



# The Journal



Winter 2006

## EARLY CHRISTIANITY: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF MOVEMENTS & COMMUNITIES

by Dr. Michael Zarb, Cobble Hill, BC

Early Christianity was not catholic or uniform in any sense of the terms. It started within a mixed Jewish and Hellenist environment and adopting and adapting elements from both of these cultural streams it developed into a complex of diverse movements and communities.

Jesus and his followers lived in a Jewish milieu containing various factions and movements representing different doctrinal tenets and practices e.g. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, in towns and at Qumran.

Jesus of Nazareth believed himself to be a Jew, lived as a Jew and died as a Jew. He did not start a new religion nor did he, rejecting the existing Jewish institutions, organise a structured community. Rather, through his unpretentious teaching, he attempted to hone the spirit of Judaism.

After his death his followers, who were Jews, continued as a Jewish group, believing the 'Messiah', expected generally by the people, but emphasised by such movements as those of the Zealots and Qumran, has come in the person of Jesus, thus initiating another messianic movement, the 'Jesus Movement'.

It was at Antioch, within a Hellenistic Jewish community that the Christians were first called "Christians" i.e. "Messiah People" [Acts 11:26]. In Palestine they were probably not called by that name since there were other 'messianists' around. Near the end of the century we find them referred to e.g. in the curse of the Jewish prayers, as the 'minim', i.e. sectarians.

This Jesus/Messiah movement exhibits a diversity of doctrine and practice according to geographical location and cultural environment.

In Palestine, before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, we find in Jerusalem at least two communities, the Hebrew one headed by James [Acts 15:13f], and that of the Hellenists whom the Seven were chosen to help [Acts 6:31]. In the rest of Palestine there were other Hebrew communities e.g. in Galilee.

In the Diaspora there were first the non-Pauline communities, e.g. in Antioch, Damascus and Rome and then the Pauline communities in Asia Minor and Greece [cf. Paul's journeys / letters].

The Gospel writers, with their emphases on different aspects of their christology, even when they share the same traditions, attest to the diversity of the beliefs of the communities they represent. Traditions of important events in the life of Jesus are rendered subservient to the christological and local interests and biases of the writers.

The fact that there were different Gospels, whether canonical or not, and other writings indicates a diversity of communities served by writings which at the same time mirrored the beliefs of the respective community.

Mark reflects a Gentile community very ignorant of Jewish culture and portrays a Jesus completely misunderstood by the authorities, his people and his own disciples, a defeated messiah abandoned at his death, not only by his followers, but even by his God, yet proclaimed the 'Son of God' by his Gentile executioner. The resurrection is only announced to the women (Mk 16:71) confirming the three predictions (Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:34); no appearances are mentioned.

At the other end of the spectrum John presents a very different Jesus for a different community (probably comprising a Jewish nucleus): a superhuman messiah, an almost godlike figure always in control of every situation including his arrest (cohort thrown to the ground), trial (Jesus holds the upper hand on Pilate) and execution (calmly converses with his mother and Beloved Disciple, and at the very end realising his task is accomplished he peacefully dies). The risen Jesus appears to his disciples imparting to them the Holy Spirit and is confessed by Thomas as "My Lord and my God".

In between stand Matthew and Luke, both presenting a very human Jesus, starting from his extraordinary birth, through a period of teaching and healing, his execution and ending with the appearances and instructions to his disciples.

Matthew, probably representing a Palestinian group, perhaps Galilee, but not Jerusalem, reports the crucial appearances of the risen Christ and the final command in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem as Lk-Acts and Jn do.

Luke's community most probably contained hellenistic Jews well versed in the Old Testament and capable of grasping the numerous allusions to it.

That these were separate communities with differing christological interests is also seen, for example, by the dissimilarities in the birth narratives.

As an example of significant doctrinal divergence one may mention the emphasis laid on the Last Supper.

The Journal  
Winter 2006  
Vol. 9, No. 1

**Editorial Team**

Chris Diamond François Brassard  
Arthur Menu Phil Little  
Jim Noonan (NCR Regional Editor)  
Emil Kutarna (SK Regional Editor)

The Journal welcomes submissions from small faith communities and individuals that share its vision of the Christian Church as one in which all are equal, decisions are made by consensus, healthy relationships are nurtured, justice is done, and the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

All submissions to the Journal must be received by February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15.

Address all submissions and correspondence to the **Principal Editor:**  
Chris Diamond  
4390 Kingscote Rd.  
Cowichan Bay, BC V0R 1N2  
Phone: (250) 743-5088  
Email: diamondcnf@shaw.ca

**Desktop Publisher:**

Michael Irving  
Email: ballinderry@shaw.ca

**Assembling & Mailing:**

Jim Doyle & crew

**PUBLISHER**

Xristos Community Society  
35-10070 Fifth Street, Sidney, BC V8L 2X9  
Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product  
Agreement No. 40025971

Xristos Community Society, a non-denominational society incorporated in British Columbia, serves the Gospel of Jesus Christ through worship and the promotion and development of Christian small faith communities across Canada. Xristos Community Society is a registered charity in Canada. The Journal is distributed free of charge. Xristos Community Society needs and welcomes donations in support of its ministry.  
See the back page for further details.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1-3 Early Christianity: A Kaleidoscope Of Movements & Communities  
*Dr. Michael Zarb*
- 4 Cafeteria Catholic  
*Emil Kutarna*
- 5 I Am A Cafeteria Catholic & Proud Of It!  
*John Palardy*
- 6-7 Sophia  
*Dianne Peck*
- 7-8 Cafeteria Catholics  
*Chris Diamond*
- 9 Living As A Cafeteria Catholic  
*Phil Little*
- 10-11 Secularism And Benedict XVI  
*Jack Shea*
- 12 Theological Soapbox: Creating The World  
*Arthur Menu*
- 13-15 A Dialogue With Rosemary Gravenor  
*François Brassard*
- 16 Voice Of The Faithful  
*Terry Renshaw*
- 16-19 Feminist Theology And Humankind Theological Liberation  
*Jim Lauder*

## FOCUS TOPIC

*for the Spring 2006 Issue*

How do we build a positive relationship between Islam and the Christian West?

***Note Articles for this issue are due by May 15.***

Reader's may send in questions to the Corpus Canada Forum at [www.corpuscanada.org](http://www.corpuscanada.org)

While the Synoptics report and interpret the Last Supper in terms of the 'Eucharistic' meal, stressing the food elements, symbolising the person of Jesus, anticipating the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of God, John focuses on the interrelationship of the community members in terms of a symbolic action, the "washing of the feet" and Jesus' speeches stressing inter-relationship (the 'New Commandment').

This probably indicates that the Eucharistic meal was at least not central to, maybe not even existent in, the belief and ritual of the Johannine community. Further, the Didache (9:1-5) also indicates that the words of the Eucharistic ritual were in some communities very different from those we are familiar with in the Synoptics and Paul.

Non-conformity in certain significant practices was exercised by these various communities. Luke/Acts tell us that the Galilean disciples continued to worship at the temple indicating no disparagement towards the Temple, on the other hand the Hellenists did not have the same respect, as evidenced by the speech of Stephen who was executed not in as much as he was a "Christian" but because he spoke against the Temple [Acts 7:48].

Note that this disagreement regarding the Temple did not compel the Hebrew community to expel the Hellenists, on the contrary they devised a scheme for the distribution of the common funds to the Hellenist widows. Perhaps their common belief in Jesus was more important than their cultural and theological differences.

Acts 19:1-5 refer to disciple/believers in Ephesus, who were not baptised except in the baptism of John and had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Probably these were disciples of John turned disciples of Jesus following his teaching but had not yet adopted the "Christian" baptism (an action absent from the teaching or practice of Jesus) which became a visible action designating the adherents of "The Way." [attested in the communities represented by Acts, Matthew, and Paul; John 4:1 has Jesus' disciples baptising like John the Baptist; v.2 corrects 3:22, i.e. Jesus himself did not baptise; Mark is silent regarding Jesus' practice.]

In the Palestine area, the Jesus movement was so Jewish that some of the early members (the circumcision group) opposed the acceptance of Gentile converts into the movement (Acts 11:2); the Pharisee Christians demanded the Gentile converts to be circumcised and observe the law of Moses (Acts 15:5) contrary to the practice of Paul (Acts 15:1, 24; Gal passim; Phil 3).

Peter (Acts 10:47f; 15:6-11) and James (Acts 15:13-29), while conceding to Paul that circumcision was not essential for conversion, still insisted that it was incumbent on the Gentile converts to observe certain Jewish purity laws (Acts 15:20,29; Gal 2:12).

Paul did not impose any such requirements on his Gentile converts (1 Cor 8:1-13), though in Acts 16:3 he insists on the circumcision of Timothy who was Jewish through his mother.

Diversity is also evident with regards to the idealised leaders of the communities. The Synoptics present Peter as the leader among the disciples and put on his lips the important confession that Jesus is the Messiah (Mt 16:16; Lk 9:20; Mk 8:29).

John promotes the Beloved Disciple as the idealised figure who steps in Jesus' place at his death, and the confessions are attributed to several persons (Nathanael, 1:49; Peter, 6:69; Martha, 11:27; and Thomas, 20:28).

The Gospel of Thomas champions Thomas and James, (in GT 13 it has Peter, Matthew and Thomas answer Jesus' request to compare him to something, but the plum goes to Thomas saying, "Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying whom you are like.")

Jesus rewards him with three secret words that if he were to tell them to the others fire from stones would burn them up. On the other hand in section 12, to the disciples' question, "Who is it who shall be great over us?" after Jesus' departure, Jesus answers, "Wherever you have come, you will go to James the righteous..."

In 1 Cor 1:10-17 Paul berates the Corinthian groups for their divisions and quarrels; some belong to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Cephas and others to Christ. Thus these different communities considered different persons as their idealised leaders, not only Peter. Paul insists that the leader is Christ who is not divided; the focal and crucial element of the Jesus movement is the unity of the community in the spirit of Jesus as the Christ (Messiah).

Many of these communities, though initially Jewish, soon received an influx of members from the Gentile element bringing with them their own concepts and practices which served the growth and diversification of the Christian movements, which we find in the second and third centuries, such as Gnostics, Docetists etc., some known to us only through the criticism and censure of them by the church Fathers, but who, nonetheless, influenced, negatively or positively, the development of the Christian doctrines that were debated in subsequent centuries and eventually decreed in the ecumenical councils.

A conclusion from this brief summary: The early Christian movement was never a monolithic organization, with a single set of doctrines and the same common practices, insisting on allegiance to a single leader, namely Peter or his alleged successor, and demanding conformity as the indispensable prerequisite for membership.

*Dr. Zarb's article originally appeared in The Journal in March/April 1996.*

# Cafeteria Catholic

by Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK



It seems to me that the many religions in the world are like the many brands of clothing that people prefer to wear. And, like clothing brands, each religion has its distinct logo too— the cross, the star of David, the half moon, and so on. One morning at Mass, the elderly gentleman sitting in front of me got up to serve at the altar because there were no altar servers. When he removed his jacket, I noticed the “Roots” label on the back of his sweater.

Did he buy this brand because he thought it was better? Wouldn't another ordinary sweater be just as good? Maybe it was a gift?

Being in church (the cathedral, no less) my thoughts turned to religion. Just like clothing brands, one is tempted to see the many religions as different ways of practicing spirituality. Of course one's own religion is the better brand. Isn't that what all religions claim? You could say that people in general are “cafeteria religionists”. Like looking at a menu of world religions, you decide what you want to order. Then when you get to the generic menu of Catholicism, you hear the term “cafeteria Catholic”.

My impression is that it is a bad thing to be called a cafeteria Catholic. It suggests that you are picking and choosing what you will “swallow” of all the Catholic teachings, and what you prefer to leave alone. For example, I see very few people going to confession any more. Rosaries are much less in evidence. Even some priests don't wear the Roman collar. First Friday Mass is not as crowded as it once was. Devotion to Our Lady of Fatima is not as popular as it once was.

Let's take the analogy a bit further. Just as there are many foods that may disagree with you, so is it not possible that there are many religious practices that don't fit your personality? Take for example the feminist movement. I personally know that some women (I can't say how many) change the wording of the responses at Mass. In the “Gloria” they do not say “Peace to *His* people on earth”. They respond with “Peace to *God's* people”. In the recitation of the creed they say “and in Jesus Christ, *God's* only Son”. Is this being a cafeteria Catholic? Or is this the thin edge of the wedge which eventually will bring about change?

Change is taking place, and maybe it is because of these things going on within the Catholic Church. I've read somewhere that there

really is another Catholic Church co-existing within the official Church. Some Catholics are just doing what their consciences tell them. For example, there are married priests without dispensation who regularly go to Mass and communion with their families. Divorced Catholics without annulments and in a second marriage do the same.

In Regina here, a group of women have been holding a women's celebration in Catholic churches with the consent/approval of the pastor and knowledge of the bishop. When they heard that Father Ed Cacia was suspended from ministry after he approved openly the ordination of the womenpriests on the St. Lawrence, they decided to have a collection during the service toward helping Fr. Ed. This was when they were denied permission to use the church. What the women did was simply hold the prayer celebration outside the church on the parking lot. Interestingly, I heard through the grapevine that the bishop instructed the priests of the diocese not to make any statements about this, but to let this go quietly.

Some years ago this would have brought down the hammer on somebody. For example, in 1990 the rector of the cathedral (now Archbishop James Weisgerber, of Winnipeg) announced that there would be a lay service on a Sunday due to a shortage of priest. Joe Gubbels and I put flyers of the cars in the parking lot that Sunday, saying that there were twelve married priests in the city who could have celebrated the Mass.

Boy, the 'you know what' hit the fan then! Bishop Halpin gave me a dressing down so loud that the secretary in the outer office heard it. I remember him telling me that “It is guys like you who are causing the priest shortage”. He was so worked up that he stood up and threw his glasses onto the desk when he said this. I held my peace, and when he finished, I told him that I understood why he felt that way. Then I told him my side of the story and how I decided to leave the ranks of the clergy. To his credit I must say he listened. When I rose to leave, he gave me a hug!

Emil Kutarna

DEAR FRIENDS,

Just finished perusing (yes) the latest issue of the JOURNAL. (Fall 2005). I definitely can't simply send you a cheque! I want to reiterate my boundless admiration for that dedication and work of yours under the moving of the Spirit, I am absolutely convinced.

Je vous trouve F O R M I D A B L E ! Ça crée chez moi, hélas, un sentiment de culpabilité. Et moi? et mon ancienne famille religieuse: les (married) Rédemptoristes, qu'avons-nous fait et que faisons-nous pour renouveler le ministère dans cette Eglise qui nous est chère? Shame on me (us?), indeed.

Anyway, may this short note spur you on. At least in conversation with friends and family members. I never miss echoing this- yours- new vision of what our present Church should be like. Vous pouvez compter sur nos (mon épouse) prières fidèles. Ça me déculpabilise un brin.

WE MUST BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN THIS WORLD (The Journal, p. 7). I do try. My conscience feels better on this day of Epiphany, January 6, 2006. I manifested myself. Come on!

Rita and Jean-Rene Gilbert

# I Am A Cafeteria Catholic And Proud Of It!

by picky eater John Palardy, Calgary, AB



I have been thinking about the comparisons between being a hungry adult in a cafeteria to myself as a hungry Christian looking for solid food for my soul. Here are a few comparisons that fit for me.

1. I never like starting with the dessert section - give me the main course first. I know I don't need the frost toppings and it probably isn't particularly healthy for me either.

2. Many people are allergic to specific types of food, for them "all or nothing" could literally kill them. I guess I am allergic to some aspects that make me sick but not to the point of death yet.

3. I notice on more than a few occasions that the food I select is not tasty or it is cold, half-baked or over cooked. The same thing happens with my understanding of traditional Catholic faith.

Over the past couple of years I have found myself having a renewed interest in reading about my faith. My reading of our traditional catholic material was less than satisfying. It has been a little like starting at the dessert end of the line instead of at the items of some real substance and nutrition. For some strange accident or fate I have been exposed to ideas from the Anglican perspective. This started with reading the memoirs of a married Jesuit priest who joined the Anglican style of Catholicism. His memoirs spoke more of an openness to a certain divergence of thought and hence of belief instead of theological statements such as the Creed and ongoing pronouncements from the Vatican. The perspective was more on a welcoming invitation to "Come and See". This attitude of openness in thought and expression has allowed for a searching heart to look for the deeper significance of the scriptures. I must agree that I get tired of rice and potatoes boiled in the same old traditional manner.

The posturing of the hierarchy on same sex marriage, the place of females in the Catholic church and other issues has left me bewildered. They have stirred the pot by claiming to have the final word of truth. Many of our best community thinkers and theologians are and have been silenced. The hierarchy claim to speak for the faithful. Yet what I see is not a "sensus fidelium" which requires a goodly amount of discussion at all levels but rather a talking down to the educated masses. There is instead a strong feeling of "silencing" the non-conformer. Yet it is only out of that openness that we can come to a greater sensitivity and practice of inclusivity.

I, along with many others, have strongly experienced this silencing at our parish level. We were controlled over what can and cannot be

discussed in a public forum. The sad reality is that we let it happen to us. This is even truer at the national and international levels. It is not unlike my mother telling me that the food may not taste good but that it is good for me and that I will in time acquire a taste for it. Well, I think I will just leave it on my plate!

A sauce I dislike that covers many 'dishes' is the use of the statement "contrary to the natural law". I don't recall ever having anyone clearly explain to me where this natural law comes from. Do they mean legal law, or one of the physical sciences like biology, chemistry, or physics? Or is it from the principles of power and economics? Or is it just from observations like the rich get richer while the poor get poorer? Or is it a stated truism like "the wealthy never have enough money?" Perhaps it is really a reference to "common sense". This seems reasonable to me because anyone can claim "common sense", which means: 'I accept this and so should you', and/or 'everyone knows that so I do not have to prove anything, it is just my authority that you are to respect'.

Recently the chairperson (a very fine lady) of our parish council asked me if I would speak on the Eucharist and the Real Presence. Initially my answer was yes but upon reflection I thought I had better clarify this with her. So I asked if the focus was on the Real Presence rather than on the Liturgy and if I had to teach it from the traditional explanation of transubstantiation which pulls from ancient Greek thought on the nature of the material world as 'matter and form'. This results in me needing to believe ancient science. Well I don't believe it! I accept modern science as the best explanation we have at the present time to describe our physical world. I shared that I truly believe in the Real Presence but my way of understanding it is different. My offer was declined as being out of line with what our pastor wishes. Isn't it strange how I am expected to believe in ancient science in order to have faith in a spiritual reality?

Marcus Borg speaks of an emerging paradigm of our Christian faith. It appears to me that he and many others like him are becoming some of the chefs at the cafeteria. I am finding myself putting more of their goodies on my tray. In quiet conversations with others I am finding they also have the same taste for some nourishing and satisfying food.

*François and Connie are weathering a major health crisis for Connie— some serious heart and bowels problems. Connie was in hospital (icu) for 10 days but is now home on bed rest and a careful re-coop. The docs think she will make it. The heart was too slow and she just got depleted and wrecked with colitis. Thank God for big treatment, power of recovery, and good prognosis.*

*Editor*



I love the undercurrent that comes with this time of year, a bit like spring in its promises of new beginnings.

However, there can be another undercurrent that a New Year brings, and that is the one that includes the strain and struggle to keep up with what we fondly call goals and resolutions.

Just the phrase “goal-setting” can make the muscles in my jaws tighten, so I was ecstatic to read about a daring concept called goal-free living. The book is *Goal-Free Living: How to Have the Life You Want Now*, by Stephen Shapiro.

The key point in this idea of goal-free living is the word “idea”. Or thought, or perception.

Often our perception of a goal is that it is a decision, a resolution, a command, the one-and-only way to the result we want. And that creates pressure. That creates rigidity and stress and inflexibility, and gives us a “the goal has to happen this way or I fail” mindset.

But what if we could get to our end result, such as increasing our income, losing weight, exercising, becoming healthier, and all those other categories that are the stuff of New Year resolutions, another way, a way that involved ease, joy, new experiences, wellness, and lightness of mind and heart?

And what if the key was as simple as changing our perception a little, that is, approaching goal setting in a slightly different way. Here are some of the ideas from *Goal-Free Living*.

Instead of making a resolution, the author says to pick a theme. I liked that idea immediately. My theme is “feeling good”. Yes, and instead of setting a goal I am setting an intention. My intention is to feel good emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually each day.

For example, I want to have thicker and more resilient hair. Actually, what I really want is to feel good about my hair and I decided that in order to do that, my hair needs to be thicker and more resilient. So I can set a goal to have thick, resilient hair and start doing everything that is recommended by the hair experts toward this end. And then I could watch my progress with great scrutiny, and believe I am reaching my goal or not reaching my goal according to the degree of improvement with the thickness of my hair.

Or, I can follow Shapiro's advice and set the intention to feel good about my hair, and broaden the definition of what that means. So that is what I have done and this is what is happening. I am feeling

GOOD about my hair. Is it any thicker and more resilient? Maybe. But it is behaving better and looking better and the feelings I want are growing daily.

I will continue to seek advice and follow the recommendations of the experts. But the point is this: by releasing a too narrow concept, perception, idea, of what has to happen in order for me to feel better about my hair, I am opening up all the energy pathways to enable the results I want to arrive at by whatever means they want to choose.

Another example is the experience of one of my coaching clients. Her goal is to become a licensed psychotherapist. She was both dumbfounded and devastated when, for the second time, she failed to pass the required exam.

Now she is applying goal-free thinking to her situation and it looks like this. She asked herself what her deeper goal was, and realized it was financial stability and work that was personally fulfilling. So she has eased up on her translation of what that can look like for her. Perhaps there is another way for her goal to be actualized.

One of the secrets for goal-free living that Shapiro gives is what he calls creating many paths. He says to start doing that by making an active “Could-do” list. So my client is asking herself what other paths she can explore, what are her Could-do's. As she relaxes her definition of how she can reach her goal of financial stability and personal fulfillment, the doors of opportunity are flying open. Will she make a third attempt at the therapists license? It's on her list of Could-do's. Unless something better arrives in the meantime.

“Remember that you are on the right path, no matter what path you are on, if you are enjoying it and playing it full out”, the author says.

Another author, Deepak Chopra, makes this powerful statement, “Knowledge has organizing power inherent in it.”

He explains that our usual way of using effort to consciously reach a goal is unnecessary and can cause stress and strain. He tells us with certitude that it is important only that we know what we want. Then what happens is, the more we become aware at a cellular level of our desires (goals), the more this knowledge gets structured in our consciousness and awareness. Then it is more likely that our previous outcomes, ex. couch potato, poor eating habits etc, will begin to change, without any effort on our part.

### *So. What is your theme for this new year?*

Health awareness, exuberance, self-care, travel, creativity, being joyful, finding your passion, living your passion, play, financial security? Anything you want for your life qualifies.

Do you see the difference between approaching each day and each event by asking the question, “is this furthering my theme?”, and in approaching each day by measuring and calculating what and how much has to yet be done to accomplish a goal.

It's just a differing mindset. A differing idea, or perspective. But it can be the key that sets your inner mind free from its natural resistance to meet deadlines and quantities.

Feel the difference in your body and your emotions between “I'm making a resolution to go to the gym three times a week” and “I

## Focus Continued...

---

am setting a theme to increase my health". Now you have space. Now you have choices.

And this is when you ask yourself what the steps are to take so you can gently move in the direction of better health.

Take baby steps if you want. You're still moving. Someone said that success is measured by whether or not you move forward each day, not by ten miles or even one mile, but just forward.

Then our RAS, our Reticular Activating System in our brain, whose job it is to filter EVERYTHING in order to protect us from change, even healthy change, relaxes, feels safe with the baby steps, can support small beginnings, doesn't panic and sabotage the big resolutions.

And of course going to the gym may well be just what eventually happens, but this time the decision flows out of a natural progression that your mind and emotions are ready for.

Ask yourself this: Does the particular outcome I am going for compare to "driving on a highway where there are no exits for 300 miles so that if I mess up I can't even get off without huge consequences, or to driving on a beautiful winding country road where there are exits every mile, frequent intersections, and a rotary from time to time". (Shapiro, p.46)

Notice the difference between the super highway path and the country

road. You can get off the country road at anytime. You can change plans and change direction and stop for exploration of the scenery and take detours. You can let the circumstances lead you. You can let your end goal evolve. Is the way you thought it had to unfold the only way? Is there only one path to your heart's desire? Ease up your grip on the end results and how to get them and you will be surprised at the results you do get, discovering they are more or better than what you originally had in mind. Most of all you can be productive and fulfilled, and feel good, relaxed and easy all the while.

*Sophia wisdom: Spirit arranges the easy way.*

Choose a theme and set the intention to make each day's choices in the light of that theme. You'll love how it makes you feel.

When you set a theme and an intention, there will of course be action steps and time frames. We have to move into action to get results.

But you'll love the feelings of gentleness with yourself that this approach brings. You'll love the easy flow with which your dream goals come to you.

---

## Cafeteria Catholics

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC

---



Between Christmas and New Year's day, nine of the Mid-Island Corpus Canada group went out to eat together to celebrate François' 70th birthday. Some had beer; others had stout; still another had a glass of wine; and some just plain water. For the meal, one had steak and mushroom pie, two had chicken pie, two had oysters, one had roast beef, another had soup and salad, and two had bratwurst sausage and sauerkraut—a veritable smorgasbord to smite and delight everyone's appetite, and "in keeping with the situation" as Scrooge's housekeeper says in "A Christmas Carol", we all had a great time.

The same can be said for cafeteria Catholics—In keeping with the Catholic "situation", there has always been a variety of good and

not-so-good beliefs, moral practices, prayers, and devotions that has shifted and changed down through the centuries.

The canon of the New Testament itself was in flux for four centuries with texts being accepted and rejected by serious and committed Christians. Today, many verses of the New Testament are still open to interpretation.

The Catholic Churches throughout the ages and around the world have never been uniform in organization and structure. Diocesan structure and papal appointment of bishops have not always been the norm for local Churches.

The history of the Catholic Church is full of surprises that should compel it to keep full and open dialogue with the whole of God's People for the same God is ever manifest in new contexts.

It is difficult for us today to picture a eucharistic liturgy without a crucifix showing, and we are so used to the blessing with the sign of the cross that it is hard to imagine that for centuries these things were not so.

We recite the Lord's Prayer (usually the version in Matthew's Gospel) without thinking of it as the prayer of devout Jews.

We revere Peter as the leader of the twelve Apostles but do not often heed the stories in which Jesus calls him "Satan; a loose stone; a stumbling block" (Mt 16).

Many today cannot imagine a woman hosting a eucharistic gathering, or a church without priests leading the eucharistic liturgy, or bishops elected by the local church.

All of these do not mean that cafeteria Catholics think any less of the New Testament Canon, or of Peter who preached Jesus' message and who died a martyr's death in Rome, or of diocesan

church structure (modeled on the secular Roman state), or of eucharistic liturgy with priest, cross, and crucifix, and so on. Cafeteria Catholics do not harken back to some golden age in Catholic history as imaged in Acts; nor do they long for priestless communities. The egg basket is not thrown away because of some bad eggs. New contexts need new answers. In the last issue of *The Journal* (Fall 2005, page 19) Raymond Brown was quoted saying "New questions have caused the main body of Christians to move on to new answers."

Our Catholic cafeteria is rich in legitimate choices. We respect each others' efforts to live God's Kingdom. Jesus' way was Jewish but it was not the only way. The Hellenist way was not the only way; nor was the way of the Middle Ages, nor the Latin way, nor the way of any other age or culture. When one culture has been denied and only one way has been decreed, the Catholic Church has suffered: The loss of the Chinese Church when Matteo Ricci S.J. was recalled from China is only one example. Ricci was successfully using Chinese culture to present the teaching of Jesus, but his method was condemned and the Chinese christian community withered for centuries.

Real dialogue in the Church— even in the Roman Catholic Church— has led to new understandings that have then been measured by the message of Jesus' Gospel. At one time, birth control was looked upon as against Natural Law and therefore intrinsically evil. There was no way for conscientious Catholics to disagree. Then Catholic scholars studied the matter and found that birth control was not against Natural Law. The bottom fell out of the intrinsically evil position, but Pope Paul VI could not bring himself to accept that married couples were free to make their own decision and their freedom was withdrawn from the menu; Catholics were given no choice, and the Church was the worse for it.

There have been eccentrics (and worse) in the Catholic Communion: ascetics who sat on top of poles for years; saints who never washed; scrupulous people who confessed their sins every day; forgers of documents who gave special powers to the Holy See; liberators who

promoted crusades against Islam; fanatics who wiped out anyone who was thought to be unorthodox; and so on through the centuries. The list is long.

Alongside of these were followers of Jesus' genuine example, prophets, elders, teachers, leaders, bishops, priests, men and women who loved the poor and helped their neighbours: James, the brother of the Lord and leader of the Christian community in Jerusalem; the 14 holy helpers; young men and women such as Vitus (303), patron saint of dancers, Kateri Tekakwitha (1656) of the Mohawks, and Cecilia, patron saint of musicians; Colman Mac Lenine, 6th century poet, bard, musician, and genealogist; mature women such as Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mother Cabrini in the U.S.; patron saints of hopeless cases and lost articles. Every catholic has a favourite saint and from early childhood was told the stories of holy people. And there are the countless people who show us the way but who go unsung for their service, their generosity, their wisdom, their loyalty, and their bravery in face of overwhelming odds. They are in our Catholic story though they may never be recorded.

The Catholic thing is vast; it is concrete; it is universal; it embraces all. If someone says that a thing is not on the Catholic menu, they have to show why not. Some may try (in good faith) to tell the People of God that there is only one Catholic way that Catholics must believe or follow. But in the long run, Catholics know that they have choices: faith choices, moral choices, leadership choices, life—style choices. God's table is spread with God's plenty. I'm glad to be there. My culture may be Canadian Catholic, but I can eat and drink at God's abundant polycultural table. I may not like what someone else may choose, but I can be nourished in God's cafeteria without restricting others to what suits my taste. There's plenty of choice for everyone in the Catholic cafeteria.

*Readers are asked to name books that they have read and that they think might interest other readers of *The Journal*. A short comment on the books would be worthwhile as well.*

**Life's a Growin' Thing. Ya Grows or Ya Dies: Reflections on Life and Death And Our Time In Between** by **Hank Mattimore**, published by **Woodrunner Press, Petaluma, ISBN 1-93002-49-5**

This is a very well written, easy to read, and insightful book— 50 reflections in three parts. The book is dedicated to Hank's "late beloved wife, Kathleen Hutchins Mattimore, who with her love and Irish wit was my editor and support as I wrote these essays."

The following, "People Are More Alike Than Unalike" is excerpted from the second part, "Reflections on Life".

"I feel fortunate to have shared my brief moment of time on earth with a wide variety of people. Raised in an Irish—Catholic neighborhood in Buffalo, N.Y., I have lived in a fishing village in Japan and studied at a University in Manila. I was a white priest in an Afro-American parish in Florida. I've worked with young children, troubled adolescents and with old folks. As a priest, I have heard the confessions of the very wealthy and the impoverished, the innocent and the cynical. The mother of my two children is Jewish but I have also numbered Moslems among my friends as well as gays and lesbians.

Yet, when I reflect on the diversity among my friends and acquaintances, It's not their differences that I recall. It's their common humanity... my own experience will not let me forget that underneath the veneer of color, religion, race, or gender, we are much more "alike than unalike."

Copies can be obtained from Amazon or from  
Hank Mattimore  
2343 Avenida De Las Brisas  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

# Living As A Cafeteria Catholic

by *Phil Little, Cedar, BC*



**P**ope John Paul II stated in 1987 that it was a grave error to dissent from the official magisterium of the Church, especially on matters of sexual morality and marriage. To those who would seem to pick and choose which doctrines, dogmas and

teachings are acceptable, the derogatory term “cafeteria catholic” is applied. Joanna Manning wrote an insightful study called “Is the Pope Catholic?” An appropriate subtitle might well have been “Is the Pope a Cafeteria Catholic?” but of course that derogatory subtext is usually meant for us slobs in the line up at the soup kitchen, not the chief chef who defines the menu.

For those who define themselves as the orthodox faithful - the main issues that those other cafeteria catholics tend to deviate around are of course the genital and gender zones of religion. Birth control and abortion, premarital sex and divorce, the place and role of women in the world, homosexuality, and celibacy together constitute the most obvious areas in which the governing mandarins are prone to grind their teeth. But there are other topics - albeit less erotic - but perhaps of greater importance where there are even wider gaps of disagreement.

The acceptance of the sciences and the questions these disciplines bring to matters of “belief” require an openness to less absolute conclusions. In areas like embryology and stem cell research there arise totally new concerns that need to be considered but do not fit into ancient schemas. The discipline of sociology causes us to understand abortion and divorce in a different perspective. The continual threat of nuclear annihilation and the very real abyss of geocide (the killing of the planet) should challenge religious people to think outside the box. Lone voices like that of Sister Helen Prejean (*Dead Man Walking*) continue to challenge us on issues of life and death. Immigration and economic justice issues just don't seem to attract the attention of the religious right, even though the social doctrine of the church provides a rich foundation for proactive involvement in change.

The institution of the Church while seeking to control a community that is more democratic and educated sinks with a bureaucratic millstone around its neck that was un-Christian even in the mediaeval era for which it was designed. The C.E.O.'s and managers must adhere to a code of celibacy that simply is not working anywhere in the world, and certainly not in Rome. It is a farce that mocks those who are freely celibate and denigrates those who find support and energy in a committed loving relationship. Unable to defend its uncompromising inability to deal with the modern world, the church cloaks itself in the vestments of infallibility.

It would seem to me that we are all cafeteria catholics - left wing rebels, orthodox fascists and the multitude in between. We can be

sure that this new Pope will have more to say about the dangers of secularization and relativism, obvious threats to theocracy and absolutism. Would the person who does not pick and choose their favorite beliefs, rituals, traditions, etc. be the first to throw a proverbial cream pie?

As an ordained man, of course I lined up at the banquet of the ruling class. It was delicious and plentiful - not too many clergy die of starvation! Ordination brought with it not only a variety of main courses but an endless array of desserts. All you had to do was pledge allegiance to the established order, whether or not you believed in it. Promotion came to those who dared not express any deviation from the official menu - especially in matters of “the opposite sex.” It didn't mean that clergy couldn't taste of the forbidden fruit. It was just wrong to acknowledge a different value for men or women in a committed relationship and what they could offer the church.

Leaving behind the status and prestige of being clergy brought meaning to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience as lived in a loving and committed relationship. Becoming a husband and father was an apprenticeship in humility and vulnerability. Working with colleagues as an equal caused me to redefine realities. Working for others - on behalf of others - caused me to enter their reality and to share their insecurity.

Of course I am a cafeteria catholic. What is relevant is that I am more aware that we do have a choice in the menu. But behind the choices are ideological, philosophical, and pragmatic value systems that are at the heart of who we want to be or become.

As a member of the clergy I was clearly “pro-life” - very anti-abortion. I even protested at the Morgentaler clinic on Harbord Street in Toronto, although I did walk with a group called S.A.N.E. (Socialists against Nihilist Ethics) because I didn't want to be identified with the weirdoes wearing plastic fetuses around their necks who yelled vulgarities and hatred at the clinic staff.

Later as a teacher and counselor of adult learners in a public system I encountered for the first time women who “needed” to get abortions. I had to learn about their situation and still appreciate them as good people struggling to survive real life tragedies. I learned about single female Catholic teachers who needed to get abortions so as not to lose their jobs and compromise their careers in education. I listened, as imperfectly as I was able, to women who defined themselves as feminists and who were willing to give me time to digest their analysis. And I read beyond the controlled catholic press. I lost my clerical juridical myopia, and all I could see were endless variations that called out for understanding and compassion. I came to understand that “pro-choice” is not pro-abortion. I still do not understand gender politics, just as I do not understand race politics. Coming out of the male white privileged world, I can only admit to knowing so little about the reality of those who are not.

I am proud to be a cafeteria catholic. I admit that I am making choices or trying to make choices that are consistent with a belief and faith that makes me want to be a disciple of the Jesus of Nazareth, the rabbi from Galilee, who taught us that sometimes it is not what you eat but who you choose to eat with that makes all the difference.

# Secularism And Benedict XVI

by Jack Shea, Ottawa, ON



From the very eve of his election as pope, Benedict XVI has not ceased to highlight his preoccupation with relativism and secularism. Several days before the death of John Paul II, the new pope, then as Cardinal Ratzinger, reflected in a dark and pessimistic manner on the condition of the Church itself in his Good Friday meditation. He complained, "Lord, your Church often seems like a boat about to sink, a boat taking on water on every side." He lamented the "falling of many Christians away from Christ and into godless secularism." It seems that for Benedict the Church itself is constantly under attack from a secular culture that he believes offers no fixed values.

Then, during his first excursion outside Rome after his election, he continued to launch a strong attack on the evil influences at work in society. It was in the historic city of Bari, Italy, which was celebrating a Eucharistic Congress, that he stated, "From a spiritual point of view, the world in which we find ourselves, characterized by unbridled consumerism, religious indifference, a secularism closed to transcendence, can seem like a desert."

Perhaps a key to his understanding of the meaning of secularism can be found in the words of his homily given at the World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany in August of this year in the presence of an estimated one million young people. He spoke of a "strange forgetfulness of God" even though at the same time the sense of frustration and dissatisfaction has led to a "new explosion of religion."

An even more descriptive expression of his, given in a meeting with

some Italian priests this past summer were his words, "the west is a world that is tired of its own culture...that has arrived at a time in which there's no more evidence of the need for God, much less Christ, and in which it seems that man alone can make himself."

Since secularism occupies such a prominent place in this new pontificate we think it useful to look more closely at the meaning of the concept. This examination might prove useful to married priests, who by their dual vocation to priesthood and marriage while living in a profoundly secular environment, could be instrumental in explaining the interplay between the sacred and the secular.

What, then, do we mean by secularism? According to the English philosopher, George Jacob Holyoake, who first used the term about 1846, "secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable."

According to those who profess this philosophy, secularism as a life-system is the belief that life can be best lived without reference to a god or gods or other supernatural concepts. It represents complete freedom from religion, or no religion at all, and consequently religious influence is minimized in the public sphere. Secularists claim that this understanding has resulted from the Enlightenment as people turn towards science and away from religion and superstition.

In recent years a clear challenge to the philosophy of secularism was offered by a well-known Canadian journalist/philosopher and social activist, Claude Ryan, speaking at a Conference on "Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy" at McGill University in Montreal in 2002.

Ryan said, "there has been a tendency since World War II to relegate religion to the private sphere; to suggest that it should have as little as possible to do with economic, social and political life. ...but a valueless society is unthinkable. Human nature being essentially moral, a life without any reference to moral principles would simply not be human....a common set of community accepted moral values is indispensable for the good operation of every society....religion is the safest guardian of moral values in human society."

When, in his first days as pope, Benedict said that he would welcome the Church shrinking in size, so long as it could become purer in doing so, he unleashed a strong reaction throughout the world. One of the first to respond to this comment was the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the most senior British churchman. In a sermon broadcast on the BBC he strongly, if implicitly, opposed the direction in which the newly-elected pope indicated he wished to take the Church. The Cardinal said that "Gaudium et Spes" (Joy and Hope), the only Council document proposed from the floor of the Council, and not introduced by the Council planners, was the document that caused a revolution. It firmly inserted the Church into the modern world. He said, "In Gaudium et Spes the world is no longer divided between allies and enemies, believers and non-believers."

It has often been said that when Pope John XXIII conceived of an ecumenical council he profoundly wanted the Church to enter into dialogue with our modern world for he felt that the gospel of Christ

## Secularism Continued...

---

and the aspirations of our society were complementary and could develop harmonious assistance to one another.

A recent editorial in the London Tablet (July 9/2005) celebrates this relationship. It says that the drama of the Catholic Church's interaction with the modern world can be described as a dialogue and at times a confrontation, between two new versions of humanism. "One takes complete human autonomy as the ultimate goal, and the other promotes a Christ-centered vision of human wholeness - human growth and development towards a model of perfection that is not humanity's own invention."

What strikes one as strange in this treatment of secularism is that the Church already has a theology of the secular. Although it is not always applied, or even preached, it is contained in the rich corpus of social teaching that has been elaborated over the last century, beginning with the famous Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII in 1891 in which he championed the right of workers to organize to improve their economic condition.

In fact the Church has just recently published what is called a "Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church", a great collection of nearly all the significant statements, encyclicals and major documents during the last one hundred years. Although the structure of the Compendium might leave the impression with some readers that it is a kind of catechism and does not reflect the changing social circumstances in its coverage, it is nevertheless a valuable source of the Church's social teaching.

One value of the Compendium is that it illustrates how the message of the gospel of Christ has been applied to the changing social conditions down through the years. While it is important to remember that social situations change, the various references in the text remind one that the answer to secularism is that we must not be concerned only with the sacred and the otherworldly but that we should find in the world the opportunity to promote Christian values that should make life more human and virtue more easy to practice.

The Second Vatican Council considered the separation of Christian faith and daily life as one of the most serious errors of our time. It will be the mission of lay people in the Church, whose natural environment is the secular city, to bridge this gap and bring the moral values of the gospel to the issues of everyday life. As we read our newspapers or listen to the media we are confronted every day with problems and issues that have a moral dimension, matters like, stem-cell research, honesty in sports, the morality of globalization, just war theory, fidelity in relationships, truth in scientific research, integrity in politics, etc.

This Church's expression of this desired dialogue is, of course, contained in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World", (*Gaudium et Spes*), one of the sixteen documents to emanate from the Second Vatican Council. It would be instructive to examine a few of the themes contained in this text which illustrate the Church's attempt to describe the intimate, yet distinct, relationship that appears to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular and deny the atheistic premise of secularism. (The numbers following the texts refer to the appropriate paragraphs in *Gaudium et Spes*).

- in the Introduction to *Gaudium et Spes* the Council Fathers say that the "Church realizes that it is linked with humankind and its

history by the deepest bonds" (1) and that this world "is the theatre of humanity's history" (2).

- after describing how Christians are "citizens of two cities" the document urges them "to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit" (43). It then goes on to say that the fact that "the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate each other is a fact accessible to faith alone" and remains a mystery of human history (40).

- in another section the Council document describes the interplay between the Church and world as a two-way exchange, each helping the other. The Church "desires to add the light of revealed truth to humankind's store of experience" (33). But, at the same time, the Church says "she is convinced that she can be abundantly helped by the world in the matter of preparing the ground for the Gospel" (40).

- Finally, what could be considered the ultimate response to secularism are the words in the document "People are not deterred by the Christian message from building up the world, or impelled to neglect the welfare of their fellows, but that they are more stringently bound to do these very things." (34).

Last April 20, when Benedict XVI celebrated his first public mass in the brightly frescoed Sistine Chapel he told the assembled cardinals who had elected him that he promised to carry out the Second Vatican Council. Forty years after the end of the Council that radically reformed the Church, he said, "the Council documents have not lost their actuality" and their teachings are particularly important to the current Church and today's "globalized society". We may be hearing more about secularism soon from Benedict since it is the custom for a new pope to outline his policy directions in a major statement. It is reported that he is preparing a policy-setting white paper or encyclical letter on the subject of relativism and secularism. The long tradition of social teaching in the Church illustrates that if a reigning pope does not deal with current issues it falls to his successor to do so. Let us hope that Benedict engages constructively with contemporary issues too often dismissed under the guise of secularism.

---

*Jack Shea has written a very important article that needs to be read carefully and discussed further. The term 'Secularism' is used by some without understanding what was meant by Vatican II and Jack points this out. Such words as "godless" and "evil work in Society" are not indicative of the present but of an older understanding of Secularism— as in Holyoake, 1846— and like the abuse of the term 'Modernism' can become a mechanism for control in the Church. We look forward to a return to the positive outlook of Vatican II.*

*Editor*

# Theological Soapbox: Creating The World

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



The digital revolution in computing and communications is changing the way we think. In this Theological Soapbox I will give an example of a way of viewing creation that is very different from how we have imagined creation in the past.

Consider the

image that appears on your computer screen or digital television set. Originally a physical object was photographed or filmed to produce an image which was then coded as a sequence of ones and zeros (e.g., 1001101000111010.....). This binary code was then transmitted as electrical or optical pulses over a land line or by electromagnetic waves through the atmosphere to your computer or television set. The transmission was then decoded as instructions to the computer or television to generate an image on your screen.

It is certainly within the realm of possibility that the first step of creating an image based on a physical object and the second step of turning that image into binary code could be dispensed with and a computer programmed to generate original binary code that would be decoded into images that we can see. The computer would not have first to 'see' an object and turn it into code. The computer would have the code for various objects programmed into it, as well as rules for manipulating that code so as to produce code that would be seen as objects that never have existed in the physical world.

The point of all this that if objects can be described fully by binary code, then we can regard the object as information, i.e., code that can be given a physical interpretation.

The model of perception most people have is that of a world of objects 'out there', that emit light waves that enter our eyes, are converted into electrochemical signals in the optic nerve and reconstituted as images in our brain, which we interpret as images of the original object. But physical objects, space, and we ourselves can be viewed as information, as code, that we have converted into sensory images. In other words, the world 'out there' may consist entirely of code.

We have been programmed by the Creator to decode the code of creation into sensory representations. We decode one piece of code as a tree, green in colour, of such a height and width and depth, existing over a given period of time. All this sensory representation in dimensions of time and space is how we sort out some of the information contained in the tree code. Description of the tree in terms of molecules and atoms is a representation of the tree code in scientific concepts.

What this means is that each of us creates the world as we perceive it. We create colours, shapes, and quantities, and even the dimensions of space and time. We create beauty. We are programmed to do so.

But we are also self-aware and free. So we can make choices that modify to a limited extent the code of creation and, therefore, our perceptions of creation.

All this fits wonderfully well with the prologue to the Gospel of John, which says, 'In the beginning was the word'. This 'word' may be described as self-aware code containing an infinite amount of information. Among the bits of information contained in the word are finite pieces of self-aware code. That's us. It is appropriate that the most precise description of the piece of code that constitutes an individual is his or her DNA, which as we all know is itself a code.

We are pieces of code with the capacity to interpret the code in which we are embedded as sensory representations and concepts. We also possess free will and so can modify the code in which we are embedded to a limited degree, which will in consequence change the way we and others perceive the world. We start life as autonomous individuals conscious of our separateness from the primal code (word) in which we are embedded.

But we are unable to access the infinite riches of the primal word as long as we exercise a free will that is separate from the free will of the primal word. Only by allowing our free will to be subsumed by the free will of the primal word can we share in the primal word's eternal exploration of the infinite richness of information it contains. What is delightful and surprising (and the way our loving God intended it), is that when we exchange our individual freedom for the greater freedom of the primal word, we do not lose our self-awareness as a finite piece of code, an awareness of ourselves as persons, with unique identities and personal histories.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

## The Body Broken: Answering God's Call To Love One Another

by Robert Benson, published by Doubleday, ISBN 0-385-50614-7

Robert Benson is known as "A lifelong Christian pilgrim and seeker". He writes in a narrative style that keeps you reading on. His insights into the topic are rewarding. For example, "A man whose last name is Thomas is one of the people who live close by. He is a writer and a musician and a minister, and he is bright and funny and thoughtful. By his own humorous admission, he has been put on the planet to tell everyone exactly how they are to live. We have a running joke between us that I am the guy to call if you are certain about everything spiritual, because I can raise more doubts (generally out of my own experience) than anyone that either of us has ever met. And I can do so in less time than anyone that you will ever meet.

He, on the other hand, can quote enough scripture and posit enough theological and intellectual truths to straighten you out and eliminate all your doubts, setting you on the road to glory— it will only take about ten minutes or so. All that is required is that you do exactly as he says and believe exactly as he believes and never ask any more questions. I am the Doubting Thomas and he is the Answer Thomas, and we both grin whenever we think of each other."

# A DIALOGUE WITH ROSEMARY GRAVENOR

by François Brassard, Ladysmith, BC



*Rosemary Gravenor, a member of WOC from Durban South Africa <rosemary-mcs@telkomsa.net> writes:*

Some time during the 90s I began the journey of challenging those with authority over me. I discovered a lot about others that I would not have considered possible and also discovered both my strengths and my weaknesses. It followed rather naturally that this challenging extended to the Catholic Church and everything that meant to me. Questioning even what I had been taught so that what I believed began to change. The more I critiqued, the more I learned that things were not as kosher or believable at the coal face. This led quite naturally to involvement with We are Church and Woman's Ordination movement.

After my 2005 experiences: the Witness Wagon tour, WOW Conference in Ottawa with this culminating in the ordination of women on the St. Lawrence river, I came home subdued. I had expected to arrive back in South Africa fired up to work harder at trying to expand the whole reform movement in whatever way we possibly could. Instead, I came back with a lot to process and think about - on the spectrum of my experience from happily good to the distressingly bad.

Having taken a while to digest this thoroughly (as well as reflect intensively on the Conference speakers' transcripts), I would like to now ask some questions of the whole reform movement.

Are we responding creatively and positively to each other and to the Church? As Church (People of God), are we opening up, expanding, offering the Third Way to all other people? Are we eliminating us/them thinking in all circumstances?

Before anyone can attempt to answer such questions, I believe we have to look at human behaviour and how that affects the basic spectrum of 'needs' or goals within the movement.

We all risk over-simplification when dealing with anything crucial to human beings but I plunge into the deep end!

Walter Wink identified that most human beings prefer two responses

to life: Fight or Flight. This concept was basic to his proposal of what he called 'The Third Way' of Jesus Christ.

The Fight or Flight responses are primitive and basic to the survival of the human race. Today these instincts are more subtle and sophisticated but still resorted to by humanity.

In trying to paint the picture of the fight or flight spectrum, I am not trying to label people or groups unkindly. I am trying to understand where I need to 'fit'. I cannot go back to being an obedient daughter, but where do I belong on the spectrum or indeed 'do I belong at all'? I say this from the point of view that my birthright is 'Roman' Catholic.

I see the beautiful, Spirit-filled community of Spiritus Christi (Rochester, NY) as somewhere in between these described polarities. It is an example of courage, neither a flight from the institution nor staying to fight a losing battle. A Catholic community of possibility, trusting God and just getting on with the life of being "followers", ministering to all God's beloved 'anawim'.

All the examples that can be found illustrate to me that our basic response to reality affects where we are on the spectrum of the whole reform movement.

The Third Way, according to Wink, has to be learned. If we don't learn it we will stay stuck in either fight or flight, or vacillate between the two. We will find that one group within the movement takes a stance in opposition to another. When this occurs, the whole movement slows and perhaps may grind to an end because it will split by the exclusion of the 'other' who sees things differently.

The Third Way is a spiritual journey. It is not an out-of-body experience, it is very much to do with how we should live in the reality of our world. It is Jesus' Way and it is impossible to do alone. The recognition of our dependence throws us into the arms of God and Grace. Then perhaps we can see clearly that the oppressor, the system, is riddled with fragmentation, backstabbing, personal agendas, clerical careerism - all being power struggles which conspire to work against the system itself!

We must not lose our prophetic ministry in the quest for change in the institutional Church. We must have a clear vision for a transformed Church and not fight power and authority to gain power and authority. If we are challenging the morality or the legality of church hierarchical impositions, then we have to do so legally and with impeccable morals. Can we achieve this?

I am sure that I have to do whatever I am capable of to fight for equal discipleship. The whole 'women in a one-down position' in whatever situation is something that I will expend all my energy on trying to reverse.

However, I am no longer sure that I want to bother with including a transformed ordained priesthood in my agenda. At this moment of my life, I doubt radically the whole concept of clericalism. In other words, I would rather focus on our royal priesthood because Christianity takes place there. Christianity needs the priesthood of the faithful crucially for its very survival let alone growth. It is clear that Christian religious systems, not only Catholicism, need people who understand, live and love their 'royal priesthood' in Christ.

### *François Brassard of Corpus Canada responds:*

Rosemary Gravenor's article reflects a very sincere, earnest journey of faith linked in part to the women's ordination movement. I truly appreciate her description of fight or flight reactions of people in the church renewal movement, and her proposal of Walter Wink's concept of 'The Third Way' of Jesus Christ.

She feels that both sides of the women's ordination movement (the 'ordination-now' group and the 'waiting-for-renewal' group) are both engaged in a 'fighting' game with the hierarchy (only their strategies are different) in their attempt to bring about church renewal. She may be right in her assessment. However, I don't agree that it has to be as she describes.

Personally, I believe the 'ordination-now' group, represented by the RC Womenpriests Movement, shows indications of pursuing 'The Third Way.' Rosemary writes: "The 'ordination-now' segment is fighting by saying with their actions: "your way is unjust and we will be priests in answer to our calling by the Spirit. If you won't change or even dialogue with us we will do it our way."

In my view, the RC Womenpriests Movement does what it does out of prophetic obedience to the will of the Spirit to lead God's People to God's Way. In this respect, they are doing what Jesus did in his time, and what we are all called to do in our own time. The RC Womenpriests Movement is not fighting the hierarchy (in fact, they are doing everything possible to avoid conflict with the hierarchy, e.g. ordinations take place in international waters, avoiding episcopal territorial authority); rather, the movement chooses to model a non-clerical, servant-leadership form of priesthood akin to the 'Way' that Jesus taught/teaches us: show people how God loves everyone, especially the downtrodden, and help energize their God-given creativity so that God's Plan can happen.

Now Rosemary responds that she "would rather focus on our royal priesthood because Christianity takes place there. Christianity needs the priesthood of the faithful crucially for its very survival let alone growth. It is clear that Christian religious systems, not only Catholicism, need people who understand, live and love their 'royal priesthood' in Christ." This is true and desirable. But it is theory. It will not happen in a vacuum. We live in history just as Jesus did. We need ordained servant-leaders who can show the way to realizing the priesthood of the faithful. We need a new model of ordained ministry that operates, not against, but rather outside the box of the clerical model - the strictly construed sacramental model of priesthood. I believe the RC Womenpriests Movement reflects that vision, and, in striving to make that vision a reality, its members are following the path of 'The Third Way.'

Rosemary cites Mary Ramerman's Spiritus Christi community as a wonderful expression of "The Third Way:" "I see the beautiful, Spirit-filled community of Spiritus Christi as somewhere in between these described polarities. It is an example of courage, neither a flight from the institution nor staying to fight a losing battle. A Catholic community of possibility, trusting God and just getting on with the life of being "followers," ministering to all God's beloved 'anawim'."

I agree that Mary Ramerman and John Callan's Spiritus Christi

community is truly Spirit-filled. In my view, it is a wonderful expression of a Vatican II Roman Catholic Christian community. More to the point here, I truly believe that both Mary Ramerman and John Callan are modeling in excellent fashion the form of renewed priesthood, a servant-leadership priesthood, that the RC Womenpriests movement espouses. This is important because it highlights the main purpose, the central focus of the RC Womenpriests movement.

However, the RC Womenpriests movement has a secondary goal related to its main purpose, and that is to attain legitimacy at some point within the RC Church on the basis of practices that are generally acceptable to the People of God, practices that, with time, become custom, and Custom becomes Law, a very old tradition within the Church. For this to happen, I believe, it is important as a strategy (not in and of itself, that the RC Womenpriests movement remain "in good standing" in the RC Church. This means, among other things, that the movement must avoid, if at all possible, the grounds for excommunication and/or self-excommunication.

At this point, the movement, as best I know, is still "in good standing" with Rome. Were the RC Womenbishops to ordain to the episcopacy 'schismatic' priests like Mary Ramerman or John Callan, regardless of their holiness, would they jeopardize their "good standing" with Rome? I don't know. Nor am I sure how much one should worry about it. Just a thought.

---

### *Rosemary Gravenor responds:*

I appreciate François Brassard's <ckfb@telus.net> response to my exegesis on the Church! I must point out that the article was not written under the banner of any Woman's Ordination movement. It is a personal response to an experience.

My concept of 'fighting' is, in this context involving institutional R.C. Church (or indeed, Christianity): opposing, taking action which directly opposes teachings. Flight could also be a withdrawal from conflict!

Of course we don't want romancatholicwomenpriests to follow the example of clericalism based on patriarchy! I am not saying or believing that these women are not being obedient to the Spirit. The Third Way, in essence, is struggling – in a relationship with Christ – to live right! In Walter Wink's words: Jesus' Third Way is not a law but a gift! It establishes us in freedom, not necessity. It is not something we are required to do, but enabled to do. It is a 'Thou mayest' not a 'Thou must'.

Francois agrees with my point regarding the priesthood of the faithful but says it won't happen in a vacuum. Of course, it cannot possibly happen in a vacuum. Who would tell us of Jesus? It is happening, surely, in the ministries so well described and named by the keynotes at the WOW Conference. These ministries and small Christian communities are all operating without any ordinations to priesthood. It is further well documented that small Base communities have grown up largely as a result of the vacuum of priesthood! (Please read Like His Brothers and Sisters subtitled: Ordaining Community Leaders by

## Dialogue Continued...

---

one of South Africa's working retired Bishops: Fritz Lobinger).

At present, I believe I am being 'prophetically obedient' to the Spirit. Why else would I try and clarify my thoughts like this? As far as the 'Church' is concerned, I am in a very lonely place.

Allow me to come at all this from another tack. I am the product of a very dysfunctional family and have to work at learning to overcome its toxicity.

The hallmark of a dysfunctional family is denial. There is a definite tendency towards deception and the members live their lives in anticipation of crises happening. Their lives are marked by, to say the least: anxiety. In short, they are expecting – all the time – all the wheels to fall off.

Living in this state for long enough, the whole 'personality' of the family influencing the individuals operates on toxic energy. When you begin on a negative foundation it is most likely that the end result will be negative. There is a great need to try and control others as well as situations.

As a first step, the only way out is to admit there is a problem (metanoia) and acknowledge one's powerlessness (recognise the source of real Power) - very much the needed entry to Jesus' Third Way.

The parable of the lamp under the bed – for me – is telling us not to live in denial of reality. (Our secrets are our weaknesses). Moreover, that which is hidden will be revealed or disclosed means we cannot live fully human lives unless we acknowledge these weaknesses. The total acknowledgment is the beginning of the process/journey to having our weaknesses turned into our greatest strengths. Why did the body of the risen Jesus still have the marks of his wounds?

The emphasis on hearing causes me to recognise that we have to 'hear' inwardly (responding to the Spirit within) in order to deal with what we 'hear' outwardly i.e. reality; what is really real and not just our perceptions of reality.

I have used this knowledge as a basis for coming to the conclusion that the institutional Church is dysfunctional.

The reform movement has no power over the institutional Church. We have to show it how much harm it is doing, or rather, how there is more harm than good emanating from it.

How do we assist the Church in getting out of denial, secrecy, exclusivity? How do we show that all perceived 'crises' do not need more control measures but a different approach to bring about a renewal in the hearts of humanity? Maybe Benedict XVI was inspired to this end with *Deus Caritas est!*

---

### *François Brassard responds.*

Thank you for your reply. I would like to make a few comments that, hopefully, might advance the dialogue.

As a psychotherapist married to a highly gifted psychotherapist, both of us immersed in 'family systems psychology,' I would agree with your assessment that the 'institutional church' is dysfunctional, largely mired in control issues, and almost completely in denial about the whole situation.

I very much like the way you frame the question of how the People of God might respond: "How do we assist the Church in getting out of denial, secrecy, exclusivity? How do we show that all perceived 'crises'

do not need more control measures but a different approach to bring about a renewal in the hearts of humanity?"

Certainly, angry confrontation will not enable the hierarchy or the far-right conservative minority to willingly acknowledge and dismantle "fortress Catholicism." As any therapist knows, you can't force a patient to take the responsibility for their healing. You can only employ strategies that enable the person to understand the harm they do to themselves and to others, at the same time showing them a way out of their dilemma, making it clear that the choice for following a healing path is theirs.

Personally, I am enheartened by the incredible variety of creative responses of church renewal groups that model a healing path in keeping with the message of Jesus. As we are incapable of doing this on our own, I am convinced that this is happening out of 'prophetic obedience' to the call of the Spirit. It is not without cost, both personal and communal. It's the gift of the cross willingly accepted, as Jesus modeled, that brings about the ongoing Resurrection. This, I believe, is the Love that Benedict 16 is talking about in "*Deus caritas est.*"

Concretely, I am a married Catholic priest 'in good standing,' a member of Corpus Canada which is a member of a world-wide organization of married Catholic priests. I would say that none of us wishes to do battle with the Vatican or the local hierarchies. But we do have different strategies for engaging the People of God. Personally, I am delighted that I am no longer a clerical priest and that I am free to exercise a priestly ministry "outside the box" of the hierarchical model, something more akin to the worker priest model of France, something, as I understand it, more akin to the servant-leadership style of Jesus.

Now you have pointed out that one does not need to be an ordained minister in order to exercise a Jesus style of ministry. You are quite right and I am wonderfully encouraged to see so many Christians, men and women, exercising such ministry. Does this mean that we do not need ordained ministers, that we do not need married Catholic priests like myself, that we do not need RC Womenpriests like Michele Birch Conery of Parksville, B.C.? I believe that we are all needed, that we all have a gift to give, and that if we all give it as Jesus did, God's Plan will happen.

### **Please Come Home**

*by Francis A. Sienna, published by  
Riptide Resources Inc., Box 2040, Thornton, On  
L0L 1N0 ISBN 0-9738603-0-8*

This book is dedicated "To all those, who for various reasons left the Church that Jesus established, and for the millions who never had the privilege to fully belong to that Church. I offer my prayers and my life, asking the Good Shepherd to bring them home so that once again there will be one fold and one shepherd."

# Voice Of The Faithful (VOTF)

by Terry Renshaw, Sidney, BC

This year we celebrate our 4th anniversary as a ministry, meeting once a month on the second Tuesday at St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church in Sidney, B.C. We have grown from a handful of disgruntled Catholics to a membership of 30-40 people from the peninsula and Victoria. We are adults on the journey, seeking, questioning and open to change. Our philosophy is centrist and we have joined together with the aim of restoring trust between the Catholic laity and the hierarchy. Our mandate is to bring the laity to the table of governance and guidance of the Church per the moral imperatives of Vatican II and to implement the teachings of its documents. Our goals are

- 1) to support victims of clergy sexual abuse;
- 2) to support priests of integrity; and
- 3) to change the structures of the Church.

Our Mission Statement reads: To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.

In Sidney, we have taken an educational approach to these goals by inviting guest speakers who can help us grow in our vision of church and in our faith as well as guide us in the implementation of the documents of Vatican II and the proposals of our diocesan synod. Over the last three years we have had a number of reputable and distinguished speakers. The first one was our former Bishop, Remi de Roo, who shared his insights into Vatican II; Grant Crosswell shared his vision of what church should be; Mary Louise Meadow gave a talk about the sexual abuse polices of the Anglican Church; Jack Sproule shared his ideas and philosophy of a Christian way of life. During the summer months we have had the pleasure of listening to Ted Schmidt, the former editor of Catholic New Times. Also, the people of Corpus have been a great support and have provided us with an endless source of speakers: Art and Alanna Menu, Phil Little, Michael O'Kane and Tom Hassett.

In September, 2005 we held a Healing Service, and by some turn of fate or faith, a victim of clergy sexual abuse from Ontario was visiting on Vancouver Island. She was contacted and was able to attend this service. Her presence added real meaning to the evening and to our "raison d'être".

Since one of our goals is to change the structures of the Church, we

were more than happy to welcome Michele Birch-Conery. In September many of us attended her first mass in Ladysmith and on November 11, 2005 she was able to come to Sidney with François Brassard and Connie Kurtenbach to share her insights as the first ordained woman in Canada and to give VOTF pointers on how we may live and attain our goals. In December, Dr. Gertie Joschsch led us in a discussion about our strengths, the role of women in the Church, and how to assess our goals and prioritize them. Hopefully I have missed no one.

To add to this list of resources we also view pertinent videos: 1) *Absolute Truth*: a four-part documentary that shows that the Church believes it has a monopoly on Truth; how Vatican II was side-lined and John-Paul II was placed in power to contain the effervescence of Vatican II and, therefore, quash any new ideas regarding human sexuality and liberation theology; 2) *Dr. Anthony Padovano, a prominent American Theologian*, giving a talk on the American Church-Past and Present; 3) *An interview with Gregory Baum* produced by Raymond Painchaud of Victoria.

Whether we have a guest speaker or watch a video, it is always followed by open discussion which allows each and everyone to share views, ideas around the subject presented. In this way we share our spiritual journeys as individuals and as a group. This is the place where we truly become one.

For myself, VOTF came as an answer to a prayer. I somehow felt, for many years, that I was quite alone in my quest for understanding and for making changes in the Church. Then the Alpha program came along and I met many people who felt as I did and we were ready to take a stand. Out of this, VOTF grew and became a ministry much needed in our parish and in our diocese.

Earlier I mentioned how Corpus supports us and Corpus has also supported me personally throughout the years and has given me the spiritual nourishment I need on the spiritual journey. I have always felt at home with these wonderful people. Corpus is my church; VOTF is my mission.

---

## Feminist Theology And Humankind Theological Liberation

by Jim Lauder, Victoria, BC

---



Feminist theology can lead to and inspire "humankind theological liberation" and a greater realization of the kingdom of God. Feminist and liberation theologies spring forth from life and a person's experience in the world.

While engaged in a small group discussion during theology class, a bright woman suggested that one of the solutions to the problem of the priest shortage within the church was the ordination of women. I

wholeheartedly agreed with her, and admired her courage to speak up and share her thoughts on the matter. She argued, "Just because I am a woman I don't think that I should be denied a calling to the priesthood and the opportunity to contribute to the church in an ordained ministry."

What shocked me was the reaction of two male members who countered her with no real argument but instead offered a passive acceptance of the status quo in the Roman Catholic Church. What was more upsetting, however, was the lack of support she received from her fellow female student who refused to agree with her position. In response, I was quick to declare myself a "raging feminist", and the majority of males in the class looked at me oddly!

## Feminist Theology Continued...

---

What my fellow feminist was expressing was her lived experience that included how she felt, what she deeply desired, her thoughts and her solutions to the pressing problems within the church today. She expressed her full humanity in the moment. Why was she not supported by the other males in our group, and further, why did the other woman in the group not support her as well? The small group may well represent the prevailing cross section of opinion, ranging from male and female passivity to both male and female outrage within the church today around the question of ordination of women, and the status of women overall.

So what is feminist theology? As a male, I am en-cultured to press for a definition that will somehow frame feminist theology and confine it to some recognizable analysis or to a form that fully describes its essence. I would no doubt be challenged by pioneer feminist theologian, Mary Daly, who “warns men against imposing the ‘false gods’ of male method onto the problem as it prevents us [women] from raising questions never asked before and from being illuminated by ideas that do not fit into the pre-established boxes and forms.” However, I wish to elaborate a feminist perspective and to cite a “definition” or understanding of feminist theology using primarily female voices.

It is important to distinguish between male and masculine, and female and feminine. Male is not equated exclusively with masculine, and female is not exclusively feminine. Rather, every male and female has both masculine and feminine attributes that allow for transcendence between the male and female categories, to cross the great divide between the sexes and circumvent the argument that assumes both are entirely separate and exclusive. This Jungian distinction allows for the transcendence of rigid gender role assumptions that has been the troubling tradition within the Roman Catholic Church and that still persists today.

In a chapter entitled, *Women Doing Theology in Latin America*, found in *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Woman Doing Theology*, Roman Catholic religious sister, Ivone Gebara, writes, “Feminist theological expression always starts from what has been lived, from what is experienced in the present. Consequently it rejects an abstract type of language about life and those matters deeply affecting human relationship.” Furthermore, feminist theology strives to “redress an understanding of God and humanity rendered exclusively in male categories by balancing these with the categories and points of view of women.” As a movement, feminist theology examines the traditions, rituals and scriptures of the Western traditions of Christianity and Judaism from a feminist perspective.

More radically, the eminent biblical scholar and author, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in her book, *In Memory of Her*, views feminist theology as a critical theology of liberation [emphasis mine] that has “developed over and against symbolic androcentrism and patriarchal domination within biblical religion, while at the same time seeking to recover the biblical heritage of woman for the sake of empowering woman in the struggle of liberation.” Through critical analysis and interpretation of the scriptures, Fiorenza believes the role of woman in the early church will be rediscovered, honored, and in a sense, brought to woman’s consciousness today to assist them, and indeed all people of God to become truly equal disciples.

In her words, “Only when the ekklesia of women is joined by all

those in biblical religion who share the vision of the people of God as the discipleship of equals, only then is the gospel proclaimed in the whole world.” Ekklesia of women refers to the “gathering of women”, also known as “women-church”, where women can gather, support each other, worship and analyze issues that affect them, free from the controls and or direction of men.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a Roman Catholic theologian, has written extensively on feminist theology. In her book *Sexism and God-Talk* she challenges traditional Christian doctrines of God and Christ. Ruether’s challenge to the institutional church goes even further: “The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive.” Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption. For Ruether, what promotes the full humanity of woman is Holy and Divine, and in her writing she is encouraging, believing that women are now beginning to affirm the humanity of women and claiming it for themselves.

I believe that my feminist colleague in our small group was doing just that in her protest, her questioning, and in her sharing of her full humanity. She was also appealing to the church to treat her as an equal.

### ***What Went Wrong?***

Despite the excitement and hope that Vatican II brought as a result of the inspired leadership of John XXIII, his successor Paul VI took it upon himself to deal with the topics of priestly celibacy and artificial contraception without the dialogue of bishops. In her book, *Women and Christianity*, Mary T. Malone gets to the root of the problem, the Church’s attitude toward sex.

The subject of sex is central to these two issues, and therefore the women of the church were clearly presented as one of the greatest problems then facing the Catholic Church. Celibacy, of course, clearly affects the clergy, but the point of celibacy is to present women as somehow inimical to the priesthood, and therefore inimical to the ecclesiastical notion of the divine.

With the spread and excitement of growing ecumenism in the 1970s and into the 1990s, fundamentalists within the Vatican became nervous. As Malone points out, “It was the Vatican that named the ordination of women by the Anglican Church in England a ‘monstrous obstacle’ to ecumenism in 1992, and such it has remained.”

What possible threat could the ordination of women within the Roman Catholic Church bring? The possible threat might be to the power and control of the institutional church, built along military hierarchal lines. But is this a gospel model of church? Is not feminist theology more along the lines of the early church model?

I believe the ordination of women poses no threat, providing men and women alike believe in what Paul wrote to the Galatians: “There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and

## *Feminist Theology Continued...*

---

female -for all are one in Christ.” (Gal 3:28)

In her book, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*, Laura Swan revives the sayings, lives and stories of women leaders in the early church, and she reminds us that women held equal positions of ministry: “Both men and women were involved in evangelization and works of mercy to the poor, orphans, and prisoners. Women held leadership positions: Ancient tombstones reveal a history of women bearing titles such as *ruler of the synagogue, deacon, presbyter, and honorable woman bishop.*” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza writes:

The Pauline literature and Acts still allow us to recognize that women were among the most prominent missionaries and leaders in the early Christian movement. They were apostles and ministers like Paul, and some were his co-workers. They were teachers, preachers, and competitors in the race for the gospel. They founded house churches and, as prominent patrons, used their influence for other missionaries and Christians.

What changed? When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, its leadership became public and male dominated; women in leadership were pressured to remain at home. However, Swan states, “As leadership opportunities within mainstream Christianity decreased, the desert and the monastery offered women a greater sense of physical and spiritual autonomy.” Women refused to surrender and found places and ways to practice their faith and develop their own feminine spirituality and theology.

### *The Contemporary Situation*

Given that “Many women are especially gifted with a deep intuition about human life and are able to counsel, to intuit problems, to express them, to give support, to propose solutions, and to confirm the faith of many people,” why are they not treated as equals in our Roman Catholic Church? In *Unveiled, Nuns Talking*, Mary Loudon shares the stories of ten nuns.

### *Sister Eva Heymann provides us with some insights:*

I think many people, and perhaps some men in particular, see us as powerful people, and we are regarded by some of the clergy as a threat. Nuns have often been innovators. I think the very fact that many Sisters have been in, and are still in, leadership positions in education and reform, means that we are aware of the way in which society and the Church have for centuries, colluded with attitudes that diminish women. That awareness makes us potentially powerful. Our vows are really about Kingdom values - social justice, preferential options for the poor, those kinds of issues, so we present a threat to some people who do not share our priorities.

Heymann elaborates further and speaks about the whole question of sexuality and spirituality and the lack of comfort some feel about those topics.

I think that some priests, for example, feel very threatened that their authority will be diminished if there is more shared teamwork ministry. It suits the bossy male, it suits the powerful, authoritative Church institution and it fits in with the reactionary view that a woman's place is in the home and that she brings up children or is compliant in other ways in her service to the Church.

My experience of the men in my small group (and the passive acceptance by the woman to the position of the Church) might be understandable simply from the point of view of socialization, namely that without deep consideration or thinking, or questioning authority, my colleagues have resigned themselves to think, “it is the way it’s supposed to be.” I would assert that this might stem in part from a Church that teaches from an inadequate perspective, saying it is not the will of God for women to be ordained. Therefore, how can one possibly question that authority transmitted by the hierarchical church? In the face of authority, many of us have issues around asserting our own individuality because we have not done the psychological work of severing the power politics in our own family of origins. In other words, many of us have not yet successfully differentiated ourselves as mature adults but instead remain as eternal children and unconsciously rely on the institution to keep us that way. For many, the authoritarian focused church, with willing “Fathers” ready to offer themselves as surrogate parents to “needy children” in their midst, can unconsciously perpetuate the status quo. Mary Daly offers more insights about the acceptance of the Church's teachings by many parishioners around the status of women. She says, “When an audience which has been conditioned by Catholic training hears or sees the words 'divine plan,' 'divinely ordained, etc.,' there tends to be a response of awe and reverence, and an inclination to assent to whatever is being proposed as God's plan. This effect is greatly increased if the people are made to feel that the speaker or writer has a position of authority in the Church and a claim to some esoteric body of knowledge which they themselves lack.”

In her chapter entitled, *The Pedestal Peddlars*, Daly offers a critique of what she calls “the myth of the 'eternal feminine’” that is, a motif or proposition that “would keep woman on a pedestal at all costs, paralyzing her will to freedom and personhood.”

As I reflect on the small group exercise and think of how the conversation ended with my female colleague's energy, enthusiasm and creativity shut down, the very essence and life of theological discourse was limited and shut down as well. Without her feminine perspective we were left with only part of what is possible, only the so called masculine and dominant perspective that is rational in tone and insists on its own truths.

As Gebara points out, “discourse dealing with the important issues in life is the heart of every theology. God's life is related to the life of humankind, and the life of humankind is related to God. All subsequent systematizing, all thematizing, all connecting of ideas, is vitally linked to this most basic aspect.”

### *Personal Experience*

Above, I asserted that feminist theology can lead to and inspire “humankind theological liberation.” I consider myself blessed to practice my own form of “humankind theological liberation” with families when I offer them a funeral and memorial service. The service I create in partnership with them celebrates and honors the life and essence of their loved one. As part of my service, I like to include a psalm or scripture passage that speaks of love. I do so because what we celebrate together is the love expressed by a loved

## *Feminist Theology Continued...*

---

one, and we mourn the loss of their loving presence in our lives. To reflect the humanness of the person, I listen carefully to how the family describes their loved one. Whether the person was female or male, I do my best to reflect that person's essence and character. So the source of the materials I choose is very important. If the person was direct, matter of fact, and not necessarily poetic or metaphorical, then I suggest the following passage from Paul to the Cor 13:4-8.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Paul in this passage is very direct and clear, and he expresses what he believes are the qualities of love; he does so in a very matter of fact way conveying to the reader his confidence in his truth. Quoting this passage in a service for a person who was just as direct and clear, I believe, is very appropriate and helpful for a family.

On the other hand, for a person who is much more poetic, free flowing, and perhaps less direct, and matter of fact, I suggest a psalm written by Julia Esquivel, a Catholic activist, poet and liberation theologian. She speaks of love differently.

*I have been summoned by love,  
Real love that believes and hopes and discovers because it is stronger  
than death.*

*It comes to us from beyond the zenith and submerges itself into the  
depth of the nadir.  
Love that extends my arms into the infinite and invites me to embrace  
the cosmos with its tenderness.*

*The Love that opens my eyes to the mystery that I am in the  
unfathomable depths of yours continues giving me, step by step,  
victory over fear, leading me secure to the abundant fountain of life.*

*I have been invited to the Love whose swelling waves vibrantly shake  
my little vessel of clay.  
Yes, I come from Love and I am led to Love. All my being yields itself  
in ecstasy to its embrace in the very heart of the beatitude!*

With two theologies of love, I am able to reflect more accurately the humanness of an individual. Thankfully I have a choice and I am not limited by any church teaching or prescribed liturgy, and I am not limited to only Paul's or some other male's version of love. Instead, I have the choice to quote and serve families more fully by offering them a psalm written by a female theologian. My theology is not dominated or ruled by a purely male perspective but comes from my own experience in community with the families I serve. I believe that this is an example of "humankind theological liberation" and the perspective most needed in the Roman Catholic Church today.

Hans Kung says in *Women in Christianity*, "The study of Catholic theology by women, who in many places gain only limited admission or are completely excluded, needs to be encouraged. Women should be admitted to full theological study so that the church and theology everywhere gain from the insights of women." Kung also points out

that with respect to women's ordination, "There are no serious theological objections to women priests." He contends that just because the Twelve Apostles happened to be male does not justify the continued exclusion of women in the priesthood. Kung adds, "In view of the completely different position of women today in business, scholarship and science, culture, state and society, the admission of women to the priesthood should not be further delayed."

It is obvious that the addition and inclusion of the feminist perspective more fully in the church would contribute a great deal more than we have today in so many ways. Ivone Gebara elaborates.

When women's experience is expressed in a Church whose tradition is machistic, the other side of human experience returns to theological discourse: the side of the person who gives birth, nurses, nourishes, of the person who for centuries has remained silent with regard to anything having to do with theology. Now she begins to express her experience of God in another manner, a manner that does not demand that reason alone be regarded as the single and universal mediation of theological discourse. This way of doing theology includes what is vital, utilizing mediations that can help to express what has been experienced.

Feminist theology can and does lead to "humankind theological liberation." Further realization of the kingdom of God is necessary if we are to reflect what is fully human and what is Divine in our church and in our communities. To continue on the path of denying women full participation in roles of leadership in the church, the priesthood and in all aspects of community life, is to limit our full potential as human beings as we evolve and face the challenges of today. The role of women is vital for the development of the church and for the preaching of the Christian gospel. Sadly, as Kung points out, we experience the "constant resigned departure of women from the Roman Catholic church..." Once again I return to scripture for advice and direction: "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." and "There is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:26:28) This calls us to our equality, our shared blessing of life, our humanity, and our responsibility to show each other respect, love, and compassion, and in particular, the inclusion of us all in all our pursuits and challenges in this kingdom of ours.

*Corpus NCR has published an open letter to Marc Cardinal Ouellet. To read the text of this letter follow the link in the Corpus Canada website ([www.corpuscanada.org](http://www.corpuscanada.org)) to the Corpus NCR website and click on the News section.*

# Corpus Canada

## Who Are We?

We are a faith community of men and women empowered by our baptism in Jesus' Spirit to reach out to others in their need as Jesus did. We also provide support for married Roman Catholic priests, their family and friends.

## Where Are We Going?

This faith community is dedicated to

- Renewal of ministries in the Church, including an ordained ministry open to men and women, married and unmarried;
- A vision of Church that includes all people who profess faith in Jesus Christ;
- Development of leadership among all the baptised in the Church;
- Promotion of a wholesome view of sexuality;
- Justice for all based on Gospel values.

Our message is a healing one and is directed to everyone, especially the marginalized in the Church. It is our hope to reach people through many ministries, and in a special way through the creation of small faith communities.

## How Do We Get There?

Through a collegial approach based on consensus reached through communal discernment in the Spirit, we share our gifts that all creation might be transformed according to God's loving plan.

**Corpus Canada**  
[www.corpuscanada.org](http://www.corpuscanada.org)  
**Corpus-NCR (Canada)**  
[www.ca.renewedpriesthood.org](http://www.ca.renewedpriesthood.org)  
**Corpus USA**  
[www.corpus.org](http://www.corpus.org)

# Corpus Canada National Coordinating Team

## Coordinator

**Joe Gubbels**

Email: [jgubbs@shaw.ca](mailto:jgubbs@shaw.ca)

**François Brassard**

(see box at lower right)

**Chris Diamond**

(see page 2 column one)

**Emil Kutarna**

113 Tibbets Road, Regina SK S4S 2Y9

Tel: (306) 586-2853

Email: [emil@kutarna.net](mailto:emil@kutarna.net)

**Jim Lynn**

Box 2702, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R1

Tel: (867) 873-8529

Email: [jjniteowl@hotmail.com](mailto:jjniteowl@hotmail.com)

**John Palardy**

Tel: (403) 556-7855

Email: [palardyj@telusplanet.net](mailto:palardyj@telusplanet.net)

**Dianne Peck**

7163 Royal Pine Avenue, Halifax, NS B3L 2G3

Tel: (902) 454-2406

Email: [diannepe@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:diannepe@ns.sympatico.ca)

**Leonard Schmidt**

902 Borebank Street, Winnipeg MB R3N 1G6

Tel: (204) 487-3553

Email: [schmidt1@TOTAL.NET](mailto:schmidt1@TOTAL.NET)

## How Can I Join Or Show Support?

If you wish to join or renew your membership in Corpus Canada for the year 2005 (membership is open to all regardless of denominational affiliation), write to: Corpus Canada Treasurer, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9. Enclose a cheque for \$50 (individual membership) or \$75 (family membership) payable to "Corpus Canada." Corpus Canada will donate \$25 of your membership fee to Xristos Community Society in your name, and Xristos will send you an official tax receipt. At the request of Corpus Canada, Xristos Community Society distributes The Journal free of charge to the membership of Corpus Canada.

## HOW TO GET THE JOURNAL

If you are not now receiving The Journal and would like to, please fill out this form and mail it to the Treasurer, Xristos Community Society, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

The Journal will be sent to you free of charge. If you would like to support the free distribution of The Journal, please send a cheque to "Xristos Community Society" c/o the Treasurer, Xristos Community Society, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9. Xristos Community Society is a registered charity. all donors of \$10 or more will receive an official tax receipt. Thank you for your support of this Christian ministry.

**Corpus Canada Treasurer**  
**Alanna Menu**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**Corpus Canada Media Representative & Contact Person to the International Conederation of Married Catholic Priests**  
**François Brassard**  
422 Davis Rd., Ladysmith, BC V9G 1V3  
Tel: (250) 245-3365  
Email: [ckfb@telus.net](mailto:ckfb@telus.net)  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**Corpus Canada Web Site Manager**  
**Michael Irving**  
Email: [ballinderry@shaw.ca](mailto:ballinderry@shaw.ca)

Return Postage Guaranteed By  
**The Journal**  
422 Davis Road  
Ladysmith BC V9G 1V3

