substantial editorial experience, and has been actively involved in the publication of 'Champagnat' over a number of years.

Peter Henriot sj is an internationally respected Jesuit researcher, speaker and writer on Social Justice, Globalization and Africa. He has worked in Zambia since 1989, and until recently was director of the *Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection* (JCTR) in Lusaka, Zambia. He is author, co-author or editor of a number of books, author of numerous articles, scholarly and popular, on socio-economic development and on church social teaching.

Joel Hodge is a Lecturer in Systematic Theology in the School of Theology, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. His doctoral study at The University of Queensland focused on East Timor, and examined how Christian faith forms responses to violence and oppression.

Brian Jacka taught in primary schools and subsequently lectured on educational and developmental psychology in tertiary institutions.

Dr. Jacka holds degrees in Education and Commerce and has been registered with the Psychologists' Registration Board of Victoria since 1974. He currently practises as a clinical psychologist and has additional qualifications in Rehabilitation Studies and Clinical Hypnosis. He is a member of the Australian Psychological Society, the Society's Board of Clinical Psychologists, and of the Australian Society of Hypnosis which trains professionals in the use of hypnosis.

Featured Authors:

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Kevin McGovern is a priest of the diocese of Rockhampton in north-eastern Australia. He is currently the Director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics in Melbourne, is a member of several health ethics committees, and has lectured extensively on ethics, theology and contemporary ethical issues.

Seán D. Sammon fms has a doctorate in clinical psychology, is author of ten books and numerous articles, was Vicar General of the Marist Brothers for eight years and finished a term of eight years as Superior-General in 2009. He is currently Scholar in Residence at Marist College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Timothy Radcliffe op is a Dominican friar of the English Province, and former Master of the Order of Preachers from 1992-2001. He is the only member of the English Province of the Dominicans to have held the office since the Order's foundation in 1216. Several of his books have become best-sellers. In 2003, he was made an honorary Doctor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, the University's highest honorary degree. He was the 2007 winner of the *The Michael Ramsey Prize* for theological writing, for his book *What Is the Point of Being A Christian?*

Contributors

Max Vodola is Parish Priest Priest of Flemington-Kensington in Melbourne and lectures in Church History at the Catholic Theological College, East Melbourne. He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Theology and Master of Theological Studies from the Melbourne College of Divinity, Master of Arts from Monash University, which has also recently accepted his doctoral thesis titled *'John XXIII, Vatican II and the Genesis of Aggiornamento'* - a close study of Pope John's writings on St Carlo Borromeo and the Council of Trent and how this shaped his ideas, language and historical framework in the calling of the Second Vatican Council.

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Christ in the Universe

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us. These abide:
The signal to a maid, the human birth,
The lesson, and the young Man crucified.

But not a star of all
The innumerable host of stars has heard
How he administered this terrestrial ball.
Our race have kept their Lord's entrusted Word.

Of his earth-visiting feet
None knows the secret, cherished, perilous
The terrible, shamefast, frightened, whispered, sweet,
Heart-shattering secret of his way with us.

No planet knows that this
Our wayside planet, carrying land and wave,
Love and life multiplied, and pain and bliss,
Bears, as chief treasure, one forsaken grave.

Nor, in our little day,
May his devices with the heavens be guessed,
His pilgrimage to thread the Milky Way,
Or his bestowals there be manifest.

But in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

O be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The million forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.

Alice Meynell 1847 – 1922.

Michael Elligate

An Approach to the Gospel Stories of Holy Week for Believers and Teachers

Palm Sunday through to Easter Sunday is a vital period in the Church's year. There are extended rituals and specific readings for each of the significant days.

A remarkable woman named Egeria documented her journeys through Palestine, Egypt and Syria around the year 400CE[1]. She found that Palm Sunday processions and Good Friday rituals grew out of the life of the Jerusalem Church, and were gradually taken up by Churches across Europe and Northern Africa.

Scholars suggest that what we now call the Passion Narratives were the first parts of the Gospels to be written. As early faith communities gathered to celebrate Eucharist filled with belief that Jesus had risen, they also recalled what events led to this great moment of hope. Here is a classic case of table talk. Over the table as they broke the bread of Eucharist they told the stories of His passion and death.

Scholars such as Raymond Brown in his two volume work 'The Death of the Messiah' explore how oral traditions led to the formation of different Gospel texts. The texts became highly stylized as different Gospel writers shaped their passion narrative to meet diverse pastoral needs in different places.

Mark's foundationary text leads straight to a bleak passion narrative. His community is threatened with collapse. So Jesus dies abandoned. The crunch question hovering here for the listener or the reader is 'And will you abandon Him too?' Jesus himself struggles with the issue of how to be faithful to his God in the garden of Gethsemane. He cries out words of anguish from the cross, and seems barely to hold on.

Luke's Gospel is gentle and inclusive. A black African from Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross. Jesus worries about the distressed women of Jerusalem. He promises paradise to the repentant thief and excuses his executioners. Luke quietly remarks that his followers were frightened, but they did not abandon him. They stood just some distance away. So Luke wants to soothe the struggle for the follower of Jesus. He calls the stranger and the fringe dweller closer to finding a part in the story. Above all he affirms and reassures the searcher.

John's Gospel sees Jesus as noble and serene. There is a majestic progress through the trial until the exaltation upon the cross. Pilate is in the hot seat, not Jesus. The crucifixion is a moment of triumph suggesting his resurrection. He is lifted up as Saviour of the world. His gracious words when entrusting his mother to the beloved disciple, and his final statement "it is finished" become together a message of fulfilment.

Raymond Brown wrote a helpful pamphlet some years ago where he speaks of the texts inviting audience participation. We are drawn into the story lines. Do we deny like Peter? Do we wash our hands of difficult people and situations like Pilate?

Palm Sunday captures our imagination. Often in our major cities there are Palm Sunday marches that protest about war, and the exploitation of people. Remember from oral tradition to the fine tuning of Gospel texts, the narratives become stylised. When proclaiming the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at Palm Sunday Mass, there is a need to make the story measured and grand. Jesus certainly entered Jerusalem for the final time, but maybe in the light of his resurrection it is now seen to be a triumphant move. Triumphal arches that commemorate victories rarely highlight the terrible mess of war. Did Jesus slip into Jerusalem scared and anxious? Did he quietly, but firmly, enter the city of the Temple, prepared to face the authorities of the day?

The story is narrated with a wonderful ring of victory, with references to verses from the psalms, and featuring the fulfilment of the hope of the Jewish prophets. The narrative captures our imagination. The function of the Gospel narrative is to convey the good news of Jesus. The stories are often stylised with grand effect, to engage the listener. The embellishment does not deceive, but becomes an effective agent in bringing us to the truth about Jesus.

Easter Sunday is a challenging day in our liturgy. Beyond the extended ritual of the Easter Vigil, we sing Alleluia and proclaim the hope of the Lord's Resurrection. Yet if we are honest, it is hard to handle. Christmas is easy, because we are used to babies being born. However we are not used to people coming back to us from the dead.

The Easter narratives where the Lord shows himself to the disciples are not the same as the narratives that speak of Jesus teaching in Galilee or Jerusalem. Here the Gospel writer is trying to convey the experience of people crushed by his death, coming to terms with the fact that he has risen. The experience of this realization is captured in stories where Jesus shows himself to them.

My favourite story is the narrative of the Emmaus road found only in Luke's Gospel. The clue to the crux of the story is found at the very end where it is mentioned 'And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread'. Maybe doubters or half believers were at those early gatherings of the Eucharist, and came to recognize him in the breaking of the bread? Here they came to see that he was with them. As the story is told, it follows the structure of a Eucharist, namely word and sacrament. As the story is told, Jesus speaks to them about the Jewish scriptures, then there is supper with bread and wine. The puzzled and the fragile ones become wise and strong at the breaking of the bread. Hopefully this may be one of those moments for us at the Eucharist where faith in the crucified and risen One is refreshed and restored.

These reflections merely skim the surface of remarkable biblical scholarship that is there to help all of us to grow as teachers and believers. ■

Endnotes

1 The more common A.D. (Anno Domini: in the year of the/Our Lord) was devised early in the sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus and came to be used as a means of designating years since the incarnation of Christ. Used by such historians as the Venerable Bede in the 8th C, it was in widespread use by the 9th C. Nevertheless its use even in Catholic countries was not universal until the 15th C. While the dating scheme is unaffected, the abbreviation CE (Common Era, Christian Era, Current Era) is preferred by various people, among them those who believe that it is more appropriate for interfaith dialogue. Some eastern countries, China for example, have adopted the western calendar, but in place of A.D. prefer the term 'Western Era'. –Ed.

Richard Leonard

To Live, Not Simply to Die[1]

God did not ***need*** *the blood of Jesus. Jesus did not just come 'to die', but God used his death to announce the end to death.*

I have wondered for some years now how some Christians can believe so strongly, and tell others so forcefully, that God sends them pain, destruction and death when there is so much evidence that we believe in a God who wants nothing to do with death and its courtiers. God wants life and liberty and joy for us.

I have come to believe that we should be very careful about what we sing. Spiritual songs and hymns are not part of our liturgy to fill in time, accompany a procession or to annoy the tone deaf who are pressed into making a noise. Hymns carry theology. We sing scriptural texts or a poetic version of a fundamental Christian truth to affirm our faith. Setting these texts to music makes them popular and memorable. That is why they can be so powerful and important and dangerous.

Take for example the spiritual song that was popular for a while entitled, 'The Man God Chose'. The man in question is Jesus. It was a very singable and likeable folk melody, and many of the sentiments within it were worthy indeed. The problem with this hymn is that the sincere songwriter did not know that he was giving a modern platform to an ancient heresy, and that now congregations were standing and singing it with gusto. This hymn is a modern take on some of the writings of Paul of Samosata and Theodotus of Byzantium who held that Jesus was adopted or chosen by God at his baptism and, because of the exemplary human life he then led, was confirmed as the Son at the crucifixion. This position was condemned in the late third century. God did not choose or adopt Jesus. We believe that the Word and Wisdom of God took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth from the moment of his conception.

So hymns matter; and one verse of one hymn has more to answer for

than most. ‘How Great Thou Art’ takes its place in the top five of nearly every survey of the most loved hymns in the English speaking world. Written by the Swedish Lutheran lay preacher and later parliamentarian, Carl Gustav Boberg in 1885, ‘O Store Gud’ (O Great God) was translated into English by Stuart Hine. Hine was an English evangelical missionary in the Ukraine where he learnt the hymn in Russian. In 1939 he returned to England and the following year published the first version of the hymn we now call ‘How Great Thou Art’. Its worldwide fame is thanks to Billy Graham’s International Crusade in London during 1954, during which time this hymn was sung over and over as it accompanied the altar call, and was broadcast and televised to an audience of millions. And it did not hurt the hymn’s fortunes that it was the Grammy Award winning title song of Elvis Presley’s 1967 hit record.

The Protestant pedigree of this hymn is important. A little history first. Building on the earlier work of St Clement of Alexandria, St Anselm of Canterbury, an 11th Century Benedictine monk, wrestled with the question of why God came into the world as one like us. In his famous treatise, *Cur Deus Homo*, (Why God became Human), he developed a theory that Jesus came into the world to act as a substitute for us. We were the ones who had offended God but rather than sacrifice us all, God sent Jesus to take our place in offering up his own life to the Father as restitution for our sins. He paid the ransom that God demanded to set us free.

This way of thinking relies heavily upon St Paul where on many occasions he calls Christ our redeemer. The word ‘redemption’ literarily means, ‘buying back’. It comes from the practice in the ancient world where there were two types of slaves - ones who were born or forced into slavery, usually for life, and others who paid off a debt or a crime by becoming a slave, usually for a period of time. The second type of slaves could be set free when someone else paid their debts, or the ransom their master now demanded for them was settled. They would, then, either be the slave of the purchaser, or set free completely.

St Paul introduced this metaphor into Christian theology to describe how we, who are enslaved by our destructive behavior, gained a liberator in Christ who entered into a sinful world, subjected himself to its violence and death, to succeed in setting us free. At its best the notion of Christ the Redeemer shows us that we do not have to live destructively anymore. Now claimed by the love of Christ, we are no longer slaves, but his friends;

indeed through the redeeming work of Christ we have been welcomed into God's family.

Limited version of the truth

The Protestant reformers took up these substitution ideas and gave them a more biblical spin. Relying on a literal and tougher stand on the role of the Fall of Adam and Eve, John Calvin held that because the first parents of humanity in the Book of Genesis rebelled against God, our whole human nature was corrupted forever. There was nothing we could do about it. God was so angry with us that, in time and in his mercy, and even though we did not deserve it, he decided to save us. But because humanity could not do anything to save itself, then to satisfy God's wrath at Adam and Eve and all humanity's subsequent ingratitude, the Word of God had to take our flesh, our place, and offer up the sacrifice of his own life in and through his suffering and death as atonement for our inherited and ongoing sinfulness. It is often called 'satisfaction theology', because it was through the violent death of Jesus that God's wrath was satisfied. It must be admitted that some elements of this satisfaction theology continue in Catholic theology as well, though we have never held that humanity was totally corrupt or depraved and that God had only one option in appeasing his own anger.

There are libraries written on the stuff of the last couple of paragraphs, but for our purposes here, this wholly inadequate summary will have to do.

In its more stark form, satisfaction theology is given a full confessional expression in the third verse of 'How Great Thou Art',

> When I think that God his Son not sparing
> Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in.
> That on the Cross my burden gladly bearing,
> He bled and died to take away my sin.

Why does this matter? Well if we keep singing hymns like this then some people may think it is true, may remember it and want it sung at all their family's baptisms, weddings, funerals and other rites of passage. And they do. But this hymn gives a very limited version of the truth it is trying to articulate, and the implications it holds in regard to where God is to be found in our suffering and pain cannot be underestimated. God's will for Jesus affects everything about how we think God deals with us. If our God wants and sends suffering, even setting up a grizzly death for his only beloved son, then why should we complain when we get a disease, an

illness, lose a child or become a quadriplegic? We are getting off lightly in comparison to what some claim God wanted from Jesus.

For Christians the paschal mystery – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – is the central paradigm around which our faith in God is constructed. It is the central story through which we explain our own origins, meaning and destiny. This hymn concerns itself with this mystery, and I can scarcely take in that God simply sent Jesus 'to die', and to die a gruesome and bloody death at that. If that were baldly true then why did God spare him from the outcome of the most unjust theological story in the New Testament – Matthew's slaughter of the innocents (Matt. 2:13-23). If Jesus was murdered by Herod at two years of age, then God could have got his blood sacrifice over nice and early.

Alternatively, if all God wanted was the perfect blood offering (echoes of Zeus here) of his only son for the sake of appeasing his anger, why did Jesus not leave Nazareth, stir up plenty of trouble around Galilee (as he did) and then march straight into Jerusalem and offend everyone and get crucified early on? It would not have been hard. If Jesus was simply sent 'to die' then what was the point of his hidden years and the public ministry? They were not there for God's sake, but for ours.

The simple truth is that the third verse of this beloved hymn is wrong. Jesus did not simply and only come to die. Rather, Jesus came to live. As a result of the courageous and radical way he lived his life, and the saving love he embodied for all humanity, he threatened the political, social and religious authorities of his day so much that they executed him. This is, I think, an easier way for us to make sense of the predictions of the passion. Jesus was not clairvoyant; he was a full and true human being and therefore had informed but limited knowledge. His full and true divinity cannot obliterate his humanity or he would be play-acting at being human. His divinity is seen in and through the uncompromisingly loving, just and sacrificial way he lived within the bounds of his humanity.

Many of the most morally courageous people in history knew that their personal life and liberty were threatened because of what they were saying or how they were living. They may not have known beforehand they would be executed or murdered or assassinated, but they could read the signs of their times well enough to predict that there were serious consequences to the freedom they were embodying and to which they were attracting other people. Sometimes they spoke or wrote about the cost of the stands they took. In this regard they reflect Jesus Christ. Our

martyrs are not Christian versions of suicide bombers. They do not go looking for death in any active sense. That would be the ultimate betrayal of God's gift of life. They know, however, that they may die as a result of witnessing to their faith and the demand for justice which must flow from it. In their lives and deaths they follow the pattern of Jesus. He did not seek death, for its own sake, but would not and could not live any other way than faithfully, hopefully and lovingly. In his day, as in our own, this is immensely threatening to those whose power base is built on values opposed to these virtues. The world continues to silence and sideline people who live out the Christian virtues and values now, just as Jesus was thought to be ultimately sidelined in his crucifixion. But God had the last word on the death of Jesus: Life.

For most of Christian history the question that has vexed many believers seems to be, 'Why did Jesus die?' I think it is the wrong question. The right one is 'Why was Jesus killed?' And that puts the last days of Jesus' suffering and death in an entirely new perspective.

This is how we can stand before the cross and listen to Jesus in John's Gospel say, 'I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full'. This life is not about the perfect Son of the perfect Father making the perfect sacrifice to get us back in God's good books, and thereby saving us. It is the Trinity's inner life overflowing to the world in Christ through the power of the Spirit.

Not death but life

Our God does not deal in death, but life. Everything in the New Testament shows this, even the grand apocalyptic narratives about the end of time, which show all the hallmarks of an inspired rabbinic teacher drawing big strokes on the largest of canvases. Jesus did not intend us to take this imagery literally. I assume the experience of judgment will not actually be a livestock muster of sheep and goats. The lesson behind the imagery, however, is a real one for us to learn. God's compassion and love will ultimately see that justice is done. He will hear the cry of the poor and we will be called to account in the next life for what we have done and what we have failed to do in this life.

In this context we need to look at one other Gospel text. Some people quote Jesus in the garden saying, 'My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done' (Matt 26:42) or 'Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?' (John 18:11) as conclusive proof that God wanted and even needed Jesus to suffer and

die. It all depends on what we think the will or the cup of the Father is for Jesus. If it is, as the hymn sings, 'to die', then that is quite clear and final. If, as I have argued earlier, the will of God is that we are faithful, hopeful and loving then Jesus' prayer is about the Father strengthening and emboldening the Son to stay on the Way, to speak and be the Truth and to witness to the Life, even if it costs him his own. Such a life of transparent goodness is never easy; it always involves a cup of suffering. In the Garden scene we have Jesus becoming aware of his impending doom and struggling to finally claim the power to confront death and destruction and sin head-on. Jesus' anguish at whatever might be his fate is an entirely human response, one that consoles all of us as we face our own anxieties.

God the Father's role in the context of accompanying his Son in and through the crucible of anxiety in the garden might be seen in terms of a just and good army commander. A good friend of mine has led troops into battle in Afghanistan. He says, 'I love my troops so much that I would never want to commit them to death. I have gone with them into battle only so that we can all serve the higher good of liberating people from tyranny and offering them a better life than anything they've known before. The time before any known battle is the most anxious of times when any man or woman worth his or her salt is filled with self-doubt and wishing they were anywhere but there. But the higher calling is to remain focused on the mission, and be committed to the people, among the poorest people in the world, whom we are sent there to serve. Believing in the rightness of the cause means we can overcome our worst anxieties, look death in the face and, make sure evil does not have the last word. The worst moments of my life so far have been to return to base having lost any of my troops. I can be inconsolable for a while, only comforted by knowing that they were as committed to the mission as I was and believing that their death was not in vain, but suffered in helping make the world a better place.' In this context Jesus' cup of suffering is not imposed by God from without but is the consequence of liberating us from tyranny, offering us the fullness of life in this world and the next and making sure that evil did not have, and does not have, the last word.

And think about what we have done to the Cross of Christ. Many of us now wear small crosses and crucifixes in rolled gold, platinum and sterling silver. They dangle around our necks or from our earlobes. I wonder if the Romans had access to the electric chair rather than the cross, whether we

would now have small silver, gold and platinum electric chairs around our necks and hanging from our earlobe? Furthermore, rather than starting our prayers by signing ourselves with the sign of the Cross, we might assume the grip of one in an electric chair and begin our prayers with, 'Szszszsz'. This provocative and contemporary image brings home to us what Paul calls the 'scandal of the Cross' (1Cor.1:18-26). The Cross of Christ is not a fashion accessory, no matter how many of them Madonna and Eminem wear. Looking upon it should still take our breath away. Not only because it shows us how far Jesus was prepared to go in establishing his reign of justice and love in this world, but also because it spells out the cost for all of us who follow his Way, speak his Truth and live his Life. This should be as radical and threatening now as it was in the first century. For those of us who put on a cross, and for everyone who carries one, we want to answer Christ's question, 'How far will you go out of love in following me?' with the same answer he gave the Father, and us, 'I will go to the end. I will see it through, no matter what it costs.'

Sometimes when we ask 'where the hell is God?' some Christians will avoid the answer to that question and simply tell us to 'offer it up'. By this they seem to mean to say, 'Well, God required Jesus to suffer a torturous death, so you must see in your own suffering and pain God offering you the same cup of suffering as he offered Jesus'. It is not that long ago that these ideas had such currency that we 'offered up' our suffering for the salvation of souls in purgatory, or for others whose lives we thought offended God. My worry is not that Jesus suffered and died and that so do we, but what sort of image of God emerges from understanding our salvation in terms of the commercial transaction of paying a ransom, or an angry God deriving satisfaction from us 'offering up' our suffering and illness and pain, which he has sent to us in the first place.

Another traditional way of understanding our suffering is to say that in 'offering it up' we are freely uniting our sufferings with the sufferings of Jesus, so they then take on some meaning. If my thoughts on why Jesus suffered hold true, then we could reclaim that style of approach but with an important difference. Rather than the implied belief that it is about the further appeasement of a needy God (which is difficult anyway given that classically Jesus' sacrifice was once-and-for-all) I find meaning in my suffering by being faithful to Jesus' way, truth and life, when every other instinct in me wants to cut and run. Here we find God in my Gethsemane enabling me to confront death and destruction and sin head-on, now sure

through the experience of Jesus that the life of God will have the last word.

I like creative and stirring arrangements of 'How Great Thou Art'. I am very happy to sing strongly about how we can wander through the woods and glades and praise 'all the worlds Thy Hands have made'. And in the final verse I sing more loudly than anyone about 'When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation and take me home what joy shall fill my soul'. It is just verse three. Because I take popular theology as seriously as I do, I cannot and will not sing it because I hope it, and the blood-thirsty God behind it, just isn't true, because what makes God great is that he wants nothing to do with death. ■

Endnotes

1 With the permission of the author this article is a reprint of Chapter Five of his book *Where the Hell is God?* details of which are given on page 21 and on the inside back cover.

Teach me, Lord, to stop, and look,
and listen.

To be still in the mind when I stop.

To see beauty when I look.

To hear more when I listen.

- You Have a Minute, Lord? David Kossoff.

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Kevin McGovern

Finding Meaning in Serious Illness and Suffering

When we experience serious illness, one of our deepest challenges is to make sense of what is happening to us. This article considers how we might do this. It particularly explores John Paul II's Salvifici Doloris, which suggests that Christians might discover meaning by uniting their sufferings with the sufferings of Christ.

Illness challenges us at every level of our being. Modern methods of pain control are extremely effective, but there can still be some residual pain, shortness of breath, discomfort and tiredness. Emotionally, there can be worry, anger, loneliness, depression, anxiety and many other difficult feelings. Socially, there are sometimes drastic changes to our plans, the difficulties of letting down both people we care about and projects we value, and at least some social isolation from the people we love. Illness also presents spiritual challenges. Almost all of us have a narrative which makes sense of our lives, a story in which we are in some sense a hero on a quest. Serious illness requires that we re-consider and revise this narrative and even our understanding of who we are. For people of religious faith, there are additional challenges in discerning the meaning of their illness for their faith and their understanding of God. Out of all this, we find ourselves asking the hard and essentially spiritual questions: *Why is this happening to me? What is the meaning of this? What is this all about?*

Different people might understand these questions very differently. One person might view their illness simply as a chance event. Statistically this illness happens to a certain number of people, they say, and one of them just happens to be me. Their challenge is to discern what they

might learn or how they might grow even through this chance event. Another person might believe that God is somehow involved in or even behind whatever happens to them. Their challenge is to discern what God is teaching them through this experience.

Here are two examples of people with fatal illnesses answering these questions. Towards the end of her twelve-year journey with breast cancer, Rita Magris wrote:

> Illness brings out the best in people. They have to find courage they never knew they had…. I didn't realise how much power I had until I had to dig. Each day is urgent and important. I have fitted so much into the last 10 years.[1]

Or again, a man dying of cancer in his mid-fifties said:

> No, I'm not afraid of dying, though I'm finding this hard…. I have a very loving family and so many friends… but I'm deeply alone inside of this. But I'm really only afraid of one thing, of not doing this with dignity. I want to make this, the way I die, my final act of love for my family. I want to do this right![2]

In answering these questions, we draw particularly on those things which have already made our lives meaningful, including our relationships, our commitments, and our understanding of who we are. People of faith also draw on their faith, on prayer, and on the rituals of their religion. For Catholics, these include the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and the Anointing of the Sick.[3] Other helpful insights may be gleaned from writings about theodicy – philosophical and theological works which consider how there can be evil and suffering in the world created by God. This article explores a significant but somewhat neglected work of theodicy, John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering (Salvifici Doloris)*.[4] Before doing so, however, we should note the importance of this reflection on the meaning of suffering. It is important both for us as individuals and for society as a whole. For each of us as individuals, this reflection helps us make sense of our own times of suffering - and even to continue to endure them. As Viktor Frankl noted, 'He [or she] who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*.'[5] As regards society as a whole, contemporary culture regards suffering as 'meaningless and hence to be avoided at all costs and by all means.' This is one reason why euthanasia receives 'substantial popular support.'[6] So perhaps these reflections can

also offer the men and women of contemporary society a more life-giving alternative than choosing to be killed.

Salvifici Doloris

In his Letter to the Colossians, St Paul wrote, 'In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.' (Col 1:24) John Paul's *Salvifici Doloris* is essentially an extended commentary on this text. The pope addressed this theme earlier in his pontificate – for example, in his Address to the Sick at Czestochowa on 4 June 1979 and at Knock on 30 September 1979.[7] Compared to these early, brief comments, however, the Apostolic Letter is enormously developed in both its scope and its depth. The impetus for this development was the assassination attempt on the pope on 13 May 1981. He almost died. Shot four times, John Paul suffered severe abdominal wounds, massive blood loss, and a cardiac arrest.

Despite five hours of emergency surgery, it was not clear whether or not he would survive. Four days later, in a radio message from his hospital bed, he expressed the insight which is at the heart of *Salvifici Doloris* when he said, 'United with Christ, priest and victim, I offer my sufferings for the Church and the world.' Theologian Gerald O'Collins called this 'the most moving broadcast I have ever listened to.'[8] John Paul did survive, enduring a slow recuperation with some setbacks and further surgery along the way. During this time, as most of us would, he continued to ponder the deep questions of the meaning of suffering. *Salvifici Doloris* is the beautiful fruit of this reflection.[9]

It is also clear that these insights remained with the pope for the rest of his life. In 1994, his message for the Second World Day of the Sick was about this Apostolic Letter. In the same year, when he answered a series of questions for an interview, he again returned to these insights.[10] In his later years, John Paul experienced a great deal of physical suffering. From 1991, he suffered increasingly from the trembling hands and slurred speech of Parkinson's disease. Beginning in 1993, a series of falls resulted in broken bones, surgery, and a hip replacement. He relied increasingly on a cane and then a wheelchair. Before his death on 2 April 2005, his final illness spanned several months, and included a tracheotomy and nasogastric tube, a urinary tract infection, fever and septic shock, and ultimately kidney and heart failure. In all of this, he must surely have reflected that he continued to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Salvifici Doloris was released on 11 February 1984. It is about seventeen

thousand words (including about a thousand words of footnotes). It has eight sections, which we will consider in turn:

1. Introduction (#1-4)

The pope notes that suffering is a 'universal theme that accompanies man at every point on earth.' It 'thus demands to be constantly reconsidered.' He adds that suffering 'seems to be particularly essential to the nature of man.' Belonging to 'man's transcendence,' it is 'one of those points in which man is in a certain sense "destined" to go beyond himself.' (#2) He also adds that it is on the 'long path of suffering' that 'the church at all times… should meet man.' (#3)

2. The world of human suffering (#5-8)

In this section, John Paul reminds us of the vast array of human suffering. He offers many examples from the Bible and from recent world history. There is both physical suffering, and emotional or 'moral' suffering.

The pope adds that people suffer when they experience any kind of evil. Such evil is essentially a 'lack, limitation or distortion of the good.' Thus, 'man suffers because of a good he does not share… He particularly suffers when he "ought" – in the normal order of things – to have a share in this good and does not have it.' (#7)

3. The quest for an answer (#9-13)

One possible explanation for suffering is that it is punishment for sin or wrongdoing. As John Paul II notes, this possible explanation is explored in the Old Testament book of Job. Job is a good man who undergoes enormous suffering. His friends – Job's Comforters – come, and try to convince him that his great suffering must mean that he has sinned greatly. Job protests his innocence. Ultimately, God appears, confirms Job's innocence, and rebukes Job's friends. From the book of Job, we may conclude that 'it is not true that all suffering is a consequence of a fault and has the nature of a punishment.' (#11) However, for a fuller explanation for suffering, we must turn to the New Testament and to Christ.

4. Jesus Christ: suffering conquered by love (#14-18)

At the beginning of this section, the pope expands his analysis of suffering and evil. There is temporal suffering and temporal evil – that is, suffering and evil in this world. But there is also definitive suffering and definitive evil – suffering and evil in the world to come: 'the loss of eternal life,

being rejected by God, damnation.' (#14) Christ's messianic or salvific mission is to overcome suffering (both temporal and definitive), as well as sin and death.

Christ's healing miracles are therefore part of his messianic activity. But above all Christ fulfilled his mission through his suffering and death. Christians believe that Christ is both truly God and truly human. Christ's suffering was therefore truly human suffering. But at the same time, because he is also the only-begotten Son of God, Christ was able to take on the full measure of human sin, 'embracing the measure of evil contained in the sin of man: in every sin and in "total" sin.' His suffering under the 'horrible weight' of this sin was immense. (#17)

Salvation was achieved because Christ did not turn away from this intense suffering but instead through it all continued to love.[11] 'In his suffering, sins are cancelled out precisely because he alone as the only-begotten Son could take them upon himself [and] accept them with… love.' (#17) Through the passion and death of Christ, human sin and human suffering have 'entered into a completely new dimension and a new order.' They have been 'linked to love… to that love which created good, drawing it out by means of suffering.' (#18) In this encounter, sin is conquered, death and definitive suffering are overcome, and even temporal suffering is transformed. In the next section, John Paul will reflect further on the transformation of suffering even in this world.

5. Sharers in the sufferings of Christ (#19-24)

Four sentences from the Apostolic Letter summarise this section: 'In the cross of Christ not only is the redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself has been redeemed…. In bringing about the redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised suffering to the level of redemption.' (#19) 'Man, discovering through faith the redemptive suffering of Christ, also discovers in it his own sufferings; he rediscovers them through faith, enriched with a new content and new meaning.' (#20) 'Insofar as man becomes a sharer in Christ's sufferings – in any part of the world and at any time in history – to that extent he in his own way completes the suffering through which Christ accomplished the redemption of the world.' (#24)

These are profound ideas: God can make use of our suffering. If we offer our suffering to God, just as God used Christ's suffering God can use our suffering too for the salvation of the world. Ordinary Christians might not be able to express these ideas as eloquently as the late pope.

But they certainly have this insight of faith as they counsel one another in suffering, 'Offer it up.'

For Christian believers, these insights present a great challenge. If we believe that Christ brought salvation through his suffering, are we able to see our own suffering as our share in the sufferings of Christ? And are we able in this way to find meaning in our own suffering?

6. The Gospel of suffering (#25-27)

Even as he recovered from an assassination attempt which almost killed him, John Paul did appreciate that he was sharing in the sufferings of Christ. For this reason, he is able to discuss in this section the Gospel of Suffering. As he notes, the Gospel of Suffering 'signifies… the revelation of the saving power and salvific significance of suffering in Christ's messianic mission and subsequently in the mission and vocation of the church.' (#25) This involves firstly 'suffering "for Christ" – "persecutions" or "tribulations experienced because of Christ".' But it also involves 'all those who suffer together with Christ, uniting their human sufferings to his salvific suffering.' (#26)

As well as contributing to the salvation of the world, such suffering can transform the person suffering. For example, John Paul notes that many saints including Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola underwent profound conversion during times of illness. The pope offers at least two comments about this transformation. Firstly, it occurs through the grace of the crucified Christ and the power of the indwelling Spirit. And secondly, 'it often takes time, even a long time.' (#26)[12]

7. The Good Samaritan (#28-30)

To this point, John Paul has considered suffering from the perspective of the sufferer. In this section, he uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to consider suffering not from the perspective of the sufferer but from the perspective of those who encounter the suffering person. Quite simply, our task in these circumstances is to be like the Good Samaritan: to notice the suffering person, to stop whatever else we are doing, to feel compassion for them, and to provide them with generous help. Thus, the pope suggests that suffering 'is also present to unleash love in the human person,' and that 'the world of human suffering' should summon forth 'the world of human love.' (#29) This is a challenge for all of us. It is perhaps a particular challenge for those who work in health care.[13]

8. Conclusion (#31)

The Apostolic Letter's conclusion summarises its main insights about the mystery of suffering. And we are left with much to ponder: Whether we are Christian or not, how might we find meaning in our times of suffering? If we are Christian, might we find meaning by uniting our sufferings with the sufferings of Christ? And if we encounter people who are suffering, are we able to respond to them like the Good Samaritan? ■

Endnotes

1 Rita Magris, in *A Life Well Lived: A Decade of Palliative Care at Cabrini Prahran*, ed. Amanda Place (Melbourne: Cabrini Health, 2009): 16-21 at 20.

2 Ron Rolheiser, "Blood and Water Poured Out!" Ron Rolheiser, http://www.ronrolheiser.com/columnarchive/archive_display.php?rec_id=391

3 For a thoughtful examination of how the prayers and sacraments of the Catholic Church help us find meaning in illness, suffering and death, see Vivian Boland, "The meaning of suffering and death in the Catholic Faith," *European Journal of Palliative Care* 19, no. 1 (2010): 18-21.

4 John Paul II, *On the Christian Meaning of Suffering (Salvifici Doloris)*, Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html

5 Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, trans. Ilse Lasch (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964): 76, 106. Frankl is quoting Friedrich Nietzsche.

6 J. Daryl Charles, "Protestant Reflections on *Salvifici Doloris*," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 211-220 at 212.

7 John Paul II, "Address to the Sick at Czestochowa" and "Address to the Sick at Knock," Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1979/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790604_polonia-jasna-gora-ammalati_en.html & http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1979/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790930_irlanda-knock-ammalati_en.html. Even before *Salvifici Doloris*, George Hunston Williams noted this and recognised a "very important shift of emphasis in [this] Pontiff… [Christ] is in the suffering, not the poor as such." For this, see George Hunston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of his thought and action* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 295-296.

8 Gerald O'Collins, "A pope for all people," *Kairos Catholic Journal* 22, no. 1 (6-19 February 2011): 4-5 at 5.

9 Peter J. Vaghi, "Challenge and Opportunity: John Paul II on the gift of Christian suffering," *America* 193, no. 13 (31 October 2005): 19-21 at 20

10 John Paul II, "Message for the Second World Day of the Sick," Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/sick/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121993_world-day-of-the-sick-1994_en.html; ________, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, ed. Vittorio Messori (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 25.

11 In 1099, St Anselm of Canterbury wrote the enormously influential *Cur Deus Homo?* When Man sinned, Anselm argued, he incurred an infinite debt to God. Only a Man *should* pay this debt. However, only God *could* pay this *infinite* debt. Therefore, Anselm concluded, only a God-Man both could and should reconcile God and Man. John Paul's argument here obviously has echoes of Anselm's. However, whereas Anselm spoke of forensic debt, John Paul speaks of the existential or ontological transformation of suffering by divine love. In my opinion, this is a very significant development.

12 John Paul also notes that Christ does not offer an "abstract" or theoretical explanation for suffering. (cf #26) To the contrary, suffering "always remains a mystery" and "we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations." (#13) What Christ offers instead is not an answer made of words, but rather an answer made of life: "as the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him." (#26) John Conley notes perceptively that in this the pope "challenges the power and range of metaphysical reason." For this, see John J. Conley, "The Limits of Metaphysical Reason: Re-reading John Paul II," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 76 (2002): 117-123 at 117, cf 119-121.

13 When John Paul II visited Australia in 1986, he met with sick and disabled people and their carers in Brisbane on 25 November. Significantly, he reminded "those who work with the disabled, the handicapped and the sick" that they "have chosen – either professionally or as volunteers – the life of the Good Samaritan…" For this, see John Paul II, "Address to the Handicapped, Sick and Disabled People," in *The Pope in Australia: Collected Homilies and Talks* (Homebush, NSW: St Paul, 1986), 32-35 at 34.

All on-line documents accessed 20 May 2010.

Joel Hodge

Bringing Good out of Grief and Loss

Symbolism of the Cross

Two television programs on the *ABC* on Monday 14th June 2010 revealed an important battle at the heart of Western culture over the nature of human life and suffering. At 8pm, there was the *Australian Story* programme which was about a businessman providing solace and comfort to sick and dying patients through music. At 9.30pm, there was *Q&A*, a programme comprising audience questions and answers from an 'expert' panel. That night's *Q&A* panel featured the philosopher, Peter Singer. According to form, Singer advocated euthanasia for the severely disabled, claiming that once 'you decide it's better the child dies and not to treat it' it is justifiable 'to make sure the child dies quickly now'. (http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2920673.htm).

Underlying Singer's attitude about euthanasia is something seemingly typical of the utilitarianism of modernity, in which it is increasingly difficult to make sense of suffering, and so, it must be avoided.

It seems that modernity, with its struggles between cold rationalism and sentimental romanticism, can make little or no sense of suffering, particularly as Christianity is being gradually removed from Western culture. From a theological perspective, the modern notions of the human person, with their emphases on individualism, relativism, and affluence, seem to be lacking a *relational* understanding of what it means to be human. It is this *relational* understanding that lies at the heart of Christianity:

> 'The whole history of mankind was led astray, suffered a break, because of Adam's false idea of God. He wanted to be like God. I hope you never thought that Adam's sin lay in this… Had God not invited him to nourish this desire? Adam only deluded himself about the model. He thought God was an independent, autonomous being sufficient to himself; and in order to become like him he rebelled and showed disobedience. But when God revealed himself, when God wished to show who he was, he appeared as love, tenderness, as outpouring of himself, infinite pleasure in another. Inclination, dependence. God showed himself obedient, obedient unto death. In the belief that he was becoming like God, Adam turned away from him. He withdrew into loneliness, and God was fellowship.'
>
> (L. Evely in Ratzinger, 1990, *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 202).

The heart of the Christian Gospel, then, is about the centrality of relationality, even for God, that brings good out of evil. While (post-) modernity has glorified a sentimental romanticism, the wonder, depth and vulnerability of relationality has largely been lost because of the *romantic myths* that reduce it to sentimentalism, or because of the *cold rationalism* that seeks to counter it. The split between romanticism and rationalism continues to plague the modern West; and it impacts in real ways on Western notions of human suffering and life that form how we live - and even whom we allow to live.

Suffering for many affluent Westerners, supported by philosophers like Singer, does not fit into their picture of human life: it must be cut out to make a nice, neat system in which we can control our lives. The affluence of the modern West, based on the success of mass capitalism and a technical mentality, seeks to remove suffering from life. The stimulation, individualism and affluence of Western life, with its media obsession and busy lifestyles, are enough for many to anaesthetise them to suffering. Yet, the gaping holes in this Western worldview are manifested in many modern Western problems that show how we find it hard to cope with suffering.

The major problems of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, depression and relationship breakdown seem to be symptoms. Singer's approach is a philosophical manifestation of the movement of Western culture. His advocacy for euthanasia, and the public interest in euthanasia, does not just represent a slippery slope to more dangerous possibilities. It represents the slippery slope that the West is already on because

it cannot make sense of human life and suffering: the end – a self-sufficient, affluent life – justifies the means; and, in order to justify ourselves, we go through semantic games. For example, if the media are correct in their reporting, the recent court ruling in Adelaide to allow a woman to starve herself occurred because it was not regarded as 'suicide'. Thus, the semantic games continue in the justification of an underlying cultural movement: ending the life of the fetus for the mother's 'suffering' is not killing; starving oneself is not suicide; waterboarding is not torture; and so on. Human dignity is being degraded because the West struggles to make sense of human life and suffering in the wonder of its relationality.

Seeking good in the midst of evil

Yet, there remains hope, as the *Australian Story* episode shows: there are still ordinary people being human – that is, utilizing and seeking the good in relationship with others – in the midst of suffering, pain and evil. They are trying to bring good into and out of difficult situations. At work here is a Christian instinct that brings out humanity's true goodness: one does not seek to impose one's view of being human and eradicate the situation (of pain and evil), but confronts the situation by humbly seeking to provide whatever good is possible from one's talents for the building-up of others. In this way, it is shown that it is natural for humans to seek good in the midst of evil, rather than to cut that evil off through bad or evil means (i.e. killing).

Advocates of euthanasia claim that the good that they pursue is the alleviation of pain that is not natural to human beings; but they use what is ordinarily regarded as negative or evil (killing) means to achieve the good they are seeking. This is not to ignore that in suffering and death we are all confronted with difficult existential, moral and relational problems with no easy answers. However, the answer that euthanasia gives reflects a certain theological and anthropological view of the human person that needs to be more deeply reflected on.

The Christian witness similarly seeks to combat the evil at work here but through a different means, as Peter Roberts on *Australian Story* shows by his service of music and fellowship to those hospitalized, suffering and/or approaching death. The Christian witness sees that the natural condition for humans is try to bring good (through good

means) out of evil situations, of which the Crucifixion is the ultimate example. Thus, while suffering may be ultimately inexplicable, the proper response is to continue to seek good and do good through good means. This good ends and means comes through building relationality: by building up relationships and identities, not cutting them off.

Suffering only ultimately makes sense in these relationships (with God and other humans); and many people caring for persons with disabilities can attest to the importance of their relationships. Minister Peter Garrett explained this on the same *Q&A* program:

> 'One of the things that strikes me about the debate is that sometimes you hear from parents who have had seriously disabled kids, and it's been a very challenging exercise, the amount of care, effort and time, and often expense as well, but they would not have had it any other way, and they think there is sufficient quality of life in that'.
>
> (http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2920673.htm).

Bringing good out of suffering

When my grandmother slowly approached her death at ninety-eight years of age, she was in great pain. It is easy to see why people anguish at this kind of pain and contemplate any means to alleviate it. Her suffering did lead us to want to alleviate her pain. That is a natural reaction. However, her last days and weeks, taken up with pain and unconsciousness, were important moments of grace for us as a family to deepen our relationships with each other, our grandmother and God. We gave up much to care for her and she gave up much to continue to remain with us with great faith in God, who was mysteriously leading her to himself. Grandma was in great pain at times which sometimes led her to despair, but she had an underlying determination to continue to live every moment God gave her. Her fortitude and faith was inspiring. She did die with dignity: she gave up her life, not presuming to control it, in faith and was surrounded to the end by family. Her weakest moments were in some ways her greatest: they showed who she was and they revealed who we were in our solidarity with her. As can be seen at this local level (as well as at the larger socio-cultural level), suffering can lead to solidarity: to the unity of self-giving that builds communion.

Without God (and by just trying to use our reason), we have trouble coming to terms with the relational nature of our human existence. The advent of Christianity in the ancient world brought a new emphasis on the dignity of the human person in its dynamic relationality that connects human beings to the "unknown" God (as the Greeks put it, cf. Acts 17:23). The modern West suffers from the disconnect between its relational and rational capacities; a disconnect that can only be healed by bringing together faith (that grounds, builds and directs our relationships) and reason. Since the Enlightenment, the division of faith and reason has marked the West; a division that has led to the conflict of romanticism and rationalism. The ABC has shown where the battle for the West lies: on the one hand there is the rejection or fear of suffering (in an individualised, self-sufficient notion of human being); on the other there is the effort to seek and bring good out of evil and suffering with faith that God is moving life toward good ends. Despite what much of the media, academia and public ignore, suffering remains an ever-present reality of human life with which we struggle to come to terms. In the Christian tradition, God comes to a world plagued by suffering, violence and death to bring good out of it: the Cross is the symbol of this *par excellence*. It is the symbol that the West no longer wants to face – that suffering and evil can be and needs to be transformed into good, no matter the initial pain, cost and self-sacrifice that this involves. Thanks to Australian Story we can see that there remain witnesses to life and the Cross that the West can still celebrate, despite the deep misgivings the individualized, affluent West has about suffering and relationality:

> For me the notion of dying is that people are going home and for many people it would mean different things. But for me there's a sense of going home. And, oh gosh, (starts to cry) and it's a privilege for me to be able to assist these people. It was the music that, I guess, called to me, that drew me into this work. But in fact there's more to it than that. For me, it's the sacredness or the deep connection that I have to something that is expressed through music, and now it's sort of almost beyond music and in fact, I play very little music beyond the work that I do. So in the hospital, it's the offering of the music. Beyond that, I love the silence.
>
> (Peter Roberts on Australian Story, http://www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2007/s2927293.htm). ■

Michael Green

A New Tent for Today's Marists

Deep in the psyche of the desert peoples of the Middle East are tents. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the tent was at once a place of meeting, of gathering, of praying, of hospitality, of refuge and safety in journeying, and the sanctuary for the symbol of the covenant between God and humanity. It was somewhere to encounter God, in assembly with others. It was also home. For generations of Marist Brothers, their Institute has also been all these things for them: their tent. In the last two decades, the Institute has been challenged, with fitting biblical allusion, 'to widen the space of its tent.'[1] The call responds to pressure

from two sources. First, there is the urging of the Church for all the baptised in the post-Conciliar period to assume their full and rightful role in its mission. In addition, there is the developing aspiration of lay people to be accommodated into the mission, spirituality, and even somehow into the structure, of the Marist Brothers.

The lived reality in different parts of the Marist world is that many people other than Brothers have long been seeking to identify themselves as 'Marist' in the Champagnat way. They are attracted by this distinctive expression of gospel living; they have encountered God in it. They are wanting to develop their own spirituality within it, and shape around it their own professional practice as educators and apostles to youth. Indeed, in most Provinces, the Marist mission is almost entirely in the hands of people who are not Marist Brothers. Schools, universities, welfare services and other ministries are self-identifying as *Marist* without many or even any Brothers involved in them.

What is the relationship of these people, and the ministries they conduct, with the Institute in day-to-day practice? What is it that can guarantee their connection to the corporate and deliberative mission of the Institute? What are workable lines of accountability and responsibility? How can the family bonds be maintained and strengthened? How is the Marist spirituality of these people enriched? What are their means for sharing ownership for the future development of the Marist way in the world? How do they participate in shaping this future and taking part in discernment and decision-making about it? How might they formalise their membership in some way? How is their sense of vocation recognised, valued and nurtured? In this new world where there is a deeper appreciation of the Church as *communio,* what are the structures that will shape, protect and enhance such ecclesiology among Marcellin's disciples?

These and other questions have been addressed by the landmark book *Gathered Around the Same Table* which was published in the last days of Brother Seán Sammon's generalate. This publication was the most recent step in a journey on which we have been embarked for a long time now. A number of worthy initiatives have been undertaken, notably that of the *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family*. But the questions and the unease remain. It is well that they do, for they drive us deeper into the essence of what is being sought. Perhaps it is becoming clearer that the essential issue is not that the tent-space is too small, but that it is

the wrong tent. Perhaps we need to design, all of us together, a new tent. Perhaps, several tents, some pitched together.

Who are today's Marists?

Who is it who may want to be in the Marist tent?[2] Marist Brothers, obviously. Who else? Prominent among such others would be, of course, those who are involved professionally or directly in the Marist mission: teachers, youth workers, catechists, campus ministers, administrators, and others working in various capacities in Marist schools and ministries. They are people who have been attracted by the opportunities that have been offered to them, especially during the last fifteen years or so, to be formed in Marist spirituality and mission. It is not everyone in Marist ministries who has felt this attraction to the underpinning spirituality of our mission: there will always be those who will only ever want to be employees or fellow-travellers. It would be an empty claim to pretend otherwise. So, also, in some Provinces where there has been no strategic promotion of Marcellin's spirituality among lay people, there is today little explicit expression of it or ownership of it beyond the Brothers themselves, and little or no sense that a school or other institution might be *Marist* if no Brothers are present. Yet, experience suggests that, in those Provinces where there have been opportunity and freedom to recruit staff members who are likely to be open to the Marist way, and strategies offered to them which foster their own development of Marist spirituality and professional practice, then it has flowered within them and among them.

It is of the very nature of Marcellin's spirituality that the hook which has caught such people is ***mission***. The Marist spirituality of Marcellin cannot be understood or lived apart from a context of mission, specifically the Christian education of the young. People who embrace the particular strand of Marist spirituality that was introduced into the life of the Church by Marcellin and the first Brothers need to connect themselves, either directly or vicariously, to this mission. For Marcellin, as for all those who seek to be his disciples, first comes mission. Ours is not a spiritual way that would work for the members of a private prayer group, or for an individual whose principal concerns do not include the work of evangelisation of youth. It is only natural, then, that there is so much interest in Marcellin's spirituality from those people who collaborate in and support the Institute's mission of Christian education of youth, in its many forms.

It needs also to be recognised that all of these people are not 'lay'; there are those who fall outside the dichotomous categorising of the Marist world into 'Brothers' and 'lay'. Too often we forget the priests and the female religious. What of our chaplains and priest colleagues? Can they also have a place in our Marist tent, even though they are neither lay nor Brother, just like Jean-Marie Vianney who was a pre-eminent member of the Third Order of Mary in the founding time? And how could female religious be accommodated? Must they belong to another religious institute because there is no way to live the consecrated life as a woman in the Champagnat tent?[3] It all starts to become a little complex.

Redesigning the fms tent

The original Marist dream imagined a broad grouping of people. The proposal taken to Rome in 1833 envisaged a new 'Society of Mary' with lay people, male and female religious, and priests. In hindsight it looks quite post-Conciliar in its conception. At the time, however, it was dismissed out of hand by Cardinal Castracane as a 'monstrosity' of an idea, that all these states of life could be governed together in what he saw as a multi-wheeled cart. Not workable, he said.[4] As a result of this reluctance, the Marists were indeed to develop into separate institutes. While there has been some degree of association and collaboration, most especially between the Marist Fathers and Marist Sisters, there has been much more independence than interdependence. Almost two hundred years and many thousands of people have led to the different Marist groups evolving identifiably distinct spiritualities. Like the many and varied expressions of Benedictine spirituality, or Dominican, or Augustinian, or Franciscan, there are now different schools of Marist spirituality. Although there are obvious commonalities, there are subtle but real differences. Not everyone who identifies himself or herself as 'Marist' would feel at home in each of the Marist institutes or in each of the various lay movements associated with them. And a person's spirituality, a person's spiritual tent, is very much about where one feels *at home*.

Yet, to be a legitimate expression of the founding Marist intuition of a broadly-based movement, it could be argued that all who are attracted to Marist spirituality and mission should be able to find a home in one or another of the present-day Marist branches. In this light we could revisit the famous contribution of Marcellin to his fellow Marist aspirants at the seminary of St Irenée: 'We must have Brothers!' Marcellin expressed this view in the context of a broader project; he assumed the inclusion of

priests, sisters and lay people. The reason for his intervention was primarily missionary: that the rural and neglected children needed good Christian teachers. Now that Champagnat's foundation – and his specific mission of Christian education of young people – has developed its own Marist spirituality, we need to add to Champagnat's words of 1815, '… but not Brothers alone!' Indeed, to have Brothers alone would not be faithful to the broader, Marist view that Marcellin carried to his deathbed.

In this, Marcellin's intuitions were not only aligned with the original Marist dream, but consistent with most of the major spiritual traditions of the Church which for centuries have typically had structural as well as spiritual ways to include women and men, lay and religious, secular and clerical. Without such structures, it is impossible for them to exercise their functions in the institutional life of the Church as fully as they might otherwise do. Charism alone is not enough to sustain a movement; juridical structures must be built around a charismic[5] intuition to safeguard it, and to regulate its canonical interconnection with other ecclesial entities.

The reality is that today there are many different people who are self-consciously inspired by and committed to the Champagnat Marist tradition. It is, however, naïve to think that this charismic phenomenon is sufficient to guarantee the continued development of our tradition. This is because only the Brothers among them have any canonical existence in the eyes of the Church. An example of the importance of this point can be seen in the problematic or ambiguous agreement that exists between certain dioceses and the Marist Brothers with respect to the right of appointment to diocesan schools that have historically been entrusted to the Institute. When the time comes that the presence of professed members of the Institute becomes small or ceases altogether in such a school, a diocese may not recognise the right of the Institute to appoint a lay Marist as, say, Principal. The diocese is likely to argue that such a person has no status in Canon Law, and the Institute no juridical right of appointment of a lay person. Similarly, the Institute has no right of appointment of a priest who may self-identify with Marcellin's spirituality. This raises questions concerning limitations in the Institute's Constitutions and Statutes, and more fundamentally about the possible need for new categories of membership or association.

To engage in addressing such questions is also timely as it opens a new and genuinely radical way to engage the calls of Vatican II for all the baptised to be on mission. For our Institute, this is being felt through

the ways in which lay people are seeking increasing identification with the Marist mission to young people. Yet, even when these lay people are in quite responsible positions in directing Marist ministries, and perhaps quite committed to the Marist cause, the fact of their being 'lay' means, in the present canonical structures of the Institute, they can only ever have 'associate' status. Such a situation presents itself increasingly as a rather skewed and anachronistic expression of Church.

It is worthy of highlight that the great majority of the new ecclesial movements that are currently experiencing growth and momentum are largely lay. But rarely are they exclusively lay. This is a key point. They are more inclusive in their membership: (a) welcoming a broad embrace of lay people, but (b) usually having some means for deeper and permanent commitment for a few, and (c) being served sacramentally and pastorally by priests. This is the contemporary spirit of *communio*: not one state of life, but all together, each living out its appropriate role in service of the spiritual life and evangelising mission of the Church, in interconnection with one with another.

But, how could it be possible?

A Marist institute or society that somehow includes, in addition to Marist Brothers, priests, sisters and lay people, in a non-hierarchical, interdependent, complementary relationship with one another? How could that possibly work? The instinctive reaction of some people may be to recoil in a 'Castracane response'. But Marists have a different intuition about Church, one that is fundamentally Marian: non-hierarchical, inclusive, unpretentious, complementary, simple, and shaped by a family spirit.[6]

Would there be significant issues and hurdles to be addressed? Of course. But that should not preclude our trying to wrestle with them and to think creatively and innovatively about ways to bring this vision to reality.

The question of structurally including different states of life within the Marist tent in some way, would bring into focus questions of the fundamental identity of the various states of life. Too often, in our enthusiasm to want to include everyone in a sharing of life, spirituality and mission, we create confusion about how *living as a Marist* is to be interpreted in the distinct cases of lay, consecrated and ordained people. While all may have legitimate claim on being Marist, they do not

live this out in the same ways. They do so in complementary ways that respect and indeed nurture the integrity of each. The essential bond is around mission.

This question comes into focus particularly with so-called 'mixed communities'. One point of view is that the concept itself is self-contradictory. It is neither fish nor fowl. Either the lay people will be expected to be quasi-religious, or the religious will relinquish so much of their normal religious lifestyle and timetable that they become indistinguishable from the lay people with whom they live – other than in their private, individual lives. But religious life, at least for Marist Brothers, is lived in a community context, not privately or individually. Questions can emerge in such so-called mixed communities concerning the frequency and format of daily community prayer, of Eucharist, of sharing of meals and recreation, of presence to each other, of accommodation requirements and styles of living, and of the ways that each of the vows is lived out in community.

If the lay people in such a community are married or in a close personal relationship, issues arise concerning time and space apart, exclusive time and space. Lay people have not vowed chastity, or poverty, or obedience; do they have the freedom to live a genuinely lay life in such situations? Some key components about their lay status as *Marist* include its not being the only orientation of their life or even the primary one (something that would usually be their own spouses or families), and its not being essentially permanent. In contrast, those in the consecrated life do make a commitment that is entire of their will, of their goods, and of their sexuality, as well as its being made for life and lived out in community.

The logical conclusion of the above line of argument is that Brothers' communities should be just that: Brothers' communities, lived in accordance with the ideals and requirements of the Marist Brothers' Constitutions and Statutes. Neither more nor less. And lay people should be allowed to be lay people. They could be guests, even long-term guests, of a Brothers' community, but that is a different thing altogether, one where the ground-rules and the mutual expectations are easier to determine. Perhaps there needs to be a reclaiming of the integrity of the religious community. This is not to imply that Brothers' communities should not be open, welcoming and hospitable, but only that they should be places that have the expectation that religious life is being lived within them, and that structures and obligations are in place to support this.

Such an argument does not a preclude an arrangement wherein a number of people – a religious community, a married couple, and some single people, for example – may live in a loosely-coupled arrangement that could still be called a "community", broadly speaking. But this is not community in the sense that it is described in the Marist Brothers' Constitutions.

The same would be true for communities of religious sisters. For priests, the question is different depending on their status as religious or as secular, but it is worth reminding ourselves that, from the time of The Hermitage, the inclusion of a religious priest as a full member of a Brothers' community, but in the role of chaplain, is well established. And so, also, for lay people: their vocation as lay Marists should have its own integrity, and not be seen as an adjunct or paler imitation of that of the religious or priestly Marist vocation.

Identity, integrity and complementarity

For each of the Marist states of life, *communio* does not imply amorphous uniformity of lifestyle. *Communio* is a theological and ecclesiological concept, not a sociological one.[7] For each state of life there needs to be an honouring of its distinctiveness.[8] Only then can its real contribution to the whole occur with greatest effect and witness. For lay, religious and ordained Marists to be working together in mission is one thing; for them to attempt also to have the same patterns of life, and to live in community with the same level of mutual expectation on each other, is something else entirely. The great American poet Robert Frost in *Mending Wall* insightfully explored an ironic relationship between 'good fences' and 'good neighbours'. The poem recognises the good will, and even the forces, that would 'have a wall down', that would want to demolish the things that divide.[9] At the same time, however, he observes that people re-erect the fences, re-insert boundaries, almost by instinct. Although there are downsides to doing so, there are also issues of self-preservation and integrity that come into play. Frost leaves us with the irony: 'good fences make good neighbours'. In imagining how a new tent might be designed, the Marists of St Marcellin would do well to take heed.

Any new Marist tent needs be founded on understandings that allow all its members to live out their Marist vocations in ways that honour and foster their states of life. To do otherwise can lead to misunderstandings, frustrations and sometimes fears around loss of identity and worth.

Ensuring the integrity of each state of life will lead to a movement of Marists who can genuinely become the spiritual and apostolic companions of one another, complementarily serving the needs of young people. The proposal of a new tent does not call so much for a new model of consecrated life or lay life, but a new relationship between them. And this relationship is formed around mission. In designing this new tent, the Marists could well look to some of the new ecclesial movements for a structure that suits the imperatives and character of today's Church.

Conclusion

In the Institute's timely and necessary discernment for how it could take its place in the ever-new world and ever-new Church, it is called to look creatively and comprehensively at who should have a place in the Marist tent today. In some parts of the world, vocations to the consecrated life are few and many people question if it will continue at all. Part of the answer to that is, 'Not on its own, it won't.' In other places, the lay Marist movement is fragile, its growth furtive and inconsistent. People question whether it has the substance and roots to grow. Again, the answer is, 'Not on its own.' And for both groups, the absence of ordained priests diminishes their capacity to be authentically and sacramentally a Catholic ecclesial community. The call to today's Marists is to develop a canonical structure and a charismic family that are inclusive. At this point in our Marist history, it is the Marist Brothers Institute that is best placed to lead and resource such a call, but in the long term it may not be the Brothers who remain the numerically dominant partner in the new relationship. The role of consecrated people within a larger ecclesial movement is more to be one of leaven.

The particular strand of the Marist dream that Marcellin began to realise at Lavalla, and then to develop at The Hermitage, has moved through various incarnations. The present time calls for another. The mission remains as urgent and as important: the Christian education of the young. All of the people who are answering the call to take part in that mission today need both charismic and structural ways to live out their Marist spirituality as Marcellin has inspired them to do, and to do it together. Their 'tent', as it was for the ancient Israelites, needs to be a place of grace and holiness for them. It must also be a place of gathering and security, in which all of them can encounter the God who dwells among them, and with which they can journey on together.

A new tent. The twist in the modern tale is that, of all of the groups under the canvas, the largest will be the lay group. How will Marcellin's Marists deal with that? ■

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Endnotes

1 Cf. Isaiah 54:2 and the *Message of the XX General Chapter*, 2001 #15. In the years before the XIX Chapter, the *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family* took shape in response to the same imperative. When introducing the *Champagnat Movement* in his paradigm-setting Circular of 15 October 1991 (Volume XXIX), Brother Charles Howard SG gave a comprehensive rationale for the increased participation of lay people in the spirituality and mission of

the Institute, and of the Church more generally.

2 Unless otherwise stated, the term "Marist" refers to the Champagnat tradition of the Marist way. This is done for economy of expression. It does not mean to imply that it is the only expression of Marist spirituality and mission. On the contrary, as should be evident from the later argument of this paper, there are several authentic traditions of "Marist spirituality" which have aspects in common as well as others that are distinctive.

3 One example of how this has happened has been the foundation of the small group of *Hermanitas* in Central America, as female religious who see themselves sharing in the charism of St Marcellin, but different from the two existing Marist institutes of sisters. Yet their connection to the Marist Brothers is only by informal association and personal relationship.

4 See *Rapport du Cardinal Castracane sur le projet de Société de Marie*, 31 January 1834. *Origines Maristes,* Doc.304.

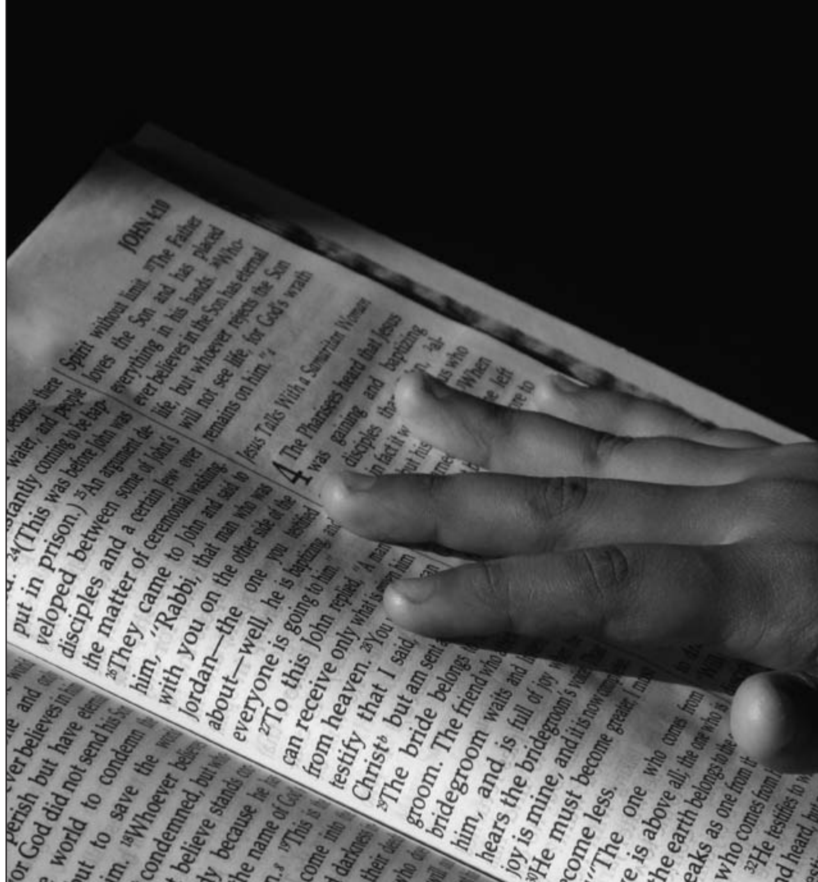
5 The adjective "charismic" is deliberately employed to describe the theological concept of "charism", in distinction from the more commonly used word "charismatic" which relates to the broader term "charisma".

6 The original nineteenth century Marist intuition aligns remarkably with the late twentieth century concept of the "Marian Church" developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar– a notion so much favoured by the late Pope, John Paul II. Mary is proposed as archetype of the Church. Craig Larkin sm has developed von Balthasar's ideas by considering them in a modern Marist context, taking as his motif the traditional icon of The Ascension with its Patristic ecclesiology. It is important to point out, as does Father Larkin, that the "Marian Church" is not conceptually opposed to the institutional/hierarchical "Petrine Church" but, indeed, points to it. Nor is it exclusive of the evangelising "Pauline" dimension of the Church, or the mystical "Johannine" dimension. These four poles of the Church that are represented in the Ascension icon are all indispensable for a complete ecclesiology. The Marist contribution, argues Larkin, is to play the role of Mary.

7 An instructive synopsis of this view was provided by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his keynote address on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of *Communio*, the international theology digest he helped to found with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac in 1972. See Ratzinger, J *Communio: A Program*, in *Communio*, Fall 1992 (American edition).

8 The final statement of the Marist Mission Assembly held in Mendes, Brazil (12 September 2007) identifies this shared but distinctive call: *We wish to promote forms of association and ways of belonging to the Marist charism, so lay and Brothers may hear the call to live their identity* (#2.3). This Assembly, arguably a defining moment in the history of the Institute, inextricably linked Brothers and laity in the future of the Marist Mission. Its call leaves the Institute with the challenge of how to bring these new "forms of association" into effect and, in the context of this paper, also to include female religious and clergy.

9 Frost, R. *Mending Wall,* in Untermeyer, L (Ed.) (1919) *Modern American Poetry.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe.



TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE

Welcoming the Word of God

RECENTLY I have been reflecting on stories about Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament, and Martha and Mary in the New. Part of the stimulus came from its being my turn to cook this Thursday. I am happy doing the washing up and cleaning and all the other household duties, but I dread disappointing the hungry brethren.

If you have any simple and delicious recipes, let me know. I have tried to justify not rostering myself to cook by thinking of Mary and Martha. Martha rushes all over the place preparing the meal, and getting everything ready, but Mary sits and listens. Jesus says that she has chosen the better part. Clearly I have a duty to choose the better part too!

Sadly, that is not the point. It is good that Martha serves Jesus. We are told that we should all serve each other. But she cannot serve him well unless she listens to him first. Jesus says that only one thing is necessary, but unless she listens to him, then she will not discover what that is. If Mary really listened, then she might end up by serving Jesus better.

The story is told of someone who went into a coffee shop and asked for a coffee without cream. And the waiter came back after a bit and said that they had not got any cream. Would he mind having it without milk? In the same cafe there was a notice which said, 'If you think the staff are rude, then you see the manager.'

So everything begins in listening. A French Dominican called Jean stayed for a few months at Blackfriars thirty years ago. He had been a worker priest in a Renault car factory for many years. The time came for him to make a more radical option for the poor, and so he came here to learn Bengali before going to live in Calcutta. I asked him what he was going to do for the poor, and he replied, 'How can I know until they tell me what they want done?'

We see the same point in the story about Abraham and Sarah. Three guests turn up at the tent of Abraham and Sarah. They rush around preparing food, baking bread and roasting veal. But more important is that they should hear what God says to them through the guests: 'I will surely return to you in the spring and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' But they are both extremely old and she is barren. And so Sarah laughs at the idea of having sex again. 'After I have grown old and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' What a hoot! They welcome the guests, but can they welcome their words?

For many of us, this is a tough time to be a Catholic. The Church may seem like this old couple, Abraham and Sarah. It is largely ruled by old men, even older than me, who seem out of touch with the world. Every statement that comes from the Vatican seems to provoke more misunderstanding, more embarrassment, more frustration.

My indignation with what the Vatican says is only exceeded by my indignation at its wilful misrepresentation by the press. To keep sane I keep repeating the words of, I think, Samuel Johnson: 'Indignation is the last resort of the fool'.

Something must be done, but we are unlikely to discover what it is, the one thing necessary, unless we listen to the Word of God. Otherwise we may be very busy, do all sorts of things, write letters and articles, plan demonstrations, and make a lot of noise. But we are unlikely to really change anything profoundly unless we have attended to God who comes to us like a guest in his Word.

One of the transforming moments for young Joseph Ratzinger was when he learned that we must not listen to the Word of God as giving us information about God. It is not a series of propositions. It is the encounter with someone, with God in person who comes to us in his word. That was a turning point in his theology.

If we do welcome the Word of God, and attend to it with all our heart and all our mind, then it will unlock our creativity, and the Church shall be renewed and become young and fertile again like Sarah. As Meister Ekhart liked to say: Christ will be born in us.

The most important thing that you offer a guest is your time and your attention, ideally every day. This is hard. Some of you are very busy; you have full-time jobs. There are endless tasks. Maybe we can only find a tiny moment each day, but that is a beginning. The busier we are the more we need that.

And so this is a very appropriate day on which to commission new readers of the scriptures and ministers of the Eucharist. You are called not just to read out a text, but to meditate on it so that you can help that text come alive, so that it may nourish us.

Three years ago or so I was given an orchid after I had preached at St Mary the Virgin here in Oxford. It flowered a couple of years running, and then it seemed to die. I was about to throw it out but I asked our brother Robert, who did a doctorate on photosynthesis and plant leaves before joining the Order. He suggested that I gave it some nourishment. So I bought a little bottle of orchid food, which gave it a drop or two every day. Within 24 hours it began to revive. The nourishment unlocked its own vitality. We need that nourishment of the Word of God. Then our barren old Church will have children. ■

Max Vodola

Bringing Light Where There Was Darkness

The canonisation of Mary MacKillop has been a great blessing for the Church in Australia. Pope Benedict XVI has recognized the heroic and courageous life not of some obscure European saint but one of our own, raised up from the soil of this Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. Being one of us, it feels like she is our own flesh and blood. We not only have admired her from afar but many of us have walked past the place of her birth in Brunswick St, Fitzroy. We have visited St Francis Church in Lonsdale St where her parents were married and Mary received her sacraments of initiation. Some of us have been fortunate to visit the humble school house in Penola where Mary MacKillop's mission of education began and we have prayed at her tomb in Mount St, North Sydney. We know her story. She inspires our lives. She intercedes for us from heaven. Her story of faith speaks to our story today. And as a people of faith, we rejoice and are glad because God has done great things through the life of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

There are a number of themes in Mary MacKillop's life that speak strongly to us today. Mary MacKillop dedicated her life to education of the poor and service of the needy. Her life was spent on the frontier of colonial Australia bringing the Good News of the Catholic faith to the sometimes harsh and rugged landscape of rural Australia. Mary MacKillop and her sisters were not scared of hard work in these tough conditions. She found God speaking to her and acting through her in this tough and rugged landscape. She discovered God in the ordinary circumstances of life. Her holiness was practical, authentic and a little rugged like the landscape that she and her sisters worked in. But it changed people's lives and attracted many to her cause. Her saintliness and holiness are tangible, they are gifts that we can know and touch. Her holiness is not some type of spiritually elusive mystery that hovers in the heavens. She crafted this

holiness in the joys and struggles of daily life.

In these struggles, Mary MacKillop was often criticized harshly, totally misunderstood and the victim of the misuse of power and authority in the Church. There were so many times in her life when she simply could have packed up the whole show and disappeared from history. But in these very real struggles which often tested her faith, Mary MacKillop maintained her trust and confidence in God's will. She trusted in God's providence to guide her, to lead her and to strengthen her in moments that seemed so dark and so hopeless. She is a wonderful symbol of not giving up , of trusting in God and not falling into total despair. She knew many moments of pain in people and people today can identify with this. They feel that she understands.

In our contemporary culture that is obsessed with fame, wealth and shallow 'celebrity', Mary MacKillop reminds us of how to live authentic lives in the service of others. She gave every ounce of her life to God, to the Gospel and to the Church. Mary MacKillop saw a need and responded. Unlike our present culture where we are often tempted to complain, to blame and scapegoat others and expect political leaders to solve all our problems, Mary MacKillop rolled up her sleeves and got her hands dirty. She saw a need and made a difference. She demonstrated that quality that many talk about but only few can show – real leadership. My hope and prayer is that Mary MacKillop's canonization will touch the hearts of thousands of people in this country, especially young people. My hope and prayer is that this canonization will inspire many to turn away from the things that entrap them and enslave them and instead find meaning and hope in service, in giving one's life for the other, in transforming our culture and society by bringing the light of faith. The recent canonization is a wonderful opportunity for all Australians, but especially young people, to be shaken out of a deathly complacency that at times rules our lives and to be open to that power of the Spirit that touches our minds, our hearts and our souls; that this is the true meaning of life, to give one's life in the service of the poor, to witness to God and the values of his kingdom and to live the transforming power and freedom of the Good News.

Concern for those who feel excluded

By coincidence, Mary MacKillop's canonisation has occurred during the liturgical year where the Church has been following the Gospel of St Luke. As we know, Luke has a particular concern for the poor, the needy, the outcast, the vulnerable, the marginalized, the dispossessed, those who

do not belong, those who are stigmatized by society. The ministry of Jesus is about healing, forgiving, reconciling, bringing the outcast back into community. On the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we read the Gospel of the ten lepers who were cured. Being a leper of necessity demanded that one be excluded from the life of the community for fear of contaminating others. It got me thinking about what it is like being the outsider, being excluded, being pushed away to the margins of society.

As an historian, I am always fascinated by watching documentaries of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and hearing the powerful and prophetic voice of the late Martin Luther King Jnr. He spoke out against racism, oppression and segregation. I find it appalling to see film footage of the decade in which I was born showing signs on buses which read 'whites only' or 'no entry for negroes'. African-Americans know what it is like to feel excluded. I feel a sense of shame that human beings could do and say such things to their fellow citizens.

Here in Australia, there were shops and clubs in the 1960s that did not permit entry to Aboriginal people. This was the same time when shop windows had signs advertising jobs with the condition that 'Catholic and Jews need not apply'. Even my own family remember a small number of instances when as newly arrived Italian immigrants in the 1950s there was little cultural sensitivity and respect for people who looked 'different', who spoke a different language, dressed differently and ate strange and exotic foods that are now found on menus across the country!! The debate concerning boat people and asylum seekers always raises unfounded fears about the stranger, the outcast and the foreigner. Gospel stories in Luke such as the curing of lepers isn't about the past; it interprets the reality of our culture and human experience today and for the community of faith, it pushes us along the road of conversion and salvation.

Hence, the prophetic nature of the justifiable fuss that was made regarding Mary MacKillop's canonization. After educating the poor, Mary MacKillop's next ministry was to single mothers and destitute women tipped out of home because of violence and poverty. In 19th century Australia, there was no greater social outcast than the woman who had a child out of wedlock. Mary MacKillop and her sisters cared for these women and their children not because it was fashionable, not because of a big government grant, not because of some 'feel-good' media story about them, but because of the Gospel imperative to care for the poor, the needy, the marginalized, the outcast and the oppressed. Long

before Mother Teresa of Calcutta became famous on the world stage, the Church in Australia had raised up Mary of the Cross MacKillop who went out in search of the lost, bandaged up the wounded, healed those who were sick and brought the love of God and the light of Christ to places of human misery and darkness.

So many times in my life, I have found great comfort in visiting Mary MacKillop's tomb in North Sydney and watching the passing traffic of people seeking her intercession and asking myself, 'Why is this woman so popular?' Why? Because she never gave up, even in the most challenging and traumatic times of her life. She continued to trust in God's providence and trust in God's will for her life. It is in this that Mary MacKillop speaks to the reality of our Australian landscape – drought, fires, flood, hardship on the land, we never give up, we steel ourselves for the challenge ahead and we go out to help our neighbor in need regardless of class, religion, culture or ethnicity. Mary MacKillop who has been 'raised to the altars of heaven' speaks across nations, cultures, creeds and languages. She is a woman of the city and the outback, for the young and those in the sunset of their lives, for those born here and the newly arrived who now call Australia home. She is a friend to the poor and the needy, the broken and the afflicted, those who struggle with life and those seeking hope, the vulnerable and the marginalized.

We thank God for the wonderful life and witness of Mary MacKillop. We ask God's blessing on the Sisters of St Joseph and we pray that many others will follow the example of Mary MacKillop and give their lives in the service of others. ■

Benedict XVI

Celebration of Catholic Education

On 17 September 2010 during his visit to the United Kingdom Benedict XVI addressed 'all the dedicated men and women who devote their lives to teaching the young'. In a separate address he spoke to students from U.K. Catholic schools and colleges. The text of the two addresses is given below.

Address to Teachers: 'Imparting Wisdom'

I am pleased to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution made by religious men and women in this land to the noble task of education. I thank the young people for their fine singing, and I thank Sister Teresa for her words. To her and to all the dedicated men and women who devote their lives to teaching the young, I want to express sentiments of deep appreciation. You form new generations not only in knowledge of the faith, but in every aspect of what it means to live as mature and responsible citizens in today's world.

As you know, the task of a teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society; education is not and must never be considered as purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom. And true wisdom is inseparable from knowledge of the Creator, for 'both we and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in crafts' (Wis 7:16).

This transcendent dimension of study and teaching was clearly grasped by the monks who contributed so much to the evangelization of these islands. I am thinking of the Benedictines who accompanied Saint Augustine on his mission to England, of the disciples of Saint Columba who spread the faith across Scotland and Northern England, of Saint

David and his companions in Wales. Since the search for God, which lies at the heart of the monastic vocation, requires active engagement with the means by which he makes himself known – his creation and his revealed word – it was only natural that the monastery should have a library and a school.[1] It was the monks' dedication to learning as the path on which to encounter the Incarnate Word of God that was to lay the foundations of our Western culture and civilization.

Looking around me today, I see many apostolic religious whose charism includes the education of the young. This gives me an opportunity to give thanks to God for the life and work of the Venerable Mary Ward, a native of this land whose pioneering vision of apostolic religious life for women has borne so much fruit. I myself as a young boy was taught by the 'English Ladies' and I owe them a deep debt of gratitude.[2] Many of you belong to teaching orders that have carried the light of the Gospel to far-off lands as part of the Church's great missionary work, and for this too I give thanks and praise to God. Often you laid the foundations of educational provision long before the State assumed a responsibility for this vital service to the individual and to society. As the relative roles of Church and State in the field of education continue to evolve, never forget that religious have a unique contribution to offer to this apostolate, above all through lives consecrated to God and through faithful, loving witness to Christ, the supreme Teacher.

Indeed, the presence of religious in Catholic schools is a powerful reminder of the much-discussed Catholic ethos that needs to inform every aspect of school life. This extends far beyond the self-evident requirement that the content of the teaching should always be in conformity with Church doctrine. It means that the life of faith needs to be the driving force behind every activity in the school, so that the Church's mission may be served effectively, and the young people may discover the joy of entering into Christ's 'being for others' (*Spe Salvi*, 28).

Before I conclude, I wish to add a particular word of appreciation for those whose task it is to ensure that our schools provide a safe environment for children and young people. Our responsibility towards those entrusted to us for their Christian formation demands nothing less. Indeed, the life of faith can only be effectively nurtured when the prevailing atmosphere is one of respectful and affectionate trust. I pray that this may continue to be a hallmark of the Catholic schools in this country.

Address to Students: 'There is always a bigger picture'

First of all, I want to say how glad I am to be here with you today. I greet you most warmly, those who have come to Saint Mary's University from Catholic schools and colleges across the United Kingdom, and all who are watching on television and via the internet. I thank Bishop McMahon for his gracious welcome, I thank the choir and the band for the lovely music which began our celebration, and I thank Miss Bellot and Elaine for her kind words on behalf of all the young people present. In view of London's forthcoming Olympic Games, it has been a pleasure to inaugurate this Sports Foundation, named in honour of Pope John Paul II, and I pray that all who come here will give glory to God through their sporting activities, as well as bringing enjoyment to themselves and to others.

It is not often that a Pope, or indeed anyone else, has the opportunity to speak to the students of all the Catholic schools of England, Wales and Scotland at the same time. And since I have the chance now, there is something I very much want to say to you. I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness.

Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?

When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all

want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.

Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. You all know what it is like when you meet someone interesting and attractive, and you want to be that person's friend. You always hope they will find you interesting and attractive, and want to be your friend. God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.

In your Catholic schools, there is always a bigger picture over and above the individual subjects you study, the different skills you learn. All the work you do is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God, and all that flows from that friendship. So you learn not just to be good students, but good citizens, good people. As you move higher up the school, you have to make choices regarding the subjects you study, you begin to specialize with a view to what you are going to do later on in life. That is right and proper. But always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture. Never allow yourselves to become narrow. The world needs good scientists, but a scientific outlook becomes dangerously narrow if it ignores the religious or ethical dimension of life, just as religion becomes narrow if it rejects the legitimate contribution of science to our understanding of the world. We need good historians and philosophers and economists, but if the account they give of human life within their particular field is too narrowly focused, they can lead us seriously astray.

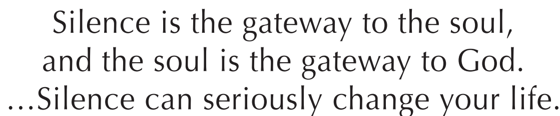
A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints. I know that there are many non-Catholics studying in the Catholic schools in Great Britain, and I wish to include all of you in my words today. I pray that you too will feel encouraged to practise virtue and to grow in knowledge and friendship with God alongside your Catholic classmates. You are a reminder to them of the bigger picture that exists outside the school, and indeed, it is only right that respect and friendship for members of other religious traditions should be among the virtues learned in a Catholic school. I hope too that you will want to share with everyone you meet the values and insights you have learned through the Christian education you have received.

Dear friends, I thank you for your attention, I promise to pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me. I hope to see many of you next August, at the World Youth Day in Madrid. In the meantime, may God bless you all! ■

Endnotes

1 cf. Address to representatives from the world of culture at the "Collège des Bernardins" in Paris, 12 September 2008.

2 Born in Yorkshire on 23 January 1585 Mary Ward grew to be a figure of immense significance with a vision for Religious Women well ahead of her time. The congregation she founded came to be known as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), its members designated as Loreto nuns. In the December 2009 issue of *Champagnat* Constance Lewis gave a brief but fascinating account of the life of Mary Ward: *The Loretos – from Mary Ward to the 1980s.*



- Christopher Jamison OSB

Brian Jacka

Positive Psychology, Positive Education

In the last twenty years, Positive Psychology has developed as a significant area of research and clinical practice. This paper first provides some historical context for this development followed by an exploration of the meaning and dimensions of positive psychology. This includes a study of factors which research has shown contribute to happiness, in particular contentment, engagement and meaningfulness, as well as the experience of 'flow', which collectively foster positive emotional growth through a 'broaden-and-build' model of development. The essay concludes with a consideration of the educational implications of positive psychology using a case study of a substantive Positive Education program in the curriculum of an Australian school.

Historical background

From the time of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Alfred Adler[1] in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when modern day clinical psychology had its beginnings, the focus has been upon *pathology* – that is, upon the curing of psychological 'disease'. Today this focus is reflected in the two 'bibles' of mental disorders, the '*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*' (DSM) published by the American Psychological Association, and the World Health Organization's '*International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems*' (ICD). The latest edition of the DSM lists over three hundred mental and emotional disorders, with subcategories of disorder within many of these. As a clinical psychologist in private practice, my training many years ago emphasised (and it continues in training programs today) that therapy should be based upon the diagnosis of a client's problem in terms of one or more of the disorders listed in the DSM or ICD. These two classification systems of mental disorder are effectively locked into

clinical practice by judicial systems and rehabilitation and insurance agencies in the Western world that demand diagnoses based on the DSM and ICD taxonomies.

Stalikas and Fitzpatrick (2008) have suggested that this focus within psychology on pathology developed out of the need to understand and cure illnesses that medicine and psychiatry (the latter based largely within asylums) were unable to explain. They argue further that psychological theories, and models of clinical practice that flowed from them, were influenced by the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of the early part of the 20th century which reflected Judeo-Christian principles regarding the dichotomy between body and soul. While the soul was good and eternal, it needed protection and fostering. On the other hand, the body had to be disciplined, restrained, watched, and generally controlled, since it was through the flesh that evil influences corrupted the soul.

This influence can be seen in Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis, developed in the early years of the last century, and which was the first integrated theory of psychological principles and practice. His clinical experience led him to the view that there were two basic, genetically driven motivations within the human being: the sexual drive (interpreted broadly as pleasure seeking) and the aggressive drive (referring to destructive urges). In his model of the psyche, these drives comprised the Id which would, if left uncontrolled, lead to personal and social crisis - hence the need for containment of the drives. At the other pole within psyche was the Superego, where the values of the parents and society are assimilated.[2] It too, like the Id, was capable of extreme demands (for example, psychological disorders associated with unwarranted guilt) and thus it was also in need of restraint. As a mechanism to balance the demands of the Id and Superego for the benefit of the individual and society, Freud conceived a third element of the psyche – the Ego. Psychological disorder was thus seen as an inability of the Ego to find this balance. Hence therapy was viewed largely as a process of identifying the dysfunctional operation of drives within the Id and Superego, and of strengthening the Ego as a mechanism to control and balance these forces.

As the century unfolded, other theories of psychological practice were developed that continued to reflect this concern with the negative aspects of emotions and behaviours. Behaviourist theory, flowing out of the pioneering work of B. F. Skinner in the first half of the

century, which rejected the role of unconscious motives so central to psychoanalytic theory, emphasised the *control* of behaviour (responses) through the manipulation of stimuli. From this research grew the body of reinforcement principles that linked stimuli and responses, so that undesirable behaviours (associated with the various disorders) could be controlled and eliminated through appropriate application of schedules of reinforcement (and punishment). Later in the century, cognitive models of therapy emerged, the focus of theory being upon various forms of dysfunctional thinking (cognitions) that led to the range of psychological disorders. By understanding the role of problematic thoughts in psychological disorders, and then changing them to more functional forms of thinking, the negative emotions and disordered behaviours of the individuals could be brought under control.

Stalikas and Fitzpatrick propose that common to all of these models of psychological therapy was the view that 'well-being' was the equivalent of an 'absence of pathology'. In DSM or ICD terms, well-being was the absence of any significant degree of disorder as listed in those documents. More specifically, they suggested that all of these models of therapy were underpinned by three assumptions. First, the process of eliminating disorders associated with negative emotions, that is, of achieving well-being, was a difficult one, requiring significant effort – in other words, it was hard work. Second, the change process was potentially painful, there being 'no gain, without pain'. Third, the absence of psychological pain was a synonym for psychological wellness.

This deficit model of psychological therapy gained added strength from the social context in which the profession developed and grew its identity, particularly in USA. The first major impetus was the First World War, out of which came counselling psychology with the objective of rehabilitating war veterans. The lack of psychiatrists during both world wars led to psychologists being employed in hospitals, and this setting encouraged the development of clinical psychology based on a medical model, the focus of which was the healing of 'wounds'.

The emergence and meaning of positive psychology

In the final couple of decades of the last century, there emerged a challenge to this notion of wellness as merely the absence of pathology. By contrast, it was argued that wellness should be viewed as an active process of living one's life fully - of developing one's capabilities to the full and of fostering the experience of positive emotions, important among

which was happiness. The focus of therapy in this context is more than the removal of psychological disorder to produce a state of non-pain: rather it is to assist the individual to move past the non-pain state to achieve optimal functioning across the full range of human conditions. The process can be represented as a three-stage continuum - from unwellness as manifested in disorder, through well-being defined as the elimination of disorder, to growth to psychological health, fulfilment and happiness (Linley and Joseph, 2004).

This challenge to traditional concepts of wellness has been broadly labelled 'positive psychology'. The movement gained considerable impetus following an address on the topic to the American Psychological Association's (APA) annual convention in 1999 by Professor Martin Seligman, which was then followed by a Special Issue of the American Psychologist (published by the APA) on the topic in 2000. Seligman et al.(2005) view positive psychology as an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and those institutions and practices that foster those emotions and traits. They see it as an 'overarching term', the value of which lies in 'its uniting of what had been scattered and disparate lines of theory and research about what makes life most worth living' (p. 410).

In their view, positive psychology does not seek to replace what is known about human disorders and their treatment, but rather to supplement this in order to produce a better balance. They write:

> The intent is to have a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of human experience – the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between. We believe that a complete science and a complete practice of psychology should include an understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their integration, and validated interventions that relieve suffering and increase happiness – two separable endeavours (p. 410).

The origins of positive psychology can be traced back to the work of humanist psychologists in the 50's and 60's. Abraham Maslow (1954) viewed psychoanalysis and behaviourism as psychologies of deficiency – in which people were viewed as victims of either their genetically based drives or their environments. Alternatively, he proposed a positive theory of motivation that accommodated not only pathology, but also focused on the higher order human needs for individuation and self actualization. Carl Rogers (1961) wrote of the 'fully functioning' person,

arguing that each person strives to make the most of his or her potential, seeking in so doing to construct a positive self-concept that is consistent with experience. Erik Erikson (1950), in his theory of psychosocial development, focused on the virtues that flowed from successful resolution of each of the eight stages of human development across the lifespan, these being hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom – all of which are viewed as desirable outcomes in positive psychology. Around the same time, Jahoda (1958) published a book describing concepts of positive mental health, while Fordyce (1977) developed a program to promote personal happiness. Despite these publications, there was no groundswell of opinion for a rebalancing away from pathology to personal growth and fulfilment as occurred in the nineties. In the view of Seligman, Rashid and Parks (2006), while these ideas '...dot the literature, [they] are mostly viewed as by-products of symptom relief or as clinical luxuries that, in this rushed age of managed care, clinicians cannot afford to address head on.' (p. 775).

Today there is a strong body of theory and research on positive psychology, as well as growing use of the principles in clinical practice and educational contexts. Reflecting this interest, there now exist organisations devoted specifically to the issue, such as the local Australian Positive Psychology Association and, on the world stage, the International Positive Psychology Association. In 2009, the First World Congress on Positive Psychology was held in the USA. Refereed journals of international repute such as the Journal of Humanistic Psychology carry theoretical and research articles on the topic. In 2005, Time Magazine carried a cover story in a special issue entitled 'The Science of Happiness', while the Boston Globe in March, 2006, reported on 'Harvard [University's] Crowded Course to Happiness'. There is now a range of books exploring aspects of positive psychology with titles like 'The Science of Optimism and Hope', 'Character Strengths and Virtues', 'Learned Optimism', 'Resilience', 'Flourishing', 'Authentic Happiness', and 'A Psychology of Human Strengths' as well as handbooks like that of Snyder and Lopez (2002) which comprises some 848 pages. A recent search on Google produced over two million results.

The dimensions of positive psychology

Sheldon and King (2001) view positive psychology as 'the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues', a study which asks the question: 'What is the nature of the effectively functioning human being

who successfully applies evolved adaptations and learned skills?'(p. 216).

Seligman (2002) attempts to answer this question and in so doing delineates between personal and group attitudes, and attitudes towards the past, the present and the future:

> The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about positive subjective experience: well-being and satisfaction (past); flow, joy, the sensual pleasures, and happiness (present); and constructive cognitions about the future – optimism, hope, and faith. At the individual level it is about positive personal traits – the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future-mindedness, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic. (p. 3)

For Seligman *et al* (2006), positive psychology is very much about human *happiness* and the conditions under which it can be fostered and thrive. In order to carry out research on these conditions, they defined three aspects or dimensions of life experience that are essential for happiness: *positive emotion*, *engagement* and *meaning*.

The pleasant life

The first requirement for happiness, what is called the *pleasant life*, consists of having positive emotions about the past, the present and the future. It also involves learning the skills for developing and intensifying these feelings. Positive emotions about the past can include feelings of satisfaction and fulfilment, contentment, pride and serenity – and may also involve feelings of forgiveness and gratitude as these emotions can enhance positive memories. Emotions concerning the present can range from simple enjoyment through to delight or even ecstasy from current pleasures. Positive emotions about the future broadly reflect optimism - the person seeing the glass as half full rather than half empty.

Below are some sample tasks that Seligman *et al* (2006) and other researchers have used to develop positive emotions about the past, present and future (a number of which I have found useful in my practice as a clinical psychologist).

The past:

- Look back on your life and list some of the most significant positive

events you experienced, and beside each, write the emotion(s) that each generated.

- Think of someone you have never properly thanked but to whom you are nonetheless grateful. Compose a letter to him or her describing your gratitude. (If it is possible and realistic, read the letter to the person by phone or in person).
- Write a forgiveness letter (not to be delivered) describing a transgression against you by another person, the emotions it generated in you, and an undertaking to forgive the person.
- Write down a bad memory, describing the anger, fear or other emotion it produced, and its impact on maintaining your condition (e.g. anxiety, depression).

The present:

- Start a diary and at the end of each day, write in it three good things or 'blessings' that have happened to you during the day. These can be as simple as noticing the perfume of a rose in a neighbour's garden, receiving a smile from a passer-by, being struck by the radiance of the full moon as it rises above the horizon, or hearing a good-news story on TV. (It is my experience that clients who present with significant levels of depression report few such blessings – while a useful indicator of clinical improvement is a growing number of diary entries).
- Once a day, take time to enjoy something that you usually hurry through (e.g. cleaning your teeth, walking to public transport or driving to work, eating lunch, putting your socks on). When it's over, think about (or better still, jot down in your diary) how it felt relative to when you do it normally.

The future:

- Plan two pleasurable activities for the next week and carry them out, savouring the experiences to the full.
- Identify a door which has closed or which you anticipate will close, and plan for another door to open for you.
- Recall some event that did not go well for you. Analyse why this occurred and how you could have acted differently to change the outcome to a more positive one – and then imagine yourself in a similar situation in the future achieving this outcome.

The engaged life

Thus a youth who shows interest and capability in sport is encouraged to develop prowess in a chosen area, engaging in competition to bring out the best in him or her. The adult, who is dissatisfied in the work situation and lacks motivation might shift to another role in the company, or change occupations to one that provides challenge and satisfaction. The retired individual may take up a hobby that has long held interest but which time has not permitted. If creativity were the signature strength, the person might spend his or her energies in one of the diverse forms of artistic endeavour, ranging through painting, photography, sculpture, pottery, quilting, writing, acting, and so on. On the other hand, if meeting and solving intellectual challenges is the strength, the individual might for example, take on advanced studies towards a higher degree, or join a bridge or chess club, or do Sudoku logic puzzles each day over morning coffee. In one exercise, participants are asked to write about a time when they were at their best and then to reflect on the personal strengths displayed in the story.

The experience of flow

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) elaborated on the issue of engagement, suggesting that a key element is 'flow'. He defines flow as a mental state in which people become fully immersed and focused, feeling and acting single-mindedly to the extent that they can become 'lost' in the task, during which time passes without conscious awareness. It is a process in which they become absorbed in the activity and the result is intrinsically rewarding. At the more extreme levels of flow, the degree of concentration and focus can increase to such a degree that they lose awareness of bodily needs - so much so that hunger or fatigue can exist without the person being aware of it. (Michelangelo would seem to have been in a flow state as he painted the Sistine Chapel, for it is reported that he would paint for days at a time, without a break for food or sleep, till he passed out. Then, awaking refreshed, he would start all over again.) Today, flow can be seen in the adult 'lost' in the Sudoku as his or her coffee goes cold, or the kindergarten child, totally focused, trying to get the jigsaw parts to fit into place.

It is not possible to force oneself to enter a state of flow – it appears to 'just happen' – and it can do so when engaged in any activity. Csikszentmihalyi and his co-researchers have formulated three

conditions necessary to achieve the flow state. First, there must be clear goals for the activity, which give focus and structure to the task. Second, the task must provide immediate feedback, so that the person can modify his or her responses to changing demands of the task. Third, there must be an appropriate balance between the perceived challenges of the task and the person's perceived skills. Where the challenge is high, but the person's perception of his or her skill level is low, the result is worry and anxiety. Where the skill level of the person is high, but the challenge is low, a relaxed, non-stimulated state or even boredom can result. Flow, it would appear, requires high challenge in the task while at the same time the person must perceive him- or herself as having a skill level that can match the demands of the task (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005).

Flow is seen by Csikszentmihalyi as a very positive experience which can produce strong feelings of achievement, enjoyment, and in turn, happiness. In the flow state, the individual is seeking to master the task in hand, and this state encourages the person to attempt progressively greater challenges, which in turn develop further skill levels, broadening and building the person's skill repertoire. It is of interest that Csikszentmihalyi identified the Montessori model of education, with its purposefully graduated learning challenges, as a source of continuous flow experiences for students. To explore this hypothesis, he carried out a study over a number of years comparing Montessori with traditional educational settings, and concluded that, as predicted, the frequency of flow experiences was significantly higher in the Montessori settings (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde, 2005).

The meaningful life

Seligman *et al (2006)* argue that fulfilment and happiness in life require a third element: that of *meaningfulness*. One way to gain meaningfulness is to use one's signature strength for the benefit of others – to use such capabilities for the service of something which the individual considers to be 'bigger than the self'. These 'bigger than self' entities may include one's family, neighbours, local council, welfare bodies, state and federal political parties or agencies, international organizations and religious bodies. The key feature of the contribution is that the person believes he or she is doing something 'good' for another, from which a feeling of personal meaning and satisfaction derives. The broader, longer term outcome of these contributions over the lifespan is that the person carries a feeling of having lived one's life well. This notion is similar to

that of Eric Erikson (1950) who, in his Eight Stages of Man model, describes the final stage as one of Integrity versus Despair. When the outcome is integrity, the individual is able to look back on a life that was 'well lived' – a life that has personal meaning. This contrasts with an end result of despair wherein the individual views his or her life as essentially meaningless and internally feels a pervading sense of unhappiness.

The following are examples of tasks used by Seligman *et al* (2006) and other researchers in the exploration of meaningfulness:

- The person is to give a gift of time, doing something over a significant period which employs a signature strength, for example, tutoring a student, working for a non-profit welfare agency, taking a position of responsibility in a club, doing *pro bono* work within one's profession, visiting sick people in hospital, playing at retirement centres as part of a band, or helping with maintenance on a community house.
- The person is to respond in a positive and enthusiastic way to good news from someone about him- or herself, trying to do so regularly so that it becomes something of a habit.
- The person discusses with family members, including children, their signature strengths and draws up a family tree listing those qualities, as a basis for fostering them within the family.
- For school children or adolescents, contributing their individual strengths to an ongoing school-organised welfare project.
- The person is asked to imagine that he or she has died, and to compose a eulogy which a close friend might write, identifying signature strengths and how they were used for the betterment of others.

Research on the 'three lives' model

Seligman and others have carried out considerable research on the 'three lives' model, some of which is summarised in Seligman, Rashid and Parks (2006). In one such study, the pleasant, engaged and meaningful lives of three matched groups of young adults were assessed. The students were classified according to those who were clinically depressed (and receiving psychiatric care), those not depressed but with other psychiatric disorders, and those with no evident psychiatric disorders. The results showed that the more psychologically disordered the client, the fewer the pleasant emotions experienced and the lower

the level of engagement and of perceived meaningfulness. Put another way, there was a significant positive correlation between the degree of psychological health and the frequency of positive experiences, the level of engagement and the perceived meaningfulness of life.

In two other studies, the researchers assessed the effects upon depressed clients of undertaking experiential courses in positive psychology. The programs ranged from six to twelve weeks in duration, and used exercises similar to those described above. In the first study, mild to moderately depressed patients showed significantly reduced symptoms, and increases in life satisfaction scores, compared with the control subjects who received no such training. Further, these gains were maintained for at least one year. In the second study, clients with a diagnosis of major depressive disorder were compared with two control groups, one receiving a more usual 'integrative and eclectic' depression therapy program, the other, the same but with antidepressant medication added. Overall, the results showed that the positive psychology treatment produced greater symptom reduction and greater happiness levels than the control groups, with the effects showing good maintenance of at least a year.

The 'broaden and build' theory of positive emotions

The *Broaden-and-Build* theory developed by Fredrickson (2004) gives some insight into how positive emotions function to produce greater levels of well-being and, in turn, happiness. She focuses on emotions such as joy, interest, contentment and love as critical emotions in this process, the outcome of which she calls 'optimal functioning'. What these emotions do is foster a *broadening* of the person's attention, behaviour and thinking - for example, joy stimulates the desire to play, interest generates the urge to explore, contentment triggers behaviours of savouring and integration, while love, which requires safe, close relationships, encourages recurring cycles in all these three behaviours in the form of an expanding upward spiral. The result is a broadened mindset, and an expanded range of behaviours flowing from it (what she calls the thought-action repertoire) which leads to a willingness and confidence to try out novel and creative ideas, actions and social bonds. Overall, this process *builds* the individual's personal resources in all areas of functioning – social, emotional, intellectual and physical, regardless of age. Fredrickson presents intriguing research evidence that these resources act as reserves that can be drawn upon later to help cope with

life's challenges. In this sense they build *resilience* - the ability to bounce back - a well researched issue in positive psychology that appears to be essential for effective coping in life.

Fitzpatrick and Stalikas (2008), who review research on the Broaden-and-Build theory, argue that not only is there plentiful research to show that a balance in favour of experiencing positive emotions (relative to negative ones) *correlates* with subjective feelings of well-being, but that this tilt in the balance actually *generates* optimal functioning and well-being over the long term. Conversely, the person who has a preponderance of negative emotions (such as anger, hate, disappointment, despair, and hurt) over positive ones will have a tendency to follow a downward spiral of even more negative emotions and personally destructive behaviours.

Frederickson (2004) employs the term 'thought-action repertoire' to flesh out the Broaden and Build process. She writes that emotions typically begin with an individual's cognitive assessment of the personal meaning of an event, and the emotion then generates some form of action linked to that emotion. For example, seeing a snake on the footpath just ahead, a person immediately thinks 'Danger', a thought which leads to the emotion of fear, in turn prompting a linked response involving some form of escape, such as stopping dead or jumping back. In this example the sequence from seeing the snake through to jumping back is summarised as a 'thought-action repertoire'. For Frederickson negative emotions are characterised by a narrowing of the 'thought-action repertoires'. Unless they have skill in handling reptiles people who suddenly happen on a snake will have a very restricted response involving rapid movement to reduce danger. On the other hand 'positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of the thoughts and actions that come to mind. Joy, for instance, creates the urge to play, push the limits, and be creative; urges evident not only in social and physical behaviour, but also in intellectual and artistic behaviour.' (p.1369)

In her presentation on the Broaden-and-Build theory to the Royal Society of London, Fredrickson (2004) concluded with a prescriptive message:

> People should cultivate positive emotions in their own lives and in the lives of those around them, not just because doing so makes them feel good in the moment, but also because doing so

> transforms people for the better and sets them on paths toward flourishing and healthy longevity.
>
> When positive emotions are in short supply, people get stuck, they lose their degrees of behavioural freedom and become painfully predictable, but when positive emotions are in ample supply, people take off. They become generative, creative, resilient, ripe with possibility and beautifully complex. The Broaden-and-Build theory conveys how positive emotions move people forward and lift them to the higher ground of optimal well-being (p. 1375).

One test of the Broaden-and-Build theory is an interesting longitudinal research study described by Fredrickson (2004) in support of her claim that positive emotions lead to healthy longevity. It involved 180 Catholic nuns who gave their lives to science as well as to God. The study was about aging and Alzheimer's disease and they donated to the researchers a range of archival material including full medical records and, importantly for this study, handwritten autobiographies from their early twenties when they first entered the order (they also donated their brains upon dying). The researchers scored the autobiographies for emotional content, noting the frequency of positive emotions like love, hope, interest and happiness, as well as negative ones including disinterest, sadness and fear. A significant, strong correlation was found between the degree of positiveness of emotions recorded by the nuns and their age upon death – with those nuns experiencing the most positive emotions living on average ten years longer than those who expressed the lowest levels of positive emotion. Fitzgerald quotes three other researchers who similarly found 'the same solid link between feeling good and living longer, even when accounting for age, gender, health status, social class and other possible confounds' (p. 1373).

In concluding this discussion on the Broaden-and-Build theory, it is relevant to note the balancing perspective put forward by Fitzpatrick and Stalikas (2008) that negative and positive emotions have different but equally essential roles in life. Negative emotions narrow our focus so as to act swiftly in the face of some challenge – for example, fear impelling us to escape, anger gearing us to attack. Positive emotions on the other hand, widen our focus, allowing and facilitating the flow of new information and ideas into the person's awareness. They use the metaphor of the tree versus the forest: negative emotions direct us to the relevant tree without the distraction of the forest; positive emotions

help us to stand back and appreciate the forest as a collection of trees. Psychotherapy, they argue, should 'maximise the utility of both positive and negative emotions, helping clients both to focus and to see the broader picture' (p. 139).

Educational implications from positive psychology

Reference has been made earlier to the emergence in the last decade or so of positive psychology courses in university and other tertiary programs. Similar developments can be seen in schools and colleges. One well known example, at least in Australia, is the program at Geelong Grammar School, the main campus of which is located in the city of that name some 70 kilometres from Melbourne.

The School's Positive Education program has been based on the ideas of Martin Seligman, who has regularly visited the school from the USA to initiate the program, train the teachers, and monitor the program's implementation and progress. According to the School's website[3], to the present time some 160 staff have undertaken training programs with Professor Seligman and his team from the University of Pennsylvania. The training has included intensive residential courses conducted by the team, from which participating teachers have become skilled in both the implicit and explicit teaching of positive psychology principles and practices.

The aims of the Geelong Grammar program, as identified on the website, are threefold:

> To increase the experience of positive emotions in our students,
>
> To encourage students to engage their signature strengths for personal and community goals,
>
> To engage students to live meaningful lives to find purpose and make a difference to our communities at large.

The School uses *implicit* and *explicit* teaching of positive psychology principles and skills. The explicit program is taught in Years 7 and 10 using specific courses written by Professor Seligman and his team, and these courses receive formal allocations in the time-tables of those years. Broadly, the courses seek to assist students to develop resilience in order to better 'tackle life's challenges', and include the following themes: Thinking and Explanatory Styles; Thinking Traps; Detecting Icebergs (Underlying and Surface Beliefs); Challenging Beliefs; Putting

It Into Perspective; and Real Time Resilience. These courses are taught by a Positive Education Department, at the main Geelong site, which comprises 12 teachers and also involves the Director of Learning, the Director of Student Welfare, the Senior Chaplain and some senior course Coordinators. By 2011, in excess of 900 students will have undertaken the explicit Positive Education program.

The implicit Positive Education teaching program occurs in all years from Kindergarten to the final year (Year 12), on each of the three campuses, and spans 'all aspects of School life: academic subjects, pastoral life, and the co-curriculum programme'. The implicit program is built around seven 'over-arching' topics that are explored across the years: emotion, gratitude, strengths, creativity, self-efficacy, resilience, and mindfulness.

On the website, the School identifies a number of benefits which research over the last couple of decades suggests flow from Positive Psychology. The outcomes include increased levels of creativity and positive emotion, better critical thinking skills, improved explanatory style for negative events, and lower incidence of depression, anxiety and adjustment disorders. Presumably the School, in listing these findings, views them as some of the expected longer-term outcomes of their Positive Education program.

Conclusion

Nearly forty years ago, in my earlier life as a teacher, I wrote a book on primary education (Jacka, 1974) the last chapter of which I called 'Little Red School House or Little White Clinic'. The purpose of the chapter was to explore the evolution that had occurred, and was still occurring, in school curricula, from a heavy focus on relatively low level intellectual development reflected in the narrow 'Three R's' curriculum that characterised Australian primary schools of the 1800's and the early years of the 20th century, to one that, in the words of one state Education Department, sought 'the harmonious development of children, in keeping with their ages, abilities and aptitudes… and to assist each child to grow to the fullest extent and to live a full and useful life while at school and in later life' (p. 56).

While I wrote that the origins of this broadened curriculum could be traced to 18th and 19th century writers like Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, and the Progressive Education movement of Dewey in the 20th century, I suggested that in recent decades this movement had received

new impetus from the writings of 'third force' psychologists[4] such as Maslow (1954), with his goal of 'self actualization', Rogers (1961) with his focus on the 'fully functioning person' and Mitchell's (1971) objective of 'psychological health'.

Were I writing this chapter today, the Positive Psychology development of the last couple of decades would form a significant part, being the logical and historical extension of the 'third force' psychology of the mid century decades. While, on reflection, the notion of a 'clinic' may not have been the best metaphor for a curriculum movement, its selection was intended to reflect the trend towards a broader curriculum that focused on the overall psychological health of the individual – including intellectual and academic strengths, social skills and awareness, positive attitudes and emotional balance and maturity. An individual with these qualities is more likely to have happiness in life.

The traditional debate over the role of the school appears to continue with periodic calls for the curriculum to 'return to the basics' or to bring back 'academic standards' (the modern day version of the Little Red School House). On the other hand, the Geelong Grammar curriculum carries with it shades of the Little White Clinic. To the extent that schools adopt this latter model, Positive Psychology can provide substantial theoretical and research support. ■

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Endnotes:

1 The first *experimental* laboratories for psychological research were established by Wilhelm Wundt in Germany in 1879, and by William James in the United States at about the same time. However, it was Sigmund Freud, in the early years of the 20th century, who put forward the first comprehensive theory (Psychoanalytic theory) that derived from, and had direct application to *clinical* practice. Carl Jung was initially a very close associate of Freud but later, based on his own clinical experience, came to disagree with him on a number of issues relating to the structure and functioning of the subconscious, and so formulated an alternative psychodynamic model of the psyche. Alfred Adler too was an associate of Freud in Vienna, but later disagreed with him, particularly over the emphasis that Freud placed on the biological basis of psyche. Adler, by contrast, argued that social factors had also a significant role in psychological development and any comprehensive theory had to account for these.

2 The Superego is not the same as conscience, though people often assume that it is. A mature conscience might lead a person to reject some of the values of society.

3 The Geelong Grammar School website is www.ggs.vic.edu.au.

4 The 'first' major 'force' or body of theory in psychology was Psychoanalytic theory; the second was Behaviourism with its focus on Reinforcement theory and principles (which eventually was linked to Cognitive theory, from which the Cognitive-Behavioural model of therapy, or CBT, has emerged). Parallel with this latter development was the influence of the humanist psychologists like Maslow and Rogers who came to be known as the 'third' force in psychology.

Peter J. Henriot

Can't You Read the Signs of the Times?

The Challenge from Africa[1]

Several years ago when I was a young Jesuit—indeed, several years ago!—when I was beginning to work at the newly-founded Center of Concern, our team had a fascination with the concept of 'reading the signs of the times.' It was an approach to discerning God's actions in history, of being sensitive to the deeper and wider meanings of everyday events both large and small. It was very Ignatian, a way of 'finding God in all things' that gave faith relevance to the political, economic and social analysis that underpinned our educational and advocacy work at the Center of Concern.

This reading the signs of the times has continued to be central to my work the past 20 years in Africa, specifically at our Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Lusaka, Zambia. It is especially important in a country like Zambia that is marked by the 'prosperity-poverty paradox' that also marks so much of the rest of the beautiful and wonderful continent of Africa. What is this 'prosperity-poverty paradox' that I speak of?

Well, I come from Zambia. Many of you will know Zambia—you won't mistake it for Gambia, or for Zimbabwe! And you may know that it is one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of resources: land, water, agriculture, minerals, tourist sites, and peace. Yes, peace—46 years of Independence with 73 tribes living together without ethnic conflict.

We are the envy of our neighbours! Southern African neighbours like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where over four million have died

in the past decade in conflicts that are local but largely are international, fights over the DRC's immensely rich minerals; or Zimbabwe, where a previously rich economy has suffered a melt-down because of the megalomaniac stance of its aged President; or South Africa, which will host the World Cup next June—where real 'football' is played—soccer!

Yes, Zambia is such a rich country. But with some of the poorest people in the world! The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), ranks us 166 out of 177 countries, according to measures such as life expectancy (just over 40 years for Zambians), literacy (especially low among women), and meeting basic needs (so unequally distributed in our rich country).

In the research, education and advocacy programs of our JCTR, we speak of Zambia as a country of great potentials and great problems. But we seriously believe that the potentials outweigh the problems! The task, then, is to get those potentials applied to those problems. And it is thus that we face this 'prosperity-poverty paradox.'

In an effort to respond effectively to that paradox through the research we undertake on macro-economic issues such as debt and trade, and on micro-economic issues such as household cost of living, through the education we do in courses and workshops and publications, and through the advocacy we promote in political action programs, we are, I believe, guided by a reading of the signs of the times. This is our value approach, our commitment to be not simply another NGO or civil society organization, but an FBO, a faith-based organization, guided both implicitly and explicitly by the church's social teaching (CST).

It is some dimensions of my reading of the signs of the times that I want to briefly share with you this evening. I am myself challenged by the title of the lecture that was suggested to me: 'Reading New Signs of the Times in Our Globalized World: The Challenge from Africa.' Indeed, some of the signs I will refer to are new, all are part of the scene of globalization, and they do come from Africa to you here in the USA, residents of a nation now presided over by a son of Africa!

Consistent with my well-known style of writing and lecturing, I'm going to present my ideas this evening in three points. (I've been told I'm a very Trinitarian Jesuit!) These are three phenomena that do present challenges from Africa: (1) climate change, (2) development model, and (3) cultural crisis.

Climate change

I don't think that I need to dwell too much on explaining the phenomenon of 'climate change.' (I note that we readily speak of that topic more than the topic of 'global warming,' something that was difficult to focus attention on during the frozen meeting at Copenhagen last December or the recently-concluded chilly winter endured in these northern climes!) But climate change is, I believe, a sign of the times that calls for deep reflection.

First, it draws us into a more profound engagement with humanity's common home, Earth. This engagement takes the form of scientific study of what actually is occurring as weather patterns dramatically shift around the globe. Such studies go on within the universities and institutes everywhere, hopefully with great seriousness especially here in the United States. And we are further drawn into theological discernment of the implications and responsibilities of our human patterns of interacting with nature. These are matters surely appropriate for reflection at a distinguished place such as is hosting us this evening, the Washington Theological Union.

But I want to suggest what reading of this sign of the times, global warming, comes from our African experience. This is the challenge of appreciating the consequences of global warming on the lives of our sisters and brothers throughout the continent of Africa, sisters and brothers whose life styles and work patterns are not the causes of global warming but who profoundly experience the consequences of global warming.

Let me draw your attention to a statement just released three weeks ago by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission during a special meeting held in Lilongwe, Malawi. It can help us appreciate what climate change means for Africa today and tomorrow. I quote:

Agricultural output is expected to decrease by 50 per cent in Africa, resulting in severe undernourishment as a result of unchecked climate changes. The health burden and conflicts will increase as populations fight over dwindling resources. The need for Africa to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies cannot be overemphasized. The costs of adaptation and mitigation are, however, extremely high and beyond the means of African countries. It is estimated that the cost of adaptation could be anywhere between 5 and 10 per cent of the continental GDP. It is therefore important for the international community to help in financing the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation in Africa.

What is the message of this sign of the times, global climate change? It is more than a call for additional funds to assist in meeting the necessary costs of adaptation and mitigation. It is a call to recognize the simple but disturbing fact that the climate change being experienced in Africa at this moment – and I can tell you stories directly from Zambia – is not caused by the people of Africa. No, it is the lifestyles and industrial patterns of the people of North America, of Europe, and, increasingly of China. Unless peoples, governments and industries outside of Africa quickly and forcefully address that fact, for example, here in the USA, the people of Africa will suffer because of you. I'm sorry to say that so bluntly, but it is the truth, a physical truth, an economic truth and a moral truth that must be acknowledged and responded to if justice is to be done.

So what is God calling us to by this sign of the times, climate change—and its disastrous effects around the world, but especially in that part of the world I come from, Africa? Surely it is an examination of our life styles and industrial patterns and an exploration of subsequent substantial changes in these life styles and industrial patterns. A 'green revolution' is not only the cry of ecological activists but of our God in history. And this is a strong challenge coming today from Africa.

Development model

Second, I believe a significant—and related—sign of the times is the fundamental questioning of the dominant orthodox development model of economic growth. I don't intend to go into a deep analysis of this model – I am presuming that my audience here this evening is familiar at least with the general outlines of an approach to development that measures success with indicators such as GDP and investment statistics, that focuses on human improvements as by-products ('trickles down') of business expansions, that espouses the free market as the primary governor of the economy, and that looks more to short-term profitability than long-term sustainability.

Such a development model of economic growth has long been challenged by papal encyclicals and by non-orthodox economists (some who have won Nobel Prizes!), by radical campaigners and by ordinary citizens who have felt the consequences of such a non-human approach to economics. But the model has, of course, most strongly been tested in the current global economic crisis. You here in the USA can confirm that from your own experiences.

But is it not a sign of the times that such a model has caused untold

human suffering in Africa? For there its most blatant manifestations, the structural adjustment programs and subsequent 'Washington Consensus' approaches, have brought neither economic prosperity nor social enhancements.

Zambia is all-too-sad a proof of that. In the 1990s we experienced a decade of the most rigid, most rapid, most radical structural adjustment program in Africa. SAP – my Zambian friends told me that this stood for Starve African People, Stop All Production, Send Away Profits, or, in the local language, *satana ali pano*—the devil is in our midst! As concern for people was left out of programs of liberalization, privatization, retrenchments, budget cuts, and the opening of borders, the quality of life plummeted.

Subsequent adjustments to this structural adjustment approach have meant a bit more flexibility in economic arrangements but still a reliance on a model of growth that all too often leaves people out of the equation. For example, Chinese investments have been attracted into Zambia—and more widely into Africa—which pay less than necessary attention to decent wages and working conditions, acceptable environmental standards, and promotion of local entrepreneurs. International trade negotiations go on frequently without adequate attention paid to human benefits and costs. And agriculture development rooted in and favourable to the small scale farmer is all too often overlooked.

But what does this questioning of the regnant approach of an economic growth model of development mean as a challenge coming from Africa? For you here in the USA and throughout the so-called 'One-Third World' (note that I do not say the 'First World' and certainly not the 'developed world'!), I believe it means the need to take seriously the intellectual and activist movements for 'sustainable growth', 'green growth' and even 'no growth'.

Is it not a sign of God's action in history, a significant sign of the times, that our home, our Earth, is crying out to us to re-examine whether we have identified the 'good' with 'goods' and become trapped in a consumerist mentality damaging not only to personal growth but also to social well-being and to ecological sanity and sustainability? Surely the rejection of the dominant development model is a challenge from Africa.

Cultural crisis

Third, certainly one of the important signs of the times is the cultural crisis experienced in so many different forms across the globe. Culture

is of course a major contributor to identity and uniqueness, community and solidarity, empowerment and future-building. When culture is endangered at its richest roots, then all of society suffers. I believe that something Africa is going through at this moment is a sign of the times that deserves our attention, for it truly presents a challenge from Africa.

Let me phrase this crisis in an ecclesial context, though it obviously has a much wider context. Last year, I was privileged to be on the advisory team for the Bishops of East Africa at the Second African Synod. The significance of this Second African Synod, I believe, will be much greater than simply its emergence from and contribution to the most vital and viable Catholic Church in the world. (But that's another talk!)

In his homily at the Synod's opening Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on October 4, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI used a particularly meaningful and strikingly beautiful phrase. He remarked that 'Africa represents an enormous spiritual "lung" for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope'. I take that to refer to the basic religious sensibility of the African people, the sacred sense of ubuntu, the cultural values of family, community, respect and hospitality—these are but a few of the elements that give vital breath to the continent today.

You may know what the word 'ubuntu' means. In the Bantu languages, one of which I learned for my pastoral work in Zambia, ubuntu means humanness, humanity, to be human in its richest sense. This is expressed in the beautiful African proverb, 'I am because we are, and we are because I am'. My talents, possibilities, future are so because I belong to a community; and this community's richness, creativity, future are so because it is made up of individuals like me. 'Individualism' is out of the question in an authentic African context!

Of course, do not let me be overly romantic or unrealistic – there are plenty of departures from this high sacred stance of ubuntu! But the basic moral truth is that I am less complete as a human person if I live in a world where others have less of a chance of being fully human, in every sense of the word. Together, we are humans and apart we are not. Another proverb expressing ubuntu clearly states: 'A person is a person through other persons'.

Now this cultural value is part of that spiritual 'lung' spoken of by Benedict. But the Pope went on in his synod homily to caution against what he termed 'two dangerous pathologies' that could cause illness in this essential African 'lung'. The first was the 'spiritual toxic waste'

exported from the One-Third World, a 'practical materialism, combined with relativist and nihilist thinking'. The second was a 'virus' of 'religious fundamentalism, mixed together with political and economic interests', that promotes intolerance and violence. I would suggest that these 'two dangerous pathologies' are certainly not threats only to the health of the African spiritual lung!

Surely, therefore, the identification of and response to these pathologies is part of the task today of reading the signs of the times. Listen again to the description provided by Benedict: the 'spiritual toxic waste... of a practical materialism, combined with relativist and nihilist thinking' and a 'virus... of religious fundamentalism, mixed together with political and economic interests', that promotes intolerance and violence.

I leave it to you here in the USA to identify what might be relevant. But I suggest it does not take too much discernment to see some of these toxic wastes coming from popular entertainment schemes and contemporary atheisms and some of the viruses being manifested in anti-gender biases and political 'Tea Parties'.

Surely a challenge coming from Africa is to be open enough to examine the cultural crisis endemic in the USA at this critical time in the process of globalization.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by acknowledging that there certainly are many more challenges coming from Africa today. But for the sake of time, I have chosen to focus on these three: (1) climate change, (2) development model, and (3) cultural crisis. For me these are not simply scientific or economic or cultural challenges. No, they are profound instances of God acting in history.

Remember the well-known passage in Chapter 16 of Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus confronts a challenge about his ministry? The Pharisees and Sadducees came along, and as a test they asked Jesus to show them some sign in the sky. He gave them this reply: 'In the evening you say, "Red sky at night, the day will be bright". But in the morning you say, "Sky red and gloomy, the day will be stormy". If you know how to read the look of the sky, can you not read the signs of the times?' [Matthew 16:1-3]

You know that this encounter occurred after the instances described in Chapters 14 and 15, where Jesus had fed the 5,000, walked on the water, cured the many sick and crippled and blind, and fed the 4,000. You can almost sense the frustration of Jesus with the Pharisees and Sadducees—

where have you been all this time, don't you see God acting in history, can't you read the signs of the times! My wish is that Jesus will not be frustrated with you and me, that we really will be sensitive to the challenges coming from Africa, and that we will read the new signs of the times in our globalized world. That is our task, that is our hope, that is our prayer! ■

Endnotes

1 The article is an edited version of an address delivered at the Washington Theological Union on 19 April 2010. It is reprinted here with the permission of Father Peter Henriot S.J.

Seán D. Sammon

A Christian Understanding About Sexuality

Sexual Issues: Understanding and advising in a christian context,
Joanne Marie Greer and Brendan Geary, eds., Kevin Mayhew, Ltd. Buxhall, Stowmarket, Suffolk, 2010, 464 pages, RP £34.99.
ISBN 978 1 8486 7252 9

Joanne Marie Greer and Brendan Geary have brought together in this well-edited volume the essays of fourteen specialists writing about the topic of human sexuality. With what result? A wise and compassionate treatment of a subject that continues to be the cause of interest and controversy in many Christian communions.

The book is divided into four parts, with the first addressing sexuality during childhood and adolescence. Here the reader is guided through a helpful discussion about sexuality's unfolding during the early years of life. Many practical examples are provided illustrating some of the problems encountered during these years; the effect that social change has had on our understanding about this important aspect of our lives is also examined.

Section one comes to a close with a discussion about child sexual abuse; some guidelines for identifying victims of abuse are provided also and will be of help to educators, medical personnel, and those involved in the care and counselling of young people.

By far the largest section of the book is devoted to sexuality during the adult years. The reader will find chapters dealing with topics such as psychosexual development over the course of life, cohabitation, sexual concerns in marriage, perversions, masturbation, and sexual orientation.

This section of the book is rich in examples as one chapter after another summarises well the many differing points of view that exist in regard to the topics presented. The discussion throughout is set within the context

of a Christian understanding about sexuality and the reader cannot help being reminded that each of us needs a certain maturity as well as an ethical system to make healthy decisions in this areas of our lives. In the absence of such a system, sexuality can quickly become something less than human.

Section three includes four chapters that deal in a very practical way with aspects of sexuality that have come to the fore in recent years: abuse, internet pornography, gender and sexual identity, and the role of sexuality in ministerial relationships. The chapter on internet pornography, for example, introduces an area with which counsellors and religious leaders have had to deal more frequently over the past few decades. The authors of this chapter point out not only the ready availability of pornographic materials on the World Wide Web but also illustrate how destructive to family life and relationships the compulsive use of this material can be. A section on intervention and treatment is also included as well as some practical guidelines for computer use in general.

The book comes to a close with a section that discusses sexuality within the context of spirituality and recent developments in Roman Catholic moral theology. Herein the reader will find a fine explanation about the paradigmatic shift in understanding that appears to be taking place in the lives of a number of people in terms of their understanding and experience of human sexuality. Contraception forever changed the relationship that many had with this area of their lives. Readers cannot but reflect upon their own beliefs as they make their way through the interesting and well informed explanations offered about classical as well as more recent thinking on the topic.

Greer and Geary have done us an enormous favour in organising and publishing this book. While of obvious interest to clinicians, members of the clergy, and others who serve as counsellors and advisors, the lucid style in which much of the text is written will make it accessible to a wide variety of readers. This is a book that you will want to read with pen and paper in hand so as not to forget the many rich and thoughtful insights that you will find in each of its chapters. Any believer with an interest in the topic could not but come away enriched after spending time with one or other of the chapters of *Sexual Issues: Understanding and advising in a christian context*. I recommend it highly. ■

Berise T. Heasly

A Coffee, a Couch and a Good Book

The Long Dark Winter's Night – Reflections of a Priest in a time of Pain and Privilege,
Patrick Bergquist, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2010.
130 pages, RP $24.
ISBN 978 0 8146 3301 4

Yes, it is a long, dark, winter's night! I approached this text cautiously, being unsure whether I would accept, or even understand whatever sentiments I found within. Father Patrick is referring to the ongoing ripple effect of the appalling sex-abuse scandal that seems to be drowning us at the start of the third millennium.

What I found was an author who thought of himself as an ordinary pastor in an Alaskan parish. What I also found was a deeply prayerful man, urgently trying to come to terms with the inevitable consequences of this scandal, and the soul-destroying pain and suffering caused to victims and their families. That ripple effect moves ever outward to friends and schoolmates, is never really resolved and takes a lifetime to heal.

Father Patrick's shame, pain, fear, and distress is couched in beautiful and sensitive prose. The reader walks with him, hearing for perhaps the first time what it is like for a priest to face an alienated First People in his Alaskan heartland, left so broken by such horrific experiences within the Church. His efforts to lead liturgies of reconciliation are remarkable. We feel the personal psychological distress as he strives to reach out to his parishioners, as he does indeed experience the 'long dark winter's night' in the Arctic snow and ice.

And so the ripple effect goes further! His shock, rage, and compassion all surface as he tries to articulate his response to this scandal. He highlights at one point the statement of one Vatican official who actually believed that the American visit of Pope Benedict recently was the instrument that 'helped

close a chapter of shame and sorrow… '! (p. 126). The only honest way to answer that comment about the belief that the matter was closed by a formal visit with a few victims is to try to understand what the official obviously did not understand.

The author is a realist, a poet, a pastor of delicacy and sensitivity. He does give indications of deep psychic pain, on behalf of the victims' plight. But my concern is for the priest himself, because the depth of his response is subtle, passionate, pastorally accurate, and it is communicated in a prayerful manner. His pain is articulated in a way that beckons the reader towards deeper understanding and more heartfelt prayer. There are echoes of Donald Cozzens[1]; this is the response of a remarkable priest, and the wonderful enduring message that lingers is one of hope and acceptance:

> 'Christ steals his way into a broken heart, a heart full of pain and full of shame. Christ enters in by means of his own broken heart, pierced by our sin and shame. And here, in the very depths of our broken hearts and sin-sick souls, Christ transforms our fears into faith, our brokenness into blessing, and our grieving into grace.' (p. 120).

He is obviously referring to his own tragedy of suffering, but I think his words are also echoing the pain of the victims, both primary and secondary. We can read his prophetic words and learn much about what it means to sin, and what it means to have a personal relationship with the Christ of the Cross. ■

Endnotes

1 See *Champagnat vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 86-87 where there is some discussion of Donald B. Cozzens, ed., The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*.

Opening Up - Speaking Out in the Church, Julian Filochowski and Peter Stanford, eds., Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, London, 2005, 160 pages, RP (Amazon-UK) £12.70.

ISBN 0 232 52624 9

The editors have assembled a remarkable group of twenty-four essayists who are eminently and expertly able to address some of the issues and paradoxes of our Catholic Church today. This is an outstanding and confronting publication, not for the faint-hearted

among us! The writers know their own fields well, addressing injustice, unsolved dilemmas, and unaddressed paradoxes with care, humility, theological honesty, and inexorable logic to the very best of their individual ability.

Each author highlights carefully the complexity, alienation, misunderstanding and in some situations real injustice suffered not only by the People of God, but by whole populations. With trepidation, I have read each article hesitantly; realising, as I read, the innate honesty, deep caring, lived experience and dawning wisdom that seem to be emerging. All are articulate writers whose ability to provide careful and accurate frameworks for each article is exemplified by the balanced approach used. People like Filochowski himself, who was director of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) from 1982 till 2003, draw on invaluable experience, as do others including Timothy Radcliffe, Jon Sobrino, Enda McDonagh, Julie Clague and Diarmuid O'Murchu.

They tackle a variety of themes connected with the interface between the church and society, exploring in particular the faith and struggles of many who, as Timothy Radcliffe has it, live in the dynamic relationship between the centre and the edges of the Church. Among the specific topics addressed are love and justice in God and church, sexuality and society, the position of women, the option for the poor, the cultural crisis in the world, the clash between ethics and politics, and the Eucharist. The final section of the book urges people of faith and vision to have confidence that by capitalizing on opportunities inherent in ecumenism, liturgy and governance they can achieve a brighter future.

As a profile of the suffering Church of God, I found myself glad that I have been given the opportunity to read, to learn, and to absorb some of the wisdom that resides within these pages. I can recommend this publication to mature Catholic women and men, and others of faith and good will. Armed with accurate detail, mature and balanced knowledge to add to our existing understandings, we can individually craft our responses to any or all of these contentious areas of pain in our world today, according to our own faith perspective. It is however an important point to recognise the existence of the paradigm shift that underscores the content.

As Timothy Radcliffe writes: 'It is the dynamic relationship between the centre and the edges that kneads the dough of our Eucharistic bread.' Lord, show us the way! ■

***Nurture Groups in Schools: Principles and Practice*,**
Marjorie Boxall and Sylvia Lucas,
SAGE Publications Ltd. London,
2nd edition. 2010, 256 pages,
RP: Paperback £22.99, ISBN 978 1 8492 0419 4;
Hardback £65, ISBN 978 1 8492 0418 7.

Marjorie Boxall originated the concept of nurture groups and is a founding member of the Nurture Group Network, as is Sylvia Lucas. A Nurture Group is a small special class providing a safe and predictable structured environment for children who, lacking positive early life experiences, are more likely to have seriously under-developed emotional, social and linguistic skills. Sylvia Lucas has revised and expanded Boxall's first edition of this book, adding *inter alia* a new chapter on relevant pedagogy and child development theories, updating a number of examples and describing an informative international case study. The book describes the context in which the children lived:

> 'Nurture groups had their origin in the 1960s in an area of East London that was in a state of massive social upheaval. Families had been resettled there following slum clearance, migrants from other parts of UK had moved in, and there was a large recently arrived multicultural immigrant population. The schools were overcrowded and under enormous stress. Children were being excluded from school within weeks of arrival and unprecedented numbers were referred for psychiatric help, virtually all described as violent, aggressive and disruptive. The child guidance clinics modified their work in an attempt to engage with the problems, but the origin and nature of the children's difficulties were outside the conceptual basis of their work.'

The history of how Marjorie Boxall began her experimental project of restorative experience for such students began in the 1970s. Valuable support from London schools networks and government facilitation began to take effect till Nurture Groups became familiar in a number of London schools and began to appear also in nursery schools, primary schools and secondary schools. One thousand nurture groups are now established to support students with social, emotional and behavioural

difficulties that impede their educational progress. It is important that this whole project is seen as an educational enterprise for vulnerable children in mainstream schools.

There is now a four-day course available: *Understanding the Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups in the UK*, and Sylvia Lucas was a course leader before settling into writing this remarkable and enlightening book. A 'sister' course is available there for new and continuing teachers: *Managing the Teaching and Learning in the Nurture Group.*

Having had the personal experience of students with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties in schools where I have taught, I am intrigued by the success that has accompanied the initial work of Marjorie Boxall and the flowering of such pedagogical skills and curricular content that provides such success.

Lucas' overview gives information about student difficulties, their nature and origin and focuses on the need to promote growth of the student rather than drift into some sort of pseudo-medical approach. Some history of the new research that has accompanied the development of this enormous project is given and the description of the Nurture group in action is realistic, exciting, demanding our respect and empathy for both students and staff. Staff need to develop an array of skills that are challenging and stressful, but become successful as the individual student settles into the knowledge that alienation can be left behind and harmonious relationships can promote educational success. Students become independent learners, they experience and value community cohesion and accept that assessment, records and evaluation are the evidence needed by teachers and parents to provide for student satisfaction and further progress.

I would recommend this publication to almost every colleague because of the clear and accurate descriptions of what can be accomplished. The research base is formidable in its scope and sequence, and there is much in the principles and practice that will be enlightening for teachers who value the charism in education that this journal promotes.

Thank God for the Boxalls and Lucases who provide professional attention to students with similar difficulties in our own milieu. ■

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Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education aims to present information on research, educational practice and policy-making in the field of Marist Schools Australia Melbourne and other associated areas in a format that is accessible to both researcher and practitioner, within and beyond the international Marist network. Qualitative and quantitative data, case studies, historical analyses and more theoretical, analytical and philosophical material are welcomed. The journal aims to assist in the human formation and exploration of ideas of those who feel inspired by a charism, its nature and purpose. In this context, charism is seen as a gift to an individual, in our case Marcellin Champagnat, who in turn inspires a movement of people, often internationally, across generations. Such an educational charism encourages people to gather, to share faith, to explore meaning, to display generosity of spirit and to propose a way forward for education, particularly of the less advantaged. Consequently, this Journal endeavours to discuss the relationship between charism more generally, and education.

Information and Guidelines for Contributors

Champagnat is a quarterly publication that aims at deepening the spirituality of readers, especially educational leaders and teachers, and thereby helping to foster spiritual vigour and integrity in Catholic education generally. Writers should keep in mind that readers are likely to be committed Christians, predominantly lay, and engaged or actively interested in school and/or post-school education.

Articles explore from a variety of perspectives the application of the example and teaching of Christ to everyday thought and behaviour. Often they illustrate how the spirit and vision of heroic Christians like Mary of the Cross and Marcellin Champagnat can assist in interpreting Christian principles in a modern context and serve to motivate and energise attitudes and action.

Each issue of the journal will contain an appropriate mix of articles varying in length but normally not exceeding 5,000 words.

The main but not exclusive focus of the journal in 2011 will be lay spiritualities, both in general and as manifested in ecclesial movements. The articles will be grouped into the following five general categories:

1. **Faith in action**, including reflections on the relevant season of the liturgical year;
2. **Charism and spirituality;**
3. **Tradition and vision**;
4. **Education.**
5. **Reviews**

Material submitted for publication should demonstrably come from writers who are informed through experience, reading and reflection, and who give evidence of a level of scholarship and research appropriate to the topic and the targeted subset of our readership. While of interest to specialist students of the relevant disciplines, the articles should be addressed in particular to the general body of informed professional readers.

Clarity of meaning should be a key characteristic of articles submitted. Writers should use inclusive language, avoid jargon and cliché, preferably use the Harvard system of referencing, and endnotes not footnotes. Material submitted is reviewed internally as part of the acceptance/rejection process. Where the Editor judges it appropriate formal procedures involving anonymous peer reviewers are implemented.

The Editor reserves the right to make minor changes to the text as these are considered desirable. With regard to more significant changes that the Editor judges necessary, acceptance of a manuscript is subject to mutual agreement.

Inquiries can be emailed to:
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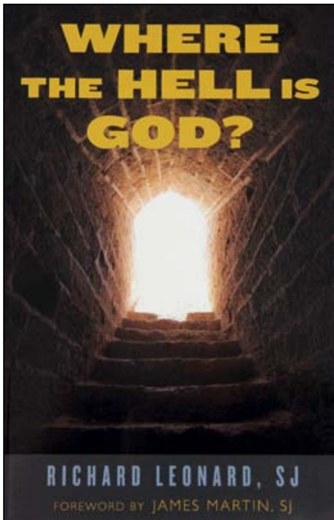
Where the Hell is God? by Richard Leonard



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