

Into the Deep

Issue 13

Newsletter of the Confraternity of St Michael, Gippsland

October 2003

Vocation of a Bishop

The prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re says that a bishop by his office must be a “man of his word, man of the Word, and man made word.”

For a bishop, to be a “man of his word” means “to be faithful to his commitments”, said Cardinal Re. “With the help of God’s grace, he does not get discouraged in face of difficulties, he does not give up when he meets with obstacles. In other words, he is a person who tries to ‘be’ before he ‘does’”.

By persevering, the bishop “creates communion in his diocese and makes it grow, giving attention to all, with particular dedication to his priests, being with and for them a father and a friend”, the cardinal said.

As a “man of the Word”, the bishop’s principal duty “is, after prayer, dedication to preaching”. The need persists “to carry out the proclamation of the Word of God with the drive and ardour of the early Church”, he exhorted.

Yet, it is not sufficient to proclaim. “The bishop is called to teach with the ministry of the Word and, beyond that, with the witness of his life, so that all will be open to the Word of God”, the cardinal said, when describing the “bishop as man made word”.

“The word, the person and the life of the bishop must become testimony, that is, faith that becomes life”, Cardinal Re said. Indeed, the language of testimony “is the most comprehensible and the most convincing for the men and women of our time”, he added.

“Our words must be backed up by a credible life.”

Zenit News

Act On Your Convictions

People need to act on their convictions, especially their religious beliefs, or their convictions eventually disappear.

Archbishop Charles Chaput

Into the Deep Turns One!

This issue of Into the Deep marks its first birthday! (See page 5 to remind yourself how it all began.)

Thank you to all our readers – we have been overwhelmed by your support. Thank you to all those who have written so many letters and articles. We appreciate your effort and acknowledge that it is not always an easy task to write in.

Into the Deep now reaches every state in Australia and every continent in the world. Thank you to all those who continue the distribution once they’ve received their own copy.

We will have a website up and running shortly where back issues can be obtained, and we intend to purchase a photocopier to reduce printing costs. Thank you to those who have given donations.

To all those who have offered prayers for us and for the Church in our diocese – our profound thanks. Without prayer, all good intention is doomed, and our strength to do the things we do is sapped.

Let us continue to pray for the Church, and to stand up for the truth.

Catholic Life Censored?

In the September issue of Catholic Life, there is an official notice regarding the appointment by Bishop Coffey of Fr Tom Cleary as administrator of Morwell parish. It gives a brief run-down of Fr Cleary’s background, and notes when the appointment took effect.

True to form, there is no mention of parish priest Fr John Speekman or the reason why the appointment of an administrator was necessary.

As yet, Catholic Life, in spite of being the official diocesan newspaper, has not mentioned Fr Speekman’s dismissal at all, nor the various decrees made by the bishop regarding Morwell parish, nor the outcry of the parishioners, nor Fr Speekman’s appeal to Rome, nor that he - a young, healthy priest - now has the status of a ‘retired’ priest in the diocese.

This is big news in the diocese – and would be in any diocese! But not a word reported. How can we see Catholic Life as anything but a censored propaganda tool of the Bishop?

CEO Has Outgrown Its Master

Some time back J. Henderson asked a very pertinent question. I think he wanted to highlight the role of the schools in the present situation. There are other factors beside the school that contribute to current catechetical confusion and wrangling, but the school is the arena where it is all being played out.

Some years ago Msgr John Kelly, famous for his orthodoxy and practical management of having as little as possible to do with the Catholic Education Office (CEO) stated that there are NO Catholic schools in Melbourne!

These strong words give us the clue: the CEO is central to the problem. It has no real teaching authority – that belongs to the parish priest. But it wields vast power through its role: to collect and distribute huge sums of money. Actually, the money doesn't really belong to it, but the parishes on whose behalf it is supposed to act.

Over the years a number of perceptive and concerned priests have tried to open up discussion on the kind of teaching happening in schools (mostly CEO-programmed), but have fallen foul of higher authority. In every case the bishop backed the CEO against the pastoral role of their priests. What does this tell us? That money, and the power it bestows, has blinded many as to the priorities.

The CEO in each diocese employs many people. Their wages, and a high percentage of teachers' wages, are paid by the government of this country. If that were to stop we would have to close down the so-called Catholic school system as we have it. Now, which bishop wants that! It is easy to understand, therefore, that good men are simply a political sacrifice in the larger scheme of things.

It was enlightening to hear the representative of the Melbourne CEO speak on national radio in the context of the Governor-General's call for religion in schools. "What's the use of teaching them religion..." she said!

It is important to realise that power is not necessarily a bad thing. All those with responsibilities to carry out, need some measure of power to ensure that they can do what they have to. The problem arises when it is power of the wrong kind, in the wrong measure, used in the wrong way, for the wrong purposes. Now the pastoral role of priests, in the mind of the real Church, is not something up for grabs, or to be usurped, but that is what has happened.

Any CEO, on the other hand, as useful as it could be when properly run, is no more than a local bureaucratic organisation that has outgrown its place and master.

One obvious truth stands out: priests who, in exercising their true pastoral role offend against the bureaucratic power drive of the CEO will never win, because they are regarded as disposable when weighed against the power of money in millions.

Special Correspondent

Disclaimer: Into the Deep does not know the identity of 'Special Correspondent' but publishes this letter in good faith. We understand there is more to follow, and appeal to the writer to provide a way to contact him/her. Contact /identity will remain protected by the Editor.

What Do We Offer Our Youth?

The Journeying Together team held a 'Diocesan Youth Assembly' in Warragul recently, reported in the September edition of Catholic Life.

Issues that our youth suggest the diocese address include 'the development of more modern day Masses', 'promote more fun in the Church', 'youth interaction in homilies', 'make Church louder', 'a more personal hands-on approach' at Mass, and 'we need more fun in the church'...

Bishop Coffey was "surprised and delighted" at their input, and responded, "We will take what you have put forward seriously and in so far as we can fulfil them."

We can only hope that he knows how far he can - and cannot - go in trying to accommodate these requests of young people who, however well-intentioned, obviously don't know what the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is.

Most telling was the insight from at least one youth: "Kids often criticise the Mass, but many just don't know what is going on. They need help to understand what it means."

Assuming that the youth attending this assembly were Catholic, and attend Catholic schools, it is yet another indication that they are not learning even the basic tenets of our Catholic faith. How can we be failing so badly in passing on the faith in Catholic schools, and then claim that this assembly was a success because 120 youth made some suggestions about how to change the Church? How can the Bishop fail to see this?

In his response reported in Catholic Life, he talks of the 'healing power' of the Church, but doesn't mention Confession. He talks of offering words of encouragement and support to one another as being 'an important part of what the Church is'; he talks of relationships and dialogue and connections, but not of prayer, or love of Christ, or learning His Way.

When will Bishop Coffey start talking about *real* issues? About learning the Catechism, reading the Scriptures, praying, being faithful to Sunday Mass, living a holy life, confessing sin and seeking forgiveness in the profound Sacrament of Reconciliation, of spending time in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

We have the most beautiful, precious treasure in our Catholic faith; rich and deep and strong and sure, the real life of Christ, His own Body and Blood, offered for us with love and mercy beyond our understanding – and we think that to let youth feel 'heard' will help their faith grow.

They deserve more than being heard! They deserve to hear the truth!

Overcome the Anger and Hatred

After reading *Into the Deep* I have nothing but feelings of despair. Despair for our wonderful Morwell parish that is made up of well-meaning people, some passionate about their faith, caring about their community and beyond, and always having a sense of belonging to a family that on the whole has always been one of solidarity.

Our Morwell parish has now been split into two camps with arguments for and against Father Speekman and a campaign is now in full force to denigrate our Bishop and reinstate Father Speekman. I am appalled at the demonstrations and secretive meetings to argue the case between Father and the Bishop - it should be just that - between them alone.

I despair that our parish will never be the same again, unless we can overcome the anger and hate campaign that is being generated at the moment. Your insidious little circular does nothing to help but fuel the anger (which maybe is what you want?). In the name of our Father in heaven let us try to overcome our differences and become one again.

V. Panther, Morwell

Yes, we despair too, seeing the injustices and irregularities in the Church we love here in the Sale diocese. How far we have fallen from the authentic teachings of the Church! *Into the Deep* is an attempt to uncover the infections so that healing can begin. It is not a pretty sight or a pleasant task. But to gloss over the problems will bring neither peace nor unity.

There are many parishioners who will dispute your perception that the parish was united before Fr Speekman arrived; however, trying to overcome differences and become one is certainly a worthy goal. It is what 'being in communion' is all about – but that communion must be in Christ, otherwise it is worthless. It is clear that Fr Speekman's aim has always been to bring people together *in Christ* – which demands faithfulness to His teachings. It seems he was the victim of an 'anger and hate campaign', but no one is supposed to care about that.

If this was a case simply between the Bishop Coffey and Fr Speekman, then why would the Catholic Education Office be involved, school principals, teachers, the Vicar General, visitors (sight-seers?) to Morwell parish, the non-practising component of our parish? How can it be acceptable for all these uninformed parties to be involved, and yet 'appalling' that faithful, orthodox parishioners should get involved by seeking out the truth?

The Bishop is responsible for a diocese, and Fr Speekman is responsible for a parish – this goes beyond their personal issues. We are entitled to ask if the Bishop is acting in communion with the Pope (the only way he can exercise his authority in the Church). *Ed.*

Letters to Bishop and Vatican

I have personally known Fr John Speekman for over 15 years and in that time have found him to be an excellent person who has conducted his priestly duties with compassion and truth. I am very saddened to hear of his removal as Parish Priest of Morwell. I feel that this should not have happened because in my opinion he is a first class priest. God bless him.

B. McLaughlin, Traralgon

I am writing to express my concern that Fr John Speekman may have been unjustly retired from office. I am so pleased that he has the strength to take the matter to appeal.

B. Tudor, Traralgon

I wish to state publicly that I feel great disappointment with the whole situation concerning the dismissal of Fr John Speekman. I have not heard any satisfactory explanation that warrants his dismissal. I have attended meetings where he has spoken and found him to be an orthodox priest. I can only believe that his words could encourage people to be faithful to God and His church. He came across to me as a gentle loving shepherd.

M. Morris, Traralgon

...So I ask you Bishop, [in light of your refusal to hear us] how can we ask you questions about that piece of paper that makes no sense, and get some truth behind Father's dismissal? You say our parish is in a confused and disturbed state, there is division in the Catholic community. Well, a lot of this is due to you for not acting sooner and not making yourself available to the parish. Instead you sat behind closed doors up in Sale. I think that you, Bishop, should take a hard look at yourself and resign your position as leader of our diocese.

T. Watts, Morwell

We would like to know if you are still in communion with the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church? Because we don't think that *Journeying Together* fits in any traditions of the Church's teaching. ... Don't you think if you give up the priest's authority, you give up your own?

One thing is sure, no one is going to shout the Gospel down our throats, as it has been implied that Fr John Speekman has done. We can all sin as much as we like, no one is going to tell us that we shouldn't, or that we should go to Confession. That's what *Journeying Together* is teaching!

Fr Speekman only taught us what you should have been doing, and every other priest who is obedient to the authentic Church teachings and the Gospel.

J. & T. Kruseck, Morwell

Our Trust Betrayed

Why should we trust our Bishop and Vicar General when they listen to lies and rumours about a fellow priest?

Why was Fr Speekman not given details of the so-called instances of 'abusive behaviour' that were used as reason to remove him? This means the bishop is acting on complaints that have not been presented to Father for his side of the story, nor was he given opportunity to 'mend his ways' if he was in error.

Why didn't the Vicar General (VG) consult with Fr Speekman before sending him a letter threatening suspension, based on a rumour he'd heard?

Who are the bullies in this whole affair? Who has acted in a threatening manner? Don't they care about the effect of their actions on Fr Speekman? I have personally seen the pain it has caused him, and how devastating it is to suffer at the hands of those you trust.

I was recently told by the Bishop I am gutless. Maybe I am. Maybe I should have acted when liturgical abuse was occurring, and when my children and grandchildren weren't, and are still not, receiving authentic Catholic teaching in our so-called Catholic schools. Sadly, our trust in our Bishop and the Catholic Education Office (CEO) has been misplaced.

Where does the laity go when the Bishop will only listen to false complaints against one of his priests?

Bishops and Cardinals protected paedophiles and sexual abusers for which the Church is now suffering. Bishop Coffey and his VG won't protect a priest who teaches what Christ and His Church teach.

I heard two homilies a few weekends ago, both by the VG. In the first he spoke about unity and communion with one another. Big deal. No unity or communion shown to Fr Speekman by his Bishop or brother priests.

In the second homily, the VG asked how we would like it if no priest turned up for Mass. Well, Monsignor McCartan, we certainly wouldn't like it! And considering we already had a perfectly good parish priest, we have little sympathy for those responsible for struggling to find a supply priest for us. In other centres instead of the Mass we have para-liturgies. Is this what the Bishop and the VG would prefer? If so, it is contradictory to what the Holy Father wants.

In this diocese, and unfortunately others, one can criticise orthodox priests with impunity, but criticise a 'modern' priest, or the CEO and you are some kind of monster.

What does the CEO have on the Bishop? It is the only conclusion one can make considering that he won't act against them. He is prepared to deprive souls in the Morwell Catholic Parish of a good and faithful priest in order to protect the CEO.

As I told Mons McCartan, I don't trust him anymore, nor anyone else for that matter, including the Bishop.

J. Henderson, Morwell

Don't Reduce the Eucharist

From *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, by John Paul II:

10. In some places the practice of Eucharistic adoration has been almost completely abandoned. In various parts of the Church abuses have occurred, leading to confusion with regard to sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this wonderful sacrament.

At times one encounters an extremely reductive understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. Stripped of its sacrificial meaning, it is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet.

Furthermore, the necessity of the ministerial priesthood, grounded in apostolic succession, is at times obscured and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is reduced to its mere effectiveness as a form of proclamation. This has led here and there to ecumenical initiatives which, albeit well-intentioned, indulge in Eucharistic practices contrary to the discipline by which the Church expresses her faith.

How can we not express profound grief at all this? The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.

Appealing to the Pope

Most Holy Father, I write to seek your intercession to reinstate our parish priest Fr John Speekman.

The Catholic Education Office seems to have a major controlling power over the Bishop in restricting Father John in his duties.

The Bishop by not talking to Father John or our parish has allowed terrible rumours to be spread in our community. Many times Fr John could have taken legal action to protect his name and character, which the Bishop would not do. Fr John's comments were "Pray for them and the Bishop."

Most Holy Father, Fr John Speekman is a holy and dedicated parish priest who brought back faith to our parish through prayers and the Eucharist. The Bishop and certain laity in the diocese are trying to usurp the authority of the parish priest by handing over control to the laity.

We have six parishes now without priests in the diocese and we cannot afford to have a priest treated so badly and sacked from his parish for no explained reason. Fr John is respected by the community and the majority of our parishioners in Morwell. We cannot afford in this day and age to lose him when we need so many of his ilk.

Excerpts from a letter by V. Pulis, Morwell

Leaders Should Build

With regard to Bishop Coffey's removal of Fr Speekman: I am shocked. Clearly discussion did not happen on the most basic level. Because of this any change Fr Speekman could have made to help the bishop, and the Catholic community of Morwell was blocked.

It's so sad if leaders mess up when they're in such a good position to build.

A. Wolff, England

Hush-Hush Diocese

Too often in the Diocese of Sale, too many things have been 'hush-hush' and I for one have been told by a priest that I was threatening my 'integrity' by speaking out and making a complaint about many things that have personally happened to our children at school, things that would not be tolerated in State schools, yet are tolerated in Catholic schools. Now is the time to turn the leaf over, enough is enough.

Fr John Speekman is a very gentle kind man. He welcomes all people to the parish, especially children. Our children have great respect for Father and can't understand what he could have done to be removed and really miss him. You see, Father takes a great interest in learning the names of his younger parishioners and wants them to come to Mass.

I am sorry Bishop Coffey, but I can't believe that Fr John is anything but a terrific spiritual leader.

A. Evans, Traralgon

Man Can Limit God's Mercy

"Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is the Father's readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His home.

Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvellous value of the sacrifice of the Son. No human sin can prevail over this power or even limit it.

On the part of man only a lack of good will can limit it, a lack of readiness to be converted and to repent, in other words persistence in obstinacy, opposing grace and truth, especially in the face of the witness of the cross and resurrection of Christ."

JPII, Dives in Misericordia, 13

Thanks from Pat

Pat O'Brien would like to thank those who have prayed for him during his recent ill-health. His heart surgery was successful and he is recovering well at home.

How Into the Deep Began

When the April 2002 edition of Catholic Life arrived in Church porches, Catholics throughout Gippsland were outraged by editorial advice to "become more grey" and "join the silent majority" on the great issues of the day.

Insult was added to injury with the unbelievable advice that "there is nothing apathetic about being undecided, it may even be a virtue."

But the real sting in the tail of the editorial came when we were advised that Catholic Life would no longer publish Letters to the Editor.

Reaction was both vocal and strong. An interim group of 50 people was formed to blow away the indifference advocated by Catholic Life and provide a forum for Catholics seeking to remind the world that God created us to know, love and serve Him here on earth, and then to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

Bishop Coffey was approached, and while admitting that Catholic schools were not fulfilling their task of handing on the faith to our children, rejected any suggestions to "repair the neglect that has occurred" (our Bishop's words).

And so we began a committee to co-ordinate our efforts, and embarked on Into the Deep.

Our aim is to be loyal to the Holy Father and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and to promote and uphold its teachings ~ not the false teachings of so-called 'experts' who will lead us into the wilderness.

Rather than indifference, we believe that the Church needs people with faith and courage to speak out on the great issues of the day, to fight the battle going on in the Church, to put the "Catholic" back into our schools, and to defend and support those who faithfully adhere to and promote those teachings.

At a meeting in Traralgon in November 2002, we took on the name Confraternity of St Michael, with the motto "Restore all things in Christ."

P.O'Brien, Sale (reprinted from December 2002 issue of ITD)

Congratulations!

I have been receiving your Newsletter for twelve months now and I would like to congratulate you on reaching one year of publication. Into the Deep has become an important channel for informing the people of the Sale diocese of events and issues that do not find their way into the diocesan paper. Given the wide circulation which your paper enjoys, it is obvious you are providing a much needed service to our diocese and beyond.

M. Goss, Sale

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

Cowwarr-Heyfld	1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30am Heyfield 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.

Understanding the Liturgy

Catholic Liturgy is the public and official worship of Almighty God by the Church, as distinct from personal spiritual practices. Hence, the Liturgy comprises the Mass, the sacraments and the daily office.

The Liturgy is nothing less than a constitutive element of Tradition, a central pillar of Catholic life and theology, to be treated with great respect and care.

This is why Catholics speak of the Liturgy, and capitalise the “L” or speak even of “the Sacred Liturgy,” for the rites and prayers and sounds and gestures and things which express, indeed which sacramentally convey, the very substance of our faith, themselves enjoy a sacrality and a centrality that transcends their human origin.

...Fashioning and refashioning our own manner of worship is, in effect, tantamount to writing our own creed, omitting or adding beliefs according to our subjective perception. This was, of course, most clearly seen in the Protestant reformers’ production of their own liturgies.

Sadly – no, alarmingly – this subjective notion of liturgy has become quite widespread in Catholic circles since Vatican II. For decades now, “liturgy groups” have prepared liturgies tailored for their worshipping community ... rather than preparing to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy as fully and as well as possible.

Such home-made liturgies run the risk that, instead of worshipping Almighty God, the community is simply celebrating itself.

From an article by Dom Alcuin Reid in AD2000, September 2003

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

Disciple?

From the Greek

Follower!

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.