



# *The Journal*



*April - June 2010*

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*Faith and religion are not one and the same. The distinction between the two is similar to the distinction between what is sometimes referred to as the soul and the body of an experience. The soul is the invisible part, rooted in the mind, will, and feelings. The body of the experience is the outward expression of its soul. It is the putting into action of an idea, conviction, hope or desire. Faith, then, is like the soul of the experience. It is an inner acknowledgement of the relationship between God and man (sic). Religion, on the other hand, is like the body. It is an outer expression of that inner acknowledgement.*

*Naturally, each of us perceives this relationship between God and man in at least a slightly different way. Consequently, we give different external expressions to our internal experience of faith.*

*What if faith and religion helped man to find God in his own daily concerns, in the things that seem most real to him? What if traditional faith and religion were to relinquish all their delusions about a privileged status, and were to enlist their strength in collaboration with anyone who wanted to work for the solutions of human disunity and distress?*

*Becoming a believer is a process, just as learning to love is a process. Both involve interpersonal relationships. Both imply moments of crisis, ups and downs, progression and regression... At stake in the process of faith is man's relationship with God. Most of us tend to construe faith as an act of acceptance or rejection of various religious doctrines. The revelation of God which we accept in the act of faith is not so much a series of intellectual propositions demanding an intellectual "Amen" from us, but rather a living portrait of a living person extending to man the hands of love and asking a total human response. This response is man's faith... To become a believer is only a beginning because faith is a living relationship, and living things are susceptible to growth.*

*from a reason to live! a reason to die! by John Powell S.J. Argus Communications 1972*

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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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**H**ellenistic philosophical dualism cast the male-female relationship as that of spirit to flesh and strength to weakness. This mindset so influenced early Christian writers that the ideal for woman was to become "manly," to display rationality and courage (the "manly" virtues), and thus to triumph over feminine weakness. Aspegren establishes the foundations of this thinking in Plato, Aristotle, and Philo, then documents its effects on a variety of Christian writers, especially the author of the Acts of Thecla and Methodius of Olympos....

Students of Christian theology need to be aware of these roots of ideas about the inferiority of women in anthropological dualism. This study exposes those roots of a mindset that is still very much with us: that the male is the the norm of humanity and the symbol of the fully human -- associations that remain just below the surface in much of our ongoing church life and theological debate.

from Carolyn Osier's review (in *Theological Studies*, December 1991) of *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal In The Early Church* by Kerstin Aspegren, 1990

# Theological Soapbox: Why I Do Not Believe In Reincarnation

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



The two main variants of the doctrine of reincarnation are found in Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Hinduism the soul of a sentient being (god, human being or animal) will upon death receive a new body. Whether this body is better or worse than the previous

body depends on how the sentient being lived in the previous life. According to the law of karma, if a person lives a good life, they will receive a good body in the next rebirth. So an animal might be reborn as a human being, or a human being of low estate might be reborn as a human being of higher estate. The ultimate step in an ever improving sequence of rebirths is unification of the soul with the one supreme soul, Brahman.

Buddhism does not acknowledge the existence of souls that maintain a continuous existence from rebirth to rebirth. What every individual "self" consists of, upon analysis, is a stream of consciousness that is constantly changing. Upon death this stream of consciousness gives rise to another stream of consciousness in a new body. However, the law of karma still holds. The kind of stream of consciousness that is found in a rebirth is determined by the stream of consciousness in the previous birth. Some streams of consciousness bring one closer to being able to achieve nirvana, which is the extinction of the sequence of rebirths. So Buddhists cultivate those streams of consciousness that will eventually develop over numerous rebirths to a stream of consciousness that will extinguish itself, i.e., not produce a stream of consciousness in a new birth.

The doctrine of reincarnation in either its Hindu or Buddhist form is compatible neither with my understanding of what it means to be a person, nor the version of Christianity that I profess, nor the application of scientific method.

## Reincarnation and the person

I identify myself as a person, as an "I". Who am I? I am the person for whose freely willed actions I both feel and take responsibility. I do not feel or take responsibility for any actions performed by someone who existed before my birth. Therefore, the "I" that I am cannot be the same as an "I" that existed before my birth. I cannot be the reincarnation of a previously existing person, nor can any person who is born after I die be the reincarnation of me. This rules out any doctrine of reincarnation, be it Hindu or Buddhist, that identifies the "I" that I am with something that existed before I was born.

## Reincarnation and Christianity

For both Hinduism and Buddhism the goal to be sought is deliverance from the cycle of rebirth. This means in the case of

Hinduism, uniting with Brahman, the supreme soul. Brahman does not have a body. But in the resurrection of Jesus, we see that the ultimate goal for Christianity is eternal life in one's own human body.

Unlike Buddhism, Christianity teaches the existence of the human soul, but in the tradition of the Hebrew scriptures, to have a soul is to be alive in a human body. There is no such thing as a disembodied soul. Under the influence of Greek thought, Christianity came to accept that people existed as purely spiritual souls between the time of death and resurrection. I reject this view. Nor do I believe it was the view of Jesus who did not challenge the anthropology of his Jewish tradition.

Living in one's body means that one has a stream of consciousness. The resurrected human being will have a stream of consciousness that is a continuation, however transformed, of the stream of consciousness they had before death. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for the risen Jesus to say to his apostles "It is I" (Luke 24:39), meaning "the same that I was when I was with you before my death". Therefore, contrary to Buddhism, Christianity cannot accept the utter extinction of the stream of consciousness that is required by the doctrine of nirvana.

The doctrine of the incarnation requires that Jesus' human life uniquely begins with his conception in Mary's womb. He cannot be the reincarnation of a previously existing human being. And since from his birth to his resurrection, Jesus is held by Christianity to be the model of humanity, the implication is that our lives too uniquely begin with our conception in our mother's womb.

Christianity's doctrine of salvation by grace alone teaches that salvation cannot be earned. The salvation of the greatest saint no less than the greatest sinner is an act of sheer grace on God's part. The choice to accept this grace or refuse it is presented to every human being in their life. In the case of Christians it may take the form of a choice to follow Jesus. In the case of an atheist it may take the form of a choice of a higher value than self-interest. Whatever form the choice takes, the person making the choice gains nothing by delaying the choice (if they could) to a future rebirth. The choice may be experienced as hard, but it is equally hard in every life. From the point of view of making the choice for salvation easier, rebirth is pointless.

Someone might argue, "But if God arranges that a person who does not choose salvation will be reborn and get another chance to choose, eventually they will choose salvation. It is a statistical certainty. And surely a compassionate God, who wants everyone to be saved, would do this." But this is to fail to understand that God honours the choice not to be saved as much as God honours the choice to be saved. The choice not to be saved (in Christian understanding, the choice not to accept God as God for oneself) has equal dignity as the choice to be saved. It has as much right to stand for all eternity as the choice for salvation. God is as much glorified by his giving us the freedom to reject God as God is glorified by our choosing God.

God wants everyone to choose to be saved, but God also knows that we attain the fullness of human dignity only when we

choose what we shall eternally be. God calls us to attain our full dignity as human beings in the life we are now living by choosing what we shall eternally be. That's what it means to grow up spiritually. And just as we are not given the option to delay growing up physically, we are not given the option to delay growing up spiritually.

A choice to delay choosing salvation will be treated as a choice not to be saved. "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16). For the sake of our own dignity as free beings, we have to choose in this life between being saved or not being saved. Delay to another life is not an option.

To the claim that a compassionate God would allow someone to put off the choice for salvation to a future life, I respond that allowing someone to delay unnecessarily the making of an essential choice is not an act of compassion.

### **Reincarnation and science**

On the assumption that we do not have a spiritual existence separate from our bodies, certain things follow scientifically.

As I understand both the Hindu and Buddhist doctrines of reincarnation, either a soul or stream of consciousness, or information about a soul or stream of consciousness, must travel from the location of a person's death to the location of the reborn person's conception.

Whether information is carried by a travelling soul or stream of consciousness, or whether the information is carried by a complex electromagnetic wave, what we are speaking of is a transfer of information. That information must first of all encode the karmic status of the dying individual. It must then be transmitted over time and space to the uterus of a female of the karmically appropriate

species, and influence the combination of genes following fertilization so that the information is encoded in the genetic make-up of the newly conceived organism. To some extent the information would also have to influence the development of the fetus after conception.

While some may wish to classify the transfer of information as a purely spiritual event, the spirit-body unity of human beings requires that all spiritual phenomena in human beings have a physical manifestation. Physical manifestations of the spiritual must obey the laws of nature and be subject to scientific observation like other physical phenomena. No physical manifestation of the transfer of information has been detected by science. No evidence exists that our bodies possess the capacity to transmit that information or that the process of fertilization or fetal development can be influenced by that information.

Some people claim to remember previous lives. If that is true, and they are not just imagining a previous life or in some way receiving information about the life of some other person who lived before them, then they should be able to remember historical details that can be checked, and could have no other source than the person who they claim was a precious life of theirs. For example, if someone remembers a previous life in which they buried some treasure, they will know where to look for it. But there is no evidence of this sort that would verify claims to have lived a previous life.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above philosophical, theological and scientific considerations, weighing the evidence, I am unable to accept the doctrine of reincarnation.

## Notice of Thanks

*François Brassard*

In the last issue of *The Journal*, I inserted a flyer announcing the up-coming ordination to the priesthood of two women on Vancouver Island. Connie and I also requested donations to help defray the costs related to the events taking place in Victoria from April 13-17. We are delighted to report that we received very generous donations from Corpus Canada, from the Xristos Community Society and from Centennial United Church that supplemented the funds received directly by the Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) movement. All expenses were covered and RCWP Canada West now has a small reserve for future events. Thank you!

We are also thankful for the excellent media coverage received in connection with two of the events held that week.

The first was a talk entitled "Shatter The Stained Glass Ceiling," given by Fr. Roy Bourgeois (SOA Watch) and Bishop Patricia Fresen on Tuesday April 13th. Their personal stories of prophetic witness to the evils of institutional racism, sexism and militarism were very powerful.

The second event, equally moving, was the ordination ceremony of Kim Sylvester and Rose Mewhort that took place at Centennial United Church on April 17. Phil Little's article in this issue of *The Journal* is a wonderful expression of the spiritual power of that kairos event.

Thanks to Ray Painchaud of Victoria, both these events were filmed, and DVD copies are available to any of you interested in experiencing the power of the Spirit's presence. Please write to me (address on back cover of *The Journal*) requesting the two DVD's and enclosing \$5.00 for shipping and handling.

Once again, we are truly grateful for your generous support.

# In Remembrance Of Jean James

## *Jean James (1930-2010)*

Jean Marion James, the wife of Corpus member Jack Shea, died peacefully on April 10, 2010 at their home in Ottawa following a stroke and a brief illness. She was born in Long River, Prince Edward Island in 1930. Jean attended the Universities of Prince Edward Island, Dalhousie and Queen's. She graduated from the London School of Economics with a Doctorate in Philosophy.

She was Director of Research for the Social and Family Services Department of the Government of Ontario. Before retirement she was Registrar of Canadian Citizenship with the Department of the Secretary of State.

Jean was an Elder and a very active member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, the same church in which she and Jack were married in an ecumenical ceremony thirty years ago. A Service of Thanksgiving for her life was held in this church on April 14. Many members of Corpus-National Capital Region attended the Service.

Following a Committal Service in the Long River United Church in Prince Edward Island, Jean was interred in the Geddie Memorial Cemetery in New London, Prince Edward Island.

Jean was known to Corpus Canada members from her attendance at several Corpus conferences in Canada with Jack. She and Jack were leaders in establishing Corpus-National Capital Region. They hosted numerous Corpus gatherings and potluck meals at their home in Ottawa. Jean also attended many meetings of married priests organizations both in the United States and in Europe. She was an unfailing support and loving companion of her husband Jack in all his work in these organizations over some twenty years.

Submitted by Jim Noonan.

## Jean James: A Woman Called by Sharon Gravelle



**I** was honoured to deliver the eulogy for Jean James - a beautiful and gracious woman. Many of you will remember Jean, Jack Shea's wife. Jean had a stroke in October but was still able to attend the Corpus gatherings until late January. In March, Jean had a brief stay in hospital when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Jean went home for palliative care until she died.

**The following are excerpts from the eulogy.**

We have all been given a share in

Divine life and the beauty and love of God shines through people. Jean James was one of those special persons who let God's love and beauty shine through her.

Jean loved beautiful things as evidenced by her collections in her home and her beautiful garden. Jean was a woman called to care for

the environment.

She had a passion for gardening and when Jean was working in the garden, close to the earth, she was very happy. Her gardening refreshed her, gave her energy and great joy. While Jean was proud of her garden she was very modest about her accomplishments.

Jean was a woman called to follow her God and she answered that call by living a life of deep faith and service. Jean chose to profess her faith in the community of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Congregation. With Jean's commitment and steadfast faith, she was called to be an Elder at St. Andrew's. Jean also had a strong sense of social justice and I think she took the following passage from Micah 6:8 seriously.

We read, "This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God."

Jean was not only called to serve in her own church, she was called to be an Ecumenical woman. When Jean married Jack Shea, I don't think she knew how much she would be called into service with him and Corpus. Jean was very involved with Corpus over twenty years. The Corpus community has met many times over the years and along with Jack, Jean was always present supporting us. Jean and Jack often hosted our gatherings, creating an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality.

In Hebrews 13:2, we read, "Make hospitality your special virtue" and Jean certainly did make hospitality her special virtue. To our Corpus community, she was always present, interested, encouraging and supporting. Jean traveled the world with Jack attending very many of the International Corpus conferences.

So, we thank you, Jean, for your faithfulness, your service, your love, your warm hospitality and your ready smile. You have truly been and Ecumenical woman.

Jean was a woman gifted with a good mind and called to use it well. She was intelligent, educated, well read, and insightful. She was a woman with high standards and many accomplishments.

Jean attended the Universities of Prince Edward Island, Dalhousie and Queens. She graduated from the London School of Economics

## Rememberance Continued...

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with a Doctorate in Philosophy. She was Director of Research for the Social and Family Services Department of the Government of Ontario. Before retirement she was Registrar of Canadian Citizenship with the Department of Secretary of State

When Jean was diagnosed with terminal cancer in March, she accepted it with great courage and resignation. God had been her strength throughout her life and she relied on her faith and her own inner strength to face her death. As Jean had faced everything in her life, she was ready to face death.

As it is stated in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2:

“There is a season for everything, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born and a time to die.”

Jean accepted the fact that this was her time to die, her time to move

on to her final stage of life, to be with her God. Jean had said that she did not want to live a long life but a good and full life; and that she did.

The Corpus community is happy to have called Jean James our friend, and has been blessed by her friendship.

In Wisdom we read, 3:1 “The souls of the virtuous are on the hands of God.” and that’s where Jean is today. Her spirit lives on and she has a special place in our hearts.

To Jack, we extend our deepest sympathy in his great loss. Thank you for bringing Jean into our lives. She has enriched us and she has been a true blessing to us.

Jean, go in peace, to enjoy the wonderful things, God has prepared for those who love the Lord. 1Cor.2: 9

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## Conversation Between Leonardo Boff & The Dalai Lama

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***Boff asks the questions and the Dalai Lama answers and comments.***

Q. What is the best religion?

A. The best religion is the one that gets you closest to God.

It is the one that makes you a better person.

Q. What is it that makes me better?

A. Whatever makes you more compassionate, sensible, detached, loving,

humanitarian, ethical.

The one that will do that for you that is the best Religion.

I am not interested, my friend, about your religion or if you are religious or not.

What really is important to me is your behaviour in front of your peers, family, work community, and in front of the world.

Remember, the universe is the echo of your actions and your thoughts.

The law of action and reaction is not exclusively for physics. It is also of human relations.

If I act with goodness, I will receive goodness. If I act with evil, I will get evil.

What our grandparents told us is the pure truth. You will others to have what you desire for others.

Being happy is not a matter of destiny. It is a matter of options.

Take care of your Thoughts because they become Words.

Take care of your Words because they become Actions.

Take care of your Actions because they become Habits.

Take care of your Habits for they become Character.

Take care of your Character for it will become your Destiny. And

Your Destiny will be your life...

And finally: There is no religion higher than the Truth.

***These two texts were discussed at the mid-island Corpus gathering.***

I (Paul) say: Walk in spirit and do not fulfill the desires of the flesh

for they are against the spirit and the spirit is against the flesh.

These things are opposed to each other so that you should not do things that you want.

If you are led by spirit, you are not subject to (the) Law.

The works of the flesh are manifest:

They are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness,

idolatry, magic, hatred, strife, jealousy, anger,

quarrels, divisions, factions, envy,

homicide, drunkenness, revels, letting loose,

and things like these which I warned you about before

and I warn you about again.

Whoever does such things will not inherit God's Kingdom.

The fruit of the spirit, however, is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, self-control.

There is no law against these.

They who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires.

If we live by spirit, we should walk by spirit.

We should not be conceited, provoking and envying one another.

Galatians 5:16-26

*Xristos Community Society annual general meeting will be held on Saturday, June 26 at 11:00AM in St. Columba's Anglican Church Hall, 40 High Street, Victoria, BC.*

# Early Church: A Few Brief Words

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



Jesus' first followers always insisted that he was fully human and that he came from God. They had no trouble accepting Jesus' humanity as a prophet of God; however, understanding how Jesus came from God took time to develop after his death into the belief that Jesus came as "The Word made flesh who dwelt amongst us" and then that Jesus came as God incarnate.

This acceptance/belief is a gift of revelation from God, something that no one can profess on the basis of human understanding alone.

(apokalupsis, a Greek word that meant making public something about a person that was previously unknown)

Jesus' humanity necessitated that he die. When Jesus died by crucifixion, his disciples understood that God did not leave him under the dominion of death but raised him up into God's Kingdom. In this way, God intervened in Jewish history: Jesus' resurrection was part of Yahweh's faithful bond to the people of Israel; it was part of God's renewal of Creation. Jesus was "the first-born of the dead" and all of us in turn would one day follow him into God's Kingdom.

Where did the resurrection idea and language come from?

As Jews, Jesus and his disciples had the language for such an event. The idea that God stood by an extraordinary prophet after death, especially in the case of a martyred prophet, had been developing for nearly two hundred years.

Dan 12:1-3 states "Many of those who sleep in the dust will awake; some to everlasting life..."

Is 52:13 "See my servant will prosper; he shall be lifted up, exalted..."

These scriptures had originally been intended to describe the future of the Jewish nation but they provided the language for apocalyptic judgment and life in God's heaven.

2 Maccabees 7:22 "The Creator in mercy will give you back both breath and life..."

Ps. of Solomon "Those who fear (i.e. respect/honour) the Lord (God) shall rise up to eternal life."

Syriac Baruch 49:1 "the earth will surely give back the dead at that time. Some into the splendour of Angels; others into horrible shapes."

Early disciples of Jesus lived in this context, and then they developed their own beliefs based on their own experience of Jesus. For them

Jesus' resurrection was God's way of dealing with Israel and, through Israel, with all humanity.

Early resurrection stories/accounts seem to have their origins among early disciple groups in Palestine. In the NT, resurrection is a sign that God's Kingdom is present and has broken through; it is the renewal of the face of the earth. This was the "stumbling block" for most Jews and it was folly to the Greeks who held that in life the soul was trapped in the body and they wondered why the body would be reunited with the soul sometime after death. To Jesus' followers, his Resurrection is the sign that God rescued Jesus and exalted him.

It is the person of the exalted Jesus who "manifests himself in another form" Mk 16:12 making himself seen to variously named women disciples and other named men disciples. The use of expressions such as "made himself seen/manifests himself" is the biblical way of saying that God has revealed something that previously was hidden; for example, "I manifested myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty" Ex 6:3 and "God manifested himself to Abraham as a voice" Gen 12:1; Gal 1:12; See also Acts 9:3; 22:6; 16:13. In Jesus' appearances, he is frequently not recognized at first. The named disciples (Peter, the Beloved Disciple, The 12, James, all of the apostles, the 500, Paul- 1 Cor 15) become the authority for the belief that Jesus is the messiah, the Lord. Eventually the authentic witnesses were remembered as the "Twelve Apostles". The early followers of Jesus very freely described his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Thus, in the different accounts there is the stone, the guards, one or two angels, an earthquake, variously named women, anointing, empty tomb, Peter, the Beloved Disciple, manifestations or "appearances" of Jesus, commissioning the disciples, and Jesus' departure to his Father. The early followers understood that Jesus is alive because God stood by him, his life, his work, and his message and they formulated statements of their faith.

God's spirit, Jesus' spirit, the Holy Spirit lives in the gathered community, the ekklesia. As the Jesus movement moved more and more into the Greek culture, understanding Jesus became more Greek: Jesus, the Jewish son of God, our advocate before God, took on characteristics of a Greek Son of God, a divine person; the exalted Jesus was believed to be the incarnated Word of God. The Spirit of God and of the Son of God was believed to be a unique person. By the 3rd century, the then largely Greek speaking Church was hammering out the inspired understanding of the Priesthood and the Trinity, beliefs that could be known only through revelation and could only come from God.

*Documents from high context cultures encode much information in widely known and understood symbolic or stereotypical statements. For this reason, these documents require the reader to fill in large gaps in what is left unwritten. All readers are expected to know the context and therefore to understand what is only implicit in the writing. Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul p. 5 Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, 2006*

# All About Inclusivity

by Phil Little, Ladysmith, BC



Years ago in a previous lifetime I participated in a Peruvian priest's movement. We gathered in our local groups to share news, to seek an analysis of current political and religious situations, and to deepen our commitment to Vatican II and the Latin American experiences of Medellin and Puebla. Through this movement I was provided with an essential support that educated and nourished me, helping to situate my own position as a

“foreign” gringo priest working among the very poorest. This movement sort of disappeared in the 1980's, but was not forced out by authorities in the church or the state who feared its influence. In its own analysis within the context of encouraging and supporting base Christian communities, the group decided that it should “decrease” so that the “community” and its leadership could “increase”. As priests of the old order, but still good faithful priests, they saw that their ministry came from and within the people of God. Clergy dominance, even when progressive, was a problem and a liability in the development of real Christian communities. I see myself as “a priest of the old order”, not chosen by a Christian community and somewhat dubious of any real “calling” other than coming out of the altar boy farm system and with a somewhat general feeling that as a priest I could do something positive for others. Much of the crisis of the church today I would attribute to this institutional apparatus that fashions priests of the old order who simply are obsolete in the church that is needed today. Old wine skins for new wine – and the precious nectar is wasted or ruined.

Through our local CORPUS group on Vancouver Island we had contact with the first woman candidate for the priesthood – Michele Birch-Conery, Ph.D. – through the Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) movement. Michele began to attend our monthly ecumenical gatherings. Michele is a most accomplished woman, a professor of English literature, and prior to that she has a medical background as a “flying nurse” serving remote areas. Michele was near retirement. Why would she want to be a priest? Is this just not a feminist face to the “priest of the old order” paradigm? I was sceptical – and not too sure.

I was a human rights advocate in my work as a union representative and I understood the fundamental inequality that women in the church have faced over the centuries. The misogynist theology and policies of a patriarchal church contributed to the suffering, exclusion and oppression of women – well to be honest it still does. I understood that the RCWP movement was a logical next step for Catholic women. Groups like CNWE (Catholic Network for Women's Equality) can only talk about the issues for so long, but eventually advocating for change leads to action. As happens sometimes the spark for change comes from a place least expected. A group of three bishops approached Dr. Patricia Fresen (a

professor of theology in Rome) and asked her to consider ordination. Patricia is another of those women who has led a full life as an educator and as a member of a religious order could have chosen to retire gracefully in comfort. She had been jailed in South Africa for defying the laws of apartheid by allowing black children to attend the school where she was the director. She knew of the struggle for equality and she stood with the oppressed and paid the price. Reluctantly Patricia listened to the arguments of these bishops and she accepted ordination to the priesthood and then later as bishop so that she could make an effort in the struggle against inequality in the community that was her church. Again she paid a hefty price as she was expelled from her religious community at the insistence of the Vatican. This meant that all financial support and the security of religious life for a faithful member were abruptly ended. That was not the “vow” of poverty – rather it is real poverty.

I met Patricia Fresen a few years ago when she was visiting Vancouver Island and she asked to come and see our new home in Saltair. We asked her to bless our new home even before we had moved in and she consented graciously. There is a gentleness and depth of wisdom that comes from Patricia and I wish we could have more time with her.

On April 17, 2010 Patricia was again back on Vancouver Island for the ordination of two women to the priesthood. One of them I know as she had joined our mid-island community gatherings with her husband Robert.

Kim Sylvester is another accomplished woman, professor of music with a full career behind her as well as her life as mother and grandmother. Kim felt the “call” to the priesthood and began the journey and preparation. How could you not support such a good woman? Yet still – the same question – another priest of the old order but with a woman's face?

I had a minor role in the ordination ceremony as videographer, something for which I am minimally qualified. Michele Birch-Conery drafted me and gave me her camera which is about 100 times better than my mini-Canon camera. The ordination was celebrated in the Centennial United Church in Victoria with the gracious support of its minister, Rev. Alana Menu. I recognized Rev. Rosalind Westaway, an Anglican priest, who recently retired and lives nearby in Ladysmith. Rosalind gave the welcome to the congregation. There were other women Anglican priests present. I noticed that like myself there were other married RC priests present – a former OMI and a former Jesuit among them. The church “felt” particularly warm and comfortable – this coming from one who is not known to be attentive to “feelings”.

François Brassard was the master of ceremonies and managed to keep everything flowing smoothly. There was a choir, led by Gordon Miller, which had obviously put much effort into preparing for this ordination. Bishop Patricia came in the procession with the two women candidates and a number of other co-celebrants. There was a presentation of the candidates and witnesses to their calling came forth and spoke on their behalf.

## Inclusivity Continued...

The Liturgy of the Word was most powerful. Perhaps it was the texts chosen (Proverbs 8:32-25, 9:1-6, Acts 16:11-15, John 8:1-8) but also the readers – an Anglican priest, a laywoman and the gospel read by Rev. Alana Menu. The Rev. Ellen Willingham, an Anglican priest, then spoke about the calling of women to leadership roles in the church. She was followed by Bishop Patricia Fresen who spoke on the unusual ordination text from John citing the encounter between Jesus and the woman caught in the act of adultery. Bishop Patricia highlighted that Jesus was an orthodox Jew who took his religion seriously but he did not hesitate to critique the law or even break the law when it was applied unjustly or for evil purposes. Jesus did not come to condemn but to offer new life. This ordination was conducted according to the traditional ritual of the Church, except for the contravention of Canon 1024 which states that only a “male” can be validly ordained. Patricia outlined how this canon stands in contrast to centuries of tradition and the very example of inclusivity as witnessed in the life of Jesus as found in the gospels.

After the liturgy of the word the choir led the congregation in the singing of the Taize version of the “Veni Sancte Spiritu”. This was not an ordinary church type hymn – there was almost a mystical breath of harmony as the entire congregation became one with the choir in this simple but profound prayer. Again the Myers-Briggs test says I am not a “feeling type” of guy, but there was something different happening. No dove fluttered down from the rafters, but there was a strong sense of communal unison in purpose.

As the candidates prostrated themselves before the altar, as is tradition, the community prayed in song the Litany of the Saints. This litany highlighted many of the great women of our religious tradition but also included modern saints like Bishop Romero. “All you holy men and women, pray for us” was the response and it was an invocation that made them present in this moment of deep religious renewal. Then Bishop Patricia explained the ritual of the “laying on hands” – a gesture without words that was itself the prayer. Bishop Patricia then invited the co-celebrants to follow her and then others in the congregation to then join in this prayer of the “laying on hands”. All of the women priests and ministers, including those of other Christian communions, joined in this prayer of ordination as well as many of the congregation including family members of the candidates. I maintained my position as videographer but found myself profoundly affected when Rev. Alana Menu approached the candidates and joined in this ritual. I know Alana and her husband through another instance and rejoiced in her own ordination as a United Church minister only a few years ago.

Deep within me I recognized that something more profound was happening before my eyes. This was not just the ordination of two women, but it was the tearing down of walls of separation. Patricia Fresen had gone to jail in South Africa to include young black students in the school run by her religious order. This was not just equality but it was “inclusivity” – refusing to exclude and refusing to be excluded. Pope Benedict would have us believe that the other Christian communions are not real churches, and that their salvation depends on them joining us. Here I was witness to a different dimension of ecumenism – not a formal week of prayer for Christian unity as governed by the old order – but a demonstration that ecumenism is unity when it is made to happen. Women ministers

united to pray for these two RC candidates in a gesture of solidarity and ecclesial love.

The communion table was again a moment that highlighted “inclusivity”. Patricia Fresen highlighted two aspects that perhaps are symbolic but very powerful in the R.C.W.P. movement. The “program of service” had printed in bold “Please note that our tradition is that the Presider and ministers receive communion last, not first”. At the beginning of the communion service it was also announced that at the Lord’s Table “all are invited”.

Religious movements and organizations pass through different stages beginning with “inspiration” and sometimes ending with “rigid institutionalization”. There are powerful signs that the R.C.W.P. movement desires to move priesthood into a new paradigm. Will the inspiration provided by leaders such as Bishop Patricia Fresen sustain the group as it grows and matures? Is it possible that this new paradigm of priestly leadership will prove “contagious” and maybe even begin to influence the old order priests? Pope Benedict XVI has shown that he can go to extraordinary limits to rehabilitate renegade bishops of the Pius X movement, even when they turn out to be anti-Semitic holocaust deniers.

Perhaps with some time and growth, a successor pope might realize that for the good of the universal church, it would be opportune to offer full communion to these women who are ordained. In the meanwhile, there is some excitement, akin to the refreshing spirit in the air in the first years after Vatican II. Maybe some of the priests of the old order, those still in

ministry and those who are retired and married, need to accept that it would be a “kairos” type moment to accept an option to “decrease” so that something new and potentially very alive can “increase”.



*Kim Sylvester and her husband Robert are part of our small ecumenical group which meets somewhere in mid-Island each month for a pot-luck meal and evening of sharing. Kim was ordained as a priest in the RCWP movement by Bishop Patricia Fresen, a most remarkable woman with a marvelous life journey story resisting inequality and injustice.*

# Gregory Baum At Bethlehem Retreat Centre

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



## Part I

Gregory Baum, professor emeritus of McGill University and an associate of the Jesuit Centre 'justice et foi' in Montreal came to the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria, BC on April 30, 2010 to

conclude The Spirit of Vatican II Anniversary Lecture Series with "A Look To The Future". The following day, he continued his visit with a workshop entitled "Continuing The Conversation" at Queenswood, and on Sunday, May 2, he spoke to a large group at Bethlehem Retreat Centre in Nanaimo. Naomi and I had the pleasure and the privilege of being at Bethlehem Retreat Centre to be part of the latter event. The following is a summary of notes that I took at Bethlehem Retreat Centre. I do not give exact quotes of what Gregory said but only a few brief highlights of what I heard and understood at the time. The full text of the UVic lecture may be obtained from Island Catholic News in Victoria (icn@telus.net).

In Nanaimo, Gregory contrasted the newness of Vatican II with the brakes that have been put on Church reform since then: Pope John XXIII summoned the Church "to discern the signs of the time, to seize the opportunity, and to look far ahead" by being in solidarity with the whole of humanity. To do this, Vatican II emphasized the role of regional local Churches stating that the entire Church is present in them responding to the world's various cultures. The College of Bishops, including the Pope in dialogue bears co-responsibility for what happens in the Church. At the Council, the Church changed its mind on a number of things:

- God is not only in the Church;
- We recognize the validity of the other churches and we affirm religious liberty;
- We reversed the historical anti-semitism of centuries;
- Previously, the Church had condemned religious liberty and would have no part in the ecumenical movement except to 'welcome back errant christians' to the true Faith.

However, in the 1970s the climate of reform in the Church turned. Among other things, the World Synod of Bishops was taken over by the Vatican; Cardinal Ratzinger stated that they were not part of Collegiality. Then in the 1990s, the oath of fidelity to the magisterium was imposed on bishops, teachers, and persons of importance in the Church.

Gregory ended his talk with a call not to be discouraged by this turn of affairs. "The Spirit is with us." To be upset is to lose spiritual equilibrium. God is implicit in life. When people act with love, generosity, and justice, there God is present. Abram worshipped God with the priest Melchizedek offering bread and wine and accepting Abram's title. Then Abraham went on with faith in Yahweh's promise

that he would be the founder of nations. Centuries later, The Three Magi too, after seeing Jesus, returned home to follow their beliefs.

## Part II

Gregory Baum is as good as his writings. I discovered that personally in the summer of 1965. There are good people who do good things that never get told. Gregory Baum is one of them. I want to tell you how I discovered that. In northern B.C. I had the advantage of being a priest with time to read, and the writings of Gregory Baum were very valuable and very helpful in my ministry. This was particularly true concerning the moral dilemma faced by Roman Catholic husbands and wives who sought advice from priests. The Church's position was that artificial birth control was intrinsically wrong based on the tenets of the natural law. There seemed to be no way out of this moral dilemma. Then in 1964 came *Contraception and Holiness*, a book of essays edited and introduced by Gregory Baum. These essays written by leading theologians and clergy (Archbishop Roberts S.J. of Bombay, for example) explained natural law and the spirituality of marriage in a very different way and they shed new light on marriage and birth control. It left the practice of birth control a matter of informed conscience.

Later when I was on leave of absence from the OMI's, I decided to visit Gregory to see if he was as good as his writing. So, I knocked on his office door at St. Michael's College and I received a warm gracious welcome. The list of good things that he did for me during the next lonely year is long - introducing me to a community of friends, helping me to find a job, inviting me to meals at the College and the Augustinian monastery and in 1966, he gave me his place at a conference in Chicago. While there I stayed with Nom and her parents and during that time, I asked Nom to marry me and she consented. When Nom came to Toronto to visit me, Gregory loaned me his car to show her around. During the next four years while we lived in Toronto, he visited with us, sent us fellow priests and sisters who were in transition, and he baptized our first two daughters.

Though this is brief and does not capture his warmth and genuineness, it is a sketch of the kind of person that Gregory is.

Nom and I moved on, relocated on Vancouver Island, and gradually lost touch with Gregory. Yet after nearly 40 years, he recognized us at Bethlehem Retreat Centre and was pleased to see us again.



# 20th Century Authority In The Roman Catholic Church

by John Wijngaards, London, England



**20th Century Authority in the Roman Catholic Church**  
Since the Second Vatican Council a small but powerful group in the Catholic Church has taken control of governance. Continuing a trend that had started from the beginning of the 20th century, this group, headed by conservative Popes, has abused, and is still abusing, spiritual authority in order to block attempts at 'modernising' the Church. Their actions contravene the clear principles of reform endorsed by the Second Vatican Council

(1963-1965), the most authoritative body of vision and legislation in recent times.

## I. The appointment of 'party-line' bishops

From the 1960's, the Popes and their Vatican assistants have tried to appoint only bishops and archbishops who agree to their policies and who see loyalty to decrees emanating from Rome as their highest priority. As well documented in *Papal Power* by Paul Collins, the Popes have now drawn all authority to themselves, reducing bishops to low-level officials executing their wishes. An oath of fidelity ensures that new bishops feel bound to observe to the letter all instructions received from Rome.

The Synods of Bishops, which were instituted by the Vatican Council to curb curial monopoly, have been deprived of any real influence by a rigging of the agenda, by saturating committees with members of the Roman Curia, by a subtle censorship of bishops' contributions, by selectively omitting resolutions voted on by the bishops. This has been documented in detail for the Synod on the Family. (See J. Grootaers and J. A. Selling, *The 1980 Synod of Bishops On the Role of the Family*, Louvain 1983, 375 pages.) Similar manipulations took place at the Synods on Evangelization, on the Laity, on Africa, on Asia, on Europe, to mention but a few (The Tablet, correspondence 16 Oct - 20 Nov 1999.)

The result of the bishops' dependence on Rome is a lamentable reduction of status. Bishops in the Catholic Church are often considered, both by their priests and the laity, to be merely 'yes-men' whose main concern is to please authorities in Rome.

## II. The suppression of lay authority in the Church

In spite of the Second Vatican Council's decrees that define the

Catholic Church in terms of the People of God and that call for real co-responsibility of the laity in all levels of the Church - national, diocesan and parish - Vatican authorities have done everything possible to reduce the influence of lay people on Church governance. The rights and duties accorded to the laity do not respond to what was the intention of the Council, as pointed out by church lawyer Ladislav Orsy. The laity in the Church has no say because the Church is a clerical patriarchal society clinging on to power, according to theologian Peter C. Morea.

Pope John Paul II beatified Pope Pius IX (1848 -78) in spite of the man's condemnation of religious freedom, freedom of conscience, socialism, democracy and the emancipation of slaves. This beatification was fully supported by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who was then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Under pressure of the Bishops' Synod on the Laity, the Vatican appointed a Special Commission on the Function of Women in Society and in the Church in 1974. However, during meetings of this commission, women members experienced a lack of freedom of expression and of open consultation: "Our views are being systematically suppressed." (From the full report by Rie Vendrik, one of the participants.)

The Pope and his advisors forget where their teaching authority originates. Its source is in the inerrancy which is a gift to the whole community of faith. The Pope and his advisors neglect to consult the faithful, as had already been advocated by Cardinal Newman.

## III. The suppression of the free speech of theologians and experts

In order to maintain total control of opinion and action within the universal Church, the Popes and the Vatican curia have created a climate in which all form of 'dissent' or 'protest' against the official party-line is vigorously suppressed. This applies especially to theologians and all experts who enjoy a specific expertise.

•Do theologians enjoy 'academic freedom' in the Church?

Yes, they do by law, but not in practice.

•Can a theologian legitimately dissent from officially taught doctrine?

Yes, he/she can, if there are good reasons for it.

•Do theologians at times have a duty to express dissent from officially taught doctrine?

True obedience to the Gospel and truth may demand open opposition to the teaching authority.

•Can clear guidelines for dissent be formulated?

No, since many situations are unique.

•May a theologian's dissent be voiced through the public media?

Yes, it may. Often the attitude of the Roman authorities leave no other way. In reality, however, all forms of legitimate disagreement or protest are suppressed.

Excerpts from John Wijngaards' fully documented and sourced article in "Mirabile Dictu" May 10, 2010

**John Wijngaards' website**

<http://www.womenpriests.org/wijngaards>

# 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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