

Into the Deep

Issue 12

Newsletter of the Confraternity of St Michael, Gippsland

September 2003

The Pope's Pastoral Plan

Recently, I finished a new book entitled 'The Eucharist at the Centre of John Paul II's Millennium Plan'. The Holy Father has set forth what he calls his jubilee heritage. Beginning with the Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, and culminating with his encyclical on the Eucharist and its crown, the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Father has issued a call to an eight-point plan to evangelise the world.

First, holiness. He has reiterated that every baptised Christian is called to be holy - that is to think and love and act like Jesus.

Second, prayer, which he has called a reciprocal conversation.

Third, frequent reception of the Eucharist and a deeper appreciation for Eucharistic Adoration.

Fourth, the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Fifth, an honest effort to live by grace and by the Spirit.

Sixth, frequent meditation on the new Catechism and the Word of God.

Seventh, the new evangelization, in which all of us are to share.

And eighth, the rosary.

Duc in Altum - Go Out Into the Deep

The Holy Father has also given us a resounding call to Set Out Into the Deep - that is, to leave behind our cellophaned artificialities of our lives and to set out into the deep waters of God's wisdom, love and power. We are called to transform this sinful and broken world of ours into the Kingdom of God. We cannot do that unless we experience the length, the breadth, the height and the depth of God's grace.

From 'Making Jesus Lord of your life', an article by Fr Bill McCarthy on the 'Your Catholic Voice' website

Strive to Meet God's Demands

"I am frightened by a Christianity that seeks to tone down God's demands to suit our human weaknesses instead of daily striving, with a contrite heart, to rise again from our sins."

Fr Werenfried van Straaten (Founder, Aid to the Church in Need)

Where Does Journeying Together Lead?

In a previous article I suggested it was to "a wide five lane freeway with a gentle slope downwards (the highway to hell)".

Introduced by Bishop Coffey, the diocesan pastoral plan *Journeying Together*, speaks of reconciliation, compassion, forgiveness, conversations, understanding, etc.

Satan must be smiling as he sees our Bishop, Catholic Education Office (CEO) and priests of the Diocese combine to remove Fr John Speekman, the one priest who is preaching the *truth* and teachings of the Church in all their fullness.

Now the best form of teaching is by example, example, example - a well known truism in teaching circles.

Our Bishop, priests, and CEO are not following the recommendations of their own programme, or imitating Christ. Is this the example they want us to follow?

Our Holy Father gives us inspiration and guidance in his encyclical letter 'Ecclesia de Eucharistia' (see page 3 of this *Into the Deep*) - *He directs us straight to Our Lord in the Eucharist.*

Our Diocese needs healing, our priests need healing and we the flock and our families need healing. Let's give away all the meetings, and journey together to the *strength*.

Let's go back to the old programme of having Eucharistic Holy Hours throughout the Diocese, with every parish putting aside one evening a week for all to attend, to love and adore Our Lord, to plead for healing.

Even if our priests have to travel to other parishes to conduct these Hours, the fruits will be plentiful, many souls will be saved. We have Our Lord's promise of this because He thirsts for souls.

I urge our Bishop to make something positive come out of this crisis and lead his flock back to the Good Shepherd.

P. Crozier, Traralgon

“DECREE OF REMOVAL OF PARISH PRIEST BY CHARACTER ASSASSINATION”

In response to the conclusions made in the July 31st 2003 Decree by Bishop Coffey in removing Fr Speekman as parish priest of Morwell, I would like to make my personal observations known to your readers about Fr Speekman’s character and ministry in Morwell Catholic Parish.

I would describe Fr Speekman as a progressive parish priest with orthodox views. He has positively increased the awareness of parishioners in relation to their obligations as practising Catholics. He once said during a homily... “If your parish priest cannot remind you of your obligation to follow the teachings of the church - then who will?”

Underlying this approach to his ministry is a deeply spiritual and 100% committed parish priest. He strongly believes in Eucharistic adoration and has established Morwell Catholic Parish as a pioneer parish in Adoration within the Sale Diocese. He regularly announces and publicly supports statements from the Pope. He has published widely his views on Sacramental Programs for school children and the Bishop has declared these views as a shining example of his own Sacramental Policy initiatives for the Diocese. During his tenure as parish priest, parish cells of evangelization have been nurtured to expand from one to four cells. Several successful Alpha programs have also been run in recent times.

He is not embarrassed to regularly promote the confessional as the best vehicle to cleanse sin and be in a state of grace for the reception of Holy Communion. It is a sad reflection on the modern church that this aspect of his ministry deserves a special mention.

His manner of acting and speaking is persuasive, honest and without hollow, new-age dogma. His personality can be confronting to those who do not know him or those that feel that the Catholic church should be modernised to catch up with secular society norms. He does stand out among clergy in general because there are so few clergy who want to remind the congregation of correct Catholic teaching for fear of upsetting the few who just do not want to hear the truth.

The July 31 Decree goes too far in suggesting that Fr Speekman “imposes the Gospel by force or threat” or that he has unlawfully harmed anyone’s good reputation or violated their right to protect the privacy of their conscience. The suggestion that this is happening in Morwell is intriguing and just simply not believable.

I am a primary school age parent and I can confidently state that his demeanour with children generally and his approach to evangelising school age children is very effective and engaging; this being consistent with his professionally trained teaching background. There are many children in our Parish who love him as their Parish Priest. This fact is not compatible with the personality attributes described in the Decree.

The July 31 Decree says that “He brings the best out of devout people” and this is true. However, he has also very successfully attracted many non-practising Catholics back into regular worship and active Parish life. If this is not a clear demonstration of *effective ministry* and his genuine endeavour to “save souls” then what would be?

The parish had pre-booked late in 2002 a thanksgiving campaign to be run during July of this year. As it happened, the canonical removal process and uncertainty surrounding Father’s future was at a climax during this campaign. There were many who thought that the campaign would be a disaster for the parish given the circumstances. It must have been a surprise to those people when the campaign finished with fresh pledges totalling a 10% increase on pre-campaign giving. This result is yet another indication that Fr Speekman’s ministry is effective. Parishioners will not pledge with their hard-earned income when there is a resident priest that is an “aggressive bully” creating “disturbance and confusion” while preaching the Gospel with “force or threats”.

Why is it that according to the July 31 Decree, Fr Speekman’s ministry is ineffective as a parish priest, but the same Decree, for some strange reason states that he can still be effective (or useful) as a supply priest at the request of any priest in the Sale Diocese. The Diocese cannot have this both ways!

It is true that Fr Speekman may not be all things for all people, but I am yet to meet such a human being.

A. Panther, Morwell

The Truth and Beauty of our Faith

Jesus’ teaching is relentless - always moving forward - never losing momentum. Truth is emerging, the revelation is being born, labour cannot be stopped. A most wonderful teaching is entering the world - no complaint or criticism, or unbelief can stop it. Jesus strikes it home, almost brutally - contemptuous of human wisdom:- **The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.**

From the internet

Vicar General On Attack

Wednesday 27th August 2003 was a red-letter day in my life. Attending a Parish Cell meeting in Sale along with 10 other leaders, Fr Mark Godridge and Vicar General Monsignor Dan McCartan, the last thing I expected was a full frontal attack on myself and others responsible for publishing *Into the Deep*.

With the approval of parish administrator Fr Godridge, the Vicar General launched an attack on those pedalling newsletters attacking the bishop and causing division in the diocese. He said it only published half the story of events and half-truths, and said we had sinned against three Commandments. He forgot to mention that only half the story appeared because the Bishop steadfastly refuses to tell anyone why he issued a decree of removal of Fr Speekman, parish priest of Morwell.

I was then castigated for publishing the fact that the Sacramental Co-ordinator for Sale parish and the senior Religious Education Co-ordinator at Catholic College Sale had recently been married in the Church. He said it was scandalous to reveal private matters such as this, completely ignoring the fact that they held these important positions while not validly married in the eyes of the Church. He said he was investigating the possibility of censure.

As soon as the Vicar General concluded his insulting remarks, Fr Godridge announced that we should leave the matter there. There was no opportunity to reply to the unjust attack.

I have never before experienced a situation where a priest has publicly accused anyone of sinning, let alone against three Commandments. His intemperate outburst demands a public apology. It will lead to questions as to whether he is worthy of the high office he holds.

P. O'Brien, Sale

Deceived

Bishop Coffey, I felt deceived when I heard the news of your final decision to dismiss Fr John Speekman.

The Catechism I was taught says: "The Bishops have from Jesus Christ through the apostles to be chief teachers and shepherds of their Diocese under the Pope."

Scripture says: "Be shepherds to the flock God has given you. Carry out your charge as God would have it done." (1Peter5:2)

How would Jesus have handled this situation?

I teach my children that every decision that they make not only affects them but also may affect one or more others by their actions.

The decision you have made affects an entire parish community, not just one priest but also many priests.

I'm sure you know the seven deadly sins of the Church – pride, jealousy and anger just to mention three of them. Are you too proud to apologise to Fr John, that you have made a mistake? Are you jealous or angry with him through some personal matter?

You have given Fr John until 20 August to leave Morwell. You have today if you are a man of humility to ring Fr John and lift the decree. There doesn't have to be a reason for your change of heart, just as there wasn't a reason for you to place one.

J. Vitale, Morwell

No Action, No Money?

As no reply has been forthcoming from either Fr Mark or the Bishop regarding Fr Mark's sacking of pastoral associate Sr Virginia, I believe some parishioners have suspended, and others are considering suspending, their Planned Giving Pledge. Perhaps this will get some action.

By the way, it wasn't *only* Catholic parishioners who signed the letter – other church members also signed the letter in protest. Sister Virginia has touched a wide range of people in the community.

A. Clancy, Sale

Always Draw Strength from the Eucharistic Mystery

"At the dawn of the third millennium, we, the children of the Church, are called to undertake with renewed enthusiasm the journey of Christian living. As I wrote in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "It is not a matter of inventing a 'new programme'. The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in living Tradition; it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ Himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem". The implementation of this programme of a renewed impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist.

Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father. Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we overcome our own deficiency?"

Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia (para 60)

No Reason Given is Disturbing

The Stop Press you sent is very disturbing. Are you sure that there is not something more serious involved in this terrible situation which would require the Bishop to take such drastic action? Has Fr Speekman said anything to his supporters? I agree with J. Henderson's letter in *Into the Deep* (August). Surely the parishioners are entitled to explanations unless it is a matter of the confessional.

J. Lovegrove, Port Macquarie NSW

This is a significant part of the problem, that the Bishop's silence has done untold damage to Fr Speekman's reputation for the past 18 months or more. Apart from "ineffective ministry" in the Decree, no other reason (or evidence) has been given, and this leads to all sorts of rumour and suggestion. Right from the beginning, Bishop Coffey came out in full support of the school teachers and principal, but kept quiet about Fr Speekman's status, implying that he was at fault. Were it a matter of the Confessional, Fr Speekman at least would know – he does not.

Ed.

Justice for Priests?

"A suspension is a public act and it injured the good reputation of the priest. Canon 220 states that everyone has a right to a good reputation and a right to protect their privacy. Canon 1390§2 states that a person who injures the reputation of another can be punished with a just penalty, including censure. An accusation can harm a priest's reputation and it should not be further impaired by the negligence of a bishop."

*Msr. Michael Higgins, California
From justiceforpriests.org*

Canonical Penal Process – Preliminary Investigation Canon 1717

1. Whenever the Ordinary receives information which has at least the semblance of truth, about an offence, he is to enquire carefully, either personally or through some suitable person, about the facts and circumstances, and about the imputability of the offence, unless this enquiry would appear to be entirely superfluous.
2. Care is to be taken that this investigation does not call into question anyone's good name.
3. The one who performs this investigation has the same powers and obligations as an auditor in a process. If, later, a judicial process is initiated, this person may not take part in it as a judge.

Who Will Lead Our People?

I am VERY disappointed with the Bishop's decision. I am also very disappointed with whoever has contributed to bringing about this decision. A kingdom divided against itself is doomed for failure. I am also very disappointed that the Bishop has not responded to a letter I wrote to him several weeks ago. I would have thought that it is good manners to respond to a fellow Catholic or parishioner that is actively involved in our faith. It's *not* good enough to contact me only when the church asks for my money.

Fr John Speekman preached *the Gospel* at all the Masses we attended. My wife and I got a lot out of his sermons. To sack a priest for preaching the Gospel is a disgrace. How would our parish like to have had St Paul preach to them, with his dynamic preaching about Jesus as our Lord and Saviour? Or St John the Baptist and how he called the Jews "Brood of vipers"?

Is this why so many Catholics have their palms read or see psychics or read their star signs - because some priests don't have the courage to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ? Now it may have been challenging for some of our Catholic brothers and sisters, *but* if what Fr Speekman preached is in the Bible and is part of our Catholic teaching, then why was he sacked?

Well, I guess they stoned Timothy, didn't they? They crucified Jesus. They crucified St Peter and hung him upside down. Look at what St Paul went through, just for preaching the Gospel. When will we ever learn?

Fr Speekman encouraged people to read the Scriptures, to get to know Jesus better. He encouraged them to attend Mass regularly. IS THIS SO BAD?

Or is it better to have your child Baptised and then never go to church again until First Holy Communion comes along and then never go to church again until Confirmation and then never go to church again until a wedding or a funeral? Or have a priest who says nothing to educate or enlighten or encourage people or challenge them to be *more* committed. Is that Christ's way? I don't think so.

If our church and its leaders don't do their job as Jesus commanded and the apostles followed through with till their death, then *who will lead* our people?

Let it be on the Bishop's head and all who took part in this very disappointing decision. And above all God's will be done.

T. Calabro, Morwell

Cowwarr 'Youth 2000' Retreat

On July 25th about 35 young Catholics aged 13-30 years gathered in Cowwarr for a time of celebration, reflection and prayer, and to learn about and experience their Catholic faith. The retreat was organised by the Sydney Youth 2000 committee.

The Youth 2000 weekend centres on Christ truly present in the Eucharist. He featured as most important throughout the 40 hour retreat and Exposition was continuous through the weekend. Parishioners and visitors assisted with the two nights of all night Adoration as a prayer for grace for the young people attending. *E. Fiddelaers, Nambrok*

Cowwarr 'Call to Hope' Retreat

About 40 people came to Cowwarr from various parts of Gippsland to take part in a Retreat in late June led by Fr Pat Austin, MSC.

Using the title of "Call to Hope", the teachings were based on the Book of Revelation. Like the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, Revelation is about Judgment, reminding us that the Risen Jesus is the real Judge. Father explained the symbolism of the various themes employed in Revelation where the symbol of the (Paschal) lamb occurs 28 times.

Brief reference was made to "The Lamb's Supper", an easy-to-read book written by Scott Hahn in which he draws parallels between the Apocalypse and the Sacrifice of the Mass.

There were opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and each day Eucharistic Adoration was followed by Benediction. In addition, we recited the Rosary and the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy.

The weekend was a feast of learning and we are already looking forward to the return visit of Fr Austin next year. *M. Goss, Sale*

Rude?

As if the situation in Morwell parish is not upsetting enough with Fr Speekman being removed, what happened at the midday Mass the Friday after Father was dismissed was uncalled for. The visiting priest referred to some of us as unhappy fundamentalists on at least 3 occasions in his short homily.

As well as this derogatory remark, he upset me more when I went to receive Holy Communion on the tongue and he said in a loud voice, "Put your tongue out!". I have been receiving Holy Communion this way all my life and have never before been spoken to in such a manner.

This begs the question - what would have happened if Fr Speekman had acted in this way?

An irate Morwell parishioner

God Upholds The Humble

"We are not abandoned to ourselves and to cosmic energies, but are always in the hands of the Lord, in keeping with his plan of salvation," the Pope said when reflecting recently on Psalm 146 [147].

God, "who surrounds the poor with tenderness and care, appears as a severe judge when confronting the wicked. The Lord of history is not indifferent before the rage of the arrogant who think they are the only arbiters of human affairs: God brings down to the dust of the earth those who defy heaven with their pride," Pope John Paul II said.

The Psalm ends showing the Lord bending over the righteous and humble. In this way, it underlines again "the Lord's logic," which "ignores the pride and arrogance of the powerful."

God "places himself on the side of the one who is faithful" and who "hopes in his steadfast love," that is, "who is abandoned to God's guidance in his acting and thinking, in his plans and in his daily life," the Holy Father continued.

The hope of the believer is based on God's grace, "certain of being enveloped in the mantle of divine love." *www.zenit.org*

Priest Suspended for 'Open Communion'

A priest was suspended in Germany for leading an 'open Communion' service recently at a Lutheran church, the Associated Press reported.

Bishop Reinhard Marx of Trier barred Father Gotthold Hasenhuettl, a professor emeritus at the University of Saarbruecken, from celebrating Mass and withdrew his Church teaching permit, AP said.

On May 29, around 2000 people crowded into Gethsemane Church as Hasenhuettl distributed Communion to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

"I cannot accept a priest practicing an open communion that was specifically forbidden in this form by the Pope in his latest encyclical," Bishop Marx said. "I still hope that Hasenhuettl will relent." *www.zenit.org*

Overheard...

"There's one thing this bishop has really achieved in this diocese, one real accomplishment he can claim - he has led us to a greater knowledge of Canon Law!"

Bumper Sticker Wisdom

If God is your co-pilot - swap seats!

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

Cowwarr-Heyfield	1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30am; Heyf 10am – 4.30pm
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9am – 12noon 2 nd Thursday 10am – 11am 11 th of the month 1 Hour after Mass
Morwell	Thursday 9pm – Friday 9pm
Orbost	Friday 10am – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 10.30am – 11.30am
Sale	Friday 11.30am – 2pm First Friday 11.30am – 6pm
San Remo	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am

Please contact us to update and extend this list with hours of Adoration throughout Sale diocese.

Church Without Eucharist is a Museum

“In the crisis of faith we are experiencing, the critical issue seems to be increasingly the correct celebration and correct understanding of the Eucharist,” says Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

“Today we run the risk of having our churches turned into museums and ending like museums. The measure of the Church’s vitality will be reflected in the fact that its doors remain open, precisely because it is a church where there is constant prayer.”

The cardinal leaves room for arguments that are sometimes heard nowadays: ‘I can also pray in the woods, submerged in nature.’

“Of course one can,” Cardinal Ratzinger replies. “However, if it was only that way, then the initiative of prayer would remain totally within us: Then God would be a postulate of our thought. That fact that he responds or might want to respond, would remain an open question.

Eucharist means: *God has responded*. This is why, in the realm of Eucharistic adoration, prayer reaches a totally new level; only now it involves both parties, and only now is it something serious.

What is more, not only does it involve the two parties, but only now is it fully universal: When we pray in the presence of the Eucharist, we are never alone. The whole Church that celebrates the Eucharist prays with us.

In this prayer we are no longer before a God we have thought about, but before a God who has really given himself to us; before a God who has made himself communion for us, who thus liberates us from our limits through communion and leads us to the Resurrection,” Cardinal Ratzinger concludes.

“This is the prayer we must seek again.” *Zenit News*

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!

John Paul II

Apostle?

From the Greek

One who is Sent

Contact Into the Deep

E-mail stoneswillshout@yahoo.com.au

Please notify by e-mail if you would like to be added to the regular e-mailing list.

Into the Deep, PO Box 446, Traralgon, Vic 3844

Into the Deep aims 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 some will be edited due to space.

Please keep letters factual, and report only first-hand information.

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, address and phone number must accompany letters. However, if there is a reasonable request, anonymity will be preserved when publishing.