

Champagnat

an International Journal of Charism in Education

Volume 12 Number 3

July–September 2010



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Leadership and compassion

Desmond Connelly Michael Elligate James MacMillan
Jamie Madigan Alice Youlden Elizabeth Monahan

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Join our conversation on

leadership and compassion

featuring

Desmond Connelly *on charism in action*

Michael Elligate *on the Good Samaritan*

James MacMillan *on Catholic music*

Jamie Madigan *on leadership*

Alice Youlden *on kingdom*

Elizabeth Monahan *on St Paul*

Colin Chalmers et al *on the General Chapter*

Cover image: Photograph taken by M. Trischler of St. Paul statue in front of St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican). (Sculptor: Adamo Tadolini)



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COMMENT

- 3 Beginnings *John McMahon*
8 Our contributors
10 The Good Samaritan *Michael Elligate*
 for believers and teachers
14 As I see it – readers' responses
16 Reactions

FEATURED ARTICLES

- 35 Christ comes to Greene County *Desmond Connelly*
42 Catholics can sing *James MacMillan*
46 Spiritual leadership and *Jamie Madigan*
 the concept of kingdom
58 What is the Kingdom of God? *Alice Youlden*
71 What the educational leader *Elizabeth Monahan*
 can learn from St Paul
80 The lost leader *Frederick McMahon*

REVIEW (BOOK)

- 85 The Kingdom of Ohio *Madeleine Laming*

REVIEWS (FILM)

- 88 The Runaways, Inception *Amelia Hughes-Lobert*

REVIEWS (TELEVISION)

- 93 Rituals, Clean House *Juliette Hughes*

Champagnat: An International 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.

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Beginnings

WELCOME TO THE third edition of our Journal for 2010. This year we have endeavoured to place a sharper focus on the content of our publication identifying this by the sub title 'Charism in Education'. Even though the main title of our Journal is Champagnat, the name of the founder of the Marist Brothers' Movement, this does not mean that our journal is only about the role the Marist charism plays in education. You will have seen over recent issues some focus on the charism of other Religious Congregations. Hopefully this will continue. For the moment, however, it is good to be able to use our

Marist experience to illustrate one way in which charism influences education.

Most of us like to be able to talk about what charism means practically. This expression, of course, varies from one charism to another, and from one school to the next. Some years ago, in our international Champagnat Marist world, a consultation took place to help us shape an expression of the Marist charism for educators. Our practitioners summarised the Marist charism as expressed in our schools within a framework containing five characteristics. We still speak about these characteristics today, recognising that our understandings are deepening. Allow me briefly to share my understanding of each of these characteristics as we experience them in our schools today.

The first characteristic, Presence, reminds us of the centrality of relationships. Marcellin Champagnat spoke about loving the young people we teach, and loving them all equally. Presence is obviously a first step in getting to know our students and their families. It involves developing relationships with these people and gaining an understanding of their joys and hopes, as well as their struggles and pain.

The second characteristic, Love of Work, focuses on the passion with which we embrace our work, not the total number of hours we put into it. What matters is the quality of our work and seeing that we are doing the 'right' work. When work gives us life we can gain a great sense of fulfilment from it. It does, of course, require our real participation in the tasks at hand.

Family Spirit, the third characteristic, acknowledges the atmosphere of the Marist school where all are encouraged to feel 'at home', like a family. It recognises the guidance and support a family style approach encourages, where staff guide students and older students support the younger students.

The fourth characteristic, Simplicity, names the unpretentious approach taken by Marist educators. It points to the straightforward and genuine approach we take to our relationships. We encourage those we teach to be themselves and to express their convictions with authenticity.

It has often been said, that the fifth and final characteristic, In the Way of Mary, summarises the other four characteristics. Mary 'pondered all these things in her heart' and was ever present to her God. Mary loved to work

exemplified by her being unafraid to head off across the hills to see her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth. Mary nurtured family even though her family lived in poor circumstances. And finally, Mary took a simple approach to her life, asking basic questions of the Angel when being invited to be the Mother of God.

It is good to be able to focus on Mary when thinking about these characteristics. They have proved the test of time and are well articulated in the 1998 book Marists have come to love called *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: A Vision for Marist Education Today*.

The theme for this issue is Leadership and Compassion. We see the theme canvassed explicitly in Desmond Connelly's article 'Christ comes to Greene County'. He takes the example of the tiny population of Catholics in Alabama. Under the leadership of Fr Pat Cullen, social outreach programs flourish. Desmond looks closer to home as well, in Australia, where for many years there have been school-based projects that assist struggling communities here and overseas.

Fr Michael Elligate returns to our pages with an illuminating analysis and exposition of the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke. Many of

the photographs in this issue have been provided by Fr Michael. They are images from the tour he led through the Holy Land in July of this year. His images are vivid and evocative.

Ritual is vitally important to our spiritual life and we welcome the Scottish composer and conductor James MacMillan as he writes for us on the importance of music in Catholic liturgy.

Carrying the theme of leadership further, Desmond Connelly has collated a series of short reactions to the recent General Chapter in Rome. How our Marist charism can find full expression in the lives of the poor and needy is an important question. Colin Chalmers, with James Jolley, Michael Green, Brendan Geary and Eugene Dwyer, join Richard Cotter and Desmond in a varied series of responses. Some of these views are expressed strongly, even feistily. I should like to encourage any of our readers who wish to contribute their views on these matters and others, to contact Desmond Connelly.

The question of leadership is explored further in essays by Jamie Madigan, Alice Youlden and Elizabeth Monahan. Jamie and Alice look at themes relating to the nature of the Kingdom of God. How does the Kingdom of God

come into being? Our own actions and mindfulness, they suggest, are crucial. Liz Monahan's article takes a specific look at what St Paul's life and words offer to those whose work lies in the field of educational leadership; her writing is vivid and the examples she selects are compelling.

Brother Frederick McMahon makes a welcome return to the Journal with a first instalment of his scholarly work on Courveille: its title 'The Lost Leader' has important resonances for this issue.

In our Review section, Madeleine Laming examines a book that many English teachers may recommend to their students: *The Kingdom of Ohio*. Set in a steam-punk genre, it is likely to appeal to boys who enjoy science fiction. Amelia Hughes-Lobert reviews two films, *Inception* and *The Runaways*, while Juliette Hughes' TV column concerns itself with SBS' eight-part series *Rituals: Around the World in 80 Faiths* and *Clean House*, a US reality TV show with a difference.

I invite our readers to read this issue with our theme 'Leadership and Compassion' in mind, along with the five characteristics of Marist charism. It may prove a valuable reflection. ■

Coming of age in San Salvador

THERE HAVE BEEN many times during the last five weeks that Joan and I have felt like the most irresponsible parents in the world. How else does one explain our decision to support our daughter Cassie as she undertakes a Marist immersion in San Salvador? How indeed?

The reason Cassie is in San Salvador is simple and familiar to Marists throughout the world. She responded to a personal invitation from Cesar Henriques, a Marist Brother to join in making Champagnat's dream real in our world today. Like many young Australians from our Marist schools, Cassie met Cesar at the Marist International Festival in Sydney in 2008. It was there that he challenged her to go to El Salvador and do some 'real work' if she was taking a gap year.

Like all adventures this one seemed like a good idea when it was a long way off. And while we were happy to support Cassie's dream we secretly hoped that the novelty would wear off.

As we now know, the fire lit by Cesar's invitation was not easily extinguished. During her time of preparation we were excited for Cassie but couldn't help feeling that there would be those who thought we were incredibly foolish to let her fly to Central America on her own with only a few words of Spanish in her vocabulary.

Somewhere in all of this I was reminded of Seán Sammon's words in his circular on Mary last year where he wrote

... our way of life was never meant to be predictable, balanced, conventional. Rather, it was meant to shake us up and stretch us to our limits, be judged a bit foolish by some ... p47

While Seán is writing about religious life, his words capture the exhilaration, fear and doubt that we experience when we or someone close to us answers 'yes' to the questions he posed on the eve of Champagnat's feast day in 2006.

Do we really believe that the Spirit of God so active in the life of Marcellin Champagnat longs

LETTER

to live and breathe in you and me today? And if we do believe it, are we willing to give God's spirit free rein?

At Mendes in 2007, participants at the Marist Mission Assembly came to understand there how important it is to be with the poor if we truly want to know Champagnat and indeed Jesus.

Yet at the same time we knew all of the things that would potentially hold us back – mortgages, careers and the like. Yet how could we not be excited for Cassie as she left the comforts of suburban Adelaide to spend time with our extended Marist family in San Salvador?

In thinking about this immersion, we are keen to ensure that Cassie's presence in San Salvador does not place a burden on the local community. Cassie often wondered what she could contribute when she got there. This was much less of a concern to the local community of Brothers and lay Marists who have welcomed Cassie generously.

Fresh out of school, Cassie was well aware of her lack of recognised skills other than a love of children and a willingness to help wherever she can.

In these first few weeks she has realised there is much she can do. I have attached the link for her

blog so that she may give her own account of how things are turning out. <http://8months-inelsal.livejournal.com/>

Finally, I ask that you keep Cassie in your prayers over the months ahead. Letting go is probably the hardest thing for parents to do. In our case with several thousands of kilometres separating us we have no choice. At the moment of realising that, we also realised how dependent we are on Jesus and Mary.

We hope that Cassie's name is in that heart in which Father Champagnat placed the names of his early Brothers, for in her own small way she has become part of his dream to make Jesus known and loved. Every day when we hear the excitement in her voice as she describes her latest encounter, we are filled with excitement for her and a deep gratitude for the love and care bestowed on her by our Marist family in San Salvador and for the support and encouragement she continues to receive from friends and family here in Australia.

Brian Schumacher
Adelaide, SA

Contributors

COLIN CHALMERS is Superior of one of the Marist Brothers' communities in his native city of Glasgow. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Conference of Religious in Scotland. He has a degree in psychology and a Master's in Christian Spirituality.

DESMOND CONNELLY is a member of the Editorial Board of *Champagnat: an International Journal of Charism in Education*. He spent a number of years as a classroom teacher and has held a number of senior positions in school and tertiary education in Australia and Canada.

MICHAEL ELLIGATE was educated at Assumption College Kilmore, and has been ordained for 36 years. He chairs Human Ethics Research at The University of Melbourne and is Parish Priest of St Carthage's University Parish Parkville. He has recently returned from taking 25 people on 'A Tour Exploring the Lands of The Epistles and The Gospels'.

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The Good Samaritan for believers and teachers

MICHAEL ELLIGATE

WHEN WE HEAR familiar Gospel stories read in church, I'm sure we often listen to the predictable lines and wait for the predictable ending. So let's have another look at the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The story is only recorded in Luke's Gospel, so it's intriguing to wonder how the story was plucked from those floating around in that store of parables and teaching moments of Jesus.

It was shared and handed down for the first half century in oral tradition, and finally taken by Luke and placed in his Gospel. The emblematic story was so very close to Luke's vision for a Gospel. He wanted to present a Gospel where outsiders were the remarkable people. Remember he is writing for Gentile converts to Christianity. The Gentiles felt that they were second-class members of the Churches with no background in psalms, prophets and the Law.

So we have the headline: 'The Good Samaritan'. We hear and use the title so easily, but in earlier times, to call a Samaritan good would be as weird as referring today to a good terrorist or a good drug pusher! Samaritans were regarded as following a mongrel breed of religion. Possibly, they were a breakaway group from Jewish Temple and Synagogue traditions who then mixed their old traditions with pagan cultic practices. Even today in modern Israel, the Samaritans are a despised people, and their towns have a stench of poverty and under-privilege about them.



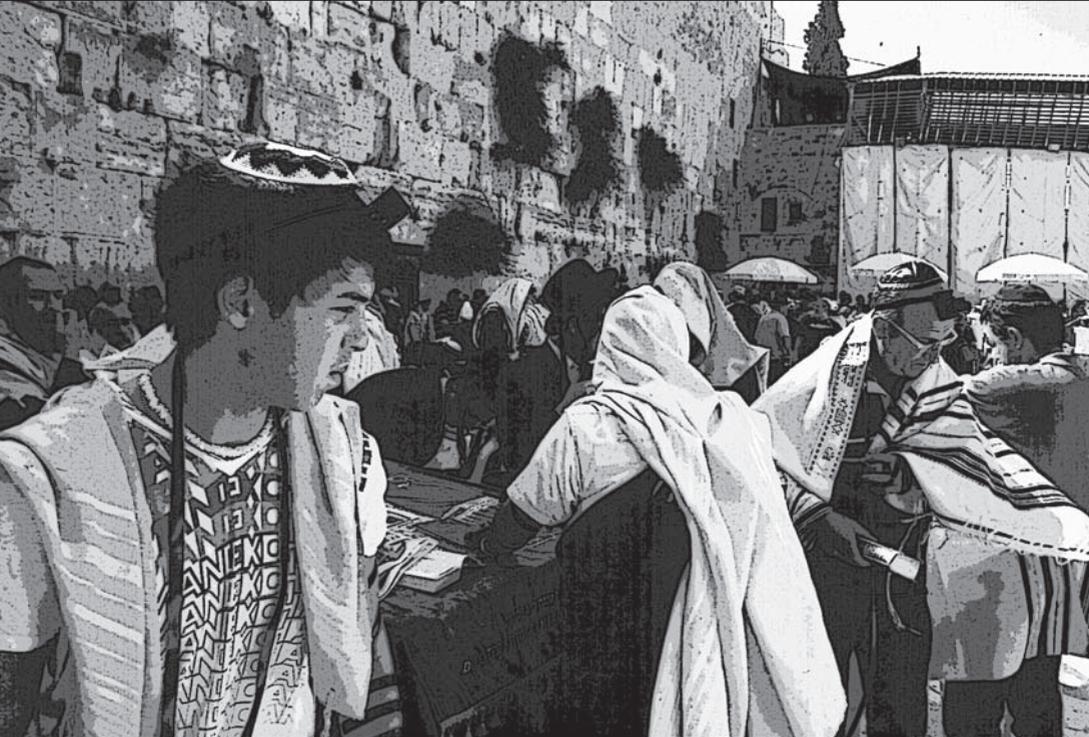
Today, Jericho is an Arab town under the control of The Palestinian Authority situated in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Jericho prides itself as the oldest city on earth, and this is solidly backed by anthropology and archaeology. It certainly looks like the oldest city on earth! Many partially-completed buildings, with people living in them, dot the shabby oasis town.

The streets are frequently blocked with uncollected rubbish, and refuse blows about this constantly humid town.

Ironically, the severe remark uttered in contempt of Jesus: ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ could easily be applied to a similar remark: ‘Could anything good come out of Jericho?’

So the Jericho road is still the steep risky road from Jerusalem to a somewhat dubious town. And here we have the setting for the parable on the road to Jericho.

Luke has the art of being quietly inclusive. The first two characters are Jewish functionaries from the Temple. Ritual laws prevent them from touching a dead body or even approaching a person who is about to die. The issue here is that religion obstructs the care of people in need. Then enters the hero – the one who cared for his neighbour – the despised outcast, who is a Samaritan.



Still the Church wrestles with this dilemma. We are ready to declare people outcasts when life is much more complicated than it first appears. Couples who are divorced and remarried, homosexual and lesbian people, partners who normally use contraception or who employ fertility treatment such as IVF in order to have a child, are sadly treated with caution if not contempt.

There is no question that this parable is boundary-breaking both then and now. The Gospels often confront practices that are part of the order of Church life. In the words of our local Scripture scholar, Francis Moloney: 'the Church forms and carries the scripture through the centuries, and the scripture keeps the Church honest.'

TWO FINAL POINTS

We often receive this parable as a timely reminder of how we fall short and pass by people in need. There is another positive prompt in this narrative. We often do *not* pass by, but take responsibility for those we live with and encounter on the road of life.

I never cease to be amazed how parents care for their children from infancy through to adult life, always attentive and worrying about their

family. Good teachers, skilled medicos and professional people in all walks of life are renowned for moving close to people in distress. Here the searching believer can give thanks to the Spirit of our God that works within us, enabling us to excel ourselves with gestures of love and care.

Finally, let us look at the mention of oil and wine in the storyline. The Good Samaritan takes oil and wine to soothe and help to heal the injured one.

In our Catholic tradition, we have this rich treasure of sacramentality. The child anointed in baptism, the priest ordained with the aid of oil, the frail soothed with the Sacrament of the sick. All these earthly gestures are to do with oil, as a symbol of strength, of healing and of hope.

Then of course we take wine as we celebrate Eucharist. In recent years the practice of sharing wine has been reintroduced into our liturgy. Wine is part of celebration, of sustenance and of taking things from the table and seeing beyond to deeper mystery.

The Good Samaritan narrative is a foundation story in our Gospel traditions. When we explore its riches, it has much to offer us today. ■



Fr Michael Elligate presiding over the Eucharist in the Holy Land, July 2010.

VALUES AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

THE ARTICLE 'To Learn, To Teach, To Guide' (vol. 12 no. 2) rightly stresses that education in values is best fostered when family and school work together. The Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education has claimed that the interest of a number of students and their parents is restricted to the quality instruction and training offered by the Catholic school, and that they demonstrate a profound apathy to the ethical and religious formation it offers. These considerations should be a warning that education in values can come up against substantial obstacles in Catholic high schools today.

**Christine Murfett
Moonee Ponds Vic**

VALUES ARE UNDENIABLY a priority aspect of Catholic education. In my view they are the distinctive feature of the Catholic sector. However, in our efforts to foster many basic values in our students, I sometimes wonder if our collaboration with parents is ambiguous and under-developed. Maybe a future article could deal with how our efforts might be more co-operative and effective.

**Matt Hurley
Melbourne Vic**

IT IS GENERALLY believed that Catholic high schools have a distinctive character. Yet conscientious teachers like Christopher Knauf ('As I See It', vol. 12 no. 2) clearly encounter major difficulties even in promoting 'some sense of what it means to be Catholic in a modern world'. While Knauf does not say it, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that, in addition to devout practising Catholics and other committed Christians, staff in our schools include people indifferent or even hostile to the institutional church and its teachings. That situation has to be taken into account as the school engages in promoting Catholic values.

**Harry Lennox
Croydon Vic**

SCHOOL RETREATS

ON PAGE 39 of the April-June 2010 edition of *Champagnat* Rachele Tullio makes passing reference to youth leadership of retreat-like YCS camps in the 1960s. It may not be widely known that peer leadership is also a characteristic of the 'Kairos' retreats. They were pioneered in Australia in 2002 by Trinity College Perth, following a

model developed in the USA, also in the 1960s. The Trinity retreat, residential over four days, is led by a team composed of senior students and staff members. Small group discussion follows major presentations given by each member of the leadership team in turn. Other activities are designed to promote and build community, to foster trust and openness, and to encourage reflection. The College claims that this form of retreat has brought significant benefits to its students, as well as staff. The strength of the Kairos experience is demonstrated by the large numbers who join in the voluntary follow-up programme.

Alan Barker
Perth WA

LAY PARTNERS

BROTHER SEÁN SAMMON ('Through the Eyes of a Child', vol. 12. No.2) states his intention to discuss 'lay partnership' as part of his address. Later he speaks of 'a Marist lay community founded by lay men and women' but disappointingly goes into little detail, at least not in the edited text published in the journal. In an earlier edition of *Champagnat* a writer suggested that substantial

formation programmes could be needed to have lay people share in and be guided by the inspiration of founders. Partnerships between lay people and religious orders have a long history in the church. Are there formation programmes available for people who are attracted to the idea of being lay partners of more recent Orders?

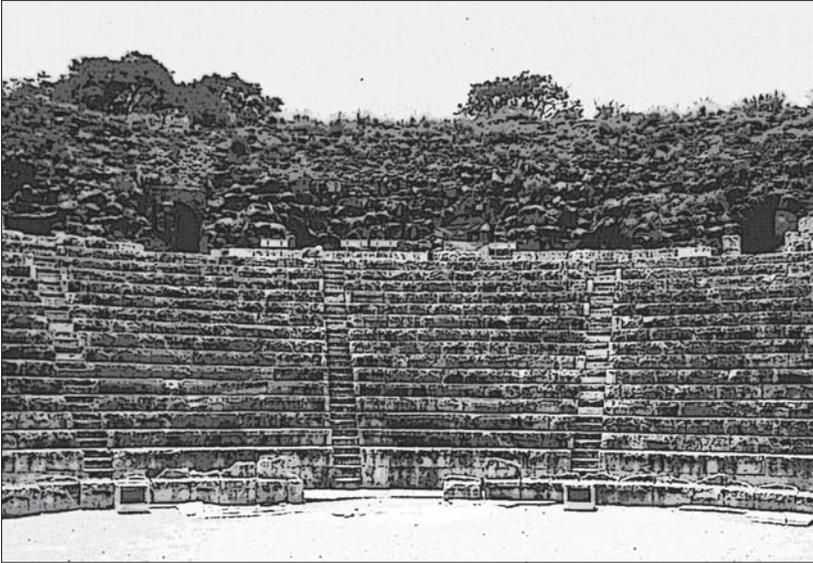
Rae Smythe
Doncaster Vic

WHAT IS SIN?

CHARLES GAY (vol.12 no.1) strings together a number of uncomfortable questions about 'institutional sin'. It is much easier to ask such questions than to answer them, especially when, morally speaking, the activities of organisations often demonstrate shades of black and white, rather than predominantly one or the other. In an imperfect world Christian living is often characterised by compromise. It is relevant that under 'Beginnings' the Editor writes of the 'need for discernment and informed conscience'.

Marion Cooper
Caulfield Vic

Comments of about 100 words are invited to stimulate further thinking on a previously published article. They should be emailed to descon@netspace.net.au Subject: 'As I See It'.



Reactions to a General Chapter: a conversation

In the May 2009 issue Colin Chalmers wrote of considerations that in his judgement delegates to the then forthcoming General Chapter of the Marist Brothers should bear in mind. Recently he was invited to provide some related post-Chapter reflections. In providing a response he suggested that Champagnat should seek supplementary views from some Chapter participants and some non-participants. A number of Brothers and Laypeople were invited to make brief observations about Chalmers' reactions to the Chapter, or give views of their own that supplement, extend or give a different perspective on the subject. The article below comprises Brother Colin's post-Chapter assessment followed by the comments of those who accepted the invitation to participate in the 'Conversation'. It is hoped that the thoughts expressed will stimulate discussion about how families of consecrated religious may move towards a current-era interpretation of the vision and charism of their Founders.

New Hearts for a New Land: missed opportunities at the General Chapter?

COLIN CHALMERS FMS

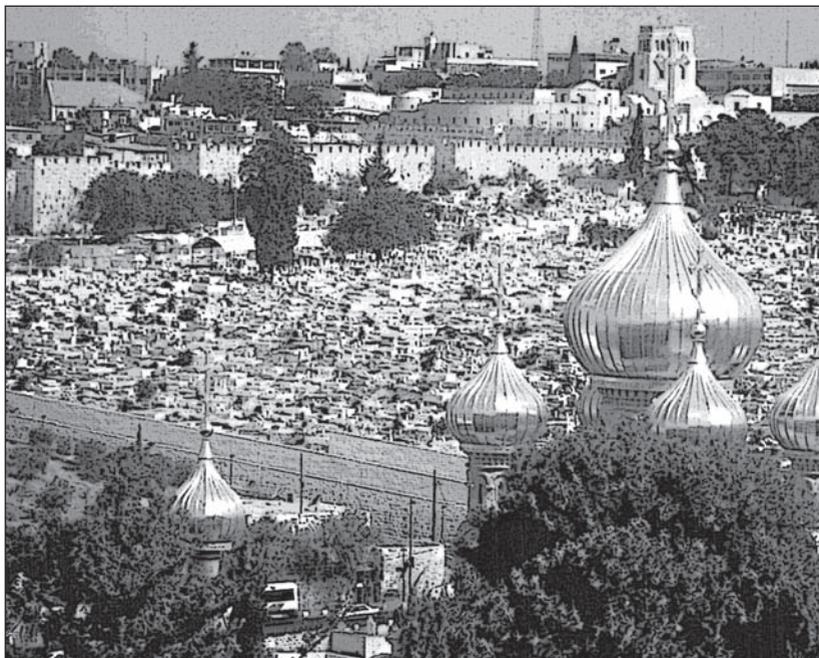
THE SLOGAN of the 21st General Chapter, 'New Hearts for a New Land' is catchy and memorable. Vague enough for everyone to sign up to, it would probably, in mediaspeak, be termed a 'soundbite'. Everyone knows what is meant by 'New Hearts', but what about the second part of the soundbite, 'for a New Land'? What is this 'New Land'? The Chapter itself defined it as 'an authentic renewal of the Institute'. However, in defining it in this way, it may have missed an opportunity for doing some radical thinking. In this paper, I would like to suggest that, by identifying the 'New Land' with a renewal of the Institute, and failing to identify it with that other soundbite which has been around the Institute and wider Church for the past few years, 'the signs of the times', the General Chapter left itself open to the charge of not providing a sufficiently coherent motivation for renewal.

In raising this issue, I am certainly

not arguing against the need for a renewal of the Institute and, indeed, renewal on a personal level for each Brother and lay Marist. However, by not providing an answer to the question, 'What are we renewing the Institute for?' the Chapter, in its call for renewal, could be seen as committing the Institute to an endless cycle of renewal for the sake of renewal. Had the Chapter cast its gaze outward to 'the signs of the times' rather than inward on the Institute, and attempted to provide an answer to this important question, it would have gone a long way to helping Brothers and laity grapple with the issue of Marist identity. The Irish Jesuit, Michael Paul Gallagher, is very clear about the need for Christians to face up to the world of today. It is instructive to substitute the word 'Marist' for 'Christian' in these words by this eminent writer:

A Christian identity worthy of today will not come from innocently inhaling all the polluted air around,

REACTIONS



but neither will it come from merely moaning about the dangers, or from jumping to judgment without the uphill journey of trying to understand the new scene.¹

I would suggest that, in ‘jumping to judgement’ on the issue of renewal, the Institute failed to realise that it is in ‘trying to understand the new scene’ that the major challenge lies. It is a challenge we shirk at our peril.

In his Circular convoking the 21st General Chapter, the then Superior General, Seán Sammon FMS, shows a deep understanding

of the zeitgeist of the present age and of the challenges this presents to the Church in general and the Institute in particular. The recent spate of revelations about the widespread nature of abuse by clergy and religious and the revelations of the handling of it by Church authorities around the world and inside the Vatican could not have been foreseen, either by Brother Seán or by the General Chapter. While everyone shares in the revulsion caused by these revelations, the reaction of the general public and the media has been very much conditioned by the

REACTIONS

prevailing spirit of the 21st century. The response of church authorities to this reaction has shown that many of them have not yet grasped the nature of this spirit. They have, to use Brother Seán's words, 'been caught up in a worldview more appropriate for the past than the present'.

There is certainly some recognition in the General Chapter document of the spirit of the 21st century. The diversity of vocations and cultures among the Brothers is welcomed, in stark contrast, for example, to the calls for complete uniformity in the Institute made in earlier times. There is also a recognition of the phenomenon of globalisation and of the need for the Institute to adapt to it. However, there are also some statements which in the context of the present age are, at one level or another, rather dubious, such as 'The world thirsts for authentic witnesses, people who risk their lives in order that the Good News is announced to everyone.'

This may well be true at a profound spiritual level. Coming, however, from one of the most 'unchurched'² countries in the developed world³, I see little evidence of that thirst. In this day and age of fundamentalist suicide bombers, the last thing 'the world'

appears to want is people 'who risk their lives' in order to spread a religious message. In picking out and criticising this one sentence from the document, I am by no means denying the duty of us Marists to spread the Good News, even at the risk of our lives, but to see this duty in terms of a response to an evident 'thirst for authentic witnesses' by the world shows, I think, a distinct lack of awareness of the world of today.

Perhaps the most significant message of the General Chapter is the passage in the 'Future Horizons' section calling for daily discernment by the Brothers 'in seeking the will of God in the world'. This discernment cannot be purely and simply a religious exercise. Brothers and laity need to work to become aware of the world around them and the fact that that world is constantly changing. This awareness is brought about by listening to what the sciences, both natural and human, are saying. The human sciences of psychology, sociology and anthropology play a vital part in helping us get to know our world and the world of the Other. In encouraging a use of the human sciences in formulating responses to religious issues, the sociologist David Lyon is very clear that his own field does not provide all the

REACTIONS

answers, but that it can be an aid:

Religious life in postmodern times demands not only to be understood differently, but also to be lived differently. Religious practices, which are in any case constantly revised, may be revised in more and less informed ways. Sociology certainly does not have all the answers, and this should not for a moment be construed as a call for sociological expertise to engineer religious responses to the postmodern. On the other hand, sociology does offer some insights, which may inform believers as well as those more reticent about their deepest commitments.⁴

What Lyon says of his own discipline of sociology can equally be applied to the other human sciences. There is, however, a profound level at which the sciences speak of God.

It is obvious that many Catholics, including (I hazard a guess) many religious, see the world of today as a threat. The desire to retreat to former times when things were (apparently) more certain, more secure, affects many in the Church of today. I suggest that, as educators, our duty as Marists is to turn this apparent threat into opportunity for growth, for a greater awareness of God at work in our world. In

order to do this there will have to be renewal, at the level of the Institute and at the level of the individual Marist but this renewal cannot simply be for the sake of the Institute itself. We all need to understand what sort of world we are renewing ourselves for. ■

1. Gallagher, Michael Paul (2005): 'Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age: A Perspective from Lonergan'. In *Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age. Celebrating the Legacies of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan*. ed. Declan Marmion. Dublin, Ireland. Veritas Publications. pp145–161
2. Davie, Grace (1994): *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Oxford. Blackwell, p12.
3. Bruce, Steve (2003): 'The Demise of Christianity in Britain'. In *Predicting Religion. Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*. eds. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas & Linda Woodhead. Aldershot & Burlington Vt. Ashgate, pp53–63
4. Lyon, David (2000): *Jesus in Disneyland. Religion in Postmodern Times*. Cambridge & Malden MA. Polity Press, p142. NB In using the phrase 'religious life', Lyon is not referring only to the vowed life, but to the faith-life of believers in general.

Champions for children

JAMES JOLLEY FMS

MISSED opportunities? I think not. I share a different point of view, a different perspective. Although I didn't attend the last General Chapter, I have been caught up in some aspects of it – both during and afterwards.

As the Institute's representative in Child Rights Advocacy, I sense that the General Chapter has flung open the door onto the new land of child rights advocacy. While we have been advocates for children right back to our Founder's time, a new dimension has opened up for us at the international level. The move of the Brothers to Geneva in 2006 signalled our engagement with the international community as defenders of children's rights, principally through the mechanisms available to us at the United Nations. The language of the UN is new language for us and so our first step in this 'new land' is to understand what it means, and then, how best to use these new opportunities. This won't happen overnight! It will take time and

we will have to be patient. But it will allow us to be champions for children on a world-wide scale, which we hope will bring about significant improvements to the lives of children in the countries where we have a presence – 79 in all, and that's a lot of countries where we can be advocates for children, especially those on the margins of society.

Colin notes that the Chapter's understanding of 'New Land' centres around the notion of 'authentic renewal of the Institute'. He interprets this as being inward-looking, to the detriment of being attentive to the 'signs of the times'. My sense is that this definition doesn't negate the fact that, as an Institute, we have been conscious of reading the signs of the times, since this term was coined at the Second Vatican Council – and we will continue to be so. From my perspective, therefore, since this is a 'given', it is not necessary to include it as part of the understanding of 'authentic renewal'.

Be that as it may, I think that the

REACTIONS

call by the Chapter to be advocates for the rights of children gives us something new and concrete to direct our energies. The Superior General's closing remarks at the Chapter re-affirmed this new form of ministry for the institute where he challenged us not only to be known as experts in the evangelisation of children but also to be 'experts in the defence of the rights of children and the young'.

This new call will come at a price for many provinces that are already stretched to the limit with resources and personnel. It may be a matter of priorities and choices as to whether this new challenge will be 'authentically' taken up by our provinces.

In concluding this brief reflection on Colin's article, I reiterate a concern that Br Benito Arbues (former Superior General) has expressed in the March 2010 edition of 'FMS Message', namely

the concern about 'slowness' – slowness in taking up these new challenges, whether they be about advancing the role of laity in the Institute, or about this new land of child rights advocacy. I have already seen a lot of energy among provinces that have had provincial chapters since the General Chapter. They have modelled their chapters on the 'round table' methodology of consensus as a way of discerning their future goals.

This in itself shows that the Marist world has been attentive to the dynamics and spirit of the General Chapter. And so I am hopeful that action is at hand. But let's not forget that slowness to act will certainly kill off any energy that the Chapter has generated. Let's make haste, then, with Mary – Mary of the Annunciation – to this 'New Land' for all of us to become known as experts in the defence of children and the young!

A new way of being church

MICHAEL GREEN FMS

AT THE RISK of being seen as breaking ranks, I have to confess that I was disappointed by the General Chapter. To say that is not to suggest that I undervalued for a moment the extraordinary privilege of spending the best part of two months with a quite special group of Marists, both with my confrères from around the Marist world and also, for the first two weeks, with a most inspiring group of Lay Marists. Nor is it to demean the deep movements of grace that occurred, or the general directions that were discerned for our Marist future. My disappointment, ironically enough, was because of the very calibre of the people and the richness of the agenda at hand. Much more, so much more, could have happened. At least, that was the feeling with which I left Rome.

The first days of Chapter promised much. There was excitement in the air. The preparatory phase had been comprehensive in its cast,

and expectations had been raised. The key themes that had been identified seemed to me to be exactly the issues that needed to be addressed. Among them, the questions of who were today's Marists, how they understood their relative identities, and how they might viably and legitimately form 'communio' and share responsibility for Marist life and mission, were to the fore. They were big questions, questions of the moment. Naively, perhaps, I thought that a Marist Brothers' General Chapter might tackle them with unbridled imagination and daring inventiveness.

Whether it was the size and heterogeneity of the group, the effects of the processes that were used, the complexity that comes from such a range of cultural and ecclesial backgrounds, or some other factors, I don't know. At the end of six weeks, however, I did not feel that we had advanced the questions much distance at all. Certainly, there was nothing that represented

REACTIONS

anything like a paradigm shift. The most creative responses had been dulled, or buried in papers and drafts of papers that were jettisoned into dark cyberspace.

Yes, there was a welcome and formal affirmation of the Lay Marist vocation and an unambiguous recognition of the imperative for Brothers to share fully their mission with other companions. Yes, there was a deeper appreciation of our Marial character, and the place of Mary in our spirituality and mission. Yes, there was a heartfelt identification with the young people who are most in need of the liberation of the gospel. Yes, there was honesty and realism. But, at the end of the day, I felt that the outcomes of the Chapter – despite all its headline rhetoric about haste and new lands – were somewhat safe and cautiously nuanced. Look at the detail of the statements.

I also had a problem with the Chapter's moving away from the slogan that it had had in its lead-in phase: 'new hearts for a new world'. The new grab-line it chose

seemed to me to be a somewhat confused and confusing one, both in its Scriptural allusions and in its semantics. Any slogan that needs so much explanation – as seems to be happening with the term 'new lands' – is arguably not so useful a slogan. But perhaps this ambiguity – and even ambivalence – was reflective of the Chapter itself and indeed of the directions of Marist life in various parts of the world.

I suggested before the Chapter that there was a call for us Marists to re-imagine quite fundamentally how Marist life and mission might be structured. I used the metaphor of 'new tents' to propose a way forward – rather than the older Scriptural image of 'widening the space' within our present 'tent'. I am even more convinced of this as a strategic direction for us companions of Champagnat in today's church and world. Indeed, we see the signs of its nascent growth in various countries and situations. A new way of being Church. Now, didn't our Marist founders have some similar proposals? ■

Poets, prophets and critics

BRENDAN GEARY FMS

SOME OF Colin's observations about the recent General Chapter are fair and apposite. Yes, 'New Hearts for a New Land' is the kind of slogan that is vague enough for everyone to sign up to, and yes, the Chapter may not have given sufficient space to reflecting on the signs of our times. And, yes, again, perhaps the Chapter missed out on opportunities for radical thinking.

However, I find myself wondering if we may be expecting too much from a General Chapter. Mario Cuomo, the American politician, famously quipped that 'we campaign in poetry and govern in prose'. General Chapters are times for the poetry of Marist life – even, dare I say – a time for lines like 'risking our lives' for the sake of the Gospel. Evelyn Woodward reminded us that we need poets, prophets and pragmatists¹. I would add that we need critics also, and I hear a certain level of critique in what Colin has written. Colin, for example, writes about a 'missed opportunity', he

uses the word 'failed' (twice), and 'not providing' (twice). I sense he was disappointed.

He praises the three individuals whom he mentions: Michael Paul Gallagher, Brother Seán and David Lyon. It seems to me that the kind of leadership, analysis and vision that Colin is looking for comes from prophetic individuals, and not (normally) from Chapters, which need to reach consensus, and are not usually remembered for radical insights. Someone once asked me how many people's ideas had shaped Vatican II. I suspect there were no more than a dozen key thinkers whose theological insights were profoundly influential during that transformative assembly.

This is not to denigrate or devalue the work of the bishops or members of our chapters. I hope I am simply reflecting the reality of how systems work and how change happens. The Ad Gentes program, as far as I am aware, emerged from Brother Seán's vision for Marist life, and not from a meeting.

REACTIONS

What Chapters can do, I believe, is create the climate within which certain people, with particular values and skills, can emerge to lead the congregation during a particular time. They can also write documents that both inspire the young and challenge the middle-aged and old, and set down policies for a given period. From that point of view we have been well served by our Chapters in the years since the Vatican Council.

Colin refers to the challenge 'to read the signs of the times', which was given fresh impetus at the Second Vatican Council. I agree that this is crucial, but we could spend years reflecting on the signs of the times and still not make much progress. The journalist John Allen has put together a thoughtful list of megatrends that he believes are having a profound effect on the future shape and direction of the Catholic Church². They would certainly repay close attention. When it comes to renewal of religious life, however, I am inclined to take a leaf out of Fr Champagnat's book. I am not aware that Fr Champagnat conducted a survey of needs in the Lyons area in 1816.

As Archbishop Mark Coleridge reminded the Brothers at a Provincial Chapter at some point in the mid-1980s, Fr Champagnat got

angry at the lack of education and spiritual formation for children, and did something about it. One of the abiding gifts of the 19th General Chapter was placing the Montagne experience before the brothers to remind us of the significance of this transforming event in the life of our founder. Brother Charles Howard, in one of his circulars, quoted a line that is attributed to St Augustine (and if anyone knows the source of this I would be pleased if they shared it with me): Hope has two beautiful daughters: anger and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to make sure they don't stay the way they are.

I wonder if an alternative starting point for a General Chapter might be to ask the capitulants what makes them angry. What puts fire in their bellies to the point that they might be prepared to get up and do something about it, the way Fr Champagnat did? I have a hunch that that could lead to renewal in ways that might surprise us. Colin mentions the issue of child sexual abuse. This provides a good example, as readers of Fr Shay Cullen's *Preda* newsletter will know³. Fr Shay feels deeply about the abuse and exploitation of children in the Philippines – but he has done something about it. In

REACTIONS

responding to this problem he has clearly read some of the signs of the times. The two approaches are not in conflict.

Readers of this journal will be familiar with Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum that 'The medium is the message'. I would like to adjust this slightly and suggest that for the recent General Chapter, 'the method was the message'. The XXI General Chapter made use of a method of working and discernment which was called 'fraternal dialogue', and which has been used at numerous Provincial Chapters and meetings since October 2009.

I would like to suggest that one of the lasting legacies of the General Chapter will not necessarily be its message (although, like Colin, I agree that there are some important things that were approved by the capitulants), but the manner in which they worked. I have spoken to brothers who have been present at a number of General Chapters and they have all said that the experience of brotherhood and genuine dialogue at the XXI General Chapter was different from that at previous ones. In risking, experiencing, learning, and becoming witnesses to a new way of working together, the Chapter may have discovered something that relates to our identity as brothers,

and to our desire to be people who help to build a Marian Church. This may not sound very exciting, but it may, in its own gradual way, be transformative.

Colin concludes his reflection by saying that many Catholics and religious experience the world of today as a threat. I am inclined to agree with him. He continues, in a positive note, to suggest that our duty as educators is to turn the threat into an 'opportunity for growth, for a greater awareness of God at work in our world'. This sounds a bit vague to me. I look forward to hearing the details. ■

1. Woodward, E. (1987). *Poets, prophets and pragmatists*, New York: Ave Maria Press.
2. <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/ten-mega-trends-shaping-catholic-church>
3. <http://www.preda.org/main/newsletters/news1003.html>

Marist roots and the new millennium

EUGENE DWYER FMS

I AGREE STRONGLY with Br Colin: I found the General Chapter motto ‘New Hearts for a New Land’ very disappointing... ‘Vague enough for everyone to sign up to.’ I fear, however, that what I will suggest as an alternative may not totally square with the premises underlying Colin’s article. I would have preferred something like: ‘Towards Our Bi-centenary: Marist Roots and 2017’. That I would see as both remedying the vagueness, and more importantly, urging the unfurling of a true radicality ... one both in service of our new millennium and flowing from our charismatic origins.

Doubtless the key underlying issue is ‘Marist Identity’ – as Colin has said – but I am not sure that the desired clarity re identity will be assured merely by concentrating on the zeitgeist, which after all is very much a moving target. For most generations, it is our ‘homeland’: we must acknowledge its power,

but most importantly of all, we must understand it and confront it: our effort is to transform it. (I think this is what our Founder did two centuries ago when facing another axial moment in history; animated by the devotion of his mother and aunt, and moving with the sagacity of his father, he was able to move with understanding and transforming zeal in response to both the excesses of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic Restoration.)

We should also take into account that there are some contemporary FMS commentators who would dissolve ‘the Institute’ (and its identity?) anyway, referring henceforth only to ‘the (Marist) Movement’ – this in order to escape categorisation as one of the ‘great dinosaurs of large Religious Institutes’. I wonder in fact how such a view could be reconciled with our current Constitutions, but in any case it seems a somewhat

REACTIONS

brutish way of dealing with what must surely become a fruitful complementarity, respectful of difference but united in charismatic inspiration.

I liked Gallagher's idea (quoted above by Brother Colin) and see it as opening to the crucial idea of the three paradigms of Religious Life (Philibert 1999¹ and Sammon 2002²). I would unpack it as follows:

A Christian [or Marist] identity worthy of today will not come from...

- innocently inhaling all the polluted air around [paradigm 2], but neither will it come from
- merely moaning about the dangers [paradigm 1], without the uphill journey of
- trying to understand the new scene [first half of paradigm 3].

I believe that if we (as FMS Brothers, and consequently also Marist Movement Members) are to have a future at all, we are going to have to plunge into paradigm 3. This is a model which transcends the previous two (paradigm 1 = *fuga mundi*: a radical flight from and fear of world and culture; paradigm 2 = embrace the culture and seek conciliation with it) in a movement which actively affirms whatever is good in them, and forges a

new paradigm which requires understanding the culture, and thence endeavouring to transform it. The evidence, suggests that the future of religious life is with those who can move into this paradigm. For those who are stuck in the 60s/70s, or who are consumed with nostalgia for a distant past, there would seem to be little hope for a renewed future (see Dwyer 2009, esp §102³).

The question of 'witnesses' and 'martyrs' is highly tendentious in our day! But for all that I would affirm the statement that 'the world thirsts for authentic witnesses, people who risk their lives in order that the Good News is announced to everyone'. I doubt that anybody would propose that our martyrs are an embarrassment. (Think: South Pacific, China, Spain, Algeria, Rwanda, Bugobe, ...). Perhaps the issue is that witnesses, to be effective, must first 'understand' the culture, and then move lovingly to transform it. I think the Ad Gentes Province is a powerful sign in our Institute today, as it models a sincere effort first to 'understand' and then to 'transform'. As for the 'thirsting' – and speaking as one who was there – I think we saw thousands of people (young and old) at WYD 2008 whose thirst was elicited even where it was

REACTIONS

dormant, and who were given fresh reasons for hope in post-modern times.

The question of using the psychological and sociological sciences in understanding the human foundations of religious commitment has been adequately canvassed since Vatican II, and no serious agent of evangelisation should be ignorant of them. It remains true, however, that they can be – and have been – grotesquely misapplied at times. Cardinal George of Chicago commented that

... there was a collective sigh of relief at Vatican II, with human freedom being so much in the forefront of conciliar concerns that the tension wasn't there anymore. I think some of the moves of the church in that period now seem sociologically naïve in their long-term consequences. (Allen⁴)

I think the same could be said about our disestablishment of Institute practices (since 1958), sometimes without understanding their foundational function or proposing contemporary equivalents. Positively, the anthropological concept of 'liminality' is crucial to the understanding of religious life in its essence, yet the concept has been 'dumbed down' in recent decades. (Groeschel 1990, 2000⁵)

Indiscriminate tinkering with the universal anthropological structures of marriage, family, sexuality, and especially fathering, has already wreaked havoc in modern society, and augurs even worse for post-modernity.

A highly relevant example would be the consideration of how we, as an Institute, could mobilise ourselves to implement an adequate response to one of John Paul II's favourite themes: that 'evangelisation in the Third Millennium must pass through the family'⁶. I believe this would give Marists (Brothers, families, and single) a magnificent and renewing focus for the future. Some groups amongst the New Movements have managed to integrate families into the priestly/religious 'branches' of their Institutes in ways which are rather astonishing. The religious in some such cases, retain their 'liminal' status (i.e. they are neither 'family' people nor completely independent of the families), and they use it for a different quality of missionary availability. ■

1. Philibert, Paul (1999). 'Towards a Transformative Model of Religious Life' *Origins* 29, (May 20) pp1, 9–14.
2. Sammon, Seán (2002). *Religious Life in America: A New Day Dawning*. New York, Alba, pp44–51.

REACTIONS

3. Dwyer, Eugene (2009). *Nova et Vetera: Theses on FMS Religious Life towards 2010 AD* (03 Sep 2009; circulated to General Chapter delegates).
 4. Allen, John (2007). cf <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/cardinal-georges-thoughts-american-church>
 5. Groeschel, Benedict (1990) *The Reform of Renewal*. San Francisco, Ignatius; and (2000) 'Death or Rebirth in the New Decade? A Watershed Looms for Religious Life' *Catholic World Report*, April.
 6. John Paul II (2001). *Tertio Millennio Ineunte*, §28.
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A graced moment

RICHARD COTTER

There is a close connectedness between 'growing new hearts' and 'discovering the new land'. They are not two disconnected exercises in discernment. That is not Colin Chalmers' intention. Any effort in finding 'new hearts' will overlap with finding the new land. With new hearts comes empathy and connectedness that allows an expansion of reality; seeing with the heart brings new features of the landscape into view.

But it goes further than simply adding new items to the existing picture in the way that a better telescope or microscope provides more detail to an already existing picture. Growing our hearts in the way Seán Sammon describes –

'seeing the world through the eyes of a poor child' – does more than add new features to an old reality. Old structures erode and new ones emerge. The landscape itself is transformed with a new topography. The elephant in the room (and there may be more than one!) becomes visible and old features fade or are reduced to mice.

It's interesting how our perceptions change when our own circumstances change. When my wife had our first child I noticed that women and prams seemed to be everywhere! Was this a baby boom or my changed circumstances? However, growing new hearts is not about my changing circumstances. Seeing the world through the eyes

REACTIONS

of a poor child transcends one's particular circumstances. It's about seeing the world through other eyes. And it's also about listening as much as seeing.

Perhaps I'm making an old point, namely that our understanding both of ourselves and reality is dialogic. Human identity is never achieved in isolation but must be explored in relationships. The 'I-Thou' relationship, as articulated by Martin Buber, is essential in becoming human and making sense of the universe.

When seeing reality transcends our particular circumstances, it is a graced moment and we enter a 'New Land'. It is often a sudden insight, perhaps after extended discernment. It may also be triggered by a particular experience such as the Montagne experience, but the seeing is as much about the capacity of the witness as what is witnessed.

'Post-modern' is often a contentious term to define. Perhaps one feature of that term is the purportedly large overlap, if not erosion, between subjective states (e.g. New Hearts) and what is perceived (the New Land). The previous philosophical confidence in a clear identity between the observer and the observed is not shared by 'post-modernism'. I would

not wish to get into this debate and think that a total erosion of that distinction has its own problems. However, there is an intimacy and connectedness between observer and observed, and some overlap, at least, is arguable.

The new land is a new way of seeing, not just seeing new things. What was invisible becomes visible when we see with a new heart. But is it the land or the heart that is the driver? We could say that it is a dialogic relationship in the way that virtues and the community were seen by Aristotle: the virtues are those capacities that sustain the community (or polis), and it is in community that we are taught virtue.

Colin Chalmers reminds us that seeing with new hearts cannot be done without journeying from our world and engaging with a 'new land' in a very personal way. In that regard, the concept of 'brothers-without-borders' has an important role in expanding both our capacity to engage with 'the Other' and to 'go in haste to a new land' beyond our comfortable lives in Western, middle-class communities. This is at least one important strategy towards realising both these aspects of the Marist mission – new hearts and new lands.

Immersion programs provide a

REACTIONS

platform for Marist students and teachers in which they develop new hearts and discover new lands; their engagement with 'the Other'

is, of course, also with the self. And our physical return to the world we left behind may lead to the discovery of another 'new land.' ■

Warp, weft and vision

DESMOND CONNELLY

WHAT MIGHT a dis-engaged layman say about the outcomes to be expected from a six-week assembly of representatives of an international Religious Order? A checklist of anticipated outcomes could include: the comforting experience of the affinity of like-minded people; reassurance that unity prevails despite a diversity of geography and mission; pleasure derived from experience of fresh contexts, new people, but common and treasured origins; satisfaction that problems have been addressed and competent people deputed to do something about them.

In the cold aftermath what assessment might lay and religious members make? Presumably some will feel secure in their judgement that for them things will

not change unduly. Others may be encouraged that their particular field of activity was either specifically endorsed or given at least tacit approval. And others may be disappointed that what they saw as an important new area of mission was not highlighted and sanctioned.

Recently I renewed acquaintance with the Marist Brothers after a gap of 40 years. I looked at the Marist landscape and found it in many ways a strange, new land. No doubt at the end of the next twenty or so years a person in a similar position to me will make the same observation: so much has changed!

Nevertheless, a number of today's Marists will be among those who will have brought about that change. Whatever views they may now have about the outcomes from the Chapter, these people are part

REACTIONS

of the warp and the weft, weaving fresh patterns in the Marist fabric of the future. They may well include a number who, while at this stage feeling dissatisfied with what the Council seems to have achieved, are yet determined to use their discontent as a spur to renewed effort.

Among the present body of Marists there are bound to be individuals with a clearer vision than their colleagues of how the structure and image of the fabric might profitably unfold. Such folk may be uncomfortable to work with. But if they are ignored, rejected, discouraged, a project can be all the poorer for it.

Experience in a variety of fields proclaims that leaders in particular must foster their visionaries. They need to be supported, encouraged, occasionally curbed, but listened to with a discriminating ear, for the foremost among them are outlining designs for the decades ahead.

‘New hearts for a new land’. I suspect that what is called for in this slogan has less to do with geography than with a major change in the Marists’ conception of their mission. Throughout their world they are doubtless engaged in profound and comprehensive dialogue about how the Chapter can be a beginning rather than an

absorbing past event. I imagine that the following will be among the qualities they exhibit:

They trust, support and heed their leaders, recognising that the pool of their combined talents and experience must constitute a wealth of wisdom.

They respect their seers, their lateral thinkers, their trailblazers, knowing that some of them have increasingly clear perceptions of how future patterns may emerge.

They listen to the Spirit, accepting that it is through prayer, reflection, and sincere dialogue with others, that the Spirit guides, enlightens, strengthens them, reinvigorating them to explore new horizons. ■



Ancient olive tree, Gethsemane. Michael Elligate

Christ comes to Greene County

Charism and compassion

DESMOND CONNELLY

CHRIST HAS CERTAINLY come to Greene County. However, many of us might feel reluctant to follow him there. Despite its numerous fine citizens, that part of Alabama could strike us as not even remotely like a home away from home. If we were to travel directly south from Chicago we would pass through Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee before reaching Birmingham and going on to meet the Gulf of Mexico at

Mobile. We would have been quite unaware of Greene County, more than 100 km south-west of Birmingham, near the border with Mississippi .

Like various other places the County bears the name of a man who during the American War of Independence distinguished himself as George Washington's most gifted and dependable lieutenant. Little else embellishes it. In area it is about half as large again as one of Australia's Greater Regional Cities. With some 10,000 people, more than 80 per cent of them African-American, the County averages only six people to the square kilometre, almost 40 per cent of them are below age 24, more than 33 per cent live below the poverty line, the average expenditure per public school pupil is 20 per cent below the U.S. average.

A region with such characteristics would seem likely to be located in some poor part of the developing world rather than in a prosperous western nation. Often it suits politicians to turn a blind eye to the quality of life of citizens like those in Greene County. Not so Father Pat Cullen, the Consolata Missionary Sisters, and a small army of volunteer workers headed by Rob Markham. Theirs is a very different attitude.

Immediately after ordination in 1968 Father Pat left Dublin to begin his priestly ministry in Alabama. There are many States where he would have found himself in a much more Catholic environment. Catholicism is the dominant religion in thirty-three of the States, but in Alabama Catholics total scarcely 160,000, not quite 3.5 per cent of the population. Comparatively few in number they may be, but in certain respects they are a model for places where the proportion of Catholics is much larger.

Within a few years of arriving in Birmingham Father Cullen asked to be entrusted with the diocesan apostolate to those with intellectual disabilities, and today continues to head that activity. Among other matters keeping him busy was an impressive renovation of the cathedral and the construction of the striking parish church of St Mark and associated facilities. He now serves as parish priest of Bessemer in a modest part of Birmingham.

While at St Mark's, Father Pat had what he terms 'a simple idea' for making a significant difference to the living conditions of some of the most deprived of the people of Greene County. With the advice and guidance of the Consolata Missionary Sisters working there, a team of his parishioners would spend a week in the summer carrying out practical repair and renovation jobs on people's homes. With Father Pat in the

driving seat, thought quickly evolved to planning, and soon after to well-organised action.

Consolata Sisters Josephine and Zelita are a key to the success of the project. Having worked in Greene County for a long time they had a thorough knowledge of the people, their living conditions and their capacity to benefit from a helping hand. The Sisters affirm that their charism calls them to bring practical consolation to the people they serve. Faithful to the energy and inspiration coming from the early leadership, traditions and heritage of their Order, the Sisters are motivated and energised to be attentive to the cries of the people for justice and peace, to empower them to voice their experiences of injustice and suffering, and to stand by them in their efforts to improve their lot.

The Sisters accord high priority to a person-centred approach that honours the dignity and diversity of individuals, communities and cultural groups. It is a matter of record that their tireless energy, spirit and kindness are an inspiration to all who see them in action. Accordingly, when Father Cullen and his helpers wanted to offer assistance in an acceptable way to some of the most disadvantaged of the people of Greene County, the Consolata Sisters provided invaluable access.

Nevertheless, the work to be done depended on the compassion, skills, energy and endurance of a key group headed by Rob Markham. The annual 'Missions to Greene County' began under Rob's direction in 2006, and involved a group from Father Cullen's parish of St Mark's. When he became Pastor at St Aloysius' in 2007 a group from that parish joined the squad. By 2009 four parishes were participating, with some assistance from two others. As the present account is being prepared the project management team is fully engaged in planning the six-day 2010 project. If he were alive today Major-General Nathanael Greene would be gratified by the thoroughness of their preparation.

The campaign generally begins with a dinner meeting at which the previous year's achievements are carefully assessed. Potential projects are then discussed with the Sisters, and field trips are undertaken to the sites earmarked for work. This important stage consumes a good three days. After a thorough analysis of what will be required, and calculation of the resources likely to be available from each of the parishes, the tasks to be undertaken are finalised in consultation with the Sisters. Finally managers are appointed for each job.



With each annual mission new parishes have provided additional expertise to the management team and, as a result, work efficiency has noticeably improved, and the number of jobs completed has grown significantly. In 2009 more than 100 adults and youth from six parishes collaborated in the work of replacing floors, doors, windows, sinks and cabinets, supporting foundations, replacing plumbing, repairing roofs, applying gallons of paint, and doing extensive cleaning.

Winston Churchill would have coined a catchy phrase or two paying tribute to the substantial assistance given to needy Greene County citizens by a comparative few. For, as we have seen, Catholics are a tiny part of the population of Alabama. But that tiny fraction provides a telling demonstration that quality is more critical than numbers.

The participants in the 'Missions to Greene County' go to their labours encouraged to look on them as an exercise in practical Christianity, drawing inspiration from the charity of Christ. Before a recent Mission, for example, Sister Mary Pat Garvin, from the faculty of Rome's Gregorian University, led a large group from the participating parishes in prayerful reflection on the previous year's project, and in setting the forthcoming mission in the context of Christianity in action. Sister encouraged the group to dwell on the powerful thought suggested by Teresa of Avila: *Christ has no body now on earth but ours; ours are his welcoming eyes, ours*

the warmth of his greeting, ours are his helping hands; for we are Christ doing good in the world today. Moreover, each work day begins with a prayer session conducted by the Consolata Sisters, and a concelebrated Mass marks the mid-point of the mission.

According to the Report on the 2009 programme participants learned that to make a real difference in the lives of needy people they did not need to go to a third world country. Pertinently the Report could have highlighted the thorough planning, co-ordination, supervision, generous giving, hard work and constant commitment entailed in each annual mission. The concept of sacrifice inherent in Christianity is certainly embodied in this form of practical charity. But all involved come from each mission more aware of the disparities weighing on many of their fellow citizens, more appreciative of their own way of life, and heartened by the realisation that they have made a small contribution to lightening the burdens of others.

In these pages in December 2009 Jeff Crowe outlined many ways in which Marists, motivated and energised by the charism of their Founder, are contributing to 'a resurgence of an interest in spirituality' through being Christ's 'helping hands' in a range of disadvantaged communities. He concluded with a plea to all to 'join the dance' with those labouring to make a positive difference in the lives of the needy.

Many Australian schools, Catholic and otherwise, have long maintained a helping relationship with disadvantaged communities at home or abroad. Often unheralded, such commitment is very much a tribute to the calibre of the schools involved. The REMAR Movement, operating in fourteen schools across Australia, provides an opportunity for students and teachers to participate in this kind of activity. In the middle year of the three-year programme volunteers prepare by reflection, prayer and fund-raising to be involved in a week-long immersion and solidarity experience. Year 11 students spend the week living simply in a needy community and making a practical contribution to bringing about improvements. Needs are identified during the course of the first visit, and in each succeeding year a REMAR group from the same school builds on what was done in the previous year.

Marcellin College Bulleen has been involved in this way with St Ignatius' Primary School in Bourke NSW for 16 years. The students pay their own travel and related expenses, help children with their

lessons, do minor maintenance work at the school, and assist in a nearby nursing home conducted by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity. Another REMAR group has been similarly engaged with a parish in the Peterborough diocese.

Some schools have found their 'Greene County' in places even farther from home. Catholic College Bendigo has an ongoing relationship with a poor village in the Philippine province of Cebu. A group of teachers and students visit the village to share the life of the people there and to assist in a practical way with tutoring and with improving facilities.

Another noteworthy example is the 'Coolies' programme conducted from Melbourne's De La Salle College Malvern. Each year, instead of engaging in the exuberance of end-of-school celebrations, a group of graduating students travel at their own expense to a rural village in India where they work as labourers in constructing simple homes for the poor. In recent years they have helped construct 30 basic dwellings and two buildings for schools. During 2009, students from the De La Salle Oakhill College Castle Hill in Sydney set aside time to raise funds, undergo training, and do thorough preparation for a project in the same part of India. On the spot, during their October holidays, they provided the local people with the necessary materials, skills training, and trade practices for the making of simple furniture.

Although these projects are undertaken by senior students, they are *indirectly* supported in a variety of ways by their families and by the wider school communities. In the January-March 2010 issue of this journal Ambrose Kelly reported on 'The Kalahari Experience' in which those *directly* involved include not only students and teachers but also parents. For the last 20 years international groups of Years 11 and 12 students, along with some teachers and parents, have constituted working teams to assist in the provision of schools and their needs in a desert area of the Moshaweng Valley in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. An inspiring instance of family and school in active partnership demonstrating the genuine spirit of the gospel message!

Young people and their families, working together, actively participating in some form of 'Mission to Greene County'... does this have to be an exceptional occurrence, a scenario necessarily limited to a few places like a poor area of Alabama or the Moshaweng Valley in South Africa?

In the 1960s Phil Sambain, a lay teacher at the Marist school in

Melbourne's North Fitzroy, initiated a project to provide bushwalker-style accommodation at Mount Tamboritha in the High Country some 160 km in a direct line East from Melbourne. Phil persuaded a landowner to allocate an area for the structure, talked various commercial businesses into donating building materials, and organised groups of parents and students to build what was grandiosely called 'The Chalet'. Now further developed the facility is an adjunct of Lavalla Catholic College Traralgon. In its origins the enterprise was a tribute to the unselfish generosity and considerable talents of a family man for whom the provision of a recreational facility for middle class students of an inner suburban city school need not have been a priority.

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century a venture like 'The Chalet' could encounter bureaucratic hurdles that would ultimately make it impracticable. But I relate the story because it illustrates how enthusiastic leadership can facilitate the active involvement of family and school in successfully undertaking a voluntary operation over a significant period.

In his day Phil was among a small number of lay teachers in a school staffed mainly by Brothers. Nowadays school staffs in congregational schools are almost exclusively lay. Perhaps there are 'Phils' and 'Philippas' in some schools needing just a little encouragement to take a lead in guiding family and school together to identify their own appropriate mission at home or abroad. With wise leadership the necessary human and material resources could be marshalled so that family and school, side by side, could commit themselves to the long-term exercise of practical Christianity in a needy community. Are there places where this is happening already?

Such partnerships would be a striking response to the kind of invitation voiced by Brother Jeff Crowe and by Ambrose Kelly, and exemplified by the Birmingham group headed by Rob Markham. How powerfully such joint activity could reinforce in the minds and hearts of Catholic youth and their parents that we are all called – young, middle-aged and old – to do what we can to lighten the load of those who in one way or another are severely disadvantaged. In the few years of his public ministry, according to the Acts of the Apostles, Christ went about doing good. But these days it is only through us that Christ can come to each 'Greene County'. ■

Catholics can sing

JAMES MACMILLAN

A lay Dominican, father of three children, and generally recognised as the pre-eminent Scottish composer of today, James MacMillan was born in Kilwinning, Ayrshire in 1959. He there imbibed a deep love of the region's choral and brass band traditions and practice. As a child he heard the renowned Arthur Oldham conducting the choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, an experience that sowed in his mind a conviction that music can be a powerful force making you feel you are in the presence of something other-worldly. He has made numerous acclaimed recordings, while his regular Sunday Mass music includes echoes of familiar themes designed to make his compositions more accessible to the ordinary parishioner. With the kind permission of the UK Catholic Herald we publish below its edited version of a talk he gave in May 2010 to the Glasgow branch of the Catenian Society when he was looking forward to the then impending visit of the Pope to the U.K. This noted Catholic composer is in the forefront of those who are attempting to foster congregational singing in UK churches.

IS CLASSICAL MUSIC all about dead composers? Is it really a museum culture which, first and foremost, celebrates the great masterpieces of past centuries? The idea of the 20th-century, and now 21st-century, composer in this milieu has always caused some anxiety. Modern composers? Aren't they the ones that experiment with new ideas in sound all the time that leave their audience baffled?

Well, up to a point, that is the case, but composers, especially since the early 19th century, have been prophetic figures, imagining music that the rest of the world could not imagine. That is what made geniuses of Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner, Mahler, Strauss, Shostakovich and many others.

And throughout the centuries before them composers have always responded to their own personal instinct, or the wider society's instinct,



for spiritual and religious feeling. The Catholic Church has been central to the development of music in Europe since before medieval times. Musical notation itself has its origins in the hieroglyphics of early monastics who attempted to capture Gregorian and other forms of chant in written form. And from this time through the intervening centuries composers have written for the Church's liturgies.

Their names through history are a rollcall of genius and cultural summation: Josquin, Machaut, Tallis, Byrd, Palestrina, Victoria, Lassus, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven, Bruckner. And these are just the Catholics. The Reformation led also to the life and vocation of one of the greatest religious artists the world has ever known: J.S. Bach.

But what about now? Can a religious artist still be understood and affirmed in our own time? And can that person be valued for what he or she brings to our common humanity and society, because of their worldview as a religious believer, or as Christian or, indeed, as a Catholic? There are some forms of art in modern times where the connections with the numinous are clearly more difficult to discern than others. But in the case of music there seems to be a veritable umbilical link with the sacred.

Through the centuries, musicians have proved themselves to be mid-

wives of faith, bringing their gifts to the historic challenge of inspiring the faithful in worship. But modernity has brought with it a breach in the working relationship of composer and Church. Mozart and his contemporaries were among the last group to have a master-servant relationship with the Church authorities. And with the onset of the Enlightenment, rationalist, romantic and revolutionary values in the last two centuries, it was only to be expected that religion would begin to take a back seat.

Nevertheless, composers continued to want to write religious music – not necessarily for liturgy, but the liturgical forms have found their place in the concert hall from Beethoven and Verdi to the present day. Major modernist figures of the last 100 years were, in different ways, profoundly religious men and women.

Stravinsky was as conservative in his religion as he was revolutionary in his musical imagination, with a deep love of his Orthodox roots as well as the Catholicism he encountered in the West. Schoenberg was a mystic who re-converted to practising Judaism after the Holocaust. Messiaen was famously Catholic and every note of his unique contribution to music was shaped by a deep religious conviction and liturgical practice.

The list of composers in recent times radiating a high degree of religious resonance is substantial, covering a whole generation of post-Shostakovich modernists from behind the old Iron Curtain: Górecki, Pärt, Kanchelli, Silvestrov, Schnittke, Gubaidulina, Ustvolskaya. And, in this country, after Benjamin Britten have come Jonathon Harvey, John Tavener and many others.

Far from being a spent force, religion has proved to be a vibrant animating principle in modern music and continues to promise much for the future. It could even be said that any discussion of modernity's mainstream in music would be incomplete without a serious reflection on the spiritual values, belief and practice at work in composers' minds.

This truth is a great encouragement to a composer like me who has drawn inspiration from the deep reservoirs of Christian liturgy and theology. I have used that liturgical experience in works like my recent *St John Passion* and the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. But it has also been a significant motivation in purely instrumental works like *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* (a percussion concerto which charts a kind of journey from Advent to Easter) and in my 3rd Piano Concerto (which seeks to revive the practice of musical reflections on the rosary).

Almost unknown to the classical music world where my work is performed and discussed is the fact that I busy myself in the week-to-week preparation of liturgy in my local church: St Columba's in Maryhill, Glasgow. There I have formed a little schola of amateur singers who help lead the congregation in their worship. I write for this congregation regularly, producing a Responsorial Psalm every Sunday I am there.

I use my own congregational settings of the vernacular Ordinary of the Mass and am planning a new one for the imminent fresh translation which will be among us in a few months time.

I love doing this, but it is one of the hardest things I do as a composer. A different mindset is required when writing music for the non-specialist. One has to create something simple and yet attractive enough for even the most reluctant person to want to raise their voices to God. And you don't get a more reluctant singer than the Scottish working-class Catholic. In fact, sometimes it feels that draining blood out of a stone would be a more productive activity. In fact, I know some stones that are far less stubbornly inexpressive than some Scottish Catholics I've met.

But this is a challenge that must not be shirked. It is part of the great renewal of our Church that we should learn afresh that to sing is to pray twice, and as St Augustine said, 'Cantare amantis est' (singing is a lover's thing). If we truly have the love of God in our hearts we would want to sing it out loud, whether our voices are trained or not. My musician's heart would be filled with an unparalleled delight if I could persuade my fellow Catholics to raise their voices with abandon and love every time they came to the altar of God.

There is a sobering book by the American Thomas Day called *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste*. We owe it to ourselves as Catholics to begin dismantling the attitudes and reticence that makes his accusations so shameful, troubling – and accurate. In Benedict XVI, who will be visiting the UK in September, we have a Pope who is keenly interested in fostering singing in the liturgy. Let us raise our voices in the joyful praise of our loving God, especially when His Shepherd is with us. ■

Spiritual leadership and the concept of kingdom

JAMIE MADIGAN

Spiritual leadership, the concepts of kingdom, spiritual intelligence, ministry and vocation are inextricably interrelated and are not mutually exclusive.

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

I HAVE SPOKEN these words throughout my life, in prayer, thousands, maybe tens of thousands of times. I have never really until now, stopped and reflected on the above words so intently. It is only now that I stop and ponder what exactly 'Thy kingdom come' really means. I have always thought I knew the genuine meaning of these three rather unobtrusive words. But on deep, personal reflection, what actually is the 'Kingdom of God'?

To me the word 'kingdom' is an anachronism. It is a word that we as a society do not tend to use much, if at all any more. Yet at the time of Jesus, the term 'kingdom' was common place. Borg (2003) alludes to the fact that the phrase 'the kingdom of God' is perhaps the best shorthand summary of the message and passion of Jesus. He further believes that the central message of Jesus of Nazareth, was centred on the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is more than just simply praying for 'thy kingdom



Jesus and Nicodemus. Stained glass panel in the transept of St. John's Anglican Church, Ashfield, NSW

come'. Kingdom is about being active in living the values inherent in the gospels and indeed lived and modelled by Jesus. For me the kingdom is now, to be lived every day of our lives. It is not about the majestic image of being taken up to heaven, in pristine white clothing, by flying angels with wings on our day of atonement and judgement. It is our yesterday, our today and our tomorrow. It is the air we breathe each day of our lives here on earth.

The mission of Jesus was to establish the kingdom of God here on earth, as it is in heaven. It is a Utopian concept. A world where all are treated equally, an egalitarian society where wealth is shared, and love, compassion, and empathy are omnipresent. Where everyone loves and serves their neighbour, and has pure hearts and minds. This is not the world we currently live in; this Utopia is not an actuality. This indeed is our struggle as Christians trying to make the kingdom of God a reality today, in a world of war, poverty, lust, avarice and many other vices.

Dupuis (2001) refers to Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* to further explain the concept of kingdom where the Pope states that:

The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually, as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. The kingdom's nature therefore is one of communion among all human beings – with one another and with God.

(*Redemptoris Missio* 15)

This could be a mantra for the life of Jesus. Through the life of Jesus and his teaching, we can effectively be at the service of God, in the kingdom here in the present by acknowledging and promoting the Gospels values. The key word is 'Service'. I will elaborate in depth later in this paper, about the significance of 'Ministry' and 'Mission' and how in Jesus and through Jesus 'Ministry' and 'Mission' are in reality, one.

For me the kingdom of God can be experienced anywhere and at any-time. Dupuis (2001) summarises this concept succinctly where he states:

The Kingdom of God is universally present and at work. Wherever men and women open themselves to the Divine mystery which impinges upon them, and go out of themselves in love and service of fellow humans the reign of God is at work. (p200)

For Borg (2003) the Kingdom could also be described as what the world would be like if God were in control and his people lived and demonstrated these values. Borg further explains the notion of the Bible being not only personal, but also very political. We often do not see the Bible as a form of political criticism and political advocacy. Criticism and advocacy are grounded in their understanding of the character and passion of God; a God who has a dream of love and justice.

I understand the above by believing that the God of the Bible would most definitely care about politics. This is because the biggest causes of human suffering, today and throughout history, have been unjust social, economic and political systems brought about by exploitative empires, rulers and leaders. Jesus in his teachings spoke out against these 'systemic injustices'.

Borg (2003) alludes to these 'systemic injustices' that have occurred throughout the Bible. The emancipation of slaves in Egypt, exiles in Babylon, exploited peasants in the time of the monarchy and again in the time of Jesus, and the most vulnerable in all times, the widows, orphans, the poor, and the marginalised. To live in the kingdom of God is to be a servant to these people in need.

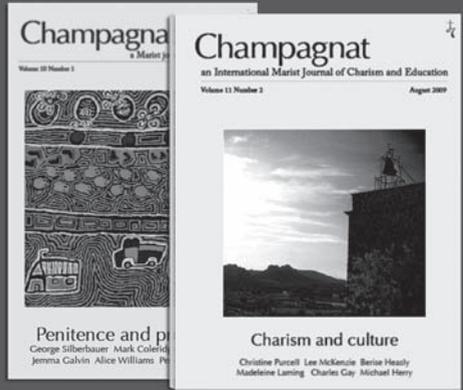
Interestingly, in all of the above references to the kingdom of God, I

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have not as yet referred to one extremely important and central part of this kingdom – that of the role of the Church in the kingdom of God.

Dupuis (2001) refers to a document of the Federation of Asian Bishops' conference (FABC), dated November 1985, to help explain the relationship between Church and kingdom:

The Reign of God is the very reason for the being of the Church.
The Church exists in and for the Kingdom. The Kingdom, God's gift and initiative, is already begun and is constantly being realised and made present through the spirit. (p200)

The Church plays an important role in bringing people to the Kingdom of God. However, when the Church is inauthentic and inward focused and the Church itself attempts to substitute for the kingdom, then ecclesiolatry is the result. The Church should be the servant and proclaimer of the kingdom. The Church lives for the kingdom. The Church does not have its own reason for being; it is not an end in itself.

Radcliffe (2006) separates the Catholic Church into two fragmented yet equally necessary categories, the Kingdom Catholics and the Communion Catholics. He defines Kingdom Catholics as:

Those who have a deep sense of the church as the pilgrim people of God, on the way to the kingdom. This tradition stresses the openness to the world, finding the presence of the Holy Spirit working outside the church, freedom and the pursuit of justice. (p1)

These are the more communally concerned people, who are more missionary in their beliefs and who are active in justice issues and being involved outside the four walls of the church buildings themselves. These people are certainly necessary in any community, and are integral in bringing about the realisation of the kingdom of God, through the unconditional love of our fellow human beings.

Radcliffe (2006) defines Communion Catholics as:

Those who feel the urgent need to rebuild the inner life of the church. Their theology stressed Catholic identity, was wary of too hearty an embrace of modernity, and they stressed the cross. (p1)

These Catholics are more concerned about the inward dealings of the Catholic Church. The emphasis is on the beloved traditions of the church and traditional ways of celebrating the liturgy. They are not overtly affianced in concerns for social justice or being active in the world outside of the four walls of the church.

I believe we need both Kingdom and Communion Catholics in our pursuit of the realisation of the kingdom of God. Yes, we need to be deeply concerned for, and act justly towards, the oppressed and marginalised in society as Jesus taught us through his own life and actions. But Jesus also taught us the sanctity of breaking bread and sharing it with his disciples, with the words at the last supper: 'This is my body given to you'. The celebration of the Eucharist is central to our beliefs as Christians and must not be underestimated as a way of truly understanding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Without the celebration of the Eucharist, we are incomplete as true followers of Jesus and unfulfilled in our journey for the kingdom of God in our lives.

Collins (2004) remarks that there should be an emphasis on the Eucharist, the sacraments and worship, social justice and a commitment to working with others for a better world. This also supports my belief that we need both 'Kingdom' and 'Communion' Catholics in our pursuit of the realisation of the kingdom of God.

Dupuis (2001) says that the Church must give witness to the reign of God through its own life, making it visible and tangible for human beings, and having an active presence in proclaiming the 'good news' for all people. The credibility of the Church is, therefore, in being a servant to her people and in bringing these people closer to the true kingdom of God each day. The kingdom of God is inextricably linked to the spiritual-

ity of Jesus and is about living each day with Jesus in our heart, and with Jesus influencing our every thought and action.

My own understanding of the kingdom of God as ‘our yesterday, our today and our tomorrow’ is confirmed where Jesus makes this clear in the Gospel of Luke when he states,

The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you. (17:20b-21)

This leads me to the next major concept that of ‘Spirituality and the Jesus Story’. Throughout my life my own image and views of Jesus the man have evolved and developed.

My earliest recollections of my own ‘spirituality and the Jesus story’ can be traced back to my childhood days when I was attending a Catholic primary school. The gentle and loving Jesus prevailed with the image of the blue-eyed, long-haired, majestic figure with angelic features and a compassionate face emanating light and grace. Jesus was an understanding, empathetic and merciful man, who walked with and loved us all regardless of colour, race, or creed. The image of Jesus sitting on a rock in a garden, surrounded by children at his feet and birds and animals around him, was how I envisioned Jesus to be. Gentile or Jew, rich or poor, powerful or weak, healthy or sick, he loved, walked with, talked to and ate with them all. The Gospel stories I remember most as a child were the miracle stories and the infancy narratives in Luke and Matthew. The baby Jesus born in a manger, the three wise men, the star in the East and the feeling of the divine nature of God’s only son, filled me with awe and wonder. It still does, but in a different way.

Many of the above early recollections of Jesus are still true now, such as the compassionate, understanding, empathetic and merciful man who walked with and loved us all, regardless of colour, race, or creed. To me now however, Jesus is a ubiquitous presence that saturates and permeates all aspects of my life. He is a dogma, a teacher, a preacher, a social activist, a visionary, a philanthropist, a humanitarian, an example to others, and put simply Jesus is the way, the truth and the light to living the kingdom of God here on earth. He was courageous and daring, at times impudent and audacious. He was in his time controversial and contentious, because he had the intestinal fortitude and conviction to challenge, question and rebuke church leaders, authorities and powerful figures for their malevo-

lence, corruption and immorality. He experienced the ugliness and chaos of our world. Through his death and resurrection he became the redemptive presence of God in our world and a source of new life for all.

In today's vernacular he certainly 'talked the talk but could walk the walk'. Jesus is almost a paradox, in that he was a loving, caring and gentle man, yet still, a powerful, commanding, uncompromising and authoritative figure. This is my current image of Jesus Christ our saviour.

Wessels (2003) refers to Christ as a 'symbolic person who embodies the universal salvific presence of God by which our Earth community and our human family are transformed'. (p176) For me the key word out of this statement is 'transformed'. It is through our connection with Jesus and our acceptance of and adherence to the true spirituality of Jesus, in leading us to the kingdom of God, that we are able to be fully transformed ourselves and to be able to transform others in the name of Jesus.

Wessels (2003) speaks about the unconditional love of God, and claims that as humans, we can alienate ourselves from God as a result of our failure to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. However he further articulates that redemption is about reclaiming the darkness, nothingness and chaos of our world and celebrating the potential for new life and wholeness. I believe it is through Jesus and in Jesus that we can come to experience God's salvific power and presence and become transformed.

Borg (1995) uses two key words to understand what is most central to Jesus: *spirit* and *compassion*. Compassion in Latin means 'to feel with'. In Hebrew, the singular form of the word 'compassion' means 'womb'. Borg states 'In its sense of 'like a womb', compassionate has nuances of giving life, nourishing, caring, perhaps embracing and encompassing. For Jesus, this is what God is like'. (p48) Borg explains that there is an intrinsic connection between the boundary shattering experience of Spirit and the boundary shattering ethos of compassion. He concludes that Spirit and compassion go together and that indeed, growth in compassion is the sign of growth in the life of the spirit.

The above statement, about growth in compassion, being the sign of growth in the life of the spirit, resonates deeply with me on a personal level. In my 15 years as a teacher in the Catholic education system, I have most certainly grown in my compassion and empathy for my students. As a Head of School, with only one class to teach, the primary focus of my day-to-day work, involves interacting with students on a personal and



pastoral wellbeing level. When I began teaching, I would consider any student who was not behaving appropriately, as being more work for me, and a burden. I would often be very punitive in my approach, rather than pastoral or restorative. I often labelled them as just ‘naughty’ students, seeking attention. It was not really until I had a personal spiritual experience, that I grew in compassion for these students and that I did not see them as a burden, but more of a spiritual vocation.

The personal spiritual experience involved a particular student who was a member of my Year 11 homegroup about 8 years ago. This student was always in trouble, always misbehaving and generally disrespectful. I had always got along with my students very well and had really never had an issue with behavioural concerns in my classes. But I was having difficulty with this one particular student. I approached him after class one day and asked him to have a chat about his behaviour. The first conversation lasted about one minute, with him refusing to elaborate much about why he was behaving in an inappropriate way. But I persisted, and after every class I asked him to stay back and gave him the opportunity to have a chat about his behaviour. After about two weeks, I again asked him to stay back and have a chat and I remember asking him ‘Is there anything you would like me to help you with or anything you want to talk about?’ His reply stunned me. He said ‘Sir, why do you care so much about me,



and if I am alright, and if I need anything, no one has ever given a f#@k about me'. It was there and then that I realised that something in me had changed and that from now on, I would have a deep, genuine concern and care for all of my students.

It turned out this boy's mother and father were both alcoholics who used to abuse him physically and emotionally and left him when he was 11 years old. They no longer kept in contact with him at all. When they left he went to live with his grandmother and grandfather. His grandmother died two years later and he lived with his grandfather. His grandfather was terminally ill with cancer and he often had to spend all his spare time caring for him. His words touched me deeply and from that day on I saw all of my students differently. I was a father myself and could not imagine my own children living such a traumatic life. He touched my heart and my spirit of compassion had been revived. I no longer took my own upbringing and family life for granted. There were young people in my care who needed me and needed help in finding their own spirituality. His grandfather died a year after he graduated from Year 12. I attended the funeral and will never forget the surprised look on his face when he saw me after the funeral service. I went up to him to give my condolences and he said 'Thanks for coming Sir, and thanks for caring'. Through his

humility and resilience to overcome obstacles in life, I had been renewed and began my own spiritual transformation.

By chance, the Sunday after I attended his grandfather's funeral I went to Mass. There was a group of Redemptorist Priests from Sri Lanka attending the Mass. They were here to run a week of activities aimed at renewing and redeeming our faith. I daily attended 6am Mass, reconciliation services and evening faith activities run by these remarkably inspiring and passionate priests, for the entire week. They spoke of their own faith journeys and the important role they play travelling the world as Redemptorist Priests, re-invigorating the faith journey of parishioners. Their commitment to their faith and the modesty, meekness and grace they displayed, certainly made an immediate and life long impact on me. From that moment on, every time a student walks into my office, I see them as a child of God made in his image, with dignity, value and worth.

I now realise that Spirit and compassion go together, and that indeed, growth in compassion is the sign of growth in the life of the spirit.

This leads me to the next important concept, that of 'Ministry' and 'Mission'. Gittins (1999) states that Jesus came to comfort the afflicted and, as Reinhold Niebuhr and Dorothy Day added, to afflict the comfortable (p28). This comment is also pertinent to me, as I was not in need of comfort due to being afflicted, but definitely needed to be afflicted in terms of my faith because I was too comfortable. Gittins further discussed the notion of 'missionary' being an apt description for every person who responds to God's call. In Jesus, mission and ministry are one. They go beyond the traditional geographical notion of having to travel to far and exotic places to be missionary.

Jesus himself did not travel huge distances from his home and often preached to his own people. Therefore, in our baptism, we are all called to take up the mission of Jesus and take part in the ministry of Jesus. We are called to open the eyes and ears and more importantly, the hearts of others to the kingdom of God. We can all be missionary by being outgoing, embracing and inclusive. To put it simply, we can do what Jesus did. We can help the poor and marginalised, we can preach to the unconverted, we can show love and compassion to all people, and we can show unconditional love to our fellow humans. We can give dignity to all persons. If we do this, then we are truly living the mission of Jesus.

This brings me to the final concept, that of Spiritual Intelligence. Zohar and Marshall (2000) begin their article with a story of a Mexican fisherman, who is content and happy with his humble yet happy existence, in a small Mexican coastal village. He is challenged by a rich American businessman, to expand his one boat fishing fleet and work harder and longer hours, and move to the US and make more money. Ultimately, it ends with the Mexican fisherman realising he is more spiritually and emotionally fulfilled in his meek, yet ideal existence, than the American, and that he does not need material wealth to be happy. He is spiritually intelligent.

My own definition of spiritual intelligence is 'an innate self-awareness of what is important and essential in one's life, and how you can attain and maintain an intrinsic, inner peace and contentment'.

I will refer here to an example of what I deem is spiritual intelligence of a co-worker. This man was a chemical engineer working 12–18 hour days, 6–7 day weeks and making a very good wage. He had a wife and young family of three children. He was working and his entire energy and focus was on his blossoming career. He was climbing the corporate ladder in his firm and outwardly was very successful. He had a nice car and a large house. One day he was asked to attend his daughters' school concert in which they both had leading parts. Once again he was unable to attend due to work commitments. He decided then and there that something had to change. He went into work the next morning and to everyone's utter surprise he resigned. He had no new job organised at all. He went home and told his wife, who was supportive of his decision. He now works at my school as a cleaner and has worked there for 10 years. He says he has never been happier and more content. He begins work every day at 7am and is finished at 3pm. He whistles whilst he works, interacts extremely well with staff and students. Not many, if any other staff members know his story and that he is an educated, very intelligent man. Every day, he picks up his children from school and never misses an event that his children participate in. He is indeed 'spiritually intelligent'.

In concluding, as a spiritual leader in the Catholic education system, the aim of my vocation and mission is to instil in my students the notion of living each day with Jesus in their heart. For them to understand, that Kingdom is being active in living the values inherent in the gospels and indeed lived and modelled by Jesus. That through the life of Jesus and his

teaching, we can effectively be in the service of God in the kingdom here in the present. For them to realise that the kingdom is now. Furthermore, my ministry in Catholic schools is to see all my students as children of God, made in his image, with dignity, value and worth. My mission is to continue to show unconditional compassion to all and to grow in the life of the spirit.

Finally, each evening when I tuck my four beautiful children into bed, and we say our nightly prayers, and I say with them the words ‘Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven’, I will now have a new-found, deep and profound spiritual understanding of what ‘Thy Kingdom’ actually is and means. For this I am truly grateful. ■

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What is the Kingdom of God?

ALICE YOULDEN

THE KINGDOM of God or the Reign of God is here, but not yet. God is present in the world evident in God's actions throughout history but most particularly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, whose mission concerned the proclamation of God's Kingdom but '... it must still keep developing until it reaches the eschatological fullness at the end of time'. (Dupuis, 2001, p198) The tension of the now and the not yet is expressed so eloquently in the past, present and future reality of God in the celebration of the Eucharist. (O'Leary, 1999) The Kingdom of God is not a place, but a dynamic event that evokes tension between its immediacy and its eschatological nature. 'The Kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed ... for in fact the Kingdom of God is among you.' (Lk 17: 20-21)

God's Kingdom is here, evident '... wherever people are being healed, set free from oppression or dehumanising power systems, and made whole'. (Downey, 1993, p585) It is not about heaven, but is for the earth,

for ‘... heaven is in great shape’. (Borg, 2003, p147) The concern of the Kingdom is to eliminate suffering. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer we pray for daily bread – a basic staple for living; and it is concerned also with forgiveness of trespasses or debt – for these usurp independence and freedom. (Borg, 2003) God’s kingdom of justice, love, peace and liberation is not yet fully realised. For this to continue to unfold, the current order must be turned upside down, just as Jesus disturbed the social order of his day because he saw it hindering spiritual growth. There is a need to continue to disturb in order to make

... the last first and the first last ... it ridicules the rich and the powerful and all those who claim the earth as their own; it summons the weak and the oppressed to a joy and freedom that look crazy to the ‘powers that be’; it adulterates our self-made gods for the God of surprises, the God of raging justice, the God of passionate love, the God who becomes so radically human that it seems ridiculous to those in our world who are spiritually alienated on the one hand, or saturated in religiosity on the other. (O’Murchu 1997)

Jesus spoke out with authority from God against the slavery of the human spirit. ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.’ (Jn 8:28) As Jesus’ Church, we too are called to speak out in the same manner. The metaphor, Kingdom of God, is multi-layered because it invoked a political-religious reality for his audience, a reality that hinted at the oppressive nature of Roman domination whilst, at the same time, referring to some greater mystery such as God’s power at work in him, or God’s presence in the world or in a community or the Kingdom at the end of time. (Borg, 2003) This multi-layered reality is just as true for us today.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A UNIVERSAL REIGN WITH NO LIMITATIONS

The Kingdom of God is referred to some 150 times in the New Testament, which serves to emphasise the centrality of its message. (Downey, 1993) Michael Cook (in Downey, 1993) describes the Kingdom of God as ‘Jesus’ comprehensive term for the blessing of salvation insofar as it denotes the divine activity at the centre of all human life’. (p585)

The Kingdom is therefore the concern of all because it is about the

What is the kingdom of God?

communion of all humanity with each other and with God. According to the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, the Church is not an end in itself as it serves the Kingdom which is present in it in a special way, but it has a universal nature that extends beyond it to other Christian churches and other religions where God is accepted, where they are open to the spirit and where Kingdom values (like those taught by Jesus) are promoted. (Dupuis, 2001) Our human relationship is with Jesus who came to save all humanity, therefore all individuals are God's people, all are invited into the Kingdom for all are graced by the Spirit that extends beyond the boundaries of a religious framework. This indicates unification at a deeper level of humanity, unification by virtue of being part of God's creation, made in God's image and likeness. But because Jesus fully revealed God's Kingdom message, this exists in Jesus' Church in a special way, for it '... is "the locus of the sending of the Spirit", in which the grace of salvation consists'. (Dupuis, 2001, p212)

**SPIRITUALITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD:
WHERE IS THE CONNECTION?**

O'Murchu (1997) refers to the Kingdom of God as the New Reign of God, or Basileia, an apt term to use whilst exploring this topic. He suggests that what is required is a monumental disturbance, a new order that will turn upside down the current social acceptance of earthly power and wealth that rips apart right relationships, marginalises the powerless and applauds injustice, greed and disharmony. Many spiritual writers and theologians now recognise Basileia as the core value of Christianity. Furthermore Basileia is '... more about spirituality than religion. The desire to relate lovingly and justly is a universal human aspiration, the exploration and expression of which connects me to the inner spiritual core of my being'. (O'Murchu, 1997, p165) A friend recently said that God wrote two books, the Book of Life and the Book of Scriptures and we can't understand one without the other.

The spirituality of the Kingdom of God requires recognition of our humanness and calls for a new way of being human in an inclusive way that encompasses all creation. It confirms the mystery of our being, our yearning to be in harmony with who we are at our core and in harmony with all humanity and creation.

The Basileia, from a Christian viewpoint, serves as an encapsulation of divine-human co-creativity, spanning the millennia of evolutionary unfolding ... for Christians a vision of the Kingdom that fails to stretch us – humanly, spiritually and culturally – cannot possibly be the authentic one. (O’Murchu, 1997, p169)

**WHAT DOES THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD
LOOK LIKE TODAY?**

God cares about the suffering of people: therefore the focus of the Kingdom of God is justice, the remedy for suffering. Today the Church must continue to raise awareness of justice issues so that the many systems that promote and maintain attitudes that smack of injustice can be combated. In our cultural, political and religious systems, injustice and oppression is alive in the form of religious bigotry, racism, sexism, economic manipulation and structures that benefit a few. We need brave, modern-day prophets who can envisage and actively promote a kingdom of justice, particularly in political systems.

A politically engaged spirituality affirms both spiritual transformation and political transformation. The message of Jesus, and the Bible as a whole, is about both. What we see in Jesus and the Bible answers our deepest personal longing, to be born again, and the world’s greatest need, the Kingdom of God. (Borg, 2003, p146)

**WHAT DO SYSTEMS THAT DETRACT FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD
LOOK LIKE UP CLOSE?**

We must thoughtfully examine systems to ensure that one person, one group, nation or religious framework does not control or manipulate other human beings, God’s creatures, the Earth or the cosmos. (O’Murchu, 1997) Borg (2003) suggests some of the systems we could look at because these could easily fail so many, especially those with the softest cry. Following Borg’s content headings I have briefly considered the following:

A fairer health-care system which in Australia may mean shorter hospital waiting periods for those without private insurance. This in turn raises the question of the fairness of a two-tiered system.

What is the kingdom of God?

We need a greater awareness of our stewardship role regarding the environment, particularly the wasteful over-use of scarce resources by industry.

Economic justice must distribute wealth more equitably. Thus, the materials for living, whether that be food or financial payment for work, must be shared so that suffering does not occur. The recent world financial collapse has served to emphasise how human greed for material and economic wealth results in an unsustainable system. The enormous wages paid to company directors whether successful or not has caused many people to consider more deeply the injustice of the situation.

The use of imperial power: financial and military might that could be used for the benefit of that empire alone or for the benefit of all humanity. The US is still a mighty power but some say it is in decline and like the Roman Empire it is only a question of time as to when it will fall. Although it has made decisions contrary to the spirituality of the Kingdom of God, my concern is what will take its place; will it cause even more suffering?

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God calls us into communion because by our nature we are social beings. In this interaction with life we experience the transcendent that calls us to a deeper spirituality. Its cyclic nature further enriches the web of relationships we weave throughout our life. The spirituality of the Kingdom of God calls us to break free from whatever is holding us back from entering a loving relationship with God and others. Whether the hindrance is man-made religion or our own thirst for power we are invited to participate in the creative dynamism of God and 'live life to the full' so that we may bring about the New Reign of God. (O'Murchu, 1997)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS BEYOND OUR IMAGININGS

How can God be restricted to human imagination and abstract notions when the creative power and love evident in all of nature is so compelling? O'Leary (1999) points out how the God of creation, the God of Jesus and the God of the Catholic Church are portrayed so differently. He compares the tame image of God with the wild imaginings of the God of creation, and with the boundless all-embracing loving God



manifest in the incarnate Jesus, in whom ‘God’s first creation is forever established’. (O’Leary, 1999, p111) Yet, if Jesus is the measure and fulfilment of all, including spiritual longings, then he cannot be confined to a boundary model which is more concerned with fulfilling human needs rather than setting free God’s living spirit. (O’Murchu, cited in O’Leary, 1999) For my own spiritual growth, for my own understanding of the message of the Kingdom, and for my actions to be in keeping with the Kingdom of God, I believe I must be critically reflective. The challenge for the Church is to be ever mindful of the boundless and all-embracing God of Creation.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND RELIGION

O’Murchu states that Christian theology is attempting to reclaim the Kingdom of God as its principal data and that ‘... the ramifications for spirituality are substantial and far-reaching’. (O’Murchu, 1997, p158) This is heartening, but from what perspective will this be done? If the Kingdom of God, or Basileia, is the starting point for the spiritual journey and all are invited to the banquet, this poses some serious considerations. If Basileia is concerned with right relationships, and if this ideal is shared by the major religions, then the need for meaningful multi-faith dialogue is paramount.

The language and theology surrounding the term Kingdom of God pose problems among the divided Christian denominations and between Christian denominations and other religions. Just who is invited? Is the invitation to the Kingdom exclusive to all Christians, or just some? Does

What is the kingdom of God?



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it exclude other religions? Or is it an inclusive, universal term far beyond the confines of any religion? These are some of the questions being grappled with by theologians today.

It requires a brave heart to strip away centuries of trappings that have attached themselves to the institutional Christian Churches and get back to the heart of the matter, namely what Jesus proclaimed loudly and clearly through his words and actions, through his death and resurrection – God’s Kingdom. ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’. (Jn 10:10) For the spirituality of the Kingdom of God is much greater than a

... salvation/redemption type religion would understand. It sees the saving of one’s soul in terms of universal healing and community transformation, as well as of personal concern. It tries to recover the sense of cosmic reality and holiness, a central dimension and fascination of contemporary society. (O’Leary, 1999, p92)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

If we are to be true to the teaching of the Kingdom concerning the inclusivity of right relationships, then compassion for the other and willingness to get to know their pain is essential. This means that we, the Catholic Church, have to be aware of the pain felt by those whom Radcliffe (2006) terms Kingdom Catholics and Communion Catholics.

We cannot begin to be a beacon of hope for those searching for wholeness when we ourselves are divided and hurting. Both understandings are vital, especially when viewed through the lens of the Eucharist

... the sharing of the bread is centripetal ... It gathers us into the community of Christ's friends and disciples. It is a sign of that interior life of the Church which is so crucial for Communion Catholics. But the cup of wine is centrifugal. It expresses that outward thrust which is important for Kingdom Catholics, the reaching out to all humanity, ready to find the Holy Spirit working in all people ... the sign of our shared home, then has this double rhythm. It gathers in and it reaches out. It is like breathing. (Radcliffe, 2006, pp2, 3)

The plan and expression of God's Kingdom in the world and in the Church are way beyond mere mortals: this is God's work and it comes in many guises. As difficult as this might be at times, practising exclusivity by criticising others in a non-productive way is to be avoided. I am just as guilty as the next person of wanting to oppress and stifle the way some express their faith and conduct their spiritual search because it does not agree with my own. By the same token they are also guilty of trying to control where and how I should gain spiritual nourishment. If our home is the Church then we must converse, not be afraid of each other for

God has promised the Kingdom. We are on the way there. We do not know how or when it will come, but one day all injustice and oppression will be ended and we shall rejoice in the perfect freedom of Christ. We will reach the home for which we belong, even though every bishop in the world belonged to Opus Dei. (Radcliffe, 2006, p5)

One only has to look to the ten meal stories in Luke's Gospel to gain a sense of God's Kingdom as the cornerstone of Christianity, particularly in relation to Eucharist, the source and summit of the Body of Christ. The meal stories, climaxing in the Last Supper and Lord's Supper, are forever linked to the mission of Jesus and his teaching about God's Kingdom, the implications for Christian living and ministry are quite evident in the table fellowship: hospitality, repentance, reconciliation, commitment, discipleship, the inclusion of all, service and a ministry to the poor and outcasts.

Thus Luke addresses, through discourses, how his community are to



live according to the teaching of Jesus within their particular social context. The historical actions, words and symbolic events described by Luke are prophetic because they invite readers in any historical circumstance to better understand Jesus' teaching and the response expected. (La Verdière, 1996; 1980) Therefore, as a Eucharistic people, enlivening the Kingdom of God is not optional but is what we are all about: as Eucharistic people we must express God's reign in every age.

THE SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS, THE SEARCH FOR THE KINGDOM

The divisive dualism of the religious and secular arenas has resulted in a spiritually bereft world in search of wholeness, in search of a way to overcome human limitations, self-serving power and habits that limit our ability to become more fully human, more sacred. (O'Leary, 1999) O'Murchu (1997) and O'Leary (1999) contend that Christians have seriously moved from the Gospel message in claiming, like other major religions, to contain the fullness of salvation. This has resulted in a cultic Jesus figure with a narrow focus rather than his full message concerning a Kingdom which engages all in the search for God. It also raises a frightening question for those inside a Christian religious framework, namely, are the various denominational churches in keeping with Jesus' vision, are they appropriate vehicles to carry the vision of Basileia? Or are they stifling spirituality?

... can we assume that Jesus actually wanted a new religion in his name? Could it be – as Sheehan (1986) asserts – that Jesus wanted to get rid of formal religion – all religion – so that we could engage with the ‘fulness of life’ ... Basilea is very much more about spirituality than religion. The desire to relate lovingly and justly is a human aspiration, the exploration and expression of which connects me to the inner spiritual core of my being ... Deeper voices cry out for recognition; deeper yearnings begin to unfold. (O’Murchu, 1997, pp164, 165)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

Wherever the spiritual search for answers to the meaning of life may take a human person, whether it be deep into their own hearts and/or informed or not by a religious system, the element of mystery is a call to the transcendent, to something greater, not limited to personal fulfilment as espoused by many new-age spiritualities, not confined to religious rituals as an end in themselves but as a means to enable a response for the greater good of all humanity. (O’Murchu, 1997)

Therefore the Kingdom of God, the Basilea, has to be at the heart of Christianity as it is the heart of Jesus’ teaching and it is the response to the spiritual search of all humanity. The mission of the Church is called to direct the searcher toward the deep well of spiritual longing – the Kingdom of God. In particular we must serve the poor by reaching out, by listening with the heart. Jesus’ original message has lost much of its shattering quality; it has been commandeered by humanity with its thirst for earthly power so that the message of Jesus does not always have the clarity, the brutality it needs to speak out against iniquities.

JESUS THE DISTURBING OUTSIDER

Jesus was a boundary rider who mixed with those considered outsiders by his religious culture such as tax collectors, adulterers, lepers, thieves, children, the mentally handicapped and, in particular, women. He did not subscribe to the norm of a Jewish adult male, he and his followers were itinerants who challenged established social and cultural situations. He rode the boundary between the occupier and the occupied, the privileged and the

What is the kingdom of God?

underprivileged whilst challenging exclusivity and the religious definition of holiness. (Gittins, 2002)

In contrast to his outsider status, Jesus was the real insider where it mattered. While others of his time masqueraded as holy, Jesus truly was holy, he was the divine insider, and he was and is God. (Gittins, 2002) His life was an example of God's justice reaching out to the marginalised but also reaching out to challenge those considered insiders, the authorities of his society. He pointed out the need for change, a metanoia, for repentance and service to others, for justice. The Kingdom of God proposed by Jesus is a life giving force, one that nurtures spiritual growth because it empowers everyone in its service to all, for all time.

The plight of women in western society is much improved but we still need the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom to gnaw at the tacit, insidious inequality that persists in society. The same can be said for all poor or marginalised; we need Jesus' 'God's eye view of the world, a view of the way things could be and should be if people would rethink their relationship with God'. (Gittins, 2002, p116) This calls for great sacrifice by the rich and powerful as it requires becoming 'like a child'.

OPTION FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALISED

Basileia can never be realised unless we face up to our vulnerability which requires that '... our hearts must become transparent to the cry from the poor for a more just, equitable and loving world'. (O'Murchu, 1997, p166) Rolheiser (1998) points to the centrality of the call for social justice and the option for the poor and marginalised that is laid out in Scripture. If we are to relate to God then social justice is integral, not an optional extra, to prayer and a sincere heart.

The important question for us is, are we recognising the poor? Naturally the answers to this question are as varied as are people in the world who, at one time or another, can be counted as poor in some way. The universality of the answer says that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity in a relationship with the natural world we inhabit. There are those who are poor in the basic means to support physical life, poor in health, poor in social status, poor in the love of others, poor in psychological balance and so on. We have all experienced being poor or lacking something to enable living life to the full at some time; therefore we need to reach out to each other constantly, for we are communal beings.

Recently I experienced an anointing rite at a local Sunday mass. When the priest called for those who wished to receive the sacrament of healing I wondered who would go forward: would it just be the elderly or infirm? To my great surprise almost every single person, old and young, went forward to receive this sacrament. It was a humbling experience to be among a large group of people who recognised their human frailty, their human longing to be made whole. Tacitly they were acknowledging that they were poor in some way or another, that they needed the healing sacrament of Jesus expressed in the community of his Church.

Spirituality of the Kingdom of God requires attention to the four pillars of Christian discipleship: ‘... private prayer, social justice, mellowness of heart and spirit, and community as a constitutive element of true worship’. (Rolheiser, 1998, p51) Without these there is imbalance and inability to realise right-relationships. A mature Christian spirituality interprets and discerns experiences so that actions are not self serving but transformative both for the individual and for society. (O’Murchu, 1997)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD REQUIRES ACTION IN THE WORLD

For the Kingdom of God to be fully realised, human spirituality must search for God in every experience and aspect of life. While revelling in day-to-day living, the human person fully alive is true to self and true to the ultimate values of the transcendent. (O’Murchu, 1997) In other words there is wholeness in their approach to life, their inner life is in keeping with their actions because they have internalised the teaching of Christ. A society that condones powerful, earthly kingships in whatever sphere of action they may operate is in stark contrast to the Kingdom of God proposed by Jesus.

There is a strong connection between the future Kingdom of God and personal response which requires one to become like a child, ‘Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it’. (Mk 10:15) When the rich man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus refers to the ten commandments but adds one more prerequisite, ‘... go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven’. (Mk 10: 21) He, like many of us, could not do this.

CONCLUSION

The Kingdom of God is at hand ... are we listening? Are we bringing it to life? Are we awake to the injustices in our society? Are we open to the ramifications the message of the Kingdom has for all humanity and for all creation? Are we ready to work in dynamic synergy with God to be co-creators of the Kingdom? Are the people of Jesus' Church ready to raise their awareness of the suffering in our world and are they ready to embrace the full meaning of Eucharist as an invitation to all to dine at the banquet of the Lord in God's Kingdom? Are we waiting in hope for the future Kingdom?

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. (Jn 15: 12)

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What the educational leader can learn from St Paul

ELIZABETH MONAHAN

IN AUGUST 2009 I undertook a pilgrimage and study tour under the auspices of the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, entitled 'In the Footsteps of Paul'. This took me to sites in Greece and Turkey where Paul lived and preached, leading me to learn much about Paul himself, his theology and his context. In addition, from the study of his writings

and their interpretation by others, and reflection on their message for me, I also learnt much about leadership which can be applied to my studies in educational leadership and my specific situation as educational leader in a Catholic school.

That Paul was an outstanding leader is evident from his writings where we see his passionate commitment, his vision, the strong relationships he developed, his nurturing of community and his focus on action. It can also be inferred from his legacy, where we see the heritage of the communities he founded still thriving in the faith communities of the Christian tradition.

Why was Paul an exceptional leader? According to Caliguire (2003) he 'committed his entire life to his mission, took every opportunity to share his vision, invested in up-and-coming leaders, and endured when most would have thrown in the towel.' (p10)

There are many parallels with the authentic educational leader who, influenced by the core values of schooling, with a focus on ethics and morality, initiates both transformational and transactional leadership practices, resulting in authentic learning and teaching.

PAUL WAS PASSIONATELY COMMITTED TO HIS CAUSE

The transformational leader challenges others to grow, energising and inspiring through vision and a passionate commitment, which enlivens and sustains their communities. Paul taught that we should be passionately committed to our work: 'whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men', (Col 3:23) and modelled this commitment himself.

Paul's writings reveal his love for Jesus and his commitment to service to the message of the Gospels; the same service which has been carried out by others over the centuries through a multitude of vocations. Martini (2007) in referring to service as modelled by Paul, describes 'the certainty which inspires it, the trials that accompany it and the hope in which it is rooted'. (p11) These characteristics will also be evident in authentic Catholic educational leadership.

We are told in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul's zeal in upholding the Jewish Law and his consequent persecutions of the followers of Christ. Following his conversion, this same energy was channelled into his work in spreading the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. He was, as

he said, ‘captive to the Spirit’. (Acts 20:22) He spared no effort to ensure that the Gospel was proclaimed to all people. His core values are evident in his conviction that ‘God’s grace is open to all who have faith’. (Rom 3:22–23) The Catholic educational leader will also be faithful to his or her core values, but the distinguishing factor of this leadership will be that it is also framed around the core values of schooling. (Duignan, 2006)

Paul’s commitment to his cause at times resulted in undermining, harassment and ridicule – things that are also the experience of many modern leaders who find their health, well-being and security threatened by their commitment. However, Paul eventually also faced shipwreck, persecution, imprisonment and death, yet still did not waver from his chosen path. As he wrote, ‘we do not lose heart ... we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed’. (2Cor 4:1, 8–9)

Despite his passion for his work, his commitment and his energy, Paul at times experienced weariness and the feeling that he had reached the limits of his resources. (e.g. 2 Tim 4:9–11) At these times we see a man who struggles against daily difficulties, who is dealing with an accumulation of disappointments, who has become pessimistic. Martini suggests he was able to keep moving forward with only memory of the power of God which he was no longer experiencing. This will be the experience at times of all those in ministries of service, including educational leadership, and Paul’s ability to continue with his mission when his faith was shrouded in darkness gives hope to those in all leadership positions.

Paul is a model of servant leadership, working passionately for his cause without expecting or desiring any acclaim or personal gain. As he writes to the Corinthians, ‘neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth’. (1Cor 3:7) His focus is always on the message of the Gospel and the establishment and support of communities who will live out this message. This parallels the selfless work of the authentic educational leader who will always act with the common good and the well-being of those they serve in mind.

PAUL SHARED HIS VISION EFFECTIVELY

Authors such as Kouzes and Posner (2004) agree upon the importance of the transformational leader developing and articulating a vision. Communities, including those of Paul and our modern educational



institutions, need a shared vision, a sense of purpose and direction underpinned by common values. Paul's letters give us insight into his vision and the means he took to share it with others. Ascough and Cotton (2005) analyse the way this is done in the letter to the Romans, where he gives an overview of his understanding of God and God's care for his people, affirming the values he shares with them. His passion for sharing his vision is evident, despite the tyrannies of time and distance and the personal cost to himself – ultimately death.

It is clear from his writing that Paul was prepared to defend his vision, regardless of conflict which might ensue. Ascough and Cotton compare him in this respect with many of the great leaders of history including Churchill, Gandhi and Mandela. He could easily have given in to his opponents, but chose to continue despite the cost. This is best seen at Corinth, where new leaders with a different message assumed leadership of the community, but Paul was able to win it back by staying the course. Although educational leaders are rarely tested to the extreme extents experienced by Paul, authentic educational leadership nevertheless requires the leader to sustain a commitment to holding the vision and sharing it with others against sometimes powerful opposition.

Paul shared his vision with people of diverse nationality, background and lifestyle. He emphasised the variety of the manifestations of the Spirit within the Church in his letter to the Corinthians: 'now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services,

but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone'. (1Cor 12:4-6)

Educational leaders, while retaining their overall vision, should also attempt to embrace diversity and value the unique contributions made to enactment of the vision by different people at all levels of the organisation.

PAUL DEVELOPED RELATIONSHIPS

There would be few people not familiar with Paul's beautiful verses on love. (1Cor 13:1-13) For Paul, love flows from Christians to all those around them, and from this love relationships grow that lead to the establishment of the Kingdom. For Paul, love is more fundamental than commitment, vision, strategy and action, as these will not be present without love. Paul indicates the emphasis he puts on relationships when he writes to the Romans that 'each of us must please his neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour'. (Rom 15:2) His relationship with others was modelled on his vision of his relationship with Jesus, which transformed him 'from a top-down enforcer to a relentless advocate of equality and compassion'. (Ascough & Cotton, 2005, p59) As Paul rejected the hierarchical model, so should the authentic educational leader.

It is clear that Paul valued praise, thanksgiving and public displays of appreciation, as most of his letters commence in this way. These are elements of relationship which may be sometimes forgotten by the busy educational leader but are vital to sustaining the commitment of followers. High levels of performance and morale are generated by leaders who demonstrate care and encouragement of their followers.

As a leader, Paul was open with his followers, clear about his own emotions, personal doubts and weaknesses, for example when he writes that 'we do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself'. (2Cor 1:8) He is a model of personal transparency; his willingness to be human and vulnerable with his followers is a model to the authentic educational leader.

Paul clearly put significant value on staying in touch with members of the Christian communities, both through visits and through his letters, many more of which would appear to have been written than those which survive to the present. He addresses individuals by name and con-

nects them with others, building and sustaining community, such as in the opening verses of his letter to the Romans. He is clearly committed to ongoing relationships, not simply maintaining contact while people are useful, then readily abandoning them. It is interesting, and perhaps heartening, to note that Paul does not present as a charismatic, likeable character, but rather as somewhat gruff and uncompromising. This does not seem to have inhibited his ability to form relationships.

But as pointed out by Ascough and Cotton (2005), Paul would want to go beyond the idea that leadership is only about relationship. A trusting and supportive relationship is the foundation from which leadership may grow.

PAUL FOSTERED COMMUNITY

Paul travelled extensively to establish his network of Christian communities who would not only facilitate the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ but also support one another in remaining faithful to the message in their daily lives. He nurtured these communities through visits, messengers and letters. Although he is often seen as a solitary individualist, a reading of his letters (where he frequently refers to his co-workers) points more to a commitment to teamwork. Letters which we attribute to Paul are generally written not by him alone, but in collaboration with other members of his community. Paul acknowledges that he cannot build his Christian community on his own and relies on key people with whom he shares leadership. In the same way, effective educational leaders build around them teams with whom they work to achieve the agreed goals. As indicated by Ascough and Cotton (2005), Paul's approach emphasised 'co-operation, interdependency and shared responsibility for performance-related outcomes' and he stresses 'cohesion around mission, working approach and performance focus'. (p85) This sounds remarkably similar to the current literature around educational leadership.

Paul's care for his community is evident throughout his letters, such as when he writes to the Philippians that 'I thank God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now'. (Phil 1:3-5) He consistently writes to encourage and sustain them. He challenges them to take up the opportunities he offers to

them to grow, while addressing the concerns and doubts they may have. Ascough and Cotton equate this to emotional intelligence which they identify in abundance in Paul and which the transformational educational leader must also foster. Leadership which is based on mutual respect, understanding and care enhances the performance of those who are prepared to follow the leader.

Paul's vision of community is centred on Christ rather than position or wealth. His letters demonstrate that he does not demand unity, but invites members of his communities to share his understanding of priorities and how they might be achieved. (e.g. Phil 4:2-3) He achieves agreement through consultation, teasing out the issues, explanation of his understandings. This involves commitment of time and development of trust. We don't have records of Paul's personal conversations with his communities but his letters certainly demonstrate that he sought to establish shared meanings and promote dialogue. The essence of his first letter to the Corinthians is to address issues and tensions that have arisen within that community. Paul is a model of collaborative leadership from which modern educational leaders might learn a great deal.

Cardinal Martini (2007) comments that Paul's passion for his community is particularly striking when he is dealing with an ungrateful, insolent community which has rebuffed him. His passion for it is greater because he has invested so much of himself in it. A significant part of Paul's writing is taken up with discussion of conflicts and misunderstandings within his communities. Through this he is negotiating with different groups to develop the norms of these communities in the same way the leader of an educational community is drawn to do.

It is interesting to note that Paul does not lay down sets of rules for his communities, but rather relies on the Spirit to provide them with guidance, provided they act from mutual love and service. The church which developed from the early Christian communities clearly did not retain this approach, as is already evident in the epistles which were once thought to have been written by Paul but now attributed to later communities. (Roetzel, 1998) One sees elements of a return to Paul's underlying philosophy in the concept of shared leadership, where influence relationships take precedence over authority and rules.

In particular, as the leader of a Christian community, I have come to understand my role in greater depth by reflecting upon Paul's leadership

of his community at Corinth. He clearly loved them: his letters show an appreciation of them but also a commitment to keeping them on the right path and faithful to Christ and his message, even though at times this meant great disappointment for him and taking a stance which could not have been popular with them.

PAUL WAS A PERSON OF ACTION

Paul was a transformational leader. According to Ascough and Cotton (2005) 'he wrote the book on how transformational leaders should act'. (p16) He led people from old lives to new lives based on the message of Christ. He challenged his followers to view life differently, to consider the possibilities, to live with ambiguity and to embrace change. No doubt the people of his time would have found change difficult, as many do now, but he persevered until he won their hearts and minds. The modern leader can certainly learn from his example. Paul's leadership did not involve self promotion or the invitation to recognition by others. He did not come from a perspective of trying to please others but from a deeper moral purpose, and so was prepared to question behaviour he saw as counterproductive to his cause. Transformational leaders in the tradition of Paul challenge people to grow and develop, to examine their pre-conceptions and look at the world differently. They can also expect at times to come up against resistance as indeed Paul did.

The qualities of Paul as a person of action invite reflection. When he realised a need, he acted on it. For example, we read that 'after Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia'. (Acts 16:10) Cardinal Martini (2007) points out Paul's resilience, his ability to bounce back after setbacks. He is also free from following the current of popular opinion. He has much in common with modern authentic leaders who 'translate their values and beliefs into concrete actions at a fundamental level'. (Evans, 1996, p189)

Archbishop Denis Hart (2009) writes that getting to know Paul is like a teenager getting to know the cranky old man next door and discovering a heart of gold and wisdom to guide him through life. Walking in his footsteps helped me to get to know Paul, to understand his milieu and hence his writing, and to find in it intelligence, insight and sound advice for my life also. Paul led his Christian communities to witness to Jesus in their life and work, and challenges us to lead in the same way. ■

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The Minor Seminary at Verrières

The lost leader

FREDERICK McMAHON

*An excerpt from the story of
Father Jean-Claude Courveille (1787-1866)
Benedictine monk and promoter of the Society of Mary*

MIRACLE MAN

Born in 1787 in Usson-en-Forez (Loire), 40 kilometres west of St Etienne (Route D104), Jean-Claude Courveille was the son of Claude Courveille and Marguerite Beynieux. Jean-Claude, the seventh child in a family of 13 children, many of whom died young, was born into a family of merchants. During the French Revolution his mother hid in a wall of their home two statues of Our Lady, one of which was the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Chambraic. Madame Courveille frequently went with her children to pray before the miraculous statue. It

is quite understandable, then, that Jean-Claude became attached to the cult of honouring the Virgin Mary and her statues.

At the age of ten, Jean-Claude contracted smallpox, which affected the corneas of both eyes and made it impossible for him to study normally. Since the doctors despaired of curing him, young Jean-Claude, who earnestly desired to become a priest, turned to Our Lady of Le Puy, whose shrine was some fifty kilometres to the south. To add to his misfortunes, when he was eighteen years of age, his father died (26 April 1805).

Something of the miraculous entered the young man's life when he was twenty-two. In 1809 he was cured of his blindness in the cathedral of Le Puy. He smeared his eyes with oil from a lamp burning before the statue of the Blessed Virgin and his sight was restored. At once he could distinguish the smallest objects in the cathedral and from that day he always enjoyed excellent vision. Henceforth he was considered among the most fervent pilgrims at the shrine. In 1810, before the miraculous statue, he consecrated himself entirely to Mary and made her a triple promise 'to do all she wished for the glory of Our Lord, for her own honour and for the salvation of souls'¹.

It would appear that in this same year, in full fervour, the young man started his Latin studies, first, some say (the matter is by no means conclusive), at the minor seminary of Verrières, where he made the acquaintance of four of his future companions. He then continued his priestly formation under the direction of his uncle, Fr Beynieux, parish priest of Apinac (Loire), a small town quite close to Usson.

THE MINOR SEMINARY AT VERRIÈRES

Courveille's Marial consecration was renewed regularly each year. On 15 August 1812, Feast of the Assumption of Mary, again in the cathedral of Le Puy, Jean-Claude acquired a deep certitude that the Blessed Virgin wanted a society bearing her name. The revelation of Le Puy was to be the starting point of the Society of Mary. On this day, at the foot of the same altar, he heard, not with his bodily ears, but with those of his heart, interiorly but very distinctly,

See ... here is what I desire. I have always imitated my divine Son in everything and followed Him to Calvary itself, standing at the foot of the cross while He gave his life for men's souls. Now that I am in glory with Him, I imitate what He did on earth for

His Church, of which I am the protectress, like a powerful army defending it and working for the salvation of souls. When a fearful heresy threatened to convulse the whole of Europe, my Son raised up his servant Ignatius to form a Society under His name, calling itself the Society of Jesus and its members 'Jesuits', to fight against the hell unleashed against the Church of my divine Son. So, in these last times of impiety and unbelief, my wish is that there be also a Society consecrated to me, which will bear my name, being called the 'Society of Mary'. Its members will be called Marists; they are to battle against Hell.²

It is almost certain that the end of the last phrase replaced a more detailed text which Fr Jeantin, one of the early historians of the Society of Mary, recalled in these terms:

This Society will last until the end of time; it will produce great saints; it will have great glory and will sustain the last struggles with anti-Christ.³

Astonished, even terrified by this revelation, Jean-Claude Courveille at first kept silent about it, trying to despise this voice which he regarded as a diabolic illusion. At All Saints 1812, however, he entered the major seminary at Le Puy, even though his home town, Usson, had been attached to the diocese of Lyon in 1801. Sentimental reasons clearly explained this choice; the seminary was then very close to the cathedral, so the young seminarian could renew almost daily his earlier promises of 1810 at the foot of the venerated altar.

More and more Courveille became convinced that Mary was reproaching him for resisting her wishes and this caused him great anxiety. In order to gain peace of conscience he heard as many as six Masses one day. He seemed to hear the words, 'Speak of it to your directors, disclose all to them and you will see what they will tell you about it.'⁴ He then spoke to two of his directors, especially the professor of Moral Theology. After time for suitable reflection, they told him that the revelation appeared to be all right to them, that it could well have come from God, that it could be His will, and that Courveille must not despise it. This decided him to consecrate himself to the service of Mary, to whom he attributed his cure.

At All Saints, 1812 Courveille began his Philosophy at the major seminary of Le Puy. The next year he began his Theology there, but

an unexpected incident altered his plans. Since he was soon to receive the tonsure and Minor Orders at the Mende (Lozère) cathedral on 26 May 1814, he was obliged to obtain from the diocesan administration of Lyon a transfer note authorising this step, but, on 30 April, in the spring of 1814, when he requested dismissorial letters for tonsure, the Lyon archdiocesan councillors decided to refuse this for the reason that the young cleric was totally unknown to them, and they requested him to present himself before the archbishop. He was then reclaimed by the archdiocese of Lyon, to which the parish of his birth had belonged since the Concordat with Napoleon. Jean-Claude thus entered St Irénée, the major seminary at Lyon, at All Saints in 1814 and completed his second and third years of Theology there. It was during this period that he would hold discussions on ‘the Society’.

AT THE MAJOR SEMINARY OF LYON

Inasmuch as he was in charge of seminaries, Vicar General Bochart had to effect the administrative negotiations relating to the seminarian’s transfer. He was struck by the reluctance shown at Le Puy to release such a subject and, intrigued by this, he asked the reason:

‘It is because of the project of the Blessed Virgin that I hoped to establish at Le Puy,’ naively replied Courveille. ‘My friend,’ answered the Vicar-General, ‘You will also find in me as good a father as those at Le Puy, and you will do here what you wished to do at Le Puy.’⁵

Thus it was that, in that one year, 1814, within a matter of a few weeks, three people at the Lyon major seminary revealed their intention of founding a religious society: in June, Father Claude Marie Bochart and Father Nicholas de la Croix d’Azolette, and, now, Jean-Claude Courveille. It was difficult for the Vicar General responsible for religious congregations in the archdiocese not to see in this occurrence a sign from Providence and, naturally, Bochart interpreted it according to his personal views. For this reason he favoured the plan of the new seminarian, interviewed him frequently and discussed with him the choice of subjects, even going so far as to say to him, ‘No, don’t take so-and-so; they are blockheads.’⁶ By this manner of action Bochart hoped to draw Courveille towards his own project – the Society of the Cross of Jesus – as he had Father Nicholas de la Croix .

To create an atmosphere favourable to the Missions (within France) and therefore to the ideas of *Pious Thoughts*, the brochure which Bochart had disseminated among the seminarians to induce them to join his proposed congregation, the life of St John-Francis Regis was read in the refectory. One Wednesday holiday, probably before Easter 1815, Courveille was giving Déclas a haircut, and disclosed to him

... that he had the idea, when he became a priest, of doing as St Jean-Francis Regis had done – going through the country districts helping poor people, who often had more need of a visiting priest than people in the towns and cities. There were several priests to choose from for the latter, whereas the former had only one priest, and people were thus liable to make bad confessions.⁷ He then asked Déclas if he wished to join him. Déclas replied, ‘Yes’.

Without losing time Courveille began to speak of the future Society of Mary. Sympathisers were not slow to group themselves around him and his project. He was the oldest of them and he dominated by his forceful character and his ready speech. He was the equal of his fellow-students in piety and zeal, and it was he who gave them the idea of the Society of Mary. (*To be continued*)

ENDNOTES

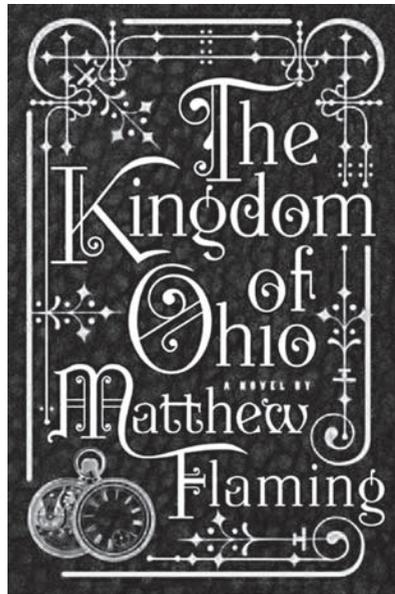
This story of the life of Father Courveille is based partly on the contents of Br Louis Laurent’s (Pierre Zind) Doctoral thesis ‘The New Congregations (1800-1830)’, on his conferences that appear in the Marist Brothers’ *Bulletin of Studies* Nos 156-162. (1955-1956) and in the Marist Brothers’ publication *Voyages et Missions*. The four volumes of *Origines Maristes* are a further source of information; they are extensively quoted.

1. O.M. 2, Doc. 718, Para. 4
2. O.M. 2, Doc. 718, Para. 5
3. O.M. 2, Doc. 718, Para. 10
4. O.M. 3, Doc. 881, Para. 2
5. O.M. 2, Doc. 591, Para. 6
6. O.M. 2, Doc. 551, Para. 3
7. O.M. 2, Doc. 591, Para. 7

Possible worlds?

MADELEINE LAMING

ONE OF THE most exciting and perplexing questions any writer can ask is ‘what if?’ What if two people had never met? Or if they had met at a different time or in a different place? Sometimes the answer is a classic chick-flick like *Sliding Doors*, sometimes it’s classic science fiction like Jules Verne or John Wyndham and sometimes it’s classic steampunk like *The Kingdom of Ohio*. For those not already in the know steampunk is a fairly new literary and cinematic genre: stories are set during Queen Victoria’s reign, in England or English-speaking parts of the world and filled with steam-powered devices – think *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* or early episodes of *Torchwood*. You won’t find *The Kingdom of Ohio* listed in *Best Books for Boys* (*Champagnat*, 2008. Volume 10, Number 2), but



steampunk’s similarity to superhero anime or cartoons, and its obvious descent from genuine Victorian or Edwardian ripping yarns like *King Solomon’s Mines* make it an ideal choice for anyone trying to

BOOK REVIEW

persuade them to read something a bit more complex than a graphic novel.

The story begins with Peter Force, an elderly antiques dealer living in present-day Los Angeles, finding a photograph amongst some magazines and papers he has bought from a clearing sale. The photo of a woman and two men was obviously taken in the early days of the twentieth century; but Force recognises them immediately. The woman is Cheri-Anne Toledo, the self-styled Princess of Ohio, and the younger man is Force. Frightened by the implications of his astonishing find, Force is unwilling to accept the truth, but the story slowly emerges.

Following the death of his father out west, young Peter Force, has come to New York in 1901 and taken the only job available – digging the first subway tunnels beneath the city. He meets Cheri-Anne Toledo by chance in Battery Park, she appears to be drunk or ill and he tries to help her. Her behaviour is so strange and her appearance so odd that he wonders if she is a madwoman who has escaped from her family, but he is fascinated and eventually convinced that her story is true. Our universe is not the only one, time travel is real and if her mathemati-

cal calculations are right, people can slip between dimensions.

The Kingdom of Ohio is part romance and part thriller, but mostly alternative history complete with footnotes which detail fortunes of the Latoledan family who arrived in 1776 having purchased an enormous area of land which they have named the Free State of Ohio. Years later, as the Latoledan family declined and the government of the United States consolidated its power, it decided to obliterate all trace of this embarrassing episode by seizing control of the remaining Latoledan estates and killing the family. Cheri-Anne escaped the final attack using the time machine that she and Nicola Tesla had designed, but found herself adrift in time, disoriented and confused: why are familiar things different and why has her friend Tesla changed? She and Force search for answers in the narrow streets of New York and into the unfinished tunnels in search of the answer. Of course Tesla has no recollection of Cheri-Anne and has her arrested. Meanwhile J. P. Morgan and Thomas Edison are also searching for the key to time travel.

Like Cheri-Anne and Force, the plot is confused at times; the intricacy of the story (Force

BOOK REVIEW

is both the elderly narrator and the young protagonist) and the frequent references to real people and events like J. P. Morgan and the construction of the subway alongside others that sound plausible will be challenging to some readers (others will just go online to check). Other writers have used the same technique, but Flaming's work is thoroughly researched and fun.

I found the ending a little anticlimactic, although I suspect that Flaming left it inconclusive so that we could continue to ask 'what if?'. Flaming's first novel shows promise and he has a genuine

talent for evoking the atmosphere of early industrial America. I found the scene in which his father, an engineer in a remote Midwest mining camp unpacks and demonstrates an electrical globe particularly moving: here is a man in one of the harshest environments imaginable yearning to be a part of the scientific revolution put beyond his reach by circumstance, enthralled by the wonders of electricity, but the full extent of Flaming's talent is revealed in his depiction of the roaring, corrupt but oh so exciting city that was New York in 1900. ■

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The Divine Office, the official prayer of the Church was once seen as the prerogative of the clergy and religious communities. Now it is more readily available to all.

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Neon heroines

AMELIA HUGHES-LOBERT

The Runaways 2010
Directed by Floria Sigismondi

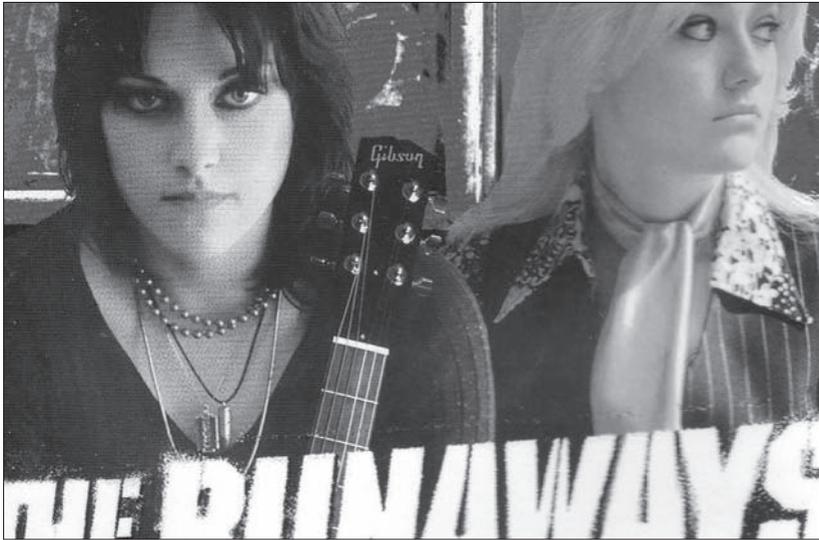
IN *THE RUNAWAYS* first-time feature film-maker Floria Sigismondi takes us through the history of the 70s punk rock revolution in the biography of the all-girl rock band. The start barely skims the surface of The Runaways' beginnings. Cherie Currie (Dakota Fanning) a 15-year old Bowie-adoring outcast bursts onto the scene. Her Bardot/Bowie looks are a perfect combination for Kim Fowley (Michael Shannon) the famous record producer, who wants her as The Runaway's lead singer. Joan Jett (Kristen Stewart) is the raw talent that drives the creation of the band behind Fowley's management. It is her passion and urge to create this band and you wonder why the film isn't about her and her background. The short answer is that it's because the film is adapted by Sigismondi from Currie's own memoir *Neon Angel*.

Sigismondi seems to rush and compress the band's earliest shows,

making it seem that they play only a few gigs in small towns before hitting it big in Tokyo. This leaves you feeling as though there is more to be told and explored and you want it to go deeper. But the film picks up as it progresses through the story. Sigismondi handles the band performances with beautiful artistry and sound: the tones and colours she uses are seductive. The soundtrack is superb and dynamic, capturing the essence of the sound of punk from the 70s.

The burgeoning punk scene of the mid 1970s is convincing; it uses a backdrop of grimy and gritty L.A. nightclubs. Typical of these dank caves was Rodney Bingenheimer's English Disco club which greatly influenced the L.A. glam-rock scene of that era. Here Jett and Currie meet for the first time after Jett introduces herself to Fowley. The chemistry between the two girls is extraordinary and resonates through the screen. Here they

FILM REVIEW



begin their journey into the maw of the rock industry, gathering a band together whose other members barely get screen-time. The girls are predictably exploited by Fowley as drugs consume them and their sexuality becomes seen as a product. What one thought of as *The Runaways*' originality was actually manufactured to the point of bullying by Fowley. Like his British counterpart, the utterly cynical and corrupt Macolm McClaren, 'creator' of the doomed Sex Pistols, he cares nothing for their welfare. He projects them relentlessly as 'genuine jail bait' and 'rebel queens': essentially they could never shake the image he gave them and that was their downfall.

Fanning encapsulates Currie's image and fierce attitude with finesse and maturity. Stewart plays the Suzi-Quattro-esque Joan Jett with immense swagger and energy. And most notable is Michael Shannon's portrayal of Fowley, played almost to the point of being sadistic. At its core the film is a dark and sad chronicle of the dwindling of Currie's success. She spirals down to rock-bottom where the sex, drugs and rock n roll take their toll, becoming (according to Fowley) '... 16 years old and already a creep'.

The Runaways is about getting caught up in the machine of rock n roll, where you have to be hard and lucky to survive. We see Fowley,

FILM REVIEW

the master manipulator and puppet master as he usurps the flowering creativity of young adolescents and bleeds them dry. For with all the darkness and toughness it's easy to forget that these girls are still so young, coming from broken homes with alcoholic fathers and distant mothers. The girls' spiky, rebellious personas are only skin-deep, and Fowley capitalises on their innocence and naivety.

The film depicts the intense relationship between a manager and his clients – and how that relationship can so easily become abusive. Because the Runaways were a girl band, the gender politics are sharp: in rock n roll women's sexual liberation is non-existent. Rock journalists and social commentators would argue about whether this was empowerment or exploitation. Fowley himself answered this: 'This is not about women's lib! this is about women's libido'. But it wasn't their libido at all, it was his as he ruthlessly used and objectified every tender, vulnerable quality in his clients. Yet, in an era when Girls Didn't Play Electric Guitars The Runaways proved them all wrong. ■



Dream wars

Inception

Directed by Christopher Nolan.

*I*NCEPTION, THE LATEST release from Christopher Nolan, scopes the many layers and complexities of the dream world. Nolan is a master action director and also one of cinema's most lateral of thinkers. He creates a world layered with layer after layer of layers, where the characters find themselves in a dream, within a dream, within a dream where gravity is non-existent and normal physics do not apply.

'True inspiration is impossible to fake' as Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) puts so wisely. But

FILM REVIEW

'inception' in the world of dream invasion and exploration, is the act of planting an idea to form in someone's mind through their dreams; within this scenario, is this fakery or real? Invading someone else's mind, according to Cobb, is no mean feat: he begins the film as an 'extractor', being paid to steal important information from within the dream of Saito (Ken Watanabe) a Japanese corporate businessman. Arthur (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) is by Cobb's side as the 'point man', defending against the dreamers' subconscious, which throughout the film is constantly trying to eliminate the intruders.

This is a universe where it is quite possible to slip into another's dream and manipulate its 'architecture' in order to steal others' thoughts. And all the while hooked to a tiny machine within a briefcase – corporate espionage to the most extreme degree.

Saito asks Cobb to enter the mind of Robert Fischer Jr (Cillian Murphy), the heir to a rival business empire, to plant an idea in his dream. This being a dangerous mission, Cobb assembles a team of extractors that includes Eames (Tom Hardy) a man who can shape-shift at will, Ariadne (Ellen Page) who 'builds' the dreams as the architect and Yusuf (Dileep

Rao) the chemist, who provides sedatives for the team in order for them to reach the stage of 'inception'.

As the characters delve deeper into the dream world, to the point of a dream within a dream within a dream, you can tend to lose sight of the purpose of their mission. The team's main objective pales in comparison to Cobb's underlying problems with his wife Mal (Marion Cotillard). As Ariadne tries quite desperately to reason with Cobb to move him out of his state of rigid denial, Mal pops up in each dream, trying to kill him from his own subconscious mind.

As we enter the quite frightening labyrinthine passages of non-reality, there is still a welcome sense of lucidity in each level of dreaming to keep the audience grounded in this completely un-grounded atmosphere. The film takes the audience on a hypnotic journey of mind-bending proportions. It seduces you with its imitations of reality and a constant unsettling feeling that everything is not going to turn out all right. Within the dreams the stunts are phenomenal – dizzying forays of action sequences are at every turn. These sequences do get quite gruelling but that is not really surprising given Nolan's other film, *The Dark Knight*.

FILM REVIEW

With special effects to drown in, the film is visually stunning thanks to Nolan's long-serving cinematographer, Wally Pfister. But one of Nolan's achievements is that the cinematography and technological marvels haven't eclipsed the complex humanity, the sense of grief and loneliness that resonates through Cobb. Nolan conveys an undertone of sadness within the dreamscape which, however glorious and immensely creative, is ultimately bleak.

In *Inception*, dreaming can create a magnificent world that makes reality seem dull and grey. The characters come back to the 'real world' after everything they've experienced together, barely even meeting each other's eyes. This is fine film-making, that plays with our emotions as skilfully as with the special effects.

Even the foreboding and robust musical track is layered with meaning: composer Hans Zimmer urges filmgoers to listen more closely because of the almost subliminal playing of Edith Piaf's song 'Je ne Regrette Rien' interwoven within his score. Strange because the characters need that song to be played in order to wake up from their dreams, even stranger and ironic is that Marion Cotillard played Edith Piaf in *La Vie en Rose*

(and won the Best Actress Oscar for it).

These films should have a whole category of their own, the 'Mind-benders'. Films such as *The Matrix*, *Blade Runner*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, even *Being John Malkovich* all challenge our perception of what reality is. With these films how do you differentiate between dream and reality?

There is no middle ground with *Inception*. Many critics fiercely defend its 'brilliance' while others have completely dismissed it. This reviewer was baffled and perplexed by the film. It appears that I was not the only one: flow charts and diagrams have since popped up on the internet for the enlightenment of many dream-invasion-bamboozled beings.

If you do watch it, pay attention: for if you let your mind wander for a second you'll be reeling from how much you've missed. Because *Inception* doesn't let you rest, not even for a moment. On first viewing it is baffling, but its originality deserves another chance. *Inception* is a maze, well worth a couple of viewings. You come out with your head buzzing full of ideas and questions, the most important being, what the ...? ■

A H-L

Outward signs

JULIETTE HUGHES

Rituals: Around the World in 80 Faiths, 7.30pm Fridays SBS ONE
Clean House, various times daily,
The Style Network, Foxtel.

How does a sequential consciousness such as yours deal with eternity? Many of us remember the firm simplicities in the old school catechism. Being drilled in articles of faith has given some of us material for contemplation in later life. However complex and flexible we may become as adults, just try answering a child's questions without some recourse to the old answers.

In particular, the catechism's definition of a sacrament stands the test of time: indeed, 'an outward sign of inward grace' is the basis for all religious ritual.

But outward signs can be more than religious expression: in *Clean House*, a popular US reality show, presenter Niecy Nash confronts

people with the uncomfortable fact that when they hoard things and neglect their living spaces, they are unconsciously expressing negative psychological and spiritual states. 'It's an outward sign of an inward state', she says. A cluttered, messy house is about defeatedness, loss and depression.

In ritual we purposely employ physical objects, gestures and scenarios to frame religious experience, trying to put our human bodies and minds *literally* in touch with the divine.

From now until October, SBS gives us a weekly opportunity to think about other faiths' different ways of getting in touch with the divine. *Rituals: Around the World in 80 Faiths* is a Cook's tour of outward signs, though not always of what I'd call grace; voodoo and weird UFO cults are on the agenda as well as Buddhism, Islam and Judaism. Peter Owen Jones is our guide some may be surprised

TV REVIEW

at his open-mindedness: he is an Anglican vicar. He has a quirky, self-deprecating way that speaks of humility; you have indeed to be humble if you venture into some of the rituals he tries to share.

But he has limits – at times he says he wants to vomit, particularly at the voodoo ceremonies (why is there such rampant, wanton cruelty to animals in some cultures?) Voodoo isn't the only religion that requires ritual slaughter of animals. It is sobering to think that the old biblical cultures that formed the seeding ground for our faith had their blood sacrifices, their temples awash with gore and guts and carcasses.

It worries me that ritual slaughter is still seen by many religions around the world as a means of propitiating the divine. To me it seems regressive not to care about suffering.

Yet the very oldest of all human cultures, the San people of the vast Kalahari, who have lived in the same part of the earth for half a million years, have a graceful, gentle way of meeting with the spiritual world. They dance themselves into a trance state to commune with the wise spirits of the animals that share the Earth with them. Their culture is threatened by those who covet the land that has sustained

them for so long. Long ago Celts like me were sacrificing humans and marrying horses while the San were living in a blessed balance with the natural world that God gave them and that some now wish to take away.

That is the virtue of *Rituals*: it causes you to reflect respectfully about some religions and critically about others. It reminds me of John Safran's disturbing series *John Safran vs God*, but while it covers more faiths (80 to his two dozen or so) it is not quite so confronting. For although Owen Jones is courageous and humble and even occasionally angry, there is not quite the sense of intense, risky immersion in the quest to define religious experience.

Yet Peter Owen Jones does take some fairly audacious spiritual risks. Participation in a wicca celebration seems to have left him unscathed, and his sense of self survives the clash with voodoo and whacky Philippines syncretism. But (as did Safran) he seems spiritually bruised by his encounter with a determined and confident pentecostalist exorcist (smoking is demonic, it seems – who knew?). And not all New Age religions are gentle: a Brazilian cult that 'channels' spirits from outer space leave him upset and needing to clear his head.

TV REVIEW

But there are benign encounters: the Sami people of Lapland honour him with a ceremony of connection. He is moved to tears by the kindness and hospitality of an Ethiopian Orthodox community in Tigray and is gracious and respectful to a family in Sulawesi whose religion involves keeping the corpses of family members in the house, sometimes for years. The mummifying body of the man's uncle is an object of grieved veneration and Owen Jones, with perfect manners, greets it as he is expected to.

Some things I missed: his Anglican take on a full Catholic Mass would have been interesting. Perhaps he is being careful; closeness in belief can be uncomfortable. I was surprised too that he didn't look at Quakers, Unitarians or Harlem Gospel churches while he was in the US, going instead for the tiresome idiocies of Tennessee snake handlers and Utah polygamists. He also missed Scientology, though I guess that they were far too secretive and controlling to let another BBC program take a look at them.

It was in the US segments of *Rituals* that I recalled once again the strong spirituality of *Clean House*. Niecy Nash is a glamorous African American divorcée whose

ex is a pastor. She dispenses more than assistance with house-cleaning ('I am not your maid: I am here to help you change your life!') as she battles chronic sloth and hopelessness in her self-nominated clients.

Her observations are homely but in the circumstances as apt as any theologian's: 'You need to take a Big Girl Pill'; 'You can tell your daughter, "I have made mistakes with you but I just had a glass of ACT RIGHT" and things are going to change round here.' She is confronting, bracing, but unfailingly kind. It's a program that at times touches on redemption and metanoia – I record it to catch it at moments when I have time to watch. For as Safran and Owen Jones have both shown, grace turns up in some unexpected places.

What I come away with after watching the preview of *Rituals* is a sense of gratitude for the beauty and warmth of the liturgies of my own faith. Vatican Two brought me into the heart of Eucharist, and gave me the blessedness of ritual in a belief system that accepts both mystery and science, as well as diversity and the individual journey each of us must take in faith. ■

Contributors' guidelines

Champagnat: An International Journal of Charism in Education welcomes submissions. We publish a wide and diverse range of material including peer-reviewed scholarly articles, and non-peer-reviewed articles, responses and commentaries, review essays, fiction, poetry and reflections. Length is negotiable; some of the subjects we tackle require considerable exploration and exposition. Therefore we encourage substantial essays of depth and rigour as well as shorter pieces of 1000 words or under.

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Please email your proposal to the Editor, John McMahon FMS:
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If your proposal is accepted, then kindly send as a Word attachment, along with a short biography (50–100 words). Please do not format: tabs, columns, fancy fonts, etc.

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