

Into the Deep

Issue 51

Newsletter of Orthodox Catholics of Gippsland

December 2006

Fr Speekman To Be Returned!

Vatican issues second Decree in his favour

The Congregation for the Clergy has given its decision regarding Father John Speekman's appeal against his second removal as Parish Priest of Morwell, by Bishop Jeremiah Coffey.

The Decree upholds Fr Speekman's appeal on the basis that Bishop Coffey did not provide any evidence in his second case which had not already been found insufficient in the first case. The Congregation found that the decision they gave in their first Decree of July 2004 still stands and Fr Speekman is to be reinstated as Parish Priest of Morwell!

It took Bishop Coffey *twelve months* to put together this second removal case, and yet he was still unable to present any new evidence. The Congregation for the Clergy has now reviewed the Bishop's reasons and evidence for removing Fr Speekman *three times*, without being able to find anything that could justify the Bishop's actions. By now they must be as tired of his obstinacy as we are, and must also be looking forward to the end of this matter, with Father Speekman finally returned to his rightful place.

We look forward in joyful hope to Fr Speekman's return to his parish in the very near future, and we thank God for hearing the prayers of His 'little ones'! Check the website www.stoneswillshout.com for further updates as they become available. See page 2 of this issue of Into the Deep for the history that led up to this significant moment.

*Awaken, o man, because God
has become man for you!*

St Augustine

(quoted by Pope Benedict in his 2005 Christmas card)

So We Can Love Him

Pope Benedict XVI

"God is so great that he can become small. God is so powerful that he can make himself vulnerable and come to us as a defenceless child, so that we can love him.

God is so good that he can give up his divine splendour and come down to a stable, so that we might find him, so that his goodness might touch us, give itself to us and continue to work through us.

This is Christmas. God has become one of us, so that we can be with him and become like him."

www.zenit.org 25-12-2005

Truth Has a Face

Pope Benedict XVI

God is the ultimate truth to whom all reason naturally tends... God is not an empty word or an abstract hypothesis; on the contrary, he is the foundation upon which to build one's life.

The believer knows that this God has a Face and that once for all, with Jesus Christ, he has drawn near to each man.

The Second Vatican Council acutely recalled this: "For, by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin" ("Gaudium et Spes," n. 22). To know him is to know the full truth, thanks to which one can find freedom: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32).

www.zenit.org 06-11-2006

All issues of Into the Deep are at www.stoneswillshout.com

'The Father Speekman Saga'

Truth Stranger Than Fiction

The following is a summary of the more significant stages in the case of Bishop Jeremiah Coffey against Fr John Speekman over the years, for those who may be wondering what all the fuss is about!

- July 2000 Fr Speekman is appointed Parish Priest of Morwell Catholic Parish by Bishop Coffey.
- Nov 2001 Bishop Coffey informs Fr Speekman that the principal of St Vincent's primary school has made a complaint against him, of psychological harassment. He does not give Fr Speekman details of the alleged harassment, except that it happened at a Parish Sacramental Team meeting.
- Dec 2001 Bishop Coffey appoints the Catholic Education Office to hold an investigation into the alleged incident. The CEO finds Fr Speekman guilty of bullying and verbal abuse, and refers to the incident as being only one of many.
- Dec 2001 Bishop Coffey assures Morwell Parish Council (in response to their concerns about rumours that Fr Speekman was to be removed) that he has no intention of removing Fr Speekman as Parish Priest.
- July 2002 Bishop Coffey delivers a Decree to Morwell Parish (while Fr Speekman is away on holiday) removing from him the governance of both Catholic schools in Morwell.
- April 2003 Bishop Coffey informs Fr Speekman that he should leave the diocese, but refuses to say why.
- May 2003 Bishop Coffey asks Fr Speekman to resign voluntarily, citing his "inability to work in a peaceful and constructive manner" with his employees and his "abusive attitude" towards those who disagree with him. He does not give any evidence. Fr Speekman refuses to resign under these circumstances.
- June 2003 Bishop Coffey assures Fr Speekman that he has not been accused of a canonical penal offence, nor of losing the support of the majority his parishioners, but that his priestly ministry in Morwell has become ineffective because of his manner of acting and speaking. Again he asks Fr Speekman to resign voluntarily, but gives no evidence for his accusations.
- July 2003 Fr Speekman is allowed to inspect the documentation of Bishop Coffey's case against him. There is still no documentation of complaints made against him. Fr Speekman writes his response to the Bishop's case.
- July 2003 Bishop Coffey issues a Decree removing Fr Speekman as parish priest of Morwell. Fr Speekman leaves Morwell Catholic Parish and has to live with family. The diocese considers him retired.
- Aug 2003 Fr Speekman formally requests revocation of the Decree. Bishop Coffey issues a Decree refusing to revoke his Decree of Removal. Fr Speekman submits an appeal to the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome against his removal.
- July 2004 The Congregation for the Clergy issues a Decree upholding Fr Speekman's appeal. They state that Bishop Coffey provided no evidence to justify his removal of Fr Speekman as Parish Priest of Morwell. They state that the case that Bishop Coffey presented in fact confirmed the *effectiveness* of Fr Speekman's ministry. The Bishop is required to reinstate Fr Speekman as Parish Priest of Morwell.
- Aug 2004 Bishop Coffey appeals to the Congregation for the Clergy for them to review their decision. The Congregation refuses to revoke their Decree upholding Fr Speekman's appeal. Bishop Coffey refuses to reinstate Fr Speekman.
- Sept 2004 Bishop Coffey begins a second removal case.
- April 2005 Fr Speekman begins working in Sydney Archdiocese while awaiting an outcome. He is appointed Administrator of St Joseph's Parish in Camperdown.
- Aug 2005 Bishop Coffey advises Fr Speekman that the second removal case will again be based on his belief that Fr Speekman's ministry in Morwell was harmful or ineffective due to his manner of acting (in spite of the Congregation finding otherwise). He asks Fr Speekman to resign (as Parish Priest of Morwell).
- Oct 2005 Fr Speekman is allowed to inspect the documentation of Bishop Coffey's case against him, and submits his response.
- Dec 2005 Bishop Coffey issues his second Decree of Removal of Fr Speekman as Parish Priest of Morwell. Fr Speekman responds to it and requests its revocation.
- Jan 2006 Bishop Coffey issues a Decree Refusing Revocation of the Decree of Removal. Fr Speekman appeals to the Congregation for the Clergy against his second removal.
- Nov 2006 The Congregation for the Clergy issues its second Decree upholding Fr Speekman's appeal and confirming that he must be returned to his parish as was decreed by them in July 2004.

Trust in the Child of Bethlehem

From Pope Benedict XVI's address on Christmas Day 2005

The Holy Father said: "On this solemn day, the Angel's proclamation rings out once again, inviting us, the men and women of the third millennium, to welcome the Saviour. May the people of today's world not hesitate to let him enter their homes, their cities, their nations, everywhere on earth!"

Benedict XVI stated that "men and women in our technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart. That is why it is so important for us to open our minds and hearts to the Birth of Christ, this event of salvation which can give new hope to the life of each human being".

He exhorted: "Wake up, O men and women of the third millennium! At Christmas, the Almighty becomes a child and asks for our help and protection. His way of showing that he is God challenges our way of being human. By knocking at our door, he challenges us and our freedom; he calls us to examine how we understand and live our lives."

"Men and women of today, humanity come of age yet often still so frail in mind and will, let the Child of Bethlehem take you by the hand! Do not fear; put your trust in him! The life-giving power of his light is an incentive for building a new world order based on just ethical and economic relationships. May his love guide every people on earth and strengthen their common consciousness of being a family called to foster relationships of trust and mutual support".

Vatican Information Services

We at Into the Deep wish our readers a prayerful Advent – as our Pope says, "In this time of preparation for Christmas, let us cultivate interior recollection so as to receive and keep Jesus in our lives."

And we wish you a happy and holy Christmas season. May you know the love and peace the Infant Jesus brings us, and may we all be His witnesses to others.

Christmas Gift

"Joy is the true gift of Christmas, and not the expensive gifts that cost time and money. And joy we can express in simple ways, with a smile, a gesture, with helping out a little, with an act of forgiveness."

Pope Benedict XVI

A Parody of the Church

Thanks for the recent edition of ITD. The review of Groome's book *What Makes Us Catholic*, is very good. The subversive nature of the book is further exposed by the following passage from the book where Groome says:

"There can be problems in making an argument from nature to favor society or social arrangements. For example, there has been much gender and racial bias in how the dominant culture has interpreted "nature." As late as 1880, the Massachusetts Medical Society argued that women were unsuited "by nature" to be physicians. This is not unlike the argument that the Catholic Church still makes against women becoming priests." (p.114)

Later he adds: "Catholics can have an air of know-it-all, acting as if ours is the only and completely true faith, replete with all the answers. Surely, this is more the sin of pride than a truly catholic spirituality. Some of the hubris is encouraged by a teaching magisterium that typically sounds absolutely certain in its pronouncements, as if faith is no longer a "leap" and all can be assured. The joke rings true that when the Catholic Church finally agrees to ordain women, the pronouncement will begin with, "As we have always taught..." (p.263)

Groome wrote this book for a general readership. It makes a mockery of his claim in the Sale Diocesan newspaper article that his dissent was confined to "scholarly" articles and circles. His dissent has even appeared in several newspapers, including the Boston Globe. Does Groome regard the Boston Globe and its readership as having attained the requisite theological sophistication that would justify him expressing his dissent in its pages? (assuming such a justification were ever possible, which of course it would not).

In all of this, Groome not only dissents from the Church's teaching, but presents a parody of it.

Name and address supplied

Please Check Your Cheques

As always, we are most grateful for the cheques we receive. We depend on your donations to assist us in our costs and we welcome all contributions.

However, we are unable to use cheques made out to "Into the Deep" as we do not have an account. This results in us having to return your cheques made out to "Into the Deep" and to ask that they be changed.

To avoid this in future, please make sure that you make all cheques out to John Henderson. This is noted on the back page of each issue of Into the Deep for your convenience.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Ed.

Like Sheep Without a Shepherd

In Michael Gilchrist's Introduction to his latest book *Lost!*, he writes:

"Lost", as used in the Scriptures, can refer to "lost sheep" or "sheep without a shepherd", in other words today's unchurched Catholics who comprise the vast majority in contemporary Australia, as in other parts of the Western world. It can mean spiritually impoverished, as most of the graduates of the Catholic education system have become since the 1970s. It can point to the loss of identity in many dioceses and Church institutions as well as to those who have "lost the plot" in opting for New Age spiritualities, pantheistic nature worship or radical feminism. In these and other senses most members of the Catholic Church in Australia are "lost". (p.1)

The word "lost" in all the above senses and more, can certainly be applied to the state of the faith in the diocese of Sale. Not only has Bishop Coffey been lost in his own liberal agenda but he has lost sight of the fact that the office of Bishop is an ecclesiastical office and as such it is primarily a spiritual one.

Like his Brisbane counterpart, he too seems to consider the abundance of priestly vocations in the past as something not to be sought after at present and certainly not the way forward for the Church in his diocese.

The stark reality though, is that it is precisely this liberal vision that has subjected the diocese to its current bondage of decay, and it will remain in this grip for as long as Bishop Coffey is its leader.

In his article in the November issue of *Catholic Life* (p.14), Bishop Coffey admits that he considers the sacramentalizing of (mostly unevangelized) school

children and the increase of lay "Ministers of the Sick and the Eucharist" as success stories of the diocese. At the same time, he all too readily attributes the pastoral failures and the deep spiritual crisis in the diocese to the "national trend" and to the difficulties of the modern world. This is a sad and desperate excuse for his leaving the diocese spiritually lost and bankrupt.

The fact remains that for 18 years he has been at the helm, with the authority and opportunity to spread and deepen the faith and to protect it against harm. But instead of working to counter the evils of secularism, materialism and relativism, he has squandered Church resources on defective catechetical programs and a religious education curriculum that damages the faith of teachers, parents and students and empties out our parishes. He has sanctioned a pastoral plan that has the faithful journeying together in a desolate waste.

On various occasions, Bishop Coffey has displayed contempt for Church teaching, liturgical discipline, canon law and the Holy See. With this attitude towards the Church's Magisterium, it is hard to imagine him taking notice of the concerns of the orthodox faithful entrusted to his care.

What we have been witnessing is the leadership of a bishop whose administrative incompetence has become a cross which we have to endure. Under Bishop Coffey's leadership orthodox Catholics have felt spiritually hijacked. And through our strong and continuous support for Fr Speakman in his struggle for justice, we have come to realise that we are not only in battle defending the faith, but are also engaged in an ongoing battle against bishops who undermine the Church in this country.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell

Daily Suffering and Love

Christ's teachings, like all his behavior, were difficult to accept. Many withdrew and went their separate ways. Yet, when Jesus questioned the Twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?", Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we believe...that you are the Only One of God."

In this way, Peter initiates the Church's Christological confession of faith. Though incomplete, his faith was nevertheless authentic and open – not a faith in something, but in Someone; in Christ. Peter was not, however, free of human weakness, and in time he too betrays the Master.

The school of faith, then, is not a triumphal march but a journey marked daily by suffering and love, trials and faithfulness. Peter knew the humiliation of denial, and for this he wept bitterly. But having learned his own nothingness, he was then ready for his mission.

That mission, made possible by our Lord's acceptance of Peter's fragile love and launched with the words "Follow me," is marked with hope: Notwithstanding his infidelity, Peter knows the Risen Lord is at his side. His long journey in faith, constantly open to the Spirit of Jesus, renders him a credible witness – one who knows the true joy that lies in Christ, the way of salvation!

Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, 24 May 2006 www.zenit.org

Free Admission

Bluegrass mass

Music for this Saturday's 7pm Mass at Sacred Heart Church Morwell will have a different sound. The Mass will feature local band 'Three 'n' a bit', which includes Greg McGrath on banjo and vocals, Carolyn Boothman on vocals and guitar and Catherine Smith and Louise Haley on vocals. Songs during the Mass will be traditional bluegrass hymns including 'Amazing Grace', 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot', 'I know who holds tomorrow', 'In the Sweet By and By', and 'Keep on the Sunny Side'.

All are welcome.

The above appeared in the Latrobe Valley Express of 6th November 2006.

The only information missing was the admission price.

A 'Bluegrass Mass' – you have to be joking. Traditional bluegrass hymns – give us a break.

What in God's name is going on? Are there not enough traditional Catholic hymns?

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most sacred celebration in the Catholic Church. Why do we trivialise this most sacred of mysteries in such a way? We do not attend Mass to be entertained.

It is scarcely 12 months since Fr Cleary with the blessing of Bishop Coffey, cancelled Eucharistic Adoration in our parish. We can have a 'Bluegrass Mass' but not Adoration. And we wonder why the faith in this diocese is dying. We accept the banal but not the sacred. Wake up and let your Bishop and priest know that we are not going to accept this secularising of the sacred.

John Henderson, Morwell

Desolation Without God

Pope Benedict XVI

Deprived of his reference to God, man cannot respond to the fundamental questions that trouble and will always trouble his heart concerning the end of his life, hence, also its meaning. As a result, it is no longer possible to introduce into society those ethical values that alone can guarantee a coexistence worthy of man.

Human destiny without reference to God cannot but be the desolation of anguish, which leads to desperation.

Only in reference to God's Love which is revealed in Jesus Christ can man find the meaning of his existence and live in hope, even if he must face evils that injure his personal existence and the society in which he lives.

www.zenit.org 20-11-2006

The Pope and His Bear

Pope Benedict XVI

Allow me to again express a thought that, in my brief memoirs, I developed in the context of my appointment as archbishop of Munich and Freising. I had to become successor of St Corbinian and I did so.

From my childhood I was fascinated by his legend, according to which, a bear had mangled the saint's horse during his trip across the Alps. Corbinian reprimanded it severely and, as punishment, put all his baggage on its back all the way to Rome. So the bear, weighed down with the saint's burden, had to walk to Rome and only then did Corbinian set him free.

In 1977, when I had to face the difficult decision whether or not to accept my appointment as archbishop of Munich and Freising, which would have taken me away from my accustomed university activity, leading me to new tasks and new responsibilities, I reflected much. Then I remembered that bear and the interpretation of verses 22 and 23 of Psalm 73, which St Augustine developed, in a situation very similar to mine in the context of his priestly and episcopal ordination, and which he would later express in his sermons on the Psalms.

In this psalm, the psalmist wonders why it frequently goes well for the wicked of this world and why it goes so badly for many good persons. Then, the psalmist says: I was foolish and did not understand, standing before you like a brute beast, but then I entered the sanctuary and understood that precisely in difficulties I was very close to you and you were always with me.

With love, Augustine often took up this psalm and, seeing in the expression "I was like a brute beast in your presence" ("iumentum" in Latin) in reference to the beasts of burden that were then used in North Africa to plough the earth, identified himself with that "iumentum," as a beast of burden of God, identified with it as some one who is under the weight of his burden, the "sarcina episcopalis" [episcopal ministry].

He had chosen the life of a scholar and, as he says later, God called him to be a "beast of burden," a good ox drawing the plough in God's field, which does the hard work entrusted to it. But then he acknowledges: Just as the beast of burden is very close to the farmer, working under his guidance, so I am also very close to God, as this way I serve him directly for the building of his Kingdom, for the building of the Church.

With the background of this thought of the bishop of Hippo, St Corbinian's bear always encourages me again to carry out my service with joy and confidence - 30 years ago and also today, in my new task - saying day after day "yes" to God: I have become for you a beast of burden, but as such "I am always with you" (Psalm 73:23). St Corbinian's bear was set free in Rome. In my case, the "Owner" decided otherwise.

Letter to Another Editor

The following is a letter I sent to Colin Coomber, Editor of *Catholic Life* in regards to the page 3 notice in the November edition of *Catholic Life* about Father Shanley [see below – Ed.]. I do not expect them to publish my letter, but I just wished to point out the injustice of the system. Thank you for your great magazine.

Vic Burton, Lakes Entrance

Dear Mr Coomber

It is times like this that the policy of not printing letters in the *Catholic Life* really irks me and many others. The article on page 3 of the November issue that states that Father Shanley submitted his request for retirement is totally misleading.

Approaching his 75th birthday, Father *had* to submit his request for retirement, but was also permitted to request permission to stay on, which *he did* at the same time. This has been documented as well.

The article gives the impression that Fr Shanley wanted to retire. At *no* stage did he wish to retire. Obviously with his failing health he could not go on forever. To have Bishop Coffey and Mons McCartan arrive at St Brendan's and inform Fr Shanley early October that Father had to vacate the presbytery and would no longer be parish priest of St Brendan's from the 1st of November, is outrageous to say the least.

Father had his faults, don't we all. Everything Father did was for the betterment of people's lifetime journey to the Lord. A few examples:

- Father said daily Mass at least 9 times per week; added to that funerals, weddings, Healing Masses, Mass at the cemetery, extra Masses at Easter, Christmas and Divine Mercy Sunday, and wherever and whenever was required; and never cut a rostered Mass unless it was physically impossible by time and location.
- Daily Rosary and Divine Office before Mass.
- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every week.
- Playing his recorder to the children and teaching them all sorts of hymns and songs.
- Ministering to the sick in their homes, plus those in nursing homes and of all the people who come from far and wide for help and healing.
- Father purchased the blocks over the road for future secondary education in Lakes Entrance, should it ever be required. You should have seen Fr Shanley and his brother Jim, in all sorts of weather over the block for years, putting in drainage, building up the block and fencing the lot, all to save the parish financial hardship.
- Father and Jim constantly cutting the grass on the oval and doing maintenance around the Church and brother Jim up on the scaffolding and the roof inside and outside the Church, with Father holding on for safety.

Personally I love the man, like many many others do, and we are grateful that he is staying in Lakes Entrance, which will obviously benefit the future parish priest of the Parish in Partnership with Orbost, but the hurt he has received is terrible.

Fr Shanley has a letter, and it was on display in the Church porch, from the Bishop thanking Father for accepting the Bishop's decision to remove him, and setting out what he can, and cannot do in the future. Father Shanley *was pushed* out of the job.

I am sending you this letter to enable you to see how unfair, for whatever the reason, the policy of denying freedom of reply to misleading articles.

Yours in Christ,

Vic Burton

Retirement Notice

The notice Vic Burton refers to, began:

"The retirement of three parish priests will necessitate the appointment of replacements.

Fr John Shanley who has been parish priest of Lakes Entrance since 1972 and a priest of the diocese for 50 years, submitted his request for retirement to Bishop Jeremiah Coffey who has accepted it."

It goes on to announce that Fr John Phelan and Fr John Davine have also retired.

No Letters

Catholic Life removed its 'Letters to the Editor' feature in 2002. Editor Colin Coomber noted in personal correspondence that the reason for no longer having letters to the editor was not to silence orthodoxy or stop anyone being critical of what's happening in the diocese (as I'd suggested) but rather to allow more space to publish teaching articles about the Catholic faith. Anyone spotted any of them in the past 4 years?
Ed.

How To Become a Saint

From a homily of Pope Benedict XVI

But how can we become saints, friends of God? An initial response to this question is this: To be saints it is not necessary to perform extraordinary deeds and works, nor is it necessary to possess exceptional charisms.

But this only tells us what sainthood is not. The positive answer is that to become a saint it is above all necessary to listen to Jesus and then to follow him and not lose heart in the face of difficulties.

“If anyone wants to serve me,” he says, “he must follow me, and where I am there also is my servant. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him” (John 12:26). Whoever entrusts himself to him and loves him with sincerity, will die to himself as the grain of wheat buried in the earth.

He knows in fact that whoever tries to keep his life for himself will lose it and whoever gives his life, in this way, finds life (cf. John 12:24-25). The experience of the Church demonstrates that, although they take different paths, all forms of holiness must always pass through the way of the cross, the way of self-denial.

The biographies of the saints depict men and women who, always docile to divine designs, sometimes endured indescribable sufferings, persecutions and martyrdom. They persevered in their task. “These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress,” we read in the Book of Revelation, “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14).

Their names are written in the book of life (cf. Revelation 20:12); paradise is their eternal abode. The example of the saints encourages us to follow in their footsteps, to experience the joy of those who entrust themselves to God, because the only cause of sadness is to live far from him.

Holiness demands a constant effort but it is possible for all since it is not just the work of man but is above all a gift of God, who is thrice holy (cf. Isaiah 6:3).

www.zenit.org 01-11-2006

Holy Priests

Christ needs holy priests! Today’s world demands holy priests! Only a holy priest can become, in an increasingly secularized world, a resounding witness to Christ and his Gospel. And only thus can a priest become a guide for men and women and a teacher of holiness.

People, especially the young, are looking for such guides. A priest can be a guide and teacher only to the extent that he becomes an authentic witness!

John Paul II: In My Own Words, p.107

Impressive Priest

Thank you for Into the Deep. I have been accessing them on the website, from the earliest issue, October 2002 to now. My reason for the interest in this publication is from friends within the Catholic Church, and I have also taken an interest in Father Speekman’s removal from the Morwell Catholic Parish.

I am not of the Catholic faith myself, but I have attended weddings, christenings and funerals in the Catholic church in Commercial Road Morwell for many years. I have lived in Morwell for some fifty four years.

When attending a good friend’s family christening, I was surprised when the priest – Fr Speekman – came over to my wife and myself and started talking to us (general conversation). I was surprised by this as I had never met Fr Speekman before. At this stage I found Fr Speekman to be a very impressive priest and this had continued up until his removal from the parish.

Allan Lawrence, Morwell

Faith As Gift

From a commentary by Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the Pontifical Household preacher

The criticism of non-believers and dialogue with them, when carried out in respect and reciprocal loyalty, are very useful to us. Above all they make us humble. They oblige us to take note that faith is not a privilege or an advantage for anyone. We cannot impose it or demonstrate it, but only propose it and show it with our life. “What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” says St Paul (1Cor 4:7). In the end, faith is a gift, not a merit, and as all gifts it can only be lived in gratitude and humility.

The relationship with non-believers also helps us to purify our faith of clumsy representations. Very often what non-believers reject is not the true God, the living God of the Bible, but his double, a distorted image of God that believers themselves have contributed to create. Rejecting this God, non-believers oblige us to go back to the truth of the living and true God, who is beyond all our representations and explanations, and not to fossilize or trivialize him.

But there is also a wish to be expressed: that St Thomas might find today many imitators not only in the first part of his story – when he states he does not believe – but also at the end, in that magnificent act of faith that leads him to exclaim: “My Lord and my God!”

www.zenit.org 24-04-2006

Why Do We Have Catholic Education Offices?

Catholics have grown up with the claim of the Church in regard to faith and morals. The reason is that what we *do* is really what we *believe*. Catholic teaching is to come to us through the Pope, bishop and parish priests; that is, those who *officially* have the duty to care for our souls. All the rest are extra-curricular.

In recent times there has come into being a beast called an 'Education Office'. Why? Some years back the issue arose of how the government could best hand on those financial grants needed to keep the parish Catholic schools going in the face of the pressure of post-World War II migration.

The government funds were to help with the capital effort of building new schools, but also to provide equity to parents struggling to meet costs and *obliged* to send their kids to Catholic schools. A big question to be faced was: should parents' money be given to them directly, or to a 'system' to handle it for them?

The bishops decided on a system whereby, through their own bureaucracy, the government grants for children/parents would be received and handled in bulk. A Catholic Education Commission would negotiate at state and federal levels for funds, later disbursed to an Education Office. This diocesan office would release the money to schools because it didn't belong to the Education Office nor to the diocese. These grants, really meant for the benefit of individual families and their kids, were now swallowed up in 'the system'.

This decision by the bishops suited the government, since it preferred to send out block cheques rather than deal with many individual families. But what effect has it had on the previously Catholic school system? It has created a bloated financial giant that bishops won't unsettle because it is a channel for the inflow of enormous amounts of money. The system has grown into a parasitical excrescence, because it lives off a host from which it gradually sucks the life. As it has gained stronger fiscal control and employed more faithless 'experts', it has effectively squeezed priests out of the schools, and so real faith and its practice began to disappear from schools and children.

This need not have happened. For years Fr John Doyle, S.J., who knew the system inside out, advocated a voucher system which would have kept parents in the equation and not supplanted the clergy. After all, an Education Office is only a local administrative creation; it has no pastoral authority (which belongs to the parish priest), but skims off the cream and juggles a few matters related to teacher recruitment and training. It is actually meant to *help* the parish priest who really has the right to hire and fire, not impede him in his proper pastoral role.

Government vouchers given directly to parents could

be 'cashed in' or lodged by parents at that school which they consider best suits their conscientious choice. After all, for years the Church has been telling us that the parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. They have the right of choice. They are not just financial clients of an educational business. For that they can go elsewhere.

These days governments are ready to approve independent schools with grants which don't have to go through any CEO. Genuine practising teachers could be selected according to suitability and priests readily welcomed to infuse and help strengthen real faith. Parents would be granted the status given them by the Church. What say ye?

S.C., Melbourne

To Those on Holiday

Pope Benedict XVI

My wish for them [those on holiday] is that this awaited rest serves to strengthen their mind and body, which, given the hectic course of modern existence, daily undergoes a continuous fatigue and strain.

The holidays also afford a precious opportunity to spend more time with relatives, to visit family and friends, in a word, to give more space to those human contacts whose desired cultivation is impeded by the rhythm of daily duties.

Certainly, not everyone can take advantage of vacation time and many must bypass it for various motives. I think in a particular way of those who are alone, of the elderly and the sick who often experience solitude even more during this time.

To these our brothers and sisters, I would like to manifest my spiritual closeness, heartily wishing that none of them lack the support and comfort of friendly people.

For many, vacation becomes a profitable occasion for cultural contacts, for prolonged moments of prayer and of contemplation in contact with nature or in monasteries and religious structures.

Having more free time, one can dedicate oneself more easily to conversation with God, meditation on Sacred Scripture and reading some useful, formative book. Those who experience this spiritual repose know how useful it is not to reduce vacations to mere relaxation and amusement.

Faithful participation in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration helps one to feel a living part of the ecclesial community even when one is outside his or her own parish. Wherever we find ourselves, we always need to be nourished by the Eucharist.

www.zenit.org 25-08-2006

Accept Truth and Love

Pope Benedict XVI

“For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice” (John 18:37).

But, what is the “truth” which Christ came into the world to witness? His whole existence reveals that God is love. This is, therefore, the truth of which he gave full testimony with the sacrifice of his own life on Calvary. The cross is the “throne” from which he manifested the sublime royalty of God-Love. By giving himself in expiation of the sin of the world, he defeated the power of the “prince of this world” (John 18:31) and established definitively the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom that is manifested in fullness at the end of time, after all his enemies and finally death, are subjected to him (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Then the Son will hand over the Kingdom to the Father and finally God will be “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). The road to achieve this goal is long and it is not possible to take short cuts. It is necessary that each person freely accept the truth of the love of God. He is Love and Truth, and love as well as truth never impose themselves: They knock on the door of the heart and mind and, where they enter, bring peace and joy. This is the way God reigns; this is his plan of salvation, a “mystery,” in the biblical sense of the term, namely, a plan that is revealed little by little in history.

www.zenit.org 26-11-2006

Confession

“One of the roots of the helplessness that assails many people today is found in their inability to see themselves as sinners and to allow themselves to be forgiven, an inability often resulting from the isolation of those who, by living as if God did not exist, have no one from whom they can seek forgiveness” (John Paul II, “Ecclesia in Europa,” No. 76).

“For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation. Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true ‘spiritual resurrection,’ restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1468).

“It would be an illusion to want to strive for holiness in accordance with the vocation that God has given to each one of us without frequently and fervently receiving this sacrament of conversion and sanctification” (John Paul II, March 27, 2004).

Rediscover Christmas Traditions

From an audience by Pope Benedict XVI in December 2005

Noting the rise of yuletide consumerism, Benedict XVI invited the faithful to rediscover the spiritual traditions of Christmas in order to transmit them to future generations.

From among the numerous Christmas symbols the Pontiff chose light, “one of the richest in spiritual meaning” on “which I would like to reflect briefly.” [...] “It is a symbol that evokes a reality that affects man’s inner being,” the Pope added. “I am referring to the light of good that overcomes evil, of love that overcomes hatred, of life that conquers death.

“Christmas makes us think of this interior light, of the divine light that presents to us again the proclamation of the definitive victory of the love of God over sin and death.” The Saviour awaited by the nations is “the star that indicates the way and the guide of people, wayfarers amid the darkness and dangers of the world toward the salvation promised by God and realized in Jesus Christ,” the Holy Father said.

“On seeing the streets and squares of our cities adorned with glittering lights, let us remember that these lights evoke another light, invisible to our eyes, but not to our hearts,” he urged. “Contemplating them, when lighting the candles of churches or the Nativity and Christmas tree lights in our homes, may our spirits open to the true spiritual light brought to all men and women of good will,” the Bishop of Rome continued.

“The God with us, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary, is the Star of our lives!” he exclaimed. “Let us pray to the Lord to hasten his glorious coming among us, among all those who are suffering, as only in him can they find the answer to the authentic expectations of the human heart.”

“May this Star of light that never sets, communicate to us the strength to follow always the path of truth, justice and love,” the Pope exhorted.

Before concluding, the Bishop of Rome invited the pilgrims to live the days preceding Christmas with Mary, “the Virgin of silence and listening.”

“May she, who was totally enveloped by the light of the Holy Spirit, help us to understand and to live fully the mystery of Christ’s Christmas,” he said.

www.zenit.org 21-12-2005

*“It is better that scandals arise
than truth be suppressed.”*

Pope St Gregory the Great

Advent Decorations

Answered by Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum university

Q: I'd appreciate some direction on the appropriate degree of altar flowers during the Advent and Christmas season and the location of a Christmas crèche. Is it acceptable to have a crèche within the sanctuary? If so, is there a preference for directly in front of the altar or off to the side, about 15 feet from the altar? – *a Pennsylvania reader*

A: The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, No. 305, gives the following indications regarding flowers:

“Moderation should be observed in the decoration of the altar.

“During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this season, without expressing prematurely the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions.

“Floral decorations should always be done with moderation and placed around the altar rather than on its mensa.”

There is a very widespread custom of using poinsettias (usually red or white) during the Christmas season.

There are no official norms regarding the crèche, or crib. Most churches seem to place it to one side of the sanctuary or in some other part of the Church, such as a side chapel. It very much depends on the church's size and architecture.

I have occasionally seen a crib in front of an altar but it is probably not the best position. On the one hand, placing it within the sanctuary makes it difficult for the faithful to get close and spend some time contemplating the mystery of Bethlehem. On the other, it can easily become an obstacle to the smooth realization of the liturgical functions.

www.zenit.org

How did God prepare the world for the mystery of Christ?

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.102

God prepared for the coming of his Son over the centuries. He awakened in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming and he prepared for it specifically through the Old Testament, culminating with John the Baptist who was the last and greatest of the prophets. We relive this long period of expectancy in the annual liturgical celebration of the season of Advent.

Life is Too Political

Approximately 4 weeks before the Victorian state election, I saw our parish priest, Fr Peter Bickley.

I discussed with him Labor's platform regarding legalising abortion right up till birth, right after the election if they won.

Father asked me – What do you want me to do about it?

I said – Father, I'd like you to give a strongly worded sermon about this very important issue, as well as for us to hand out cards (from Right to Life) depicting a newborn baby with the words: “Kill her now, it's murder. Kill her before birth, it's 'abortion'.”

His comments – No, no, it is too political.

It is sad to see that nowadays even from some of the Catholic hierarchy, any defence of the innocent life of the unborn is too political. No wonder our great Pope John Paul II referred to the “culture of death”!

Fons Janssen, Willung South

The Rosary, a Treasure to be Rediscovered

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae

Dear brothers and sisters! A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Let us do so, especially...as a means of confirming the direction outlined in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, from which the pastoral plans of so many particular Churches have drawn inspiration as they look to the immediate future.

I turn particularly to you, my dear brother bishops, priests and deacons, and to you, pastoral agents in your different ministries: through your own personal experience of the beauty of the Rosary, may you come to promote it with conviction.

I also place my trust in you, theologians: by your sage and rigorous reflection, rooted in the word of God and sensitive to the lived experience of the Christian people, may you help them to discover the Biblical foundations, the spiritual riches and the pastoral value of this traditional prayer.

I count on you, consecrated men and women, called in a particular way to contemplate the face of Christ at the school of Mary.

I look to all of you, brothers and sisters of every state of life, to you, Christian families, to you, the sick and elderly, and to you, young people: confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives.

May this appeal of mine not go unheard!

Muddled Thinking

Heartiest congratulations on your brilliant analysis of the incoherence in Archbishop Bathersby's bizarre letter to Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* on vocations ('Lost Indeed', November 2006 ITD).

The lack of logic in the Archbishop's letter has baffled and disappointed many Brisbane Catholics, but it has taken your splendid journal to point out, with penetrating clarity, just how muddled his thinking is and how unfair he has been to Michael Gilchrist.

Michael Apthorp, Chapel Hill, QLD

Brisbane's Vocations Crisis

Here's another fascinating insight into the unusual logic from the Brisbane Archdiocese relating to their vocations crisis/non-crisis.

The *Catholic Leader* (05-11-2006) ran an article with Archbishop Bathersby's strange letter to the *Courier-Mail* in which he defends the poor seminary numbers in Queensland (it's not a crisis), then claims that vocations will flow from the exciting new direction the Archdiocese is taking, while adding that he has no desire for full seminaries as in the bad old days (see November ITD p.5 for more on the Archbishop's letter).

But the *Catholic Leader* in reporting on this, adds the following:

"Holy Spirit Seminary rector Fr Michael McCarthy said several recent initiatives in the archdiocese were helping to turn around the low number of seminarians. He said this included an increased interest in the priesthood following the appointment of Mark Lysaght as the archdiocese's first lay vocations promotions officer in January."

A lay person, to promote vocations to the priesthood! What a diplomatic way to try to fill seminaries that you're not really sure you want full. It's about as unusual as appointing a champion soccer player to encourage aspiring young sportsmen to play cricket! Don't they have any inspiring priests left in Brisbane?

Ed.

Whole and Entire

If there is one challenge facing the Church and her priests today, it is the challenge of transmitting the Christian message whole and entire, without letting it be emptied of its substance. The Gospel cannot be reduced to mere human wisdom. Salvation lies not in clever human words or schemes, but in the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Paul II: In My Own Words, p.97

True Compassion

Evangelium Vitae, no. 66

To concur with the intention of another person to commit suicide and to help in carrying it out through so-called "assisted suicide" means to cooperate in, and at times to be the actual perpetrator of, an injustice which can never be excused, even if it is requested.

In a remarkably relevant passage Saint Augustine writes that "it is never licit to kill another: even if he should wish it, indeed if he request it because, hanging between life and death, he begs for help in freeing the soul struggling against the bonds of the body and longing to be released; nor is it licit even when a sick person is no longer able to live".

Even when not motivated by a selfish refusal to be burdened with the life of someone who is suffering, euthanasia must be called a false mercy, and indeed a disturbing "perversion" of mercy.

True "compassion" leads to sharing another's pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear. Moreover, the act of euthanasia appears all the more perverse if it is carried out by those, like relatives, who are supposed to treat a family member with patience and love, or by those, such as doctors, who by virtue of their specific profession are supposed to care for the sick person even in the most painful terminal stages.

Pope Hopes Eucharistic Adoration Will Increase

Benedict XVI hopes that the next International Eucharistic Congress, to be held in Quebec City in June 2008, will relaunch adoration of Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. [...]

"Eucharistic Congresses," the Pope said, "which are held in different places and continents, are always a source of spiritual renewal, a reason to make the most holy Eucharist better known, which is the most precious treasure that Jesus left us."

These congresses, the Holy Father added, "are also an encouragement for the Church to spread and bear witness unhesitatingly to the love of Christ in all realms of society."

"What need humanity of today has to rediscover in the Eucharistic sacrament the source of its hope!" Benedict XVI continued.

"I thank the Lord because many parishes, along with devoted celebration of the holy Mass, are educating the faithful in Eucharistic adoration and I hope that, in preparation of the International Eucharistic Congress, this practice will be ever more widespread," he added.

www.zenit.org 09-11-2006

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

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	Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat 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 7.30pm – midnight (alternating months, December onwards)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9am – 12noon 2 nd Thursday 10am – 11am 11 th of the month 1 Hour after Mass
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) 9.30am – 10.30am
Morwell	<i>CANCELLED</i>
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 (alternating months, January onwards)

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

Mass for Vocations

Sale Saturday 9am

“Genuine prayer transforms hearts, opens us to dialogue, understanding and reconciliation, and breaks down the walls erected by violence, hatred and revenge.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Reprinting ITD articles

ITD articles have appeared in all sorts of interesting places around the world. Many who use them have first requested permission to reprint articles, but others have reprinted articles or letters without permission and without acknowledging the source, or incorrectly noting our website address.

Please, when reprinting articles from Into the Deep, acknowledge both “Into the Deep” and the website address www.stoneswillshout.com, as well as note the edition (month and year). Any articles reprinted must be reprinted in full, unless an edited version is submitted first for approval.

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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Australia**

- 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)

ITD is released on or around the first day of each month by email and on the website; printed copies up to a week later. Deadline for contributions is one week before the end of the month (but preferably by the 15th of the month).

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.