

# Into the Deep

Issue 3

December 2002

## Fr Des Byrne inspires!

Seventy people from across the diocese attended the meeting in Traralgon on 16<sup>th</sup> November to hear Fr Byrne, of Oak Park Melbourne. He founded the Confraternity of St Michael in 1992 to provide catechetical instruction to young adults. In the beginning about 35 people attended. He now regularly has 200 or more in his course, which embodies the full Catechism of the Catholic Church. Those attending come early for Rosary and stay late for Confessions.

Fr Byrne gave us an historical perspective on how the Church came to be in the crisis of faith it is in today.

He mentioned how previous generations were taught the penny Catechism and how this knowledge formed a basis for their growing understanding, how faith was learnt from the lives and teachings of nuns and brothers, and how Catholics heard the same message proclaimed from every pulpit.

He summarised, "We knew who we were; we lived, to the best of our ability what we believed; and when we fell, we went frequently to Confession."

However, Fr Byrne contends that loyalty to priests and religious was to be our undoing ~ "When they turned in on the Church to destroy it, we were not willing to criticise them."

He calls Vatican II one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church and says that it cannot be blamed for modernism in the Church any more than Henry Ford can be blamed for the road toll! The problem was theologians declaring that the Pope was wrong, for example regarding Humane Vitae. They considered the authority of the Church no longer valid, and this filtered through to the laity. Fr Byrne stressed that we must bow to the authority of the Church; that our conscience is not all-powerful.

Father's response to this crisis was to go into the classrooms of his parish and teach! He taught the children the Creed, the Commandments, the Sacraments, and prayer. He found that children were inspired by the faith, and that there was no need to water it down to get them interested. He contends that students in high schools are bored with religious education because they are not challenged. We must not underestimate youth!

In answering questions and addressing concerns from the audience, Fr Byrne encouraged parents who are dissatisfied with Catholic education, to remove their children from Catholic schools and to home-school instead; or to send the children to non-Catholic schools and teach them their faith at home and in their parish if they have an orthodox priest. Those who remain in Catholic schools should not be exposed to school Masses where non-practising teachers and students are given Holy Communion ~ parents should let teachers know that their children will not be attending. Those without (school-aged) children should pray and fast. He lamented the fact that Catholic schools and universities are in essence, no longer Catholic.

Fr Byrne concluded by urging us all to continue to pray! He recommends daily Rosary and Holy Hour, and to go to Confession regularly.

### **"Do not be afraid"...**

... appears 343 times in Scripture.

When God reveals himself to us, our initial response is one of fear. He reassures us and comforts us with the words "Do not be afraid."

### **Twisting words...**

Orthodoxy has become "fundamentalism."

Sin has become "alternative lifestyles."

The Sacrifice of the Mass has become a "shared meal."

## Tolerance

Tolerance used to mean 'to recognise and respect others' beliefs and practices without sharing them or to bear or put up with something not especially liked.'

This form of tolerance is now intolerable in today's politically correct society.

The new tolerance says that 'every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyles and truth claims are equal.' This is dangerous. All laws enforce someone's viewpoint, so might determines right. With the new tolerance, there are no absolutes. All truth is relative ~ right and wrong differs from person to person and from culture to culture.

Comparative religions are taught this way in our politically correct 'Catholic' schools.

Our society has created a new civil right ~ the right neither to be offended, nor even having to listen to competing truth claims.

Since there are no standards, morals adapt to the subjective consensus of the masses. In the last 10 years, the percentage of Americans who believe there is no such thing as absolute truth has increased from approximately 50% to 75%. Christians are slightly lower. Orthodox Catholics would certainly be fossilised and ostracised!

Evolutionist Richard Dawkins (1996 Humanist of the Year!) paid us quite a compliment by describing the Christian faith as "one of the world's great evils comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate." Would that it were so vibrant!

If there is no absolute truth, the scourge of relativism never ends. An effective tactic to promote the new tolerance is Orwellian "newspeak" that uses name-calling and labelling of any opposing view with emotive words such as fanaticism, bigotry and fundamentalism. For example if one expresses disagreement with the homosexual lifestyle and its effective treatment, one is labelled "homophobic."

In support of the new tolerance a 'Catholic' school in our diocese recently held an in-service against homophobia! The fact is that homosexual activists are not looking for tolerance. They are trying to get more rights over time so that they can effectively legislate themselves above everyone else to become an elite group in society that is legally untouchable.

R. Earle, Marlo

## Weeping Madonna in WA

Congratulations on your newsletter! I edit a similar one in the Canberra diocese through the group Catholics Affirming the Faith. I thought your readers may like to know of my experience visiting the weeping Madonna in Rockingham, Western Australia. The statue of Our Lady has been weeping an oil-like substance for the most part of this year.

When my wife and I were there, the statue was behind the altar rails and it had a tray under it to collect the oil. People lined to move towards the altar rails and then kneeled for a while in front of the Madonna. When my turn came I prayed for a little while till curiosity got the better of me. I could see movement of the oil as it flowed down the Madonna's face, mantle and then into the tray under her. Most of the front part of the statue seemed to be wet with oil. After some more prayers I went to where two people used cotton wool, soaked with oil from the tray, to put a sign of the Cross on the top of your hand. The oil was indeed oily to touch and it had a strong fragrance similar to roses, which lasted for the rest of the day. Local parishioners explained that the statue had been investigated by three independent organisations. Chemical analyses had found the fluid to be similar to olive oil with an added fragrance. X-rays had confirmed that there was no reservoir which could hold the oil, and microscopic examination found no holes out of which the oil could come. Apparently critics refused to believe all this unless the statue was cut up into pieces. Happily for us, Archbishop Hickey of Perth seems to be content to accept this marvellous phenomenon as is, so that it can be a source of devotion and inspiration for all of us. It certainly has inspired me to a greater appreciation of the love our wonderful Mother and Queen in Heaven has for us.

B. Guysen, Canberra

*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

*The most wondrous evidence of the power and tenderness of God can be contemplated at Bethlehem. "That infinite and omnipotent God made himself little and limited," the Pope said, quoting the words of St. Jerome (343-420), who exhorted: "Look at him: He who holds the universe in his fist, is held in a narrow manger."* www.zenit.org



## Back to God for direction

The promotion of *Journeying Together* reminds me of an episode in the Old Testament.

It was when the chosen people of God were waiting while Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. The people were doing whatever they liked, even worshipping idols. I suppose some excuse can be made for the Jews. In Moses' time they did not know the Divine law or Jesus Christ and his law of love.

Today our children appear as the ignorant Jews of Moses' time. They are in the same situation. They do not know the laws of God, of the Church or for that matter even of our human nature.

What did Moses do? Displaying his displeasure by breaking the tablets, he went back to God for inspiration and direction. He did not form another committee from among the faithless before him. He did not ask what they wanted.

P.Crozier, Traralgon

### *Ed's note:*

There is another analogy circulating, regarding the shepherd asking the sheep where they would like to graze.

Unfortunately, this sad analogy has been strengthened since our Bishop noted at a Knights of the Southern Cross meeting that priests must become part of the flock.

(source verified)

## What kind of priest?

When I approached Bishop Coffey to ask permission for Fr Des Byrne to speak in the diocese, he agreed, on the understanding that this would not be a series of talks or a regular visit. He commented "As you would probably know, he's not my kind of priest." I was stunned at this statement, and as it echoes in my mind later, I wonder what the implications are for any orthodox priest in *our* diocese?

P. O'Brien, Sale

## "Keep the conversation going"

Bishop Jeremiah Coffey, in his Christmas message to the diocese in Catholic Life newspaper this month, exhorts us the "keep the conversation going". This was apparently the slogan after the launch of the Journeying Together pastoral plan. Contrast this with George Weigel's comments in his book *The Courage to be Catholic*, in this sense discussing the identity crisis bishops faced: "The false impression was that any authoritative teaching was a partisan move in a power game. Fearing to be seen as partisans or authoritarians, too many bishops had taken to thinking of themselves as consecrated discussion-group moderators, whose primary task was to keep the conversation going and to make sure that all those involved were reasonably happy with the ongoing dialogue. This was not only, or even primarily, bad management; it was bad theology. The act of faith was not a political act. Bishops couldn't call their people to be witnesses to the truth of Catholicism – the truths that the Church existed to proclaim to the world - unless they were convinced and effective witnesses themselves."

## Letters to Bishops' Conference

**Thank you** to all those who wrote letters for the Bishops' Conference. We trust that the volume of letters will indicate to the Australian Bishops the deep concern parents and grandparents have, that many of their children who have attended Catholic schools are leaving school after thirteen years, ignorant of many Catholic teachings. We trust that the Bishops will act quickly to rectify this problem.

M. Power, Toowoomba

## Not Three Cheers but Two Pats!

Into the Deep is not about the Life of O'Brien nor do they wield a crosier. They're just two Pats. If they were Irish or Chinese they would be Paddies.

Please join with me in giving these two Pats, two pats, for launching Into the Deep!

(No offence to the others on the committee, but their names don't "work".) R. Earle, Marlo

## Christ teaches in His Church

Christ gave authority to some members of the Church to be faithful witnesses of all that He has taught. This is the role of the Church's Magisterium. This teaching office is made up of the Pope and the Bishops throughout the world, who are in union with him.

It is the Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error.

The Pope is the chief teacher for the whole Church, and each Bishop is the chief teacher in his own diocese, under the Pope. They only teach in Christ's name and with His authority when they are in union with the Pope.

cf. Catechism 883, 890

## Contact Into the Deep...

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or mail care of Mr Pat O'Brien,

RMB 5165 Gibson's Road, Sale 3850.

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

## Letters to the Editor

Readers are welcome 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. It will be easy to slip into bitterness or gossip, which we need to avoid.

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.

## Magisterium?

From the Latin 'magister'...

Master

## Our beginnings and naming

When the April 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 our recent meeting in Traralgon, we took on the name *Confraternity of St Michael*, with the motto "*Restore all things in Christ.*"

## Last Laugh

- ☺ Referring to the modernists in the Church as "The Mod Squad" and "The Aging Radicals"!
- ☺ Referring to this newsletter as "Into the Deep-end"!
- ☺ Fr Byrne's classic ~ "The best defence against heresy is unbridled laughter!"

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