

Into the Deep

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A Sweet Obligation

Pope John Paul II

cited in Agenda for the Third Millennium, p.79

“For every faithful Catholic, participation at Holy Mass on Sunday is at once a duty and a privilege: a sweet obligation to respond to God’s love for us, so that we can then bear witness to this love in our daily lives ... The fulfilling of the dominical precept ought, for every Christian family, to be a fundamental source of joy and unity. Every Sunday, all and every one of you have an appointment with God’s love. Don’t fail to keep it ...”

Open the Door

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Palm Sunday homily 2007

“Lift up your heads, O gates; rise up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may enter.” (Psalm 24)

In the old liturgy of Palm Sunday, the priest, once he arrived at the church doors, knocked loudly with the staff of the cross at the closed doors, which were then opened. It was a beautiful image of Jesus himself who, with the wood of the cross, with the power of his love which he gives, knocked from the side of the world on God's door; from the side of a world that was unable to find access to God.

With the cross, Jesus opens wide the door of God, the door between God and men. Now it is open.

But also from the other side the Lord knocks with his cross: He knocks at the door of the world, at the doors of our hearts, which so often and in such great numbers are closed to God. And he speaks to us more or less in this way: If the proofs that God gives of himself in creation do not succeed in opening you to him; if the word of Scripture and the message of the Church leave you indifferent – then look at me, your Lord and your God.

May the Lord help us to open the door of our heart, the heart of the world, so that he, the living God, might, in his Son, arrive in our time and touch our lives. Amen.

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The Father’s Will

Cardinal Marco Cé, the retired patriarch of Venice, led the meditations at the spiritual retreat in the Vatican attended by Benedict XVI and his aides in the Roman Curia [in Lent 2006].

In reflecting on the solitude Jesus experienced in the Garden of Olives and his adherence to the Father’s will, the preacher said, “The agony of Gethsemane enables us to enter ‘within’ the mystery of the Passion, to understand the core – and the core is this: He willingly gave himself up to death,” reported Vatican Radio.

“The features that characterize Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane are the overwhelming psychological suffering, Jesus’ total solitude, the collapse of all his work and, at the same time, the total and radical conformity of his will with the Father’s,” continued the cardinal.

Jesus remained “tragically alone” in Gethsemane as death approached, added the preacher. Jesus asks that he not have to drink the “cup” of the passion but accepts without reservations the Father’s decision, the cardinal noted.

“There is no more human and painful prayer than this,” Cardinal Cé said. “But at the same time there is no more filial act of abandonment than this.”

“Jesus’ death out of love realizes fully the plan of salvation willed by the Father from eternity,” he said.

The preacher noted that the centurion who was before the Crucified, seeing him die in this way, said: “Truly he was the Son of God.’ In the centurion’s confession of faith one can already see the light of Easter shine.”

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What We Believe

“That body that the most blessed Virgin generated, nourished in her womb with maternal care, that body I say, without doubt and no other, we now receive from the sacred altar, and we drink its blood as a sacrament of our redemption. This is what the Catholic faith believes, this the holy Church faithfully teaches.”

St Peter Damian

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A Marvelous Adventure

Benedict XVI says silence and community life are two key elements in the formation of seminarians. The Pope said this when he visited Rome's Major Pontifical Seminary, telling the seminarians that "the gift of being adopted sons of God has illuminated your life." [...]

He invited the seminarians to journey "with a soul open to truth and transparency," to answer in a humble way to the Lord's call, freeing themselves "from the danger of seeing their vocation as a merely personal project."

"It is the Holy Spirit who makes you aware of this profound reality and causes you to love it. All of this cannot but awaken a great confidence, because the gift that is given is surprising, it stupefies and fills one with deep joy," the Pontiff said.

Benedict XVI then addressed the parents of the seminarians, probably the "most surprised," he said, "about what has happened to their sons." Inviting them to look to Mary, who asked many questions about her Son, the Pope reminded the fathers and mothers that their sons' adventure is "a marvelous one."

"In fact," he added, "even if it can seem that the life of the priest does not draw the interest of the majority of people, in reality it is the most interesting and most necessary adventure for the world – the adventure of showing and making present the fullness of life to which all aspire. It is a very demanding adventure; and it could not be otherwise, because the priest is called to imitate Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the ransom of many."

The Holy Father then underscored two aspects that characterize formation for the priesthood, namely, silence and communion.

"First of all, the years in the seminary bring a certain detachment from common life, a certain 'desert,' so the Lord can speak to your heart. His voice, in fact, is not loud, but quiet. It is the voice of silence. To hear it, a climate of silence is necessary," he affirmed.

In regard to life in community, the Pope recalled that the apostles came together, following Jesus: "Your communion is not limited to the present, but regards the future too. The pastoral activity that awaits you must see you acting in unity as one body, in an order, that of the presbyters, who, with the bishop, care for the Christian community. Love this 'family life,' which is for you an anticipation of that 'sacramental fraternity' that must characterize every diocesan presbyterate."

Emphasizing, finally, "that sanctity is the secret of the true success of the sacerdotal ministry," Benedict XVI invited the seminarians to entrust this desire and daily commitment to Mary, Mother of Trust.

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Unity At Home First

Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a general decline in unity midst the members in the Catholic Church. Sadly, all this has happened in my lifetime and it will continue if it is not checked.

Priests have been removed from their parishes for no other reason, it would seem, than that they uphold the teaching of the Catholic Church; a large number of members have left the Church; the young no longer attend Sunday Mass; and Catholic education is in a mess. The 10 Commandments are now one – 'love one another...' and although that is all embracing, the others are part of the past. Convents close as dissident feminist nuns and the 'bright' clergy want it their way, not God's way. Bishops are slow to act as the plight worsens, and continue to press for unity with the Protestant Churches. How is it possible? We are bound to return to our basic truths and then to inspire the unity of our own members first.

Christ has said that, "You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build My Church." He did not say "Churches". How then can the Catholic Church agree with other churches that approve of contraception, abortion, euthanasia, divorce, and that ordain female 'priests' and hail homosexual clergy? They have no sacramentals – and we still pursue unity?

Yes! We must keep on praying that all should be one with Christ – but not to yield.

M and L Morrissey, Sandringham

Almsgiving

"Everything, then, must be done for God's glory and not our own. This understanding, dear brothers and sisters, must accompany every gesture of help to our neighbour, avoiding that it becomes a means to make ourselves the centre of attention. If, in accomplishing a good deed, we do not have as our goal God's glory and the real well-being of our brothers and sisters, looking rather for a return of personal interest or simply of applause, we place ourselves outside of the Gospel vision. In today's world of images, attentive vigilance is required, since this temptation is great. Almsgiving, according to the Gospel, is not mere philanthropy: Rather it is a concrete expression of charity, a theological virtue that demands interior conversion to love of God and neighbour, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who, dying on the cross, gave his entire self for us."

Pope Benedict XVI

"The value of our gifts is measured not on the basis of the amount stamped on the coins. Before God it is only the hand of the donor that determines the importance of a gift. Its value depends on the [...] thoughts and intentions that have caused the person to give."

Cardinal Paul Cordes, President of Pontifical Council Cor Unum

My Mother Taught It To Me

From "Adoration, Reparation, Spiritual Motherhood for Priests" produced by the Congregation for the Clergy, 2007

Venerable Pope John Paul I

(1912-1978)

Pope John Paul I began his last general audience in September of 1978 by praying an Act of Love:

"O my God, I love You above all things with all my heart, You who are infinitely good and our eternal happiness. Out of love for You, I love my neighbour as myself and forgive any injustice which I have suffered. Lord, grant that I may love you more and more!"

"This very well-known prayer was inspired by words from the bible. My mother taught it to me, and I still pray it repeatedly throughout the day."

He spoke these words about his mother with such an affectionate tone of voice that those present in the audience hall responded with a wave of applause. A young woman in the audience said, with tears in her eyes, "It is so touching that the Pope mentioned his mother. Now I understand better what an influence we mothers can have on our children."

Eternal Life

Spe Salvi, n.12

Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical on Christian Hope

... Inevitably [the term "eternal life"] is an inadequate term that creates confusion. "Eternal", in fact, suggests to us the idea of something interminable, and this frightens us; "life" makes us think of the life that we know and love and do not want to lose, even though very often it brings more toil than satisfaction, so that while on the one hand we desire it, on the other hand we do not want it.

To imagine ourselves outside the temporality that imprisons us and in some way to sense that eternity is not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality – this we can only attempt. It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time – the before and after – no longer exists. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense, a plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy.

This is how Jesus expresses it in Saint John's Gospel: "I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (16:22). We must think along these lines if we want to understand the object of Christian hope, to understand what it is that our faith, our being with Christ, leads us to expect.

A Conflict of 'Opinion'

On 12 January it came to my attention that a concert by the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra was planned for St Mary's Cathedral in Sale on 26 February. The concert was to include music of a classical nature – that is, it would not be exclusively sacred or liturgical music.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments published a declaration on "Concerts in Churches" in 1987. It refers to the Code of Canon Law (n.1210) which states that "In a sacred place only those things are to be permitted which serve to exercise or promote worship, piety and religion." This excludes classical music. The following are quotes taken from the Congregation's Declaration:

"The principle that the use of the church must not offend the sacredness of the place determines the criteria by which the doors of a church may be opened to a concert of sacred or religious music, as also the concomitant exclusion of every other type of music. The most beautiful symphonic music, for example, is not in itself of religious character. The definition of sacred or religious music depends explicitly on the original intended use of the musical pieces or songs, and likewise on their content. It is not legitimate to provide for the execution in the church of music which is not of religious inspiration and which was composed with a view to performance in a certain precise secular context, irrespective of whether the music would be judged classical or contemporary, of high quality or of a popular nature."

It refers to sacred music as "music which was composed for the Liturgy" and to religious music as "music inspired by the text of sacred scripture or the Liturgy and which has reference to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the saints or to the Church", stating that both these types of music "may find a place in the church building".

These and numerous other practical directives were written by the Congregation in this document to "be of assistance to the bishops and rectors of churches in their pastoral responsibility to maintain the sacred character of their churches, designed for sacred celebrations, prayer and silence."

I wrote to Sale diocesan administrator Fr Peter Slater, on 12 January 2008 asking him to cancel the concert, to assist the orchestra in arranging an alternate venue, or (the easiest solution) to simply advise the orchestra that only sacred music may be performed in the Cathedral. I enclosed relevant quotes from Canon Law and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, including those above.

Fr Slater wrote a reply dated 4 February, indicating that he was satisfied that classical music is allowed, and referred to the quotes from the Congregation and Canon Law as "opinion".

Ed.

Parish: Playschool ... or School of Communion?

By Fr John Speekman, from his blog: homiliesfromaustralia.blogspot.com 15-02-2008

Over the last 30 years or so, and more intensely in recent years, people in parishes all over Australia have been fed mistaken ideas about the nature of parish, the role of the laity, and the role of the parish priest.

As a result, almost everything is now 'lay led' in a way that goes far beyond legitimate lay involvement and collaboration. An implicit message is beginning to be heard more and more loudly, especially in priestless parishes: No Priest Required!

These ideas Rome has corrected on many occasions.

Good people have been misled, and all too often conflicts, divisions and power struggles have been the result at parish level, while many dioceses have become vocations-free zones. Either the priest simply walks away from his responsibilities and gives the laity a free hand, thereby immediately becoming 'popular', or he condemns himself to interminable confrontations and discord and the labels 'bullying' and 'divisive'.

It is not the role of a parish priest to pander to illusions about the nature of the Church (however popular or widely held these may be), to give the personal opinions of parishioners the same status as Church teaching, or to keep mindlessly doing what has been done in the past long after it has ceased being effective or proper, just because some cannot bear to change direction, or have a vested interest in the status quo.

It is the task of the parish priest to build parish – a Catholic parish – based not on his faith, or some parishioner's faith, but on *the Faith*.

There are now in most parishes 'leadership' groups which are very fond of, and very attached to, their own understanding of the Church. Anyone who has attended a Bible Study with Sr Maude, or who has done the session on being a 'Eucharistic minister' with Betty Smiles, is now an expert 'ready to shape the Church of the future!'

It is common now to find many who have reduced the task of the parish priest to making people feel good about themselves, and to obeying the will of his parishioners. 'Oh, Fr Todd is so nice, he never says no.'

To put such a parish under scrutiny is usually to find a noisy, activity-centred, people-centred forum in which every second individual can be a 'leader', while the things of God are sidelined.

What are we to say, for example, about a parish described as a 'vibrant, warm, friendly, life-giving, welcoming and inclusive, happy community' with 34 clubs and groups, regular BBQs and Bush Dances, but which has only a tiny handful at Confession?

All too many parishioners see their parish as a kind of

playground offering all sorts of 'games' in which they can express their 'giftedness' and 'creativity'. They move between the seesaw and the swings and the sandpit in a frenzy of busyness – what Pope Benedict calls a kind of *ecclesiastical occupational therapy* – and when they do finally enter the school building they just want to go on playing, forgetting that the parish is really a *school of holiness*. Their religious and their social lives have become coterminous, usually with sad results for the former.

In addition, everything is now subjected to the 'how good does it make me feel?' criterion.

Such churches are usually full of chatter because they are all about 'me'. There is no reverent greeting of the Lord on entering or leaving, but great care not to overlook friends. In these churches the sense of the sacred has all but been demolished, and the high point of the Mass is the Sign of Peace.

Well, I don't believe in such parishes, no matter how well attended. I believe such parishes are failures because they fail at their primary task which is to draw people to Christ, and only thus to one another.

A pastor of a parish should direct his efforts not so much towards building community as to building *communion*.

The value of an harmonious community is beyond price, but it can only come, and will come naturally, upon the building of communion centred on Jesus Christ.

Community cannot challenge heterodoxy or sin, to name only two dimensions of faith life, whereas communion can only be achieved through adherence to Christ in his Church, which means precisely confronting both heterodoxy and sin.

Priest and people face the task of building a parish which has Christ as its centre, drawing closer to him and then, automatically, closer to each other. Only then can it become a strong and united community *worth belonging to*, and only then will it be ready to fulfil the call to evangelise the culture.

The Cross

"Before, the cross meant disdain, but today it is venerated. Before, it was a symbol of condemnation, today it is the hope of salvation. It has truly been converted into a fount of infinite goods; it has liberated us from error, it has scattered our darkness, it has reconciled us with God. From being enemies of God, it has made us his family, from foreigners it has converted us to his neighbours: This cross is the destruction of enmity, the fount of peace, the coffer of our treasure."

St John Chrysostom

Forlorn Hope

Your hope (editorial, ITD Feb 08, p1) that Bishop Coffey will now relax and contemplate telling us why he removed Fr Speekman from the Parish of Morwell 4½ years ago, would seem a forlorn one given his last Cathedral homily before retiring to Paynesville.

Speaking about the second reading on the Third Sunday of Ordinary time (in which St Paul chastised his people for division by saying “I am for Paul” or “I am for Apollos”); Paul said that we should all be for Jesus Christ), Emeritus Bishop Coffey said there was division then and we have division now in Gippsland. ‘There is a group of people in this diocese who have their own view of the Church, with their own magazine and agenda – and that is division’, or words to that effect.

So all this division has been caused by these people. Nothing Bishop Coffey has done could possibly have caused division, could it? Apart from the unjust removal of Fr Speekman, not even his 2002 decision to deny readers a say in Catholic Life, then in the same edition permit an editorial calling on people to become more “grey,” advising “there is nothing apathetic about being undecided, it may even be a virtue”? or launching a costly, in time and resources, program in 2002 called *Journeying Together* which predictably failed miserably? or permitting and encouraging Catholic Education authorities in the Diocese in 2005 to introduce a new Core Curriculum called *Journeying Together in Hope* based on the false, even heretical, ‘shared Christian praxis’ espoused by dissident laicised priest, Thomas Groome? – just to name a few instances. These were apparently no reason for division, were they Bishop Coffey? No! It is much easier to blame others, particularly when you blatantly deny them any right of reply!

Pat O’Brien, Sale

Looking for Courage

May I first of all wish our now-retired Bishop Coffey a happy and peaceful retirement. Before saying any more on that, I would like to set the record straight regarding my letter in ITD in September 2006. There are people who have called me unprintable names because of that, and accused me of being a hypocrite and of abusing the Bishop. One of these people was one of those who wanted Fr John Speekman out of Morwell parish. My article contained facts in my honest opinion. It was not meant to hurt Bishop Coffey. I sincerely apologise, My Lord, it may have caused you pain and I am very sorry that you misread my message.

Let me say that Bishop Coffey is in my prayers each day, as are many of our priests and religious. I am a born and bred Catholic who loves the Sacraments. When Our Blessed Lord and his Holy Mother are treated with disrespect e.g. with empty talk before Mass and bowing instead of genuflection, I will not refute my stand on speaking out of truth. I have to love my neighbour as myself, or accept people as they are, but most of all I must decry what is wrong.

Bishop Coffey can say what he likes, but he has let everyone down by his lack of courage and by not standing up for Fr Speekman and refusing to reinstate him.

Let us all pray sincerely to Our Blessed Mother and Our Lord that He may find a very holy and orthodox bishop for our diocese. It is to be hoped he will lead us in a true and spiritual endeavour, lead us as a true shepherd of his flock, and lead his priests with love and understanding towards true holiness. Our diocese needs someone who has courage, wisdom and forbearance in true discipleship.

Peter Duyndam, Newborough

Covering of Crosses and Images in Lent

By Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University www.zenit.org 08-03-2005

First of all, I would first like to recommend Monsignor Peter Elliott’s excellent guide “Celebrations of the Liturgical Year” published by Ignatius Press in 2002. It is a very useful resource for all those involved in the practical aspects of liturgical planning.

The duration of such veiling varies from place to place. The custom in many places is to veil from before first vespers or the vigil Mass of the Fifth Sunday of Lent while others limit this veiling from after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. In some places images and statues are actually removed from the church and not simply veiled, especially after Holy Thursday.

Crosses are unveiled after the Good Friday ceremonies. All other images are unveiled shortly before the Mass of the Easter Vigil (not at the celebration itself, and with no ceremony whatsoever). Neither the Stations of the Cross nor stained glass windows are ever veiled.

The bishops’ conference may decide if the veiling during this period should be obligatory within its territory. The veils are usually made of lightweight purple cloth without any decoration.

As Monsignor Elliott remarks, “The custom of veiling crosses and images...has much to commend it in terms of religious psychology, because it helps us to concentrate on the great essentials of Christ’s work of Redemption.”[...]

The Biblical Basis of Celibacy

In last month's ITD, I began a response to Frank Bellet's article on Married Priesthood (ITD Jan 08). I explained that while I agree the shortage of priests will not be solved by allowing priests to marry, there is a much needed effort to educate people about the purpose and benefits of celibacy, rather than simply its merits in enabling priests to be more available. Celibacy is more likely to be appreciated if we understand that it: (i) gives testimony to our most vital origin and to whom we truly belong (see ITD Feb 08); and (ii) gives witness to the ultimate destiny that awaits us. I will discuss (ii) this month.

Do you remember how Christ said that there are no marriages in Heaven? He says that quite clearly: "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection" (Lk 20:34-36. See also Mt 22:25-30 and Mk 12:20-25).

So why is no one married in Heaven? Because ultimately there is only *one* marriage in Heaven: the marriage between Christ and His Church, that is, between God and His People. That is why marriage on earth is a sacrament. It is a *physical sign* of a *spiritual reality* that awaits us.

Would you believe me if I told you that without this understanding of the sacrament of marriage, celibacy would make little or no sense? We often think of marriage and celibacy as two totally different things; things that negate each other. So how does our understanding of marriage help us to understand celibacy?

Let me explain it this way. Do you remember what St John the Apostle describes in the Apocalypse (otherwise known as the Book of Revelation)? This occurs at the very end of the Bible. St John is writing what he saw in his vision of what will happen at the end of time: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men..." (Rev 21:1-3).

As the Lord is coming to dwell with His redeemed and resurrected people, John sees that God is uniting Himself with humanity just as a Bridegroom unites himself with his Bride! In other words, God wishes to unite Himself to us like married couples are intimately united in their marital union! This is not to say that God wishes to love us sexually, but that the Sacrament of Marriage on earth provides us with a symbol of

how we will be intimately united in God's love in the life to come.

Now if marriage is a foreshadowing; an image; a symbolic foretelling of our eternal unity with God in the life to come, what then is celibacy? Celibacy is a foreshadowing of how all marriages will be subordinate to the one marriage that will exist between God and humanity.

Let me help you to understand this with an analogy. Think of marriage as a road sign. Life on earth is the road that leads us to Heaven. To get there, we need to follow the road signs. Marriage is one of the most beautiful road signs because unity in the flesh is a sacramental sign of the unity between Christ and His Church, and the ecstasy that accompanies the consummation of marriage is a foretaste of the joy that comes to our heart and soul when we possess God in Heaven. But what happens when we get to Heaven? Do we need any road signs when we get there? If we are already there why would we need a sign? Even if there is a sign in Heaven saying, "HEAVEN" would you run up and embrace it and say, "Look, I found Heaven!" This would be absurd because a sign is no longer needed when you come to the reality.

Some people are trying to make out that we can do without celibacy today; that we should allow priests to marry; that celibacy is outdated and that we should move with the times. But I cannot think of a time where celibacy is more greatly needed. If you mention the word "sex" today, most people will think of the Red Light District, or of images that can be seen on the internet and in pornographic magazines, or maybe they will think of what the movies often depict: couples jumping into bed before marriage. Think about it ... the media, and our society in general, conditions us to think of sex in terms of self-gratification; something that is *devoid* of God; *devoid* of marriage; *devoid* of commitment; and *devoid* of its significance as a sign of a higher reality – that is – our marriage with God in the life to come.

We are living in a promiscuous age. That does not mean that celibacy is 'behind the times'! If anything, it means that celibate men and women are 'in front of the times' for it is a sign of our eternal unity with God at the end of time. It is counter-cultural, yes, but relevant! For it gives witness to the ultimate destiny that awaits us! In Heaven we will all be united in and with the Lord as His Bride. And it is the celibate vocation that gives witness to this union. Celibacy "leapfrogs" the earthly marriage (so to speak) so as to anticipate the reality of what marriage on earth can only symbolise: the marriage between God and Humanity in Heaven.

Fr Michael de Stoop
Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Sydney

Hope Beyond All Hope

I have come to the point of sheer desperation in my life so many times, that the question of hope has always been in the forefront of my mind.

There are moments when you arrive at the realization that time has stopped and the next step doesn't exist. All your money to live on for years to come and pay for university tuition is stolen on a train. You panic, lose your mind, and want to jump off that train to your death. You are involved in a front-on collision in a foreign country and have no insurance. You blank out. You are told you need a major operation to keep on living, but you are destitute without health insurance. You feel your life slip away. You land in jail for a youthful prank and are told that your sentence is seven years. You surprise yourself by scratching a cross on the prison cell's wall. You never did this before. You are denied priesthood, then teacher's certificate, then access to two doctorates despite investing thousands of borrowed dollars in your career. On the way home, you stop by the ATM machine to pick up your disability check, to pay monthly rent. Your check is not there and you know that your payments have stopped. You blank out.

It all happened to me and much, much more. I wonder to this day what kept me alive, how I survived.

A few days ago, I went into spiritual counseling. There was a large picture of Jesus the Merciful in the waiting room, the common picture as one depicted by Sister Faustina. The picture caught my attention because it had an unusual inscription in Polish. In English, it means: "Leave your way to Me, and keep on trusting..."

This message is different, I thought to myself. It does not ask you to trust in the power of prayer, as most messages these days. A crucified person, nailed to the wall, can no longer trust in anything he or she does. It's over. The way is no more! But this inscription only asks one thing: to await what Jesus does! It does not ask you to do anything, except to whisper with the remaining strength, "do." Even the three dots at the message's end, added to Jesus' words, seem full of meaning. They give you an extra hope! Then there is the wonderful picture itself. Here, Jesus is descending a chain of snowy, Alaskan-looking mountains on what appears to be an antique Roman army's stone trail. One of my greatest sufferings happened in Alaska, and He is coming from there. He is coming directly at you, looking at you, knowing what you have been through. He is clearly on His way to you, to meet you in your difficulty, to turn your darkness into hope! I walked away from the counseling comforted, memorizing the inscription, muttering from time to time, "Jezu ufam Tobie" (Jesus, I trust in Thee).

I am still alive.

Bohdan Szejner, Krakow

The Something

*From a talk by Pontifical Household preacher,
Fr Raniero Cantalamessa*

The resurrection, some say, is a metaphor; that is true, but the meaning of the metaphor, as Paul Ricoeur has pointed out, is not to give expression to something other than reality, but to say, of reality itself, something that cannot be said in any other way. The resurrection in itself is something positioned at the limits, or more properly, outside the limits of time and space and hence too of history, yet there is something that took place within time and space and that the historian must therefore set out to explain.

Two facts are offered for the historian's consideration, and it is these that permit him to speak of the resurrection: the first is the unanticipated and inexplicable faith of the disciples, a faith so tenacious as to stand firm even against the test of martyrdom; and the second is the explanation of such faith that the disciples left of it.

The observation made by Martin Dibelius will always remain pertinent: "When the decisive moment arrived, and Jesus was taken, scourged and sentenced, the disciples cherished no expectation of a resurrection. They fled, and considered the cause of Jesus over and done with. What was needed, therefore, was something that in a very short time would not only bring about a radical change in their state of mind, but would move them to an entirely new kind of activity and to founding the Church. This 'something' is the historical kernel of faith in the resurrection."

There has been an endless number of attempts to find alternative explanations for this "something," but so far none has lasted much longer than its author.

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Nourish Your Day With Prayer

Pope Benedict XVI to consecrated men and women:

"Dear brothers and sisters, nourish your day with prayer, meditation and listening to the Word of God. May you, who are familiar with the ancient practice of *lectio divina*, help the faithful to appreciate it in their daily lives too. And may you know how to express what the Word suggests, letting yourself be formed by it so that you bring forth abundant fruit, like a seed that has fallen into good soil. Thus, you will be ever docile to the Spirit and you will grow in union with God, you will cultivate fraternal communion among yourselves and will be ready to serve your brethren generously, especially those in need. May people see your good works, a fruit of the Word of God that lives in you, and glorify your Heavenly Father!"

The Guilt of an Erroneous Conscience

Traditionally, Catholics have been taught that Martin Luther got it wrong, so Protestantism, which he kicked off 500 years ago, has been misguided ever since, even though we may have met many good individual Protestants in our lifetime. Originally Luther didn't mean to found a new church, but he did mean to protest against abuses of his time. Unfortunately the rulers of the time saw the political convenience of this and subverted the movement. The rest is history – how things can get out of control.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of that protest movement was a rejection of authority. It set man up to please himself, so he didn't need anyone (the Church) to help him see the real truth of the Bible – he could decide for himself! We call it “private interpretation”. We don't do it for Shakespeare or for any other historical book, but feel free to interpret God's Revelation and moral strictures in the Scriptures to please ourselves, and so (de)form our consciences in the process. That is one of the reasons why the Church is under such attack today – Protestantism has no moral theology, and Catholicism is an affront to the moral ‘free for all’ that we experience around us, and why we need a properly formed conscience if we are not to become part of the general morass of our time.

Unfortunately Protestantism, and today secularism, have confused the whole notion of conscience and its (self)obligations. The private judgement of Protestantism has left people as individuals, without guidance, to fly on their own, as best they can, inspired only by a basic good moral character, but frequently mistaken in a complex world. Secularism rejects the very idea that we should be subject to any (religious) authority, other than our uninformed or misinformed limited selves. It is a totally human enterprise, without any need of God or owing allegiance to anything higher in life than the perception of the moment, which may change as it suits ourselves. So marriage, for example, has been turned into a temporary ‘deal’ – but only for the time that it works. After that, recycle oneself!

A proper Christian conscience, however, looks at life differently. It applies the values of our faith and our knowledge of life to particular situations in which we are – or are likely to be – involved. It is not all a matter of just knowledge either. Whether something is recognised as good or not also depends on our will, which can block recognition, or lead to it. That is, recognition (or rejection) is dependent on an already formed moral character, which can choose to be purified (corrected), or remain deformed (mistaken) and continue along that track.

When it comes to making a decision, that is choosing by some form of judgement, it can be said that the erroneous (i.e. mistaken) conscience binds, since no one may act against his convictions, as St Paul was clear about (Romans 14:23). But this fact – that the conviction that a person has come to certainly binds in the moment of acting – is not a canonisation of the unfettered individualism of Protestantism or secularism. From the moral point of view it is never wrong to follow the convictions one has arrived at – in fact, one must do so. BUT, and it is a BIG BUT, it can very well be wrong to have come to such askew convictions in the first place, by having stifled or denied or suppressed the protests of truth within our inner selves or as presented to us by the Church when actually teaching in its proper domain.

The guilt of an erroneous conscience then, lies elsewhere, much deeper within us. It is not just in the present misinformed act, not just in the present decision or judgement of conscience, but in personal neglect that makes us deaf to the internal promptings of truth. For this reason, criminals of conviction like Hitler, Stalin, and today's terrorist bombers are all guilty. Such extreme examples should not suggest to us that we can put ourselves at ease, but should rouse us to take seriously the plea of the Psalmist: “Free me from my unknown guilt” (Psalm 19:13).

This is the enormity of a malformed conscience for anyone in authority, but particularly in the Church. Instead of being a help to people and guiding them to truth and grace in their need of salvation, other factors, like politics, money, power etc. become obstacles to people's salvation, because they distort their views of reality and form erroneous consciences in those looking for true pastoral guidance and help. Is it any wonder then, that at such a climactic moment of his life, Jesus told Pilate as one in authority, and all of us, to give witness to the truth, because only “the truth will make you free”.

S.C., Melbourne

Altar Rail Option

Last weekend our priest decided to make provision for people who wished to kneel at the altar rails to receive Holy Communion. Thank you, Fr Speekman. No more will ‘closet kneelers’ be frustrated at Communion time. No more will the brave ‘public kneelers’ run the risk of being trampled on by those behind them in the Communion queue. And Father has given those who kneel the choice of whether they receive on the hand or on the tongue.

Moiria Kelly, Camperdown

Holy Thursday

From an address by Pope Benedict XVI

During the **Chrism Mass**...bishops of dioceses and their closest collaborators, the priests, surrounded by the people of God, renew the promises they made on the day of their priestly ordination. Year after year, it is an intense moment of ecclesial communion, which highlights the gift of the ministerial priesthood which Christ left to his Church on the night before he died on the cross. And for each priest, it is a moving moment in the midst of the vigil of the passion, in which the Lord gave himself to us, gave us the sacrament of the Eucharist, and gave us the priesthood. It is a day that moves our hearts. Later, the holy oils used for the sacraments are blessed: oil of catechumens, oil of the sick, and holy chrism.

In the afternoon, entering into the Easter triduum, the community relives in the **Mass "in Cena Domini"** all that took place in the Last Supper. In the Upper Room, the Redeemer wanted to anticipate, with the sacrament of bread and wine made his body and his blood, the sacrifice of his life: He anticipated his death, the free gift of his life, offered as the definitive gift of himself to humanity.

With the **washing of the feet**, the gesture is repeated with which he, having loved his own in this world, loved them to the end (cf. John 13:1), and left his disciples, as a sort of trademark, this act of humility, love unto death.

After the Mass "in Cena Domini," the liturgy invites the faithful to remain in **adoration** of the Blessed Sacrament, reliving Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. And we see how the disciples slept, leaving the Lord alone.

Today as well, frequently, we sleep – we, his disciples. In this holy night of Gethsemane, we want to stay on guard; we do not want to leave the Lord alone in this hour. And in doing this, we can better understand the mystery of Holy Thursday, which encompasses the threefold, most-high gifts of the ministerial priesthood, the Eucharist and the new commandment of love, "agape."

www.zenit.org 04-04-2007

Spiritual Battle for Babies

"Let us never pretend that abortion is just a social or political phenomenon that has to be voted out of office to be defeated. We must do everything we can to restore legal protection to our most innocent citizens, but our battle against the devil will not be won at the polls. It will be won on our knees before the Lord and on our feet before the centres of death. More than ever we need men and women of tested holiness who are willing to fight the spiritual battle for the lives of God's precious babies and the souls of their mothers and fathers."

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer, President, Human Life International

From Sunday to Easter

From INFORM no. 107: 'The Church Year' by Fr Timothy Deeter, published by the Catholic Adult Education Centre, Sydney

For the early Christians, every Sunday was a celebration of the Easter event. It was on "the first day of the week" (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:9; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1) that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead.

It was also on Easter Sunday that Jesus revealed himself to the two disciples at Emmaus "in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35). On that Sunday he appeared to the assembled disciples and ate with them (Lk 24:41-43). Jesus gave the gift of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Reconciliation to the apostles on Easter Sunday evening (Jn 20:21-23).

The tradition of gathering on the weekly anniversary of the Easter event began as early as the Sunday following the Resurrection: "Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house ... Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'" (Jn 20:26-27).

So began the connection of each Sunday with the memory and presence of the crucified and risen Christ, and apparently the early Christian community was very faithful to this observance.

When 31 men and 18 women were arrested for illegal assembly in Carthage, North Africa in 304, the priest Saturninus declared to the proconsul Anulinus: "We must celebrate the Lord's day! It is a law for us." A church reader named Emeritus agreed: "Yes, it was in my house that we celebrated the Lord's day. We cannot live without celebrating the Lord's day!" And the young maiden Victoria proudly added, "I attended the meeting because I am a Christian!"

It wasn't until the early 2nd century that a specific feast of Easter began to be celebrated in some places. The Church of Rome waited until the second half of that century before it accepted the idea.

Two ways of calculating Easter arose. The Churches of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) made the feast coincide with the Jewish Passover. But the other churches waited until the following Sunday. This was the custom of the Roman Church, and it became the rule for all communities by the start of the 3rd century.

In 325AD the Council of Nicaea fixed Easter as the Sunday following the first full moon after the (northern) spring equinox; thus Easter always falls between the 22nd March and the 25th April.

Easter is the centrepiece of the church year, and all other feasts and seasons radiate from it. The dates of most of them are determined each year by the date of Easter.

"Science contributes much to the good of humanity, but it is not able to redeem it."

Pope Benedict XVI

Saying Sorry

The following article was in the parish bulletin of Warragul and Drouin on Sunday 17th February, as “A personal reflection from Father Herman Hengel” entitled “I am sorry...”:

“Amazing words!! How often do we not say them, and sometimes, not often enough. Jesus challenges us in the Beatitudes to be PEACEMAKER. To ask ourselves “What can I do to make peace” The Prime Minister’s words of apology to the original inhabitants of Australia. When the former Prime Minister refused to say sorry on behalf of the Government for the misdeeds of former governments, I, personally, felt inclined to agree. After all I had been in Australia only about fifty years, why should anyone apologise on my behalf for something I had not been part of. However grave injustices were part of European settlement of Australia. The Aboriginals were the original inhabitants. There were massacres. They were disposed of land, put into Reserves, worked and forced to work on sheep and cattle stations just for board and lodging. Their tribal cultures and spirituality were not recognised or even acknowledged. The list goes on. Let us hope and pray that this apology will be a stimulus for mutual respect and cooperation and that this will lead to people with aboriginal heritage having their rightful place in Australian society.”

These are amazing words on reconciliation to reflect on for the retired Bishop Coffey and all the priests who signed the petition that was addressed to Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, dated 27-01-2006, which states:

“... While we do not know the details of the case that has been sent to you, we are very aware of the damage Father Speekman has caused in the parish of Morwell. His behaviour has divided the parish and this has had an effect on the rest of the diocese. We would like you to know that: We support our bishop and believe that his decision to remove Father Speekman is correct; The state of the parish of Morwell is fractured and in turmoil because of Fr Speekman; If Father Speekman is returned to the Morwell parish as Parish Priest, the damage to the parish and to the diocese would be disastrous.”

Contrast this to the words of the Decree that had already been issued by the Congregation for the Clergy in July 2004 upholding Fr Speekman’s appeal against his removal:

“In the end, the reasons for Father Speekman’s removal are generic, and it is difficult to know in what specific way Father Speekman is responsible for confusion or disturbance at Morwell. In fact, any confusion or disturbance at Morwell which the Most Reverend Ordinary [the Bishop] has ascertained might well be attributed more to the actions of the Most Reverend Ordinary than to those of Father Speekman.”

I hope and pray with the people of this diocese that the retired Bishop, priests and deacons who signed this petition (who to date continue to stubbornly believe that it was Fr Speekman’s “damaging behaviour” that caused all the problems in the diocese), have the same courage as the Prime Minister had by saying “I am sorry” to the Aboriginals, that they also say “I am sorry” for the damage they have caused to Fr Speekman’s name and reputation.

St Cyprian reminds us (quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church n.2845): “God does not accept the sacrifice of a sower of disunion, but commands that he depart from the altar so that he may first be reconciled with his brother. For God can be appeased only by prayers that make peace. To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly concord, and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Leo Willems, Warragul

Good Friday

From an address by Pope Benedict XVI

Good Friday, which commemorates the happenings between Christ’s condemnation to death and his crucifixion, is a day of penance, of fasting, of prayer, of participation in the passion of the Lord. At the prescribed hour, the Christian assembly retraces, with the help of the Word of God and liturgical actions, the history of human infidelity to the divine plan, which nevertheless is fulfilled precisely in this way. And we listen again to the moving narration of the sorrowful passion of the Lord.

Later, a long “prayer of the faithful” is directed to the heavenly Father, which includes all of the needs of the Church and the world. Then, the community adores the cross, and approaches the Eucharist, consuming the sacred species, reserved since the Mass “in Cena Domini” from the day before.

... There is one expression of piety, the Way of the Cross, that offers us year-round the opportunity to impress in our spirits ever more deeply the mystery of the cross, advancing with Christ along this path and thus, interiorly conforming ourselves to him. We could say that the Way of the Cross teaches us, using an expression from St Leo the Great, to “fix the eyes of our heart on Christ crucified and recognize in him our own humanity”. In this consists the true wisdom of Christianity...

www.zenit.org 04-04-2007

Holy Saturday

From an address by Pope Benedict XVI

Holy Saturday is a day in which the liturgy is hushed, the day of great silence, which invites Christians to foster an interior recollection, often difficult to maintain in our day, so as to prepare us for the Easter Vigil. In many communities, spiritual retreats and Marian prayer meetings are organized on this day, in union with the Mother of the Redeemer, who awaits the resurrection of the crucified Son with anxious confidence.

www.zenit.org 04-04-2007

Principle of Unity Causes Division

Reading the editorial, "Reflective Time Ahead" in the February issue of ITD, I am reminded that in many ways the merciless and unjust treatment meted out to Fr Spekman epitomizes what's been happening to the orthodox faithful courageous enough to stand up for the truth and the faith of the Church in their liberal dioceses.

The irony about the scandal in Sale is that Bishop Coffey, while he was the principle of unity of the local Church, caused deep wounds of division in Morwell parish and throughout the diocese by his administrative actions. Throughout the country, this scandal has eroded the confidence, trust and respect of the faithful in the authority of the office of bishop in the Church.

Many in the hierarchy of the Melbourne province, some religious in the Sale diocese, and a small group of laity who actively supported Bishop Coffey's divisive actions, are – like him – in a chronic state of denial about what has happened. These people will remain in this state for as long as the Holy See delays justice and fails to resolve this controversy.

The notion that time by itself will heal the wounds caused by this scandal now that Bishop Coffey is retired, is wishful thinking. Time by itself has no power to heal. This fact has been proven by those who have been sexually abused in the Church. The wrongdoing has to be confessed, guilt has to be admitted, sorry has to be said, forgiveness has to be sought, and the damage has to be repaired.

It is the truth that heals and justice which corrects, and together over time they can heal the wounds of division caused by this scandal. People are more capable of overcoming the pain of knowing the truth than they are of living with the wounds of lies, deceit, corruption and injustice. Unresolved injustices not only deepen the hurt and the scandal, but prolong the time required for healing, and ultimately delay peace and unity.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell

Language in Liturgy

From a speech by Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, on 11-11-2007 at the Gateway Liturgical Conference, Missouri

Did Vatican II discourage Latin?

Some people think, or have the perception, that the Second Vatican Council discouraged the use of Latin in the liturgy. This is not the case.

Just before he opened the Council, Bl. Pope John XXIII in 1962 issued an Apostolic Constitution to insist on the use of Latin in the Church. The Second Vatican Council, although it admitted some introduction of the vernacular, insisted on the place of Latin: "Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.36).

The Council also required that seminarians "should acquire a command of Latin which will enable them to understand and use the source material of so many sciences and the documents of the Church as well" (*Optatam Totius*, n.13). The Code of Canon Law published in 1983 enacts that "the Eucharistic celebration is to be carried out either in the Latin language or in another language, provided the liturgical texts have been lawfully approved" (can.928).

Those, therefore, who want to give the impression that the Church has put Latin away from her liturgy are mistaken. ...

The Vernacular: Introduction, Extension, Conditions

...The reasons for the introduction of the mother tongue are not far to seek. It promotes better understanding of what the Church is praying, since "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy... (and which) is their right by reason of their Baptism" (*SC*, n.14). ...

What is expected of us?

We should do our best to appreciate the language which the Church uses in her liturgy and to join our hearts and voices to them, according as each liturgical rite may indicate. All of us cannot be Latin speakers, but the lay faithful can at least learn the simpler responses in Latin. Priests should give more attention to Latin so that they celebrate Mass in Latin occasionally. In big churches where there are many Masses celebrated on a Sunday or Feast day, why can one of those Masses not be in Latin? In rural parishes a Latin Mass should be possible, say once a month. ...

Experience shows that it is not superfluous to remark that priests, deacons and all others who proclaim liturgical texts, should read them out with clarity and due reverence.

www.zenit.org 11-01-2008

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration in Gippsland

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Cowwarr-Heyfld	1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30am Heyfield 10am – 4.30pm
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) 10am – 11am
Cranbourne	Friday and Saturday in the Church: (9.30 Mass) 10am – 11am Adoration Chapel accessible 24 hours by PIN available at parish office.
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am First Fridays 4pm – 8pm (every second month, December onwards)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) 9.30am – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday (10am Mass) 10.30am – 12 noon
Orbost	Friday 10am – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 10.30am – 11.30am
Sale	Friday 11.30am – 2pm First Friday 11.30am – 6pm
Trafalgar	Tuesdays 10am – 11am First Saturdays 10am – 11am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am First Fridays 4pm – 8pm (every second month, January onwards)

Mass for Vocations

Sale Saturday 9am

Easter Vigil

From an address by Pope Benedict XVI

In the Easter Vigil, the veil of sadness, which surrounds the Church during the death and burial of the Lord, will be torn in two by the victorious cry: Christ has risen and has overcome death forever! Then we can truly understand the mystery of the cross and, as an ancient author writes: “As God creates wonders even from the impossible, so that we will know that only he can do as he wishes: From his death proceeds our life; from his wounds, our healing; from his fall, our resurrection, from his descent, our rising up”.

Animated by a stronger faith, at the heart of the Easter Vigil, we welcome the newly baptized and renew our own baptismal promises. Thus, we will experience that the Church is always alive, always renewing itself, always beautiful and holy, because its foundation is Christ, who, having risen, will never die again.

Dear brothers and sisters, the paschal mystery... is not only a memory of a past reality. It is a current reality: Today, too, Christ overcomes sin and death with his love. Evil, in all of its forms, does not have the final word. The final triumph belongs to Christ, to truth, to love!

www.zenit.org 04-04-2007

Mary, our mother

And mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned,
Yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted
Hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II

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- Please notify by email if you would like to be added to the regular emailing list.
- There is no subscription fee.
- Donations are welcome! (Cheques made out to John Henderson please)

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Editor - Janet Kingman

The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in Catholic Life, our diocesan newspaper,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic Adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters or articles. We cannot guarantee that all will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. The purpose of sharing letters is to pass on relevant information and suggestions for making positive changes, that is, in line with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We live in joyful hope that the diocese we love can be faithful to the authentic tradition of the Church. As such, Into the Deep aims to be a messenger of hope and not of doom. Name and contact details must accompany letters. However, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.