



The Journal

July - September 2008



From The Journal July-August 1998 issue

Report From Catholics of Vision, Canada (CVC)

by Sandra Glynn, Arnprior, ON

From a meeting with Msgr. P. Schonenbach, general secretary to the CCCB (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops), and follow-up correspondence with other clerics from the CCCB, we have been informed of the following: "The mandate and procedures of our Commission do not permit us to address an ad hoc group such as Catholics of Vision. However, in returning the request to consider your concerns to the CCCB Secretariat, we suggested that other means be found to foster dialogue, particularly at the local level." (Bishop T. Prendergast)

"My message was simple: the Bishops are in a constant dialogue mode; a dialogue that is within the traditional structure of Church procedure (councils, synods, and such); a dialogue that promises to be productive and therefore stays away from issues that are beyond the competence of the Bishops; finally a dialogue that is respectful of people and avoids divisiveness." (Msgr. P. Schonenbach)

OUR REACTION:

- 1) Although not surprised, we are disappointed that there appears to be little specific response to the recommendation in the CVC report "that the CCCB work cooperatively with all sectors in the Church to develop mechanisms which facilitate dialogue so that all Catholics can express themselves on all issues of concern, openly and without fear." From our signature campaign we know that many people find the traditional structures inadequate.*
- 2) During the signature gathering we were "respectful of all people". We should continue to operate in this mode.*
- 3) Articulation of divisions is a component of productive dialogue. There are deep divisions within the Church. These divisions have not been caused, but merely articulated, by CVC. To avoid discussion of divisive issues is counter productive if not dysfunctional.*
- 4) Discussion at the local level is good; that is where real growth takes place. However, if one local group does not know what another local group has discussed, or what procedure has been followed, the process is fragmented and we are not helping one another.*
- 5) We have numerous small reform groups in Canada and even more small faith communities. We have many excellent newsletters. But again the fragmentation prevents us from supporting one another's initiatives, and from sharing what we have learned about issues and process....*

Let us all be inspired by the words of Oscar Romero:

"We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in that. This enables us to do something, and do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest."

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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.

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See the back page for further details.

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FOCUS TOPIC

for the October - December 2008 Issue

There is no Focus Topic for this issue

Note: Articles for this issue are due by November 15.

Reader's may send in items of interest to the Corpus Canada Forum at
www.corpuscanada.org

*I was beginning to think I was a cynical person until I realized I was a positive person in a cynical institution.
No author.*

Reflections On My Ordination

by Alanna Menu, Sidney, BC



Opinion within the Roman Catholic Church about the ordination of women priests is polarised. I doubt there are few people who are neutral about this issue. I commend those women and men of the Womenpriest movement for their courage and their prophetic stand - they recognised their call to ordained ministry and embraced that

call regardless of institutional strictures.

I, on the other hand, have taken a different path. In two respects I am similar to the Womenpriests - I have been a practicing Roman Catholic and I have always felt a call to ministry. But I differ from them in that I have always not felt a call to ordained ministry. Working alongside the people of God wherever they are, is what I have wanted to do, and is where I have felt called. Until one day late in life God surprised me with a different call.

When I married Arthur Menu, formerly a Jesuit priest, we decided to work together in ministry. I needed professional accreditation to do this so I chose to attend Huron College, an Anglican seminary in London and part of the University of Western Ontario, in order to receive a Master of Divinity. I did not attend the Roman Catholic seminary, St. Peter's in London, because my marriage to Arthur meant I was not in good-standing with the Roman Catholic church. St. Peter's advised me they could not grant me a degree because by doing so they would be giving the Roman Catholic world an incorrect understanding of my status with the official church.

Members of the Anglican church at the school advised me to pursue ordination within the Anglican communion. Members of the United Church also tried to persuade me to become ordained. But I did not feel this call and so I continued to do ministry with the people of God while remaining outside the official structure. All of the areas of ministry to which I have responded have been gifts from God - I did not seek them out. After I obtained my Master of Divinity, Arthur and I were hired by the United Church (as Roman Catholics) to minister as lay pastors at three United Church congregations, two in northern Ontario and, after we moved to Sidney, BC, at Centennial United Church in Victoria.

When those ministry positions ended, I worked as the Assistant Director of L'Arche Victoria for five years. I then moved to the Ozanam Centre, part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to work as a Community Support Worker with adults with developmental

disabilities and to help with their accreditation process. During this time, I attended both the United and Roman Catholic Churches. I received an in-depth education about about the polity of the United Church as I took on responsibilities at St. Paul's United Church in Sidney as Chair of the Outreach Division and Secretary of the Church Council, and finally, the Secretary of Victoria Presbytery (the United Church equivalent of a diocese, governed by a council of ministers and lay people instead of a bishop). In this capacity, I was required to become a member of the United Church.

Instead of *feeling* an inner call to ordained ministry, I *received* an outer call, when members of one of the churches to which I had ministered, upon learning that I was now a member of the United Church, told me they wanted me to "get ordained" so I could be their minister.

God speaking through the people brought me to ordained ministry within the United Church.

Following the prodding of God, on 25 May, 2008 I was officially ordained to a ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care within the United Church of Canada. Pictures, commentary, and video clips of the ordination ceremony can be found on my personal web site at www.armcam.net. I invite you to take a look.

I have been working with Centennial United Church in Victoria since 1 July, 2008 as their pastor. I lead the worship services (writing the prayers and choosing the hymns), preach and do pastoral care. I am also required to assist the Church Council in their work and responsibility for the spiritual life of the members. I thank God every day for bringing me to this work. I am blessed by the face of God before me and the presence of God around me in the people I serve.

*#4. The term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult. Then "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities; in their meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of the Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinct features. Through such dialogue everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, these Communions engage in that more intensive cooperation in carrying out any duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience... Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and, wherever necessary, undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform." (The exact term used at Vatican II for "separated brethren" is "Fratres a nobis seiuncti" i.e. divided from us - but not from God nor each other. Renewal indicates adopting changes; reform indicates restoring whatever has become deformed.)
Vatican II "Decree on Ecumenism"*

Theological Soapbox: The Worship Of Idols

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



When we hear the phrase “the worship of idols”, many of us think of pagan religions that use idols. We believe that the pagans believe a physical object like a statue has the power of a god. This seems to us quite absurd. How can stone possess godlike power?

In places the Bible mocks idol worship

in just this way. “To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, as though we were alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales- they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries out to it, it does not answer or save anyone from trouble.” (Isaiah 46:5-13)

But is this fair? Hindus worship idols. How would they respond to this criticism? Here is one response I found on the Internet.

“Hindus do not worship a stone or metal 'idol' as God. We worship God through the image. We invoke the presence of God from the higher, unseen worlds, into the image so that we can commune with Him and receive His blessings.”

(<http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Hinduism/id/51449>)

We must distinguish between worshiping a piece of stone and worshiping a god who inhabits or infuses a piece of stone. If Christians can worship Jesus, a human being united with God, in his physical manifestation, cannot a Hindu worship a god in its physical manifestation?

Furthermore, Hindus have an answer to those who accuse them of worshiping many gods. According to Subhamoy Das, “The Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism amount to thousands, all representing the many aspects of only one supreme Absolute called 'Brahman'. However, people who don't know this misinterpret the fact that Hinduism has a multitude of Gods! What one should understand is that although there are many manifestations of Brahman in the forms of deities each deity is really an aspect of the Brahman or, ultimately Brahman itself.”

(<http://hinduism.about.com/cs/basics/a/aa072103a.htm>)

So is there any real difference between the mental act of a Christian worshiping the “only one supreme Absolute” (which the Christian calls “God”) while contemplating a statue of Jesus, and the mental act of a Hindu worshiping the “only one supreme Absolute” (which the Hindu calls “Brahman”) while contemplating a statue of one of the Hindu deities?

And if this true of Hinduism, cannot it not also be true of the main pagan religions of former times? There is a passage from the prophet Malachi that suggests to me a recognition of the validity of pagan

religions, at least in their purest form. “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 1:6-14)

Now Malachi cannot be referring here to pagans practicing Judaism, because only Jews did that. But he seems to be saying that in their pagan worship, they are, in fact, worshiping the God of Israel.

All that being said, what is the Bible really condemning when it condemns idolatry? To answer that question, we must first understand what the true worship of God consists of. The true act of worship is one in which the worshiper surrenders completely to the will of God. Muslims have this right when they call their religion “Islam”, which means “surrender”. The true worshiper acknowledges and accepts that they have an obligation to conform themselves completely to the will of God. When the worshiper, despite their acknowledgement of this obligation, does not bow to the will of God, they recognize that they have sinned. Any so-called act of worship in which the so-called worshiper does not accept their obligation to subordinate their will to the will of God is idolatry. The idolater holds their own will to be supreme.

That is why the most common forms of idolatry involve the worship of things that have no will of their own: wealth, power, prestige. They present no challenge to self-will.

But what is the point of idolatry? Why do people do it? The reason lies, I believe, in the psychological experience that accompanies both true worship and idolatry. There is an initial exultation that is felt when we attribute supreme value to something. In the case of true worship, the struggle to subordinate our wills to God's will cause the exultation to fade. It is similar to falling in love. When we first fall in love, we are transported, we are euphoric. But as time passes and we have to do the hard work of maintaining a committed love relationship, as happens in marriage, the euphoria fades.

But in the case of idolatry, the exultation can be experienced again and again because the idolater never has to undergo the struggle of subordinating their will to the will of what they worship. It is similar to falling in love with someone who is unattainable. One can fantasize forever about that person and indeed become addicted to the euphoria that accompanies the fantasies because one never has to go through the hard and often disillusioning labour of living with that person, no longer being able to do as one pleases.

Idolatry is an addictive pleasure that like all addictive pleasures, if practiced too much, weakens our spirit. True worship is continuous struggle but it gives us peace and makes us strong in spirit.

Sophia wisdom from Sufism:

The shaykh (guide) takes the hand of the student (al-murid) and says to him, “Now you are facing God, face to face...This is who you are (ha ant). You see that your eye is really the eye of God. There is only one eye”.

Resources:

sufiuniversity.org; suficentereast.org; rahimbronner.com

Sophia: The Best Is Yet To Be!

by Dianne Peck, Halifax, NS



Since there is no designated Focus Topic for this issue of the Journal, I would like to share some thoughts about an experience I am currently involved in, called falling in love.

I have a friend who has just completed a two year study program at the University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism in California. Recently she told me about a course called "Finding Your Beloved" that was being

offered by one of her Sufi teachers.

For sometime now I have felt my soul whispering its need for a very particular kind of Anam Cara. Not that I felt urgent enough to leap into just any old kind of relationship in order not to be alone. As the saying goes, "I'd rather be lonely than wish I were". But a course in the Sufi approach to romance and love had a strong pull. The writings about love by famous Sufis such as Kahlil Gibran and Rumi have nurtured my heart for many years.

And so I took part in a seven-session teleclass led by Jeff Rahim Bronner, and nothing has been the same since.

At this point I know very little about Sufism. I know that the particular branch of Sufism I am being introduced to is called the Shadhiliyya path. It defines Spiritual Healing as the process of connecting your needs and pain with Divine love through your spiritual heart. It is led by Spiritual Master and Shakyh (guide) Sidi al-Jamal. Sidi has lived on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem for forty years, and has worked to bring peace to the people. He is the Head of the Higher Sufi Council in Jerusalem. He travels across the US every year, holding four-day 'Sufi Schools' and visiting the university in northern California whose focus is teaching and healing. The foundational spiritual practice of Sufism is called 'The Remembrance'. It consists simply of turning inward to the heart centre, and "remembering the Name". To remember the name means to connect with the Divine by chanting the Arabic name for the Divine "Aaaaaa...llah". The 'Aaaa' sound stirs and loosens the closed off areas of the heart, and the 'llah' sound opens them. When they are opened they can be healed. The teaching is "When you remember the Name, you find everything. Every meaning, every message, every holy book is in the Name". (Sidi al-Jamal)

By the time you are reading this article, I will be attending a Sufi School in southern Pennsylvania. It is being held at a year-round Sufi center called the Farm of Peace.

My purpose for attending is to encounter the Sufi spiritual path to love (which they refer to as "the Love"), and to discern the next step for my future. I am very excited.

But back to my Finding Your Beloved course. Many years ago, yes, more than forty, I fell very much in love with God, and responded by leaving my world and entering the Sisters of Charity, the order of religious women founded by Mother Elizabeth Seton.

Many of life's most beautiful experiences have come my way since then, including marriage and children, a teaching career, grandchildren, ministry in adult faith development, and most recently a career as life

coach and healer. So it was quite a surprise at first to start out to find a life partner and to end up falling in love anew with the inner Beloved.

I think it happened like this. Rahim Bronner, course facilitator, began from the Sufi premise that to find your true physical beloved, first find the divine Beloved. Well, there was no searching required because Rahim was so filled with loving compassion himself. Or perhaps it was that he was such an open channel to let the heart of God wrap around us that I hardly noticed my own heart being stolen away.

The result is I am being led on an extravagant adventure. I have given up my apartment, and am selling off my possessions. I am living with my son Andy and his wife Tania and my grandchildren here in Halifax until about October. Then I move to Utah to stay as long as immigration laws allow, with my son Joe, his wife Lynda, and my Utah grandchildren. I expect to know additional details of my journey after my attendance at Sufi School in September. But I am as sure of what I do know as I have ever been about anything.

I am also quite sure that every one who takes Rahim's course does not run off blindly to another country, etc. In fact, the rate of successful relationships that result right at home is very heartening.

And I will be adding to those statistics in due time.

One of the practices Rahim teaches is to speak to your beloved's spiritual heart. I believe that my heart's desire for a beloved comes from my inner Beloved, and that he is already on his way to me. And I am ecstatic to be taught that I can nurture our relationship now, that we can take each other to divine love and light now. And so I spend beautiful time pouring out the love for him that fills my heart and receiving his in return. My spirit then hears such reassurance that he is indeed already here, that I am his beloved, and he is mine, that his heart is toward me in every way. I know that he is aware of all I have undertaken in order to be with him, and that his desire to find his heart's Anam Cara matches my own.

Actually, I now realize that I have previous experience with this technique of relating to a loved one through the spiritual heart. Only a few days after my husband's passing I began to be filled with his presence, and flood gates of healing that didn't happen while he was physically present, poured out.

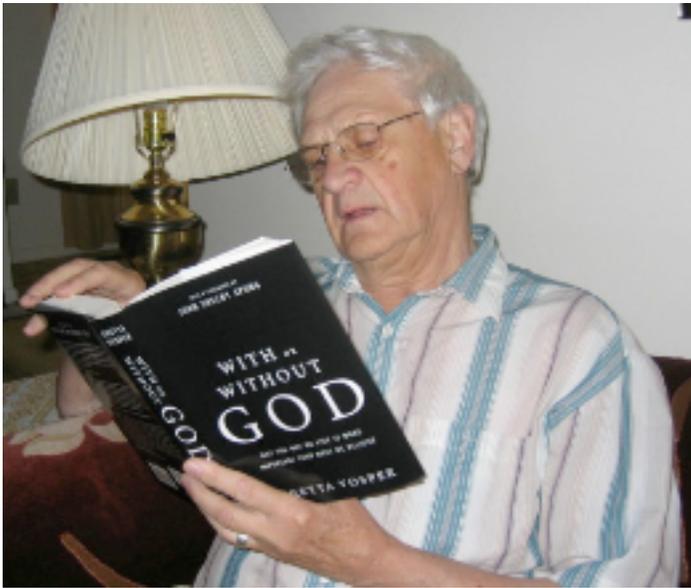
I am also using it in a little differing format to influence my young grandchildren's emotional adjustments that go long with life challenges such as potty training. I embrace and talk to and comfort and reassure their spirit that they are greatly loved, very welcomed, and very safe in their life as physical beings.

There were several participants in my Finding Your Beloved course, some of whom were already in relationships that they needed discernment about, or more from. They were encouraged to use this same process of addressing a partner's spirit and heart in love, compassion, and honesty. So it can also be a matter of re-finding or helping the one you have to become the beloved of your dreams.

It has been very helpful to share this new journey with you, and a joy, and I am filled with appreciation.

If You Can't, You Can't. But If You Can, You Must

by Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK



Greta Vosper, United Church minister, gives this advice in *With or Without God*. In the context of that statement she says that those who can write should write because **now is the time to reconstruct Christianity**.

I can't agree with her more.

She writes "Former structures crumble and give way, and in the remaining mixture of dust and sweat, things that seemed outrageously improbable suddenly emerge as the next best, in fact the *only*, thing you could possibly expect."

Take women's ordination, for example. When Corpus Canada was organizing in 1989, we wondered whether our policy of church renewal should include the ordination of women. At that time some felt it would hurt our cause by alienating the bishops. We didn't want to be seen as sh-- disturbers. Today we feel vindicated. Corpus members were proudly and prominently visible at the recent ordinations of women in Victoria, BC. Improbable twenty years ago, expected today!

Vosper says "**Change is needed... not new curtains, window-dressing change but real, 'this is going to hurt' change.**" For her this means getting to the bottom of things, such as whether God exists and the possibility, no, the probability that Jesus was not divine. Heavy stuff! But before we cut her off as being too radical, if we are confident in our beliefs, why not hear her out?

To start with, she contends that "Everything outside of the natural world that we see, touch, and respond to – every person, every group, and every political movement; every system of thought, of education, of economics, every religious act – **was created at sometime by someone.**" Do we dare apply this to the Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church? That would be like going for the jugular. Yet why should it frighten us to think that the Church may have a human origin? Many human inventions are marvelous. There are many great things about the Church. Unfortunately, there are also many not-so-great things.

In her book, Vosper says that **we need to redefine and re-mythologize, starting with the Bible**. We can no longer believe the Bible is TAWOGFAT (The Authoritative Word Of God

For All Time) as some fundamentalist denominations believe. Bishop Spong's book *The Sins of Scripture* illustrates the humanness and the non-holiness of parts of the Bible very well. The Bible is a collection of human writings, not of God's writing. "When we allow the progressive scholarship of the past centuries to challenge us to reconsider the foundations of our faith, we find ourselves left with an enormous task." (Vosper) Is the endeavour worthwhile? Some think the Church cannot be saved and should be let die in peace. Vosper thinks there is hope, but it first requires *four essentials*.

We need **an open mind** (such as not forbidding the discussion of women's ordination as the Pope has done). We need **Passion** because there will be fierce opposition, ostracism, ridicule and even physical threats. We need **Creativity**. This latter means thinking outside the box. "Ideas swell, visions become more focused, reality begins to pale in comparison with the urgency of what is inside, one becomes almost fixated on it, and then something has to give. It has to come out, to be born, released into its own." (Vosper)

Fourth is the need for **intellectual rigour**. We need to know what we are talking about. "Language holds power, incredible power. Those who control language control power. It's as simple as that". (Vosper) Avoid big words. Transubstantiation is meaningless to ordinary Catholics. They just take it on faith that the priest knows – but does he really?

Another four essentials are **honesty, courage, respect, and balance**. You can fill in the meanings for the first three. I like her explanation of balance. She says this means patience, perseverance, and pace.

It is no small undertaking. We are changing worldviews and beliefs, and this has serious consequences.

Vosper's gives the example of a ninety-six-year-old grandfather who was delighted at the invention of the motor car. He marveled at the technology. But he was a harness-maker in the time of the Depression. His very livelihood would suffer.

We are talking about a paradigm shift, from the Bible being TAWOGFAT to being a set of ancient human writings, some wise and wonderful, some cruel and despicable. This means that our salvation does not depend upon the Bible any longer.

What is salvation? Is it Jesus opening the gates of heaven by his blood on the cross? It cannot be that if we accept the evidence of how the earth and humanity originated. What kind of God would play games with the first humans in the Garden of Eden – tempting them and then punishing them for failing the test? No sensitive human parent would think of such cruelty. The story of the Fall has to be a metaphor. If it is not history but a metaphor, then maybe the "gates of heaven" were never closed! What then does "salvation" mean? Could the death of Jesus have a different meaning than "redemption from sin"?

Vosper suggests, however, that **we don't chuck the Bible just because it is a human book**. It has many beautiful passages. And if these passages inspire, fine; but if another passage insults your intelligence, then just let it go. However, we need to be aware that the Bible is not the last word about who God is, or even whether God is. We just don't know. In his book *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, Presbyterian minister, Jim Dollar,

If You Can't Continued...

cautions "We don't need another doctrine of God to add to the pile. We just need to torch the pile." Vosper says she is going to try dropping the word God altogether and use some other word such as breath or love. "When we consider the concept of god and work our way toward exploring it differently than we have in the past, **the whole idea of Jesus being the Son of God no longer makes any sense.**" Yet she says we remain fascinated by him. But now she suggests we read the Gospels as just a book, not as TAWOGFAT. Keep in mind that "No other historical record contains anything about Jesus' miraculous works or resurrection; we have only the words of those who believed he was the Messiah or the Son of God, a decidedly biased view."

Vosper sees hope if we understand the **stages of faith** as explained by developmental psychologist James Fowler: Before age seven, children have difficulty differentiating between the real and imaginative worlds. After that they realize some things don't really exist, and so they rely upon the authorities in their lives and learn to believe what they believe. Finally by young adulthood they have synthesized the belief system that surrounds them.

Sadly, many people live at the young adult stage until they die. The church reinforces it. Catholics are not encouraged to think independently- not encouraged to think, period. "Pay, pray and obey."

But some Roman Catholics move on to the stage of **critical thinking**. Here family and friends may see them as mavericks, and family is uncomfortable with mavericks. Go off the beaten path and the church will isolate you. (Does excommunication mean anything anymore?). A Catholic priest who marries loses not only his clerical rights but even some that all other Catholics have. It is easy for such a one to become bitter and angry.

I did. **But one can and must move on.** Fowler calls this the "Conjunctive Stage". Vosper puts it neatly: "Beyond anger, the

individual is now able to return to the symbols and myths of his or her original belief system and find meaning and value in them- well, *some* of them. No longer held as factual, these bits and pieces of a former worldview are freed from the necessity of proof into a realm of mythic symbolism." At one point in my journey I could not think of celebrating Mass ever again because I didn't believe as I once did. Now I can see differently; eucharistic communion can be the most beautiful and powerful symbol drawing us into community.

So where do we go from here? **Is it worth the effort to change the church?** Vosper thinks so: "Religion and philosophical traditions have been dealing with issues of life and death in difficult conversations for the whole of human history." (and) "most faith traditions, not just Christian ones, are experts at creating community." This is a very useful tool. Communities can do things that the individual cannot. The Development and Peace organization is a good example.

So, I go to Mass now and I take my elderly mother-in-law. At eighty-two, it is one of her greatest consolations. She knows the prayers by heart, so well that she concelebrates by saying the words of consecration along with the priest- sotto voce, mind you, but enough to make some people next to us look in our direction. I think she has it right. Everyone should be saying the words together, including me, except that I would be saying them with a different understanding.

Maybe that is the way the change will come; gradually the myth is changing in the minds not only of Catholics, but of others like Greta Vosper. I often wonder where our Corpus people are at now. Maybe we can make more use of our Corpus-N chatroom to discuss our views. As Vosper says, "If you can't you can't...." But we can, and therefore, we must continue to work toward the renewal.

Kingdom Builders Outreach Centre *excerpt from the Beacon Journal, Akron, Ohio*

"Everybody here is recovering from something and we have been restored by God. We need men who have God in their hearts in the marketplace helping their brothers live lives for God." (Hank Richard)

In "Building God's Kingdom" (The Journal, January '08), I told about Hank Richard of Akron, Ohio and the Kingdom Builders. On August 9, 2008, Beacon Journal religion writer, Colette Jenkins, reported on the further activity of the Kingdom Builders. In June, The Kingdom Builders bought the former Croatian-American Club building to establish an Outreach Centre to minister to men

The Kingdom Builders are using the basement for offices and converting the upstairs into a transitional housing unit for men. The vision includes having churches and organizations renovate rooms in the building. Cornerstone Free Methodist Church in Coventry Township was the first to respond and are renovating the front hall to allow for handicap accessibility, bathroom facility and new kitchen flooring. Bruce Oberlin said "Helping out here is a blessing. It's not a chore. When you're doing God's work, blessings seem to come out of nowhere." Mike Mallory added "When you have the love of God inside you, you have to reach out and help others."

A local company has repaired the roof.

Kingdom Builders motto is "Doing Together What We Cannot Do Alone" and its shield shows the parable of the Sower.

"We need real men with dirt on their hands who have been raised from the ashes and want to help other men. This is not a program; it's a process. Everything we do here has to be safe. It has to be effective. And it has to honor God. The standard is that any man who comes here doesn't leave the same man." (Richard)

Faith & Belief

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



“There is much that Christianity ought to be that it has not yet become; there is much that it has been that will no longer do... we should learn to let go of beliefs that cannot really be sustained and to relocate Christian life within a faith that goes beyond beliefs and can allow us to restructure beliefs, or to retire them, when they collide with what we know, or embarrass our sense of divine benevolence, or compromise our purposefulness, or retard our capacity to live in the presence of God.”

The Truing of Christianity by John C. Meagher p7

Meagher sets out here much that needs to be thought about and acted upon: *Faith* is not the same as *belief* and much more so than *beliefs*. Faith is about meaning; beliefs are about words. There might not seem to be much difference between to believe and to faith, a term coined by Meagher. But there is. Unfortunately, the difference has not often been set before nor explained to the Christian people.

Generally, faith has been set out as an act of the mind preceding an act of the will to follow what has been “revealed” and what the mind has concluded from it. That’s ‘faith’ in its traditional theological light of Creed. The Fathers of the Church started defining Christian beliefs. In defining beliefs, the Church Fathers made creeds by adopting the words, ideas, and categories of Greek culture in an attempt to bring unity of beliefs (i.e. formulations) in the diverse cultures of the Christian world. This struggle has lasted from the time of the Church Fathers through medieval times and right up to the present. The history of theology details the ferocity of that struggle. But belief formulations (creeds) are not faith nor are they forever even when written in stone. Recall the words of the poem “Ozymandias”: “Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair.” written then in stone but now lying in the sand. The Mighty we have had too many of.

Formulations of belief are very useful because they enable us to pause a while before voyaging on to deeper faith and hopefully to better beliefs. Beliefs comfort people. There is an expression that says “belief is a scaffold”. It helps in getting us higher to continue building. But belief is not the building, and belief can be taken down, changed, and moved. Nor is belief the “rock” that supports the building. Not for Jesus, nor Peter, nor for the writer of Matthew’s Gospel. For them, God is the rock.

People cherish beliefs, even harmful ones, without taking into

consideration the context of Jesus’ times. For example, some people believe that their sins added to Jesus’ sufferings on the cross or that by their renunciations, “offering up” their own pain and suffering, they make Jesus’ ‘sacrifice’ easier. Perhaps that belief is based on a poor translation of a Greek preposition: “Jesus died for our sins.” But it is bad theology and needs to be discarded. Many hymns that we sing express bad beliefs. For example, we sing “Amazing Grace” without considering the words that testify to the spiritual path of former Christians. Am I really a wretch? Or again in the beautiful Gregorian “Dies Irae”: Is God’s Day the day of anger that we sing about?

Nowhere does the New Testament speak of Jesus’ faith, but his whole life speaks it and he commends faith when he meets it in others. Today there is a growing awareness of faith as Jesus saw it. Faith is the attitude of accepting God’s love for us and for all creation. Faith is an attitude of complete trust that relies on God’s power to make things right. Paul says “I am really proud of Christ’s good news: the power of God for the rescue of all who trust, Jew first and then Greek. Making things right is the way God is revealed; trust leads to trust. It is written that the doer of good lives by trust and so God’s nature is made known from heaven.” (Rom 1:16-18) Later, in the Gospel of Mark when the writer has established Jesus’ authority, the first Gospel words of Jesus are “The time is perfect, the kingdom of God is near. Think again and trust the good news.” (Mk 1:15)

Greeks conceived of God as an idea and gave attributes to God. On the other hand, the Bible knows God by what God does: God makes things right (i.e. ‘justice’); God restores the balance when things have gone wrong (i.e. vengeance); God rescues the weak who cannot do it on their own (i.e. redemption). That is God’s work in the language of the Bible. Is that what we hear today in justice, vengeance, and redemption?

Just as God is known by what God does so those who faith, trust, rely on God make God’s kingdom present in how they live and do God’s work. Faith is the disposition of the whole person. In explaining faith, Paul in “Romans” focuses on Abraham who, trusting in God all the time, lived his life making God’s way real for his whole family. The fiery dispute of Christians over the creedal formulations “faith alone” or “faith with good works” would not have lasted so long if people had looked at Paul’s words in the light of Paul’s life. Some had contended that it did not matter how one lived so long as one ‘believed’. But the writer of James echoes Paul and states plainly “The doer is blessed in his doing.” (Jm 1:25) In this, both men followed in the long line of Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Wisdom, and Sirach.

Faith is the practice of doing good to another out of love. It manifests God’s Kingdom as Jesus experienced and lived it. That is the disciples’ “good news” we trust in. That is the “Deposit of Faith”. Truth, trust, faith are synonymous.

Beliefs on the other hand are more complex. They are not to be confused with the “Deposit of Faith”. For example, it is believed and taught that there is a “Teaching Church” and a “Learning

Faith & Belief Continued...

Church”, a belief that has resulted in today’s two caste system - a Clerical Magisterium and a Learning Laity, a monarchical command post complete with kow-towing subaltern captains scattered around the world to ‘oversee’ (bishop) silent docile learners. That does not promote faith. “...a religious tradition which cannot cope with new experiences and therefore negates them, avoids them or brands them *per se* as ‘diabolical modern temptations’ forfeits moral authority, even if this refusal is based on age-old and honourable traditions (the presuppositions of which are not, however, explored).... At that point, it is not in fact swearing by the authority of its own tradition of experience but by the letter of what was once the expression of authentic experiences in a particular historical situation. Climaxes then become points of stagnation.”

Christ by Edward Schillebeeckx p39

Faith makes visible the very essence of the Trinity- the koinonia of equals, complete in all respects: Every christian, every gathering of christians, one with God, one with Jesus, and one with all the saints is the community serving God’s Kingdom, taking care of all, learning and teaching in synod (i. e. “on the way together”) or council (i. e. “called together”).

Jesus left to his disciples what came to be known as the ‘Eucharist’. It is the eucharist that makes church. Without the eucharist, there is no church. Long before there were bishops and generations of christians before priests were considered necessary for the eucharistic prayer, christian disciples ‘eucharisted’ that is, they assembled, remembered Jesus, shared bread and wine, praised and thanked God, and trusted in God’s word. Later for the sake of unity amid theological misunderstandings, beliefs were formulated (creeds) and the faithful moved on. The beliefs were complex and not perfect, but faith survived. And so it is to this day.

St. Augustine believed that unbaptized children were stained and would suffer in hell; in 418 the Council of Carthage believed that such children were not coheirs with Christ. That belief did not come about through ill will on anybody’s part. But it was an error in speculative theology and it caused unspeakable agony to good christian families for centuries. It wasn’t Augustine’s fault that generations of christians adopted that belief. Subsequent generations are responsible for their own decisions But it didn’t help the growth of faith any. Today we trust in the God who welcomes them all into God’s house.

There have been and still are erroneous ‘beliefs’ about women. If they are not strictly speaking ‘beliefs’, they are official institutional positions based on theological opinions and passed off to a docile faithful as beliefs. Anyone holding a contrary opinion- no matter how respectfully it is held- is punished. That too has not promoted faith.

God’s Spirit is poured out on all the disciples. The Acts of the Apostles is not a record of events that happened to a certain group of Jesus’ disciples one time in an upper room. But even when read piously and erroneously as such, it shows the power of God that enabled the disciples to continue God’s work in Jesus and to carry it from Jerusalem to what was for them the ends of the earth- Rome. The disciples trusted in God, knowing all the while that, like Jesus, they would sometimes be received with joy and at other times with rejection. But with hospitality, sharing, piety, and perseverance, they carried on the Jesus’ tradition seen by them as their “apostolic

heritage”. Their servant-leaders led them to faith and worship of God and warned them away from religious magicians and false prophets. The risen Jesus, chosen and anointed by God, was their leader for life and well-being, not only for Jews but for all humanity. Peter, Paul, James, and others held different beliefs but they shared the same faith. While they wrestled with one another, faith survived. “Receive the one who is weak but not for the sake of dispute.” (Rom 14:1)

God’s Spirit will never desert the disciples gathered in Jesus’ name. Walter Principe tells the story of a friend who despaired over changes in Roman Catholic beliefs after Vatican II. Principe asked him “Do you think the Holy Spirit has suddenly left the Church? The risen Christ is still with us fulfilling the promise he made to his disciples.” (in John 14:16-17)

Benedictine Sister Bede Sullivan who served in the Diocese of Victoria for many years often remarked “Do what you have discerned to be the work of the Holy Spirit. If someone tells you to stop, ask them to justify why.”

Church is a “Mystery”, the word Greek christians used to describe church. It indicates the visible presence of God in human communities, and it indicates the real way of knowing the risen Jesus’ relationship to the koinonia, the community of disciples, one with God and Jesus. This relationship would otherwise be unknown but now it is present, experienced and made manifest (revealed) in the eucharistic community. (Colossians and Ephesians) Mystery then describes something that would otherwise not be known. The Greek word ‘mysterion’ comes to western christianity in the Latin word ‘sacramentum’. It is the basis for Vatican II’s use of the expression “the People of God” in “Lumen Gentium”. This Vatican II belief was embraced by christians because it strengthens faith.

A Council is the highest authority in the Church, higher than canon law, higher than edicts put out by the Roman Curia. The ecumenical thrust that resulted from Vatican II took encouragement from that formulation of belief in the people of God. What has happened to ecumenism since a contrary belief took hold in the governance of the church? The ecumenical movement is withering. What has happened to the leaders of the churches? The worship of words has taken precedence over faith.

Faith will survive, however, and lead the community to good beliefs. To the woman who reached out to Jesus, he said: “Your faith has made you whole. In peace go on.” (Mk 5:34)

“Keep diligently the unity of the Spirit in the strength of total well-being (peace/shalom): one body and one spirit as you were called in one hope of your calling to one Lord, one faith, one baptism, to one God and father of all who is before all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4:3-6)

Andrew Kania writes “Christianity seeks to develop the whole person, and especially that facet of living which requires of all of us a good and Godly life. We need to be whole people, real people, and not figments of imagination, nor cartoon superheroes, both of which exist in a number of dimensions, but not in the fullness of humanity.” (“Christian Models of Leadership”, a discussion published in *Catholica*)

Faith leads to “the fullness of humanity”.

Blackberry Sunday

by Hank Mattimore, San Jose, CA



Blackberry pie. Is summer ever complete without at least one day devoted to picking blackberries and making a blackberry pie?

There's a ritual connected with blackberry picking. Rule number one is that it can't be planned. You just have to be out taking a walk and voila! you spot some blackberry bushes.

"BLACKBERRIES!" Someone shouts and

drawn by some ancient and unexplainable law of nature, you run pell mell towards the bushes. Soon, your hands, your arms, your clothes are bathed in that sticky purple nectar.

I succumbed to the lure of the blackberry just this past week. True to the ritual, I did not plan to go berry picking. With seven year old Mark and nine year old Jennie as my companions, we had set out to take our new Village dog, Sammy, for a walk down the country road near home. Jennie spotted the blackberry bushes first and let out a scream of delight, BLACKBERRIES! (You could almost hear Sammy thinking, "So much for taking me for a walk.")

We plunged into the glorious cache of blackberries, squeezing and squishing, reaching out with bare arms towards the blackest and sweetest of that luscious fruit, dodging those nasty thorns. Drat! Why

weren't we smart enough to wear long pants? We were being faithful to ritual; that's why. We were all wearing shorts and, of course, had no container for the berries we were picking.

We improvised. The plastic bag we brought along for Sammy's business (never been used I assure you) served the purpose. Magically, the bag began to fill before our eyes. "Is this enough for a pie, Grandpa Hank?" "No Mark, we need more. I think it takes three or four cups for a pie."

The day was hot. I felt my tee shirt sticking to my body. Mark was wearing a goodly portion of his haul on his shirt. "Ouch," yelled Jennie, as the thorns attacked her bare legs. The three of us (and Sammy, who waited patiently in the shade) stuck to our task, intent on making these black beauties our own.

"Mark, don't pick the ones that are still red," admonished Jennie. "I'm not," replied Mark indignantly. "Geez, I know THAT much."

Still, it was obvious from the kids' enthusiasm that they were having a ball. Forgotten for the moment was the grief they carried as victims of abuse and neglect. All that mattered was that they were enjoying this warm summer's day picking blackberries. Mark yelled across the road to a woman passing by, "You know what? We're gonna make a blackberry pie all by ourselves." "With vanilla ice cream on top," chimed in Jennie.

The bag was bulging with berries as we returned to my apartment. I never made any kind of pie in my whole life but there was no way I was NOT going to bake a pie for these kids. With the help of a recipe from the Internet and ready-made pie shells from Safeway, the kids and I put together a blackberry pie fit for the gods. Umm! Delicious.

In the great scheme of things, I suppose the experience of picking wild blackberries and baking a pie with a couple of foster kids is no big deal. But it's a memory this old guy will savor for a long time. I dare to hope that the kids will, too.

Signs Of Life

By Andrew M. Greeley

Don't expect real reform in the Catholic Church until the Roman curia is brought under control of local bishops. Vatican II was the most successful reform council in Catholic history - until the world's bishops left Rome and the curia took control again. Now we hear that the council didn't change a thing but was merely an exercise in continuity. Unfortunately, the leadership that should have guided the energies released by the council elected to suppress them, and the Spirit has been forced to rely on the lower clergy and the laity to restructure the church. None of us will live to see an authentic post-Vatican II church emerge.

Still, there are signs of the times on the horizon, no bigger than the size of a man's hand, that suggest enormous vitality in Catholicism and give grounds for hope... Dean R. Hoge of Catholic University has asked Catholic laity what they consider the essential components of their heritage. Responses emphasized the Resurrection, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, God in the sacraments, concern for the poor, and Mary the mother of Jesus. These essentials have remained unchanged for about a thousand years. So the news couldn't be much better, because these are the vessels of faith, the raw materials of theological reflection, the first fruits of the Catholic analogical imagination.

Popular devotions, some scorned by liturgists, remain strong. The Sorrowful Mother novena and Sunday-afternoon Benediction have not survived, but adoration chapels, festivals in honor of the Eucharist (especially Corpus Christi processions), and devotion to Mary have. The mother of Jesus has managed to escape the silly sentimentality of the old Mariology... The artificial conflict between liturgy and devotions is a construct the Catholic people will never accept. Devotions are not superstitious. They remystify the world through the insight that grace is everywhere.

http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/article.php?id_article=2287

Last Rites & Today's Celebration Of Life

by Tom McMahon, San Jose, CA



Extrême Unction is listed as one of the major Catholic sacraments. "if anyone of you is in trouble, he should pray; if anyone is feeling happy he should sing a psalm; if one of you is ill he should send for the elders of the church and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again and if he has committed any sins he

will be forgiven..." We would do well to appreciate the words "elder", "church", "oil", "confess", "forgive", and "raise up". (James 5:13)

Today, relying heavily on *The Black Death, a Personal History* by John Hatcher (2008) I whisk us back to the village of Walsham Willows in West Suffock, England, 1345 CE, paying a call on Master John, parish priest. Master John gets his title from his thirst for learning and his dedication to aiding his people; his predecessor was skilled at the acquisition of money and landholdings. We join him as he prepares to go to the bedside of a dying parishioner.

"In summer of 1345 William, a wealthy landowner, was close to death... Two nephews hurried off to summon Master John... The priest was expecting the summons and immediately started to prepare himself to lead William safely through the crucial and dangerous stages of his last hours on earth."

It is this duty that intrigues me as I recall my being summoned as a newly ordained to a death bed. Master John's preparations are similar to my 1954 readiness to administer Extreme Unction; I did not see my role as leading the dying across the River Styx.

Master John dons vestments "much like a knight would dress and arm for battle" and assembles subdeacon and altar boys who solemnly process with cross, statue of Mary, handbells, lights and incense, the priest carrying a piece of the consecrated host in a pyx. William's confession differs in that with the priest he reviews all life as to justice in business dealings and final and equitable settlement of earthly property. Master John is virtually a lawyer who sets up a defensive barrier around William as the devil marshals his forces to seize William's soul.

I was 25, ordained one month, a virtual boy after 12 years of isolated seminary; a stench permeated the room and I was left alone with a dying elderly woman, as her husband closed the door behind him and I never saw him again. When finished I let myself out. We had no training in seminary as to anointing; like a robot I followed the ritual, placing oil on her feet, hands, ears, eyes, the senses through which she could have sinned; the sick woman was comatose. As I write this the trauma floods back ... 58 years ago ... so mechanical, so inhuman, so frightening and at 25 I had no comprehension or awareness. Today I still feel my anger toward the seminary faculty and the old pastor who sent me; I was a magic man, a stranger doing a strange thing and there was no community. The liturgical practices of the Roman church desperately needed modernization.

Black Death Master John accompanies the hired paupers as they carry William's corpse to hallowed ground, over and over again sprinkled with holy water to ward off the devil's legions.

William's family has prayed the night through like sentinels remaining around the dead man. William is safe in the hands of Mother Church and is buried in hallow (holy) ground.

1986: As my mother-in-law apprised caskets she turned to me and said: "Tom, you are so right; I'm not looking at a box in which to bury my husband; I'm thinking of what the Italian people are going to say about the way I buried him." and we both smiled. I had been her parish priest before I married her daughter and seemingly some of my sermons came home. I was aware at my first funeral in South San Francisco in 1960 that no men came into the church, they standing outside smoking cigars during the service, the women inside. I questioned German descent Dr. Wald, trusted family doctor friend, who told me of the old Irish pastor who allowed the casket only to the church front door, copiously sprinkling holy water and when questioned replied: "to put out the fires of hell".

1345: Master John buries many during the Great Plague, struggling to teach his people the impotency of "relics" and trinkets for sale, teaching them to pray to a good God and not make the statue a god. Roman Catholicism is a religion of heady concepts, quite unlike the Moslem five-action pillars of faith. In spite of Vatican Two the fears and superstitions of the Middle Ages flourish in modern religion; many of the clergy are like Hatcher's parish priest, Reverend Shepherd, predecessor to Master John, whose ability was to amass wealth. The casket story I tell above comes from a 1960's era in which my mother-in-law's pastor died with a million and a half dollars to his name; there are still priests around who can milk innocent people and their fears and superstitions, especially at the time of death. Cardinal Mahony has recently built a multi million cathedral right in the midst of utter Los Angeles poverty; it has a built-in cemetery where the hierarchy are buried as well as those with money; one can get a full package deal from death bed to grave, including the priest; the Roman Church is the largest owner of cemetery land in California. People are dying to take advantage of this cash cow. The Digger O'Dells, the last men to let you down, knows how to cooperate with the institution. Tsk, Tomas, such grave humor!

I repeat here the recent death of Sarah. Recall Sarah, a member of my parish 30 years ago, requests my presence as she returns home to die in Hospice. I arrived to a household full of her four adult children and numerous grandchildren; although years had passed we were not strangers. Sarah and I talked about this gift called life and I asked her to look back over the blessings (the sacramental/sacred sign presences of God) in her children and her many friends; we spoke of how we were on loan, mortal sharers in the Eternal Life. Sarah smiled as she graciously prepared to return her gift of life to her Creator and Higher Power. Sarah's Last Rite was a thanksgiving to her God for having lived. I shall use these thoughts as I conduct her funeral, as Sarah requested. I shall wear a new colorful shirt.

I recently went to the cemetery where my mother and father are

Last Rites Continued...

buried; I saw a young ghoulish-like priest dressed in a black cope (full length ceremonial roman overcoat) sprinkling holy water over an open grave, ceremony book in hand. I passed quickly, pausing at my parents' gravesite and merely saying "thank you, Mom and Dad". There is one grave left in the plot, a small black abandoned child occupies the third space; the fourth will remain unoccupied as my sister chooses to be buried in the convent plot of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, hallowed ground reserved for the vowed. I could be buried in the 4th slot if I denounce my marriage and reconcile with Rome. I'm smiling as my will calls for my ashes to be buried under the propane tank at our High Sierra chalet depending on the acceptance or rejection by the medical world for use of my body.

Hopefully my resurrection will come about in our offspring and the writings I leave behind. Like my priest uncle my will forbids my anointing by a church cleric and I ask that I not be dragged into a church mass ceremony against my will. I will not be lonely when I depart, having part of my community world wide. Jean, wife of recently deceased Tim Unsworth, author and writer of National Catholic Reporter fame, has sent a poem that offers meaning as we face death, that unknown experience that only the dead understand. Death to me is the absence of known energy; I firmly believe energy can not be destroyed and with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin I see God-energy in all life. I have lived with this absence and presence since my father's death in 1931.

Jean sends: "In retrospect it all seems very straightforward, you had six months and then two and then three weeks and you had four days to live and then you were gone. We can remember all that, but we cannot know what it was like for you to have such a wealth, however fraudulent, of time, and then see it abruptly and without warning disappear.

And now you have no time and you have no limitations. I still recognize your face, your unmistakable heart, yet you are now presence so pure and total all the forms fall away. You have become sheer presence, sheer love. You are a beacon of peace. It is something like the perfect smile, the perfect kiss, like the perfection of light."

If the Roman Church continues in existence and claims to be a voice of Jesus in the world, I recommend that its clergy be immersed in every-day way of life and the old rituals be retired to museums. The institutional church has no clue as to a world after death. Jewish prayer at the time of Jesus was limited to thanksgiving and praise. I recommend a review of all those sacramental moments that bind families together. Sarah's gathering is to be a Celebration of Life and hopefully that will be the way I go into the unknown. I shall not meet the Mystery called God for the first time.

Mom often quoted Tennyson to me: "Sunset and Evening Star and one clear call for me and let there be no moaning at the bar when I put out to sea."

http://www.catholica.com.au/gc1/tm/041_tm_170808.php

Comment *Chris Diamond*

Migrant or imported priests are not the answer to the clergy shortage.

There is a growing troublesome phenomenon in the Roman Catholic dioceses in western countries today. It is the importing of foreign priests (migrant priests) into old well established catholic dioceses. Recently I heard the Bishop of Prince George, BC remark that it was necessary because of the priest shortage but that he did not import priests from foreign dioceses that needed them at home. He might be right, but it sounded like rationalization to me and a neglect to face the issue at home. The clergy situation is similar in many other countries. However, there is not a shortage of Divinely inspired priestly vocations and a local church that cannot produce its own priests is not really a church at all. But these are a wholly other subjects.

In the January '91 issue of *The Journal*, François Brassard wrote about the shortage of priests, and Eric Theriault, President of the Canadian Federation of Priests' Councils at the same time wrote about the same shortage and commented on the malaise, the fatigue, and the discouragement of priests at "the manner and quality of bishops being appointed and the return to unilateral episcopal decision making and the decrease in dialogue." The subject of dialogue with the Canadian Bishops has been raised by concerned catholics but it has fallen on deaf ears. The Canadian Catholics of Vision Report of July 1998 on the front page of this issue is just one example.

Jane Anderson has written insightfully about migrant priests as follows:

"... if we have a policy of attempting to overcome the shortage of priests that results from an inadequacy of our local Church to produce priests, then we are not facing the difficulties that have caused that problem. We may even be exacerbating the original problem by the current policy of importing priests. There is also the haunting suspicion that these migrant priests are welcomed by the hierarchy because they are seen to be a way of restoring conservative priorities, but which do not speak to our contemporary Western culture."

(reported in *Catholica Australia*, June '08)

Sin Of Sexism

by Dr. Michele Birch-Connelly, RCWP: Western Canada Program Co-Ordinator, Parksville, BC



Does women's ordination challenge the sin of sexism practiced by the Vatican church?

On August 9th Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest and the founder of the School of the Americas Watch, concelebrated and gave a very supportive homily at the priestly ordination of Janice Sevre-Duszyńska in Lexington, Kentucky. Immediately, the Vatican pressured the superiors of the Maryknoll community to condemn the

actions of the well-known justice prophet.

What would the Maryknoll superiors do? Would they act as did the Benedictine Sisters in support of Sr. Joan Chittister in 2001? At that time, she transgressed John Paul II's edict of silence, first by attending and then by speaking positively about the ordination of women at the Women's Ordination Worldwide conference in Dublin, Ireland.

Within days, a massive campaign of support for Roy Bourgeois is urging the Maryknoll superiors to stand by their contemporary Jesus prophet. On August 19, the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) published the latest news (<http://ncronline3.org/drupal>) about Maryknoll's seemingly positive meeting with Roy Bourgeois. It appears that the religious congregation is prepared to stand with him in their willingness to "urge" a continuing dialogue about the place of women in the Church. One hopes that this will include the ordination of women.

However, Roy Bourgeois has been warned not to attend any more RCWP ordinations, which is something that he really doesn't need to do, since his homily of justice towards women in the RC Church cannot be erased from the historical record, any more than Chittister's talk in Dublin can be suppressed.

As of this writing, the Vatican's excommunication "latae sententiae" has not been applied to Fr. Bourgeois. However, it was immediately imposed on Sister Louise Lears, a Sister of Charity of Maryland, for attending another RCWP ordination in St. Louis in November 2007. There, she was seen on a secret camera operated on behalf of the diocese. Are the Vatican's responses to men in religious orders different than women in religious congregations and are they different from censures of diocesan priests? Over time, the import of these contradictory responses may become clear. Meanwhile, it is necessary to question and search for answers.

It is now less than 3 months since the Vatican issued the automatic or blanket excommunication of all RCWP ordained deacons, priests and bishops. It was published on the eve of the May 28th ordination of Monica Kilburn-Smith and Jim Lauder in Victoria, BC. In no way did it dampen the joy of the celebration which was presided by ordaining bishop, Patricia Fresen, together with a modest sized gathering in the United Church of St. Aidan's on Vancouver Island in

Canada. We had now embraced the third ordained Roman Catholic woman priest in our country, as well as the first RCWP male ordained to the priesthood. In this inclusivity, the issues surrounding sexism in the ordination of women are somewhat blurred; however, the fact that a male was willing to stand with us and undergo the same penalty with us, modeled what will someday become a non-clericalist, non-sexist priesthood as we envision it currently in RCWP. For the moment, I learned that it is still hard to see and take in the deeper significance of the ordination of women. Who are we in the sanctuary and around the table of worship? The answer is multi-layered and, as with other crucial issues pertaining to the ordination of women, will be unfolded over time.

What has become clear since 2005, when the first women were ordained priests in North America, is that we are emerging with the People of God who, in the majority, believe that women should be ordained. This majority rejects the Vatican's continued refusal to ordain women, and many understand that we have moved beyond words alone. Instead, we are taking action on this issue of justice for women in the church. People come to the ordinations with joy and they are invigorated with hope because of them. Nevertheless, the Curia's continuing "NO" enhanced by the penalty of excommunication raises issues about the justice and credibility of such a medieval practice. Women's ordination holds up a mirror to the systemic malpractice of an unjust law and gradually, as we pursue this issue in the realities of sacramental and pastoral practice, we uncover how this denial of another's basic human rights has affected us all.

It would seem that the Vatican church understands its power as that which binds more than that which looses. In this attitude it has created a climate where the validity of the informed adult conscience is disregarded. A deep fear of acting in the freedom and fullness of the life of the Holy Spirit has set in. Instead of creating the possibilities for evolving with the signs of the times, we have a backward looking resistance to change. It is possible to conclude that this fear is driven by the loss of an authoritarian power accustomed to determining action.

The opposite of this kind of power is that which authors, and this is the kind of power that frees action for, new life. Insofar as blind obedience is necessary to sustain authoritarianism, then excommunication is tied to it as cart is to horse. The reality of women going ahead with ordinations 'contra legem' understandably stands this institutional culture on its head. Since the majority of Catholics accept the need for the ordination of women, they are the ones who have achieved growth and maturity in understanding issues of human rights and justice within RC church contexts. Many reject Vatican definitional practices that are contrary to what they know from their knowledge and experience to be true.

To impose the penalty of automatic excommunication for disregarding a man-made Canon law is an excessive use of authority not only against the ordained women but also against the 'sensus fidelium' where the wisdom of the Spirit ultimately resides. When understanding evolves such that there is no turning back, then an idea and practice has likely outlived its time. In the case of denying ordination to women and then punishing those ordained

Sin Of Sexism Continued...

'contra legem,' we now have a practice that represents the sin of sexism and more particularly, clericalism. Women who now seek ordination and/or leadership in the church are not recalcitrant children to be chided and sent to their rooms until they repent their disobedience to an outraged parent. By today's standards for children's rights, it is unlikely that a child would be treated in this manner. Nor is anyone among the People of God recalcitrant who, for reasons of conscience, disobeys unjust laws.

Rather, these persons take a stand in prophetic obedience or holy disobedience. This has been a way of serving God that pre-dates Christianity and it is a tried way of being in the church community that carries validity in our Roman Catholic tradition. Thus, one might be led to question the practice of excommunication itself that dismisses and excludes someone without permitting their questions and their answers to be heard through fair representation. A practice such as excommunication is outside the realm of law in all democratic countries. One might conclude that it has become an outlaw practice and that it should be relinquished by a Church claiming to represent the prophetic way of Jesus who excommunicated no one, not even his betrayer.

Given the knowledge of the People of God, who are more advanced in understanding freedom and justice than in any other time of history, the practice of excommunication can hardly be taken seriously except in recognition that it is a holdover from the time of the inquisition. On the other hand, it is extremely threatening for those who work in church contexts and who can lose their jobs and livelihoods for expressing dissent. The practice represents an outdated monarchical relationship with subjects who, if they offended the king

or queen, could be decapitated. Now it is an instrument of spiritual intimidation and abuse not just of an individual in their conscience but of the entire Body of Christ.

Redressing the effects of patriarchal authoritarianism and sexism is just what women and other justice seeking persons care about in seeking ordination at this time. They wish to address the deep violations enacted upon them as the People of God. The Danube seven said it best when answering the first edict for the excommunication of Roman Catholic Women Priests in 2002. They responded swiftly to the curia's 'Monitum' delivered by hand and pushed under their front doors. Dr. Gisela Forster of Germany still describes the day when the envelope with the red writing appeared. At first she thought it was an advertisement until she saw the formal print. Then she knew that the arrival of a momentous decision had taken place by stealth.

All seven women priests wrote their response to the Vatican in ordinary, rather than in abstract ecclesial language, and they wrote it together. Their words are open for all to read on their website 'Virtuelle Dioecese.' The reply is relevant to all who have been persecuted because of disagreements of conscience seen as disobedience. One is struck by their words in a directive plea revealing a firm response to authoritarian behaviour. They say, "Don't be obstinate. This must stop." These words imply that the capacity to end the practice of excommunication and to examine existing unjust laws, on the books of Canon Law, is entirely possible and within the powers of Church leaders.

Like the Danube Seven, the People of God urge the Vatican church to repent the sin of sexism inherent in its decisions.

Reader's Write

With reference to possible changes in the Catholic church and ordination, I have always been puzzled by this: We believe Our Lord Jesus Christ is Priest, Prophet and King. And we have said women cannot be priestly representatives of Christ. But we have also conceded that women can be Rulers among the Christians (presidents, queens, even presidential candidates in the USA) and Prophets (most of the teaching of religion in schools, and some of the proclaiming of it from pulpit or sanctuary) is by women. So we have conceded women can have two out of the three beautiful Christ qualities. Why on earth are we so slow then in conceding that women can have the other one, the priestly, as well?

We need to stress that while ordinarily two out of three is not bad, three out of three is at very least logical and at very best right for the church.

It's called being true to our beliefs. As we say in Ireland, Beannacht De oraibh agus ar an obair (Blessing of God on you and on the work).

I hope that when the Lord comes again He will find us at least logical!

Fr. Des Wilson, Springhill Close, Belfast BT 12 7SE

"These are the first photos and talks I have seen from the recent Ordination and Conference. Thank you."

Patricia Fitzgerald, Victoria, BC

"Let us pray that even one Canadian Bishop listens and speaks out."

Jim Noonan, Ottawa, ON

Other letters said the following:

"A truly spirit-filled multi-voiced expression of love." **"A**nother excellent edition." **"T**his Journal is excellent."

Christus Duncan Report

The summer winds gradually down and we have all been living our summer lives.

Nicki had visitors from South Africa and reports that she has neglected her summer gardening around her home so that the deer think her yard is part of their natural habitat! When she gets the yard looking better, she will be due for a rest. She has also enjoyed watching her grandchildren learning to fish and catch crabs.

Bunny has been busy with family in New York and locally with helping her daughter through chemo treatments. They are in good spirits, however. Bunny has the prospects of a good holiday coming up.

Luella is busy training her new eight week old puppy.

Laurie and Rosalind left town to escape the crowds during the North American Indigenous Games. During their stay away, Rosalind sustained some colourful bruises on her knees. Laurie wondered

whether it might have been safer to stay home.

Ray had a very enjoyable visit from his daughter and two grandsons from Co. Cork. Lavinia hosted a tea for Ray and his family and Nom and Chris enjoyed it too. It gave an excuse to make a pudding! Ray's puppy, Noella, is growing larger and chewing bits and pieces of things she shouldn't.

Marjorie celebrated her 90th birthday with family and friends. Chris and Nom celebrated Chris' 50th anniversary of ordination on June 15 with family and friends. They enjoyed visits from Nom's Eastern US cousins and celebrated birthdays of three of their granddaughters.

Gregg has been busy at the homestead, at work, and ministering to those in need of his services.

In a short while we will be back to our regular Wed. night schedule.



Dr. Neil Parado's promotion to the 4th Degree in the Knights of Rizal, a service-oriented International Organization chartered by the Philippine Government to promote the Ideals of justice, freedom, integrity and unity and the Teachings specially on Love of God and Country of Dr. Jose Rizal, the foremost National Hero of the Philippines. The Winnipeg Chapter was formally organized in 1991.

Emiliano Silverio, KGCR, Canada Region Commander presenting the 4th Degree Ceremonial Sword to Dr. Neil Parado, KGOR, Area Commander for Western Canada. The others in the picture are Dr. Tom Virey, KGOR, Regional Chancellor; Dr. Chito Collantes, KGOR, Consultant to the Supreme Commander; Gory Parado, and George Poblete, KGOR, Canada Region Deputy Commander.

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.

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www.corpuscanada.org
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www.ca.renewedpriesthood.org
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If you wish to join or renew your membership in Corpus Canada for the year 2007 (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.

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