



arcvoice

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Editorial

If only our Church had the courage! is the title of one contribution to this bumper edition of *ARCvoice*. It is a challenge which has been taken up by other writers who show personal courage in expressing views once deemed so heretical as to warrant burning at the stake!

When one-time 'pillars of the Church' start openly expressing their dissatisfaction with previously held certainties and time-worn liturgies, then the Church should have cause to be concerned. That dissatisfaction appears to be similar to what so many Catholics now feel when they attempt to reconcile their education in life with the many primitive explanations given in the religious education of their childhood.

Yet to listen to the (mainly elderly) congregation at Sunday Mass as they dutifully parrot the words of the Nicene Creed, one has to wonder how many ever give a thought to what is actually being said. Likewise, the 'hymns' we are expected to sing are exasperatingly naïve – still portraying a Pie-in-the-Sky God 'who sets the prisoners free' ... 'saves us from our sins' ... 'brings peace on earth' etc. If only it were true!

What hope is there for the Church under its present leadership? Larry Buttrose (author of *Tales of the Popes, From Eden to Eldorado*) spoke with Robin Williams on *Ockham's Razor* on Sunday 6/9/09 and referred to 'the old recidivist Catholics, such as Pope Benedict and Cardinal Pell, recklessly casting doubt upon the effectiveness of condoms against HIV/AIDS. In doing so, they too turn their backs on science, in favour of religious dogma, so risking the lives of millions.' While *Cathnews* (8.9.09) included this item: 'US Sister of Charity Louise Akers has been barred from teaching catechesis by the Archbishop of Cincinnati, Daniel Pilarczyk, on citing her refusal to back away from supporting women's ordination.' How much longer can the Vatican hold back the tide of science and education before it crumbles into an anachronistic relic of its distant past?

It is over 20 years since Uta Ranke-Heinemann lost her chair at a Catholic University because she questioned the virgin birth (1987). Her ground-breaking and well-researched book *Putting Away Childish Things* (1994) made much sense to liberal Catholics, yet has been derided or ignored by a conservative hierarchy.

Likewise, Bishop Geoffrey's Robinson address to the recent WATAC conference has been summarised by Bernice Moore in this edition. His proposals could well be a blueprint for future reform – but, when certain members of the hierarchy refuse permission for him to speak in their dioceses, it is unlikely that his vision will be acknowledged any time soon.

John Buggy's careful analysis of the recent ARC survey makes it clear that the majority of respondents are crying out for a new creed – and again John invites members to contribute their own versions.

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

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The Need for a New Creed

Thank you to all our members who took the time to respond to the ARC Survey No.3. Although I gave a summary of the results of the survey in the last issue, since that time more responses have come in and now a total of seventy-six responses have been received and have been added to the data and analysis. This represents a significant survey sample.

The extra responses are most helpful in validating the conclusions that were formed and they do not alter the trend that I commented on in the last issue. What now comes out more strongly is that primitive notions of first parents, Adam and Eve, are firmly rejected along with the original sin as deriving from them (98.67%). The whole notion of humans alienated from God through original sin is completely dismissed. God as spirit is the way members see the creating and sustaining dimensions of the divinity, with 57% of members unable to believe in God as a revealed Trinity. The theological statements about how the Trinity is comprised have little or no relevance for up 84% of ARC members who responded and who include priests, religious and laity.

Prior to this survey being conducted, we asked members to consider statements about what they truly believe. So far, only a couple have responded. Perhaps the results of this survey will help to stimulate more responses but in the meantime, may I offer a suggested creed based on my personal reflection and the responses to the survey.

I believe in God as the force behind creation and all that exists. This force is behind an evolving universe. This force is an intelligence that allows the evolution to take its course without further intervention.

I believe that human beings have evolved and yearn for a connection and relationship with this force.

I believe that there are many human beings who have developed a relationship with this force, either consciously or unconsciously, and their actions have presented an insight into its nature.

I believe that one of these human beings, Jesus of Nazareth, has given the greatest insight into the nature of this force we call God and established the way we can relate to it.

He outlined a code by which we all should live that was completely consistent in itself. By his words and, more importantly, by his actions and relationships he revealed the nature of what we all yearn for, namely love – love as selfless, generous, and forgiving. Any force that creates goodness through this is part of God.

I believe that human relationships are elevated when they seek to express the love contained in them in a manner that recognises that force.

I believe that Jesus established a way of relating to him that would enable us to relate to God in this life – by gathering together in his name, by breaking bread, by anointing the sick.

I believe that Jesus was so imbued by this force that he is the link or pathway in our attempt at understanding and responding to it.

Therefore, I believe that I will be united with Jesus after death when the full nature of God will be revealed, immeasurably more than we know now.

The aspects of belief that I have attempted to capture in the above are the following:

1. God as spirit – no gender
2. Evolution as a given
3. Recognition of other monotheistic “God seekers” and acceptance that we can also know aspects of God through them (Revelation is ongoing – Vatican II)
4. Since we say that God is love, Jesus is the closest we have witnessed anyone to equating with that love
5. Since we fall far short of the love that Jesus showed, we come closer to God by the manner in which we relate to Jesus – this is the essence of sacrament
6. We leave the afterlife open to discovery, rather than clouding our understanding with inadequate myths, hopes and concepts.

After writing this personal creed, an ancient version of the Our Father was brought to my attention by another ARC member, Paul Denny. Its tone and expression is fascinating:

*O Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,
who fills all realms of sound, light, and vibration.
May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.
Your Heavenly Domain approaches.
Let Your will come true – in the universe (all that vibrates)
just as on earth (that is material and dense).
Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) for our daily need,
Detach the fetters of faults that bind us, (karma)
like we let go the guilt of others.
Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common temptations)
but let us be freed from that what keeps us off from our true purpose.*

*From You comes the all-working will,
the lively strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age.
Sealed in trust, faith and truth.
(I confirm with my entire being).*

Several aspects stand out in this prayer:

1. God, again as spirit without gender, gives life
2. Sin is seen as “missing the mark”, simply as keeping us from our true purpose
3. Dualism is absent – we have no devils enabling us to escape our own responsibility
4. The emphasis is on God giving us the will to act and take responsibility, rather than imploring God to do things for us (like delivering us from evil)
5. Afterlife is sought, simply expressed without any inadequate description, recognising that God’s will covers the universe, not just heaven and earth.

Perhaps the results of the ARC Survey No.3 and these simple observations might inspire you to compose a creed that is closer to what is in your heart. I encourage you to do so and please share it with us and/or with any comments on the above by sending your thoughts to the ARC Editor.

John Buggy

Letter to the Editor

In ARCvoice No. 32, we included an invitation to attend a meeting organised by The Centre for Progressive Religious Thought, Sydney: **Does God Create Religion, or Religion Create God?** Two ARC Members attended this meeting and one has written:

I was present at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre on Saturday 29th August and found the day challenging and inspirational. The chief speaker, Dr Val Webb, proved well worth listening to, and I met a number of fine Christians, especially in group discussions. The general spirit was one of openness and rejection of fundamental extremes. I was very much ‘at home’.

The (now retiring) Rev. Rex Hunt seemed to be the chief facilitator, and I obtained from him (willingly) a copy of the Affirmation put forth on behalf of the group present at their Canberra conference. (See Page 6 for the full text).

Two members in my group claimed to be ‘non-believers but searching’. As a nun who has been fairly cut off from non-Catholic Christians for a life-time (although my father’s side of the family were strict Anglicans and some of my siblings are strict (Lefèvre) traditionalists, it came as a bit of a revelation to me to hear so much that resembled what I myself now represent.

Anne Drover RSM

Val Webb

Like Catching Water in a Net

Imprint: Continuum
Pub. date: 15 Oct 2007
ISBN: 9780826428912

National Best Books 2007 Award-Winner in Religion

Val Webb is not out to prove the existence of a God or the Divine, but to set out intuitions or intimations of the Divine nature and attributes from the stories and literature of the world’s religions. Casting her net more widely than Karen Armstrong in *The History of God* or Jack Miles in *God: A Biography*, Webb delves deeply into the poetry and sayings of Sufi, Buddhist, and Hindu mystics, the nature religion of the ancient Mesopotamians, their kin the Israelites, and the Aboriginal people of her own beloved Australia.

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‘Insightful, imaginative, and provocative! Val Webb’s new book has freed the Divine from the religious. A striking achievement.’

John Shelby Spong, author of
Jesus for the Non-Religious

Pondering the imponderable

Tony Griffiths

Seventy years of living has more than nibbled away at the certainties taught me at schools by a succession of nuns, brothers and priests. Concepts presented as matters I would never have to reconsider for the whole of my life are now, in the light of my lifetime, more than just questionable.

For example: I can't recall even one teacher who had any idea of the size of the Universe and humanity's puny position in it, and how this might cause one to query the concept of a Creator who monitored every grain of sand and looked over the shoulder of every person – either personally or through the eyes of an ethereal guardian angel.

In the Universe, even with our still-limited knowledge of it today, we know there are uncountable billions of galaxies. We live on an insignificant planet, an unimportant speck within one galaxy, itself containing billions of stars and possibly many millions of planets just like ours.

It's asking a lot to accept that we are unique, special, or alone in the Universe. It's asking too much to regard this utterly incomprehensible Universe as merely a setting for our insignificant species to prove its worth to its Creator. To ourselves, we are everything; to the Universe, we are nothing – we wouldn't be missed if we didn't exist. Any entity that can create such a Universe doesn't need us or our adulation, so why are we special?

This is not to say that I reject the ethics of Christianity – far from it, I try to live by them – but I no longer need all the wrapping that has come to enshroud them as men have built up their image of the characteristics they think a Creator should have, and then converted those imaginings into compulsory absolutes.

Of course, they were wise men who evolved these ideas, as are we all; however, a lifetime's experience suggests that, while love might be our greatest quality, self-deception might also be a common characteristic –

so I'm not promoting my opinions as certainties, only as doubts in an ageing mind after 70 years' observation.

But, how come we have so many supposedly wise people holding absolutely opposing ideas on almost any subject? I don't know how many fundamentally different concepts of the Creator exist in humanity's multiplicity of religions, but they can't all be right, and we've no reason to think that any group are the wisest people on the planet or that our concept is any more correct than any other's. It troubles me that we do so.

Furthermore, after considerable mental wrestling with childhood absolutes, I must also admit that, having attended Mass about 4000 times so far, its sacred mystical qualities have dimmed somewhat and responses tend towards being automatic unthinking utterances, dulled by so much repetition. Might it not be better if weekly Mass

was replaced by some other format, perhaps concentrating more on the essence of practical Christianity in modern everyday life, and that Mass then be reserved for fewer, special occasions, the better to highlight its significance? You can have too much of a good thing.

I could go on, but that's enough uncertainty for one sitting; any more and I'll start to worry.

So, you can see that a lifetime of learning has brought considerable uncertainty to my senior years. Fortunately, I'm not bothered

much by it as a practical problem, and I don't dwell upon it, because no matter how hard I ponder, I'm no better equipped to unravel the mysteries of creation, existence and after-life than anyone else – although neither am I less well-equipped. So there's no point in dwelling upon it; I'll just wait to the end, and then I'll either understand all or decay into oblivion. In the meantime I'll just try to do my best by others – but I wish that I might be able to come back and tell you all about it, although no-one has yet, which is also a bit of a worry! □

TONY GRIFFITHS is a retired electronics engineer with an interest in history – particularly the history of technology – and an urge to write about it. Retirement has also given him the time to explore and record his thoughts on the 'conflict' – if there is one still – between science and religions.



If only our Church had the courage!

Kevin Doherty

I read, with interest, the article in the Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday 18/7/09 which stated that the Catholic Church in Australia will conduct a carbon audit in thousands of churches and parish buildings. Whoopee I say! Bully for us! It's a tiny step in the right direction. However, I have a better suggestion for reducing our carbon footprint.

I am sure that my fellow members of ARC will agree with me when I say that the Holy Spirit is disappointed in the church at this point in time. While it has been a rough road that the Church has been down, it has nevertheless created:

- the first hospitals
- the first schools and universities
- the first trade unions.

All of these were created when the Church saw that they were needed. Today we are sitting on our hands, comfortable in our little outdated parish communities, hoping that the disaffected among our sons and daughters will return to the church. Meanwhile our priests are ageing and becoming more disenchanted as they find that their roles are no longer reaching out to those in need. Their roles are more that of general managers looking after church and school finances and trying to appease those in their parish councils.

I believe that we need to supply:

- long day care centres for working parents;
- indoor sports facilities for Soccer, Cricket, Basketball, Netball, etc;
- outdoor playing facilities for larger team sports;
- meeting halls able to be converted for youth dances;
- band and choir practice facilities;
- less expensive housing for single parents, young married couples, and the aged;
- churches that are designed to be more comfortable i.e. warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer without using the Earth's resources to achieve this.

How do we do this you might ask? A parish priest on the northern beaches of Sydney has the answer but no-one is listening. So I will repeat his ideas here:

- Instead of combining two or three Parishes at a time, combine 8 or 10 parishes;
- find a central location and build a new church with a six- or seven-star environmental rating with enough land around it for the other buildings and a large parish school. This may require multi-storey buildings incorporating a church in the inner city areas;
- add the purpose-built buildings for the long day care centre, indoor sports, band & choir facilities, a presbytery for several priests and any other buildings that may be needed;
- de-sanctify and sell the least attended churches in the group;
- combine those schools that can be combined into a regional campus.

The parishes we have were developed in the days of the horse and buggy. They were designed to serve the parish communities that were able to attend services without the transport facilities that we have today. They served their purpose well but now we must change.

Priests should not live alone. They should live in community. I grew up in a parish that had three and sometimes four priests in residence and although they did not always get along with each other, it was a community and the discussions that took place among them stimulated their minds and sometimes brought them back to reality. They need someone to bounce ideas off and get feedback on their homilies. This is not going to happen in present circumstances.

There will be the members of the new larger parish communities who cannot easily get to the new central Church and its facilities. This is where those that can drive and have empty seats in their vehicles will be required to pick up and take back those who need assistance; thus improving the communication among the parishioners.

The new larger Parishes will be able to afford a full time music director who will, not only, coach the choir but will assist the youth with their style of music whether it is pop, hip hop, or funk. We might even be able to stretch to a sports' manager who would bring on the indoor team sports.

I was fortunate to be invited to a presentation of how the new Melbourne Convention Centre attained a six-star environmental rating and I can see that good architects given the right terms of reference can do marvellous things when they have a clean slate with which to start. I believe that it is incumbent on us to make the change. □

KEVIN DOHERTY is a semi-retired business executive who feels the need to alert his fellow Catholics to what he describes as the way the Holy "Vatican" Catholic Church is moving away from the decisions that were made at Vatican II; away from the true principles of Catholicism in order to protect and strengthen the Curia.

The Canberra Affirmation

Produced by St James Canberra (Evening Worship in the Round)

Edited by Rex Hunt

www.rexaehuntprogressive.com

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As progressive Christians in the 21st century, we are uncomfortable with rigid statements of belief, as we recognise our understandings are shaped by life experiences within cultural and environmental contexts. Yet, there are some common understandings which continue to shape our lives, both individually and in community with others. These we seek to affirm and celebrate:

- We celebrate that our lives are continually evolving in a web of relationships: continuous with historical humans and their societies; with other forms of life; and with the 'creativity' present at the origins of the universe. Over billions of years this 'creativity' - the coming into being of the new and the novel - has undergone countless transformations, and we and all other life forms are its emerging products. Thus we are called to live in community, respecting all human beings, all life forms, our planet and universe.
- We affirm there is a presentness in the midst of our lives, sensed as both within and beyond ourselves, which can transform our experiences of this earth and each other. Various imaginative ideas have been used to describe this presentness: 'God', 'sacred', 'love', 'Spirit of Life'. We recognise all attempts at understanding and attributing meaning are shaped by prevailing thoughts and culture. Ultimately our response can only be as awe-inspiring mystery beyond the limits of our ability to understand our world and ourselves.
- We honour the one called Jesus, a first century Galilean Jewish sage, nurtured by his religious tradition. A visionary and wisdom teacher, he invited others through distinctive oral sayings and parables about integrity, justice, and inclusiveness, and an open table fellowship, to adopt and trust a re-imagined vision of the 'sacred', of one's neighbour, of life. As we too share in this vision, we affirm the significance of his life and teachings, while claiming to be 'followers of Jesus'.
- We receive the Hebrew and Christian scriptures known as the Bible, as a collection of human documents rich in historical memory and religious interpretation, which describe attempts to address and respond to the 'sacred'. It forms an indispensable part of our tradition and personal journeys. We claim the right and responsibility to question and interpret its texts, empowered by critical biblical scholarship as well as from our own life experiences. We accept that other sources - stories, poems and songs - imaginative pictures of human life both modern and ancient, can nurture us and others, in a celebration of the 'sacred' in life.
- We recognise there are many paths to the 'sacred'. We respect the diversity and pluralism of truth-claims, often in the midst of serious disagreement. In and with this diversity we honour the integrity and meaning of each religious tradition and the people who practice them. We reject all attempts to convert others to any fixed body of belief which they would not come to through their own open, free, and considered explorations.
- We acknowledge that a transformative path of inclusion and integrity involves living responsible and compassionate lives in community with others. Such a path asks us to adopt values supporting social equality and connectedness. It entails nonviolent peacemaking and considered forgiveness. It invites passion and action for social justice, and stewardship of the earth and all its life forms. It encourages humour, challenge, and acts of generosity. At its centre is an awareness of oneness: one with the 'sacred', with ourselves, with others, with the universe.

I believe in a God who ... so do we need a new creed?

Kerry Gonzales

While we may not be allowed to have jokes in church any more, I think we are probably exempt here, so here goes:

A person goes up to heaven and St Peter gives the grand tour, pointing out the tennis centre, golf course, swimming pool, bar and all the other benefits. The new arrival asks St Peter who all the people milling around in groups are. St Peter tells them that some are Muslims, others Presbyterians and also Greek Orthodox. The new arrival then questions St Peter about all the music and laughter coming from behind a barrier. St Peter answers: 'Oh don't worry about that; that is just the Catholics; they like to think they are the only ones that have made it up here and God is just too kind-hearted to disillusion them'.

That is a joke that I'm sure many of you have heard before. However, it illustrates well for me how belief – passionate, rigid belief – can often blind us to other truths that are right before our eyes.

In regard to the Catholic Church and Catholic teaching, it is in some ways easier to define what I don't believe rather than what I do. Catholic teaching is simpler to define and these days I am in agreement with the Church on fewer and fewer of its teachings. Having said that, however, it is not even a matter of what I don't believe but rather those things that I don't lose any sleep over, and dogma fits into that category. Dogma such as the Virgin Birth, Trinity, Immaculate Conception, Communion of Saints, Transubstantiation, Indulgences and the rest are not things that I argue about. If you believe that's fine, if you don't that's fine too. The question for me is whether I need to believe, whether any Catholic needs to believe those things in order to lead a good Catholic life, faithful to the model and message of Jesus. Personally, I don't think so. Whether I believe such things are true or not, doesn't impact upon the faith that I do have in Jesus, because I live my life according to my conscience, not the dictates of the church. And as much as the hierarchy would like to believe it, my conscience is not uninformed or erroneous, because it is based on so many and varied life experiences, both religious and secular, that I have encountered and learnt from over the years. That is not to say that every choice I make will be right, but it will however be based on a solid foundation.

What we believe is very much a product of the influences that have shaped our development. So to set the scene to talk about what sort of God I believe in and my beliefs in relation to the Catholic Church, I tell you a bit about my early influences.

I really don't need to tell people I grew up a Catholic. I only need to say that I was born in the 1950s and that I have seven brothers and sisters. Must be Catholic. I'm sure there are many of you who grew up Catholic in that era who have had similar experiences to mine – such as sitting in the front row at mass and we took up the whole row; responding mindlessly yet perfectly in Latin; taking communion at the altar rails by mouth; family rosary and prayer; mass very often; weekly confession; adoration of the cross; incense; nuns in habits; priestly visits to the home; Catholic schools; youth group; Catholic friends. I'm sure you get the picture – my whole life was centered around the church and to doubt or question was too scandalous to contemplate. I don't think my family even had any friends who were not Catholic. Mind you, it wasn't my soul that was at risk if I missed mass; it was my physical being I was afraid for, if my mother had found out. My own baptism was very indicative of the church of the 1950s as I was not allowed to be baptised Kerry, after County Kerry in Ireland, but instead by my second name Therese after the Little Flower, who was obviously a saint. I don't expect there to be a Saint Kerry any time soon.

Another significant life experience that has impacted on my beliefs is the damage caused by Vatican II. Damage may seem a strange word, yet I can't think of a better one to describe the sense of hope that emanated in the aftermath of V2 that has slowly but systematically been crushed in the intervening years. As such I am one of the many Catholics who had great expectations of and for the church who are now disillusioned by the way the church is fleeing backwards to a pre-V2 mode of thinking and operating. So Vatican II, which should have been a very positive influence on my beliefs, has ultimately had a much more negative effect. I realize that Vatican II itself is not the culprit here, but the result is still the same.

Earlier in the year I watched an SBS documentary called *Religious Right at the Crossroads* on the role of the conservative evangelical Christians in the election of Barack Obama. Historically US evangelical Christians are Republican voters yet over 60% of the 3½ million young evangelicals voted for the Democrat Obama. The catalyst for such an unprecedented move was the belief of the young people that the stance of the religious right was too narrow and too negative. While they still were staunchly against abortion and homosexuality they were also looking for leadership that could encompass

important issues such as poverty, AIDS and the environment. Such young Christians saw themselves as citizens of the world rather than people bound by rigid religious practice. These young Christians were not only effecting great change within US politics but within their own religious communities as well. This for me is a great example of how even staunchly religious people can change and grow without loosing the important foundations that they hold dear. Unfortunately for the Catholic Church we have few young people to drive such change.

So to a Creed – do we need one or even want one? The Merriam Webster dictionary tells us that the word CREED comes from the: Latin *credo*, from *credere* to believe, trust, entrust; and means:

- 1: a brief authoritative formula of religious belief
- 2: a set of fundamental beliefs; *also* : a guiding principle
(Merriam Webster)

I tend more towards the second meaning as it feels less rigid, but is also open to many more possibilities than is an ‘authoritative formula’.

Within the Catholic Church the first use of a creed was for baptism, where the adult being baptised acknowledged the beliefs that had led them to seek baptism. Over time, however, this acknowledgement of belief became a ‘Rule of Faith’ and ultimately a measure of determining suitability for inclusion in the Catholic Community. Even today there are many instances where the creed is being used as a way for individuals to prove their faith and conformity to the Church’s dogma. When a holocaust-denying Bishop can be welcomed back into the Church (admittedly without Episcopal authority) because he can acknowledge the creed, it says to me that there is something really wrong with the church at the highest levels and the creed itself, as neither appears to reflect any real understanding of how the model of Jesus would be truly present in such a situation.

Interesting also was the early Church’s use of the Greek word ‘*haireisis*’ or ‘heresy’ meaning a ‘school of thought or preferred doctrine’. It seems that historically heretics were a valued part of the community, as they helped the group to understand more about themselves and what they believed in. Today, of course, the word heretic is used often by the Church, but not in a positive way. The term places the person outside the community, with the understanding that their beliefs are at best confused, more likely wrong. Not only that, however, as they need to be kept apart so that they don’t taint the orthodox members of the community.

The creed should never have been used as a weapon to support hierarchical power, and according to Leonardo Boff the use of this power bears little resemblance to the example of Jesus. In 1992 he said:

My personal experience of dealing over the last 20 years with doctrinal power is this: it is cruel and merciless; it forgets nothing; forgives nothing; it exacts a price for everything.

For myself, there came a time when I could no longer say the words of the creed. I could not, in good faith, profess things that I had probably never believed. Such words are quite distant from the faith that I do proclaim. Of course, I knew the words by heart but, when I consciously chose to mean what I was saying, I couldn’t do it. For me the current Creed we proclaim does not speak of things I can take to heart, let alone understand. Of course, as many of us have done all our lives we can take these creedal statements on faith and just say them. They are not for me, however, a profession of faith, or a basis for how I live my life. Such words as begotten, incarnate, proceeds from the father and the son, one holy Catholic and apostolic, one baptism for the forgiveness of sins don’t assist in the deepening of my relationship with God, my fellow travellers or the world around me. At some point in history they may have meant more to the faithful, but today the creed needs to be so much more.

The creed as it is talks of belief but not responsibility. For me a creed needs not only to proclaim what I believe about God and perhaps the Church, but also must include my own responsibilities in regard to making these beliefs real, in my own time and place. A creed does not need to be too specific, but rather, like a mission statement, it lays a foundation on which communities of faith can build their own practices while still reflecting the principles of that creed. We can then perhaps have one creed that is invoked in a variety of ways, dependant on the needs, resources and cultural understanding inherent in a church that touches millions of people worldwide. Then perhaps the church could truly be universal.

To be relevant, a creed also needs to speak to individuals. This doesn’t mean that it doesn’t encompass the foundational beliefs of the entire family of believers, but it must be relevant, on some level, to everyone. In the mass our penitential rite has us using the first person ‘I’. Yet when we reach the creed we have moved on to a communal ‘we’. Using the plural, for me, abrogates the responsibility and spreads the need for action to the group as a whole. This may not be the intent, but it can be the result. Each person ‘gathered in his name’ should feel able to say, with conviction, that ‘I’ believe. Without that individual commitment, I feel the creed loses its ability to transform.

There is no doubt that as a Church and as individuals we do need to be able to articulate a creed. Such a creed helps us to define ourselves and provides guidance for us on the journey. Yet, such a creed needs to be a strong reflection of where we have come from, where we are now and what we strive for. It should also not be set in

concrete, as in reflecting the church that we are and strive to become; it needs to incorporate contemporary understandings and experience. I don't mean something that necessarily incorporates every new idea and fashion, but a creed must remain open to the message of the spirit in all times, all people and all places. A creed should never be imposed or used as a tool of judgment or exclusion. As people of God our human frailty means that we will often not live up to our individual or community beliefs, but as God's children we trust that we will always be accepted and nurtured at each and every point in our journey. I believe that Jesus confirms this for us all.

So while I may not be able to say many of the words of the official creed, I can still say that I do believe.

So if I had to formulate something called a creed, it would be simple and go something like this:

I believe in a god who is love, therefore I must exemplify that love.

I believe in a god who embraces, therefore I must open my heart to all people.

I believe in a god who leads, therefore I must be prepared to follow.

I believe in a god who challenges, therefore I must grow.

This is the text of a talk given by Kerry Gonzalels at the Sutherland branch of Spirituality-in-the-Pub on 15 July 2009

Futuring Now for a Better Church

The wisdom of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

In June 2009, Bishop Robinson addressed the WATAC *Futuring Now* Conference at Canterbury. He gave his notes to Bernice Moore who made the following summary of some of the issues he raised (published in *WATAC News* June 2009)

Some Issues and Questions:

If we are to explore *Futuring Now* then we will need to consider CHANGE in terms of our Society and Church – that is ‘what has been and what will be’;

Before looking forward we need to look back and consider the changes many of us have lived through in the last fifty years 1959 to 2009 then translate that experience into the almost unimaginable changes that will inevitably happen in the next fifty years, 2009 to 2059.

Some of the changes that have taken place 1959- 2009:

- technology: television, communication, internet, phone;
- growth in the number of people who own cars;
- the fall of communism and apartheid;
- Vatican II – signs of the times, liturgical change;
- attitudes in society to homosexuality;
- growth of feminism.

Some present Church issues:

- increasing centralisation of Church power in Rome;
- process of selecting cardinals – the system is incestuous and the election of the next Popes hinges on it;
- bishops are not consulted in this process nor on many/most other Church issues;
- if Bishops are not consulted there is no present nor future possibility that priests and laity will be;
- we are witnessing ‘creeping infallibility’.

Some Big Questions:

- Truth – what is essential to the identity of the Church and what is non-essential?
- Sin – what is and is not sin?
- Women's Ordination – what is essential about it?
- does all power come from ordination or does power come from God or from the people?
- did Jesus ordain priests at the Last Supper?
- did Jesus have divine knowledge?

Issues in urgent need of exploration:

- male attitudes to women both in societal context and in terms of the Church;
- the Church's history is profound and ingrained over many thousands of years in terms of its attitude to women;
- power is power to serve, all must be empowered – women and men;
- Church must be about maximum possible activity, not passivity;
- goal for human beings is growth, not obedience;
- growth requires doing the right thing and taking responsibility;
- responsibility appropriate to adults must not be reduced to obedience appropriate to children;
- leadership – enabling/accepting.

Bernice Moore

Women in Priestly Ministry

George Ripon

The Church does not have the power to ordain women.’ (John Paul II – later re-affirmed by Benedict XVI.) At the risk of being controversial and possibly upsetting both sides of the problem I felt I should explore the matter further. My first question is to Benedict XVI: ‘Is this an infallible pronouncement?’ In making it, was John Paul II speaking *Ex cathedra* as successor to Peter on a matter of faith and morals? It seems not. However, there is concern from some commentators (and me) at the notion of creeping infallibility applying to pronouncements coming from Rome. So I think an answer would help.

On the assumption that we are involved with a non-infallible church pronouncement, then surely the People of God are entitled to some explanation. Apart from centuries of male control, where is this absolute control promoted or specified in either the Old or the New Testaments? While at the time of Jesus men were the providers, the protectors and the organisers of the world, this should not justify a similar situation today for church ministry. In this respect the current proposal to revive the diaconate (in Limbo for a millennium!!) is for males only, celibate, unless already married. So as I see it the present rule is that church governance will continue under male celibate control. Apart from anything else this in itself is a challenge. Before considering the challenge it is worth having a look at some of the facts.

If the church still had the number of vocations on offer as in the seventies the question of change simply would not arise. There would be no discussion about married male priests, much less women clergy. So the issue arises by default. Is the Holy Spirit speaking to the church? Is an unwilling church being confronted with the need for change? I suspect so. However, I see no sign of any constructive response here and I do wonder whether Rome is aware of the extent of the problems at grass-roots level. What are our bishops reporting about local concerns on their ‘ad limina’ visits? Sweeping problems under the carpets (even Vatican carpets) will not lead to solutions!! So what can we, the people who front up weekly, do as we continue to pay and pray? Our older priest can’t stay to greet us after Mass as he has to dash off to the next parish to say Mass there. So its time for the ‘People of God’ (us) to cry out. If not, the stones might? (Luke 19, 39).

So why not start with a clean sheet and ask the question: what form of ministry do we need in the third millennium

and who can provide it? Instead of top-down solutions (currently in favour with the Vatican) why not consult with the people in the pews? The critical one is the weekly Eucharist and it is here that the shortage of priests hurts most. Other priestly duties like baptisms, weddings, funerals and confessions can be timed to suit. In addition to these duties for the priest are counselling, administration, school involvement and the many parish groups. Multiplied by two for a second parish, these keep the priest busy. So we are in a catch-22 situation: our mainly ageing priests are getting busier and we, the faithful, are getting fewer services.

Before looking at greater roles passing to the people (including women) we must accept one thing. At this stage there is no hope of the Catholic Church considering the ordination of women. Here I would appeal to all to be patient and not to let the hurt prevent them from ongoing involvement in the debate. The stone wall erected by the Vatican appears to be impregnable, but don’t forget the ‘Berlin Wall’. Having made this point I see no reason not to speculate on ministry in the future including women. Here I have made a problem for myself or a rod for my back, to know where to start and how to proceed.

For starters I asked myself a ‘What if?’ What if Benedict XVI decided to open the world’s seminaries to women, would they be swamped with applicants? I’m not so sure. So it is not a simple matter and we need a healthy and positive consultation process. We would need to review priesthood, ministry and celibacy as they would apply to women priests. A whole new ball-game with all its challenges! However life would be dull without challenges. So lets have a look at our ‘What if?’.

For many of our catholic priests the vocation would have started in the catholic secondary college, with older priests taught by priests and religious brothers and regular programs promoting the priesthood. While very few priests and brothers remain as teachers the ethos in the present system still encourages vocations. Nothing comparable exists in the female education system other than the possibility of entering a convent. So where would the first aspirants come from? Hopefully, from many of the campaigners for the ordination of women. But I suspect that it would be just the beginning of the process. I can see a possible response: the promoters getting back to Rome with thanks and appreciation and seeking input on the practicalities. I suspect that the prospect of seven years study on Theology, Philosophy, Canon Law, Liturgy

and Scripture would be a challenge for new candidates. Managing in becoming ordained in the present climate could quickly lead to being in sole charge of a parish. Confronting a congregation steeped in the tradition of male clerical leadership could be a further challenge for our woman priest. So, while at present this is all academic, it is clear that any change in the years ahead will need much discussion and consultation.

So back to square one, what do we need from our ministers (women and men)?

- More access to Eucharistic celebration
- More relaxed and less formal liturgies.
- Counselling – as in listening to personal problems
- Reconciliation – a better explained Third Rite (as ‘received’ by the ‘People of God’)
- Close relation with dedicated Pastoral Associates
- Positive promotion of and involvement in parish working groups. Encouragement from appointed leaders of local ecumenical activities
- And many more ...

What I see is a more relaxed and less formal model of spiritual and pastoral leadership shared by women and men. It is not surprising that the now out-of-date formation process no longer attracts men to the priesthood, so why inflict it on women? In my dream I see the parish of the future led by a priest (female or male) supported by Pastoral Associates using all the traditional voluntary groups. These include an active pastoral council, a school board, liturgy and music groups, care groups, welfare agencies, ecumenical, and discussion groups etc. All these are critical to the future of our parishes with the different gifts and talents on offer. Led by a priest, with the support of paid pastoral associates (whole or part time) and the various groups, the parish could be a real community for service.

As I try to concentrate on the role of women in the church of the future I can't avoid the problem of celibacy, which affects both women and men. While I don't see it as the only reason for the lack of vocations, it would have implications for the role of women in priestly ministry. Assuming it is retained, aspiring women – single or widowed – would be required to take the vow accordingly.

Also in return for acceptance they would, presumably, have to undergo the same formation program as men. As this is no longer attracting men I have some doubts as to its appeal to women. So perhaps Rome, in ‘shutting the door’, hopes to limit ongoing discussion on ‘Ministry’ in the third millennium and retain celibacy as a prerequisite to fulfilment of the priestly vocation. Even if the Roman door remains closed to women, celibacy for men and the priesthood will continue as an issue.

Assuming that at some stage women break through the stained glass ceiling and get ordained, how will they slot into parish ministry? I suspect with some initial difficulty. In my ecumenical wanderings I have found that many Anglican women still prefer a male priesthood. In Australia the Anglican Archdiocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Ballarat will not ordain women so, even after over twenty years, it is still not a ‘done deal’. Back to our newly-ordained woman priest. Her first duties would almost certainly be in a parish as assistant to a parish priest. In a two-parish situation she might quickly assume the daily running of one of the parishes. She would be under the scrutiny of the hierarchy, the local clergy and the congregation. Just another challenge at the end of a long journey.

However at this stage the journey has not even begun and it shows no likelihood of doing so at any time in the near future. Following a ‘What if...?’ scenario can only lead to speculation; but it is all we have got as far as women in ministry are concerned. I find it hard to understand the intransigence of our leaders in not listening to the laity. We had married male priests up to the twelfth century, why not now? Why should the faithful be denied a say in the election of bishops or the appointment of parish clergy? Why not lay presidency at the Eucharist as in the early church? Why deny the sinner the help of the Third Rite of Reconciliation? As indicated, I find it hard to understand the reluctance of the Church to have a dialogue with the people. If its teaching is right, it will stand up to scrutiny; if not, it needs to change (Acts 5:38 Gamaliel).

Perhaps, like Job (42,3) I have said enough, leaving celibacy, ministry (including women) and other matters for further discussion at another time.

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But what do we believe?

Kate Mannix

Reflecting on the *ARC Survey on Credal Statements and Priorities for Change*, John Buggy, in his editorial in the June edition of *ARCvoice*, makes an acute observation:

It was very interesting to observe the anxiety expressed by the group about change. My feeling was that, in the main, most individuals wanted to change something that was dear to them personally, yet gave indications they would resist change in many other areas that had become so much a part of what they identified as 'Catholic'.

Buggy correctly concludes that, whereas there is broad agreement amongst liberal Catholics with regard to the need to change structures and decision making in the Church, unless there is a clearer articulation of *what it is we actually believe* as Catholic Christians, then there will be no faith to pass on to the next generation.

So what do we believe? The ARC Survey gives us some clues. ARC members see faith as being to do with 'things seen and unseen' – religion tackles the great existential questions, the mystery of human experience and our wonderings about the world to come. Yet on a number of 'orthodox' questions (the resurrection, the Trinity, Christ's death as a 'blood sacrifice') we resisted. We Vatican II Catholics are not at all sure about the Trinity; we are not absolutely persuaded that Jesus' resurrection was physical; we favour an understanding of God as Spirit rather than Triune God. Further, when asked to adhere to a series of statements contained in the Nicene Creed, we actually abstained.

We *abstained*. Early 21st century Catholics rendered themselves silent on the articles of faith that defined orthodoxy at the Council of Nicea in 325CE and the follow up Council in 381CE. That *worries* us. That worry causes us anxiety. That anxiety leads us to be highly ambivalent about change, as John Buggy observed – because *we do not know what we believe*.

I would like to offer three suggestions as to why this is so:

The myth of 'Orthodoxy'

Catholics have been led to believe that from the beginning, 'ecclesiastical doctrine already represents what is primary, while heresies, on the other hand, somehow are a deviation from the genuine.'¹ On the contrary, in many areas heresies were 'primary'.² Amongst these primary 'heresies' were the so called Ebionites, those Jewish Christians who believed Jesus to be the Messiah but not divine. There were the 'Nazoraeans', followers

of Jesus, via James, the brother of Jesus, and his followers, known to insist on adherence to Jewish law as a prerequisite to becoming a Christian. There were the Donatists, Euchites, Monarchists, Apollinarianists, Nestorianists, and Marcionites. There were various groups of Gnostics, Montanists, Pauline Christians, and Jewish Christians.

The point is, as German scholar Walter Bauer described, that what we call 'orthodoxy' was just one of many, many forms of Christianity in the first century. Also, all these groups were in conflict on the very theological questions – particularly those of Christology – that the ARC survey identifies as areas of disbelief or uncertainty.

The Myth of Universal Agreement

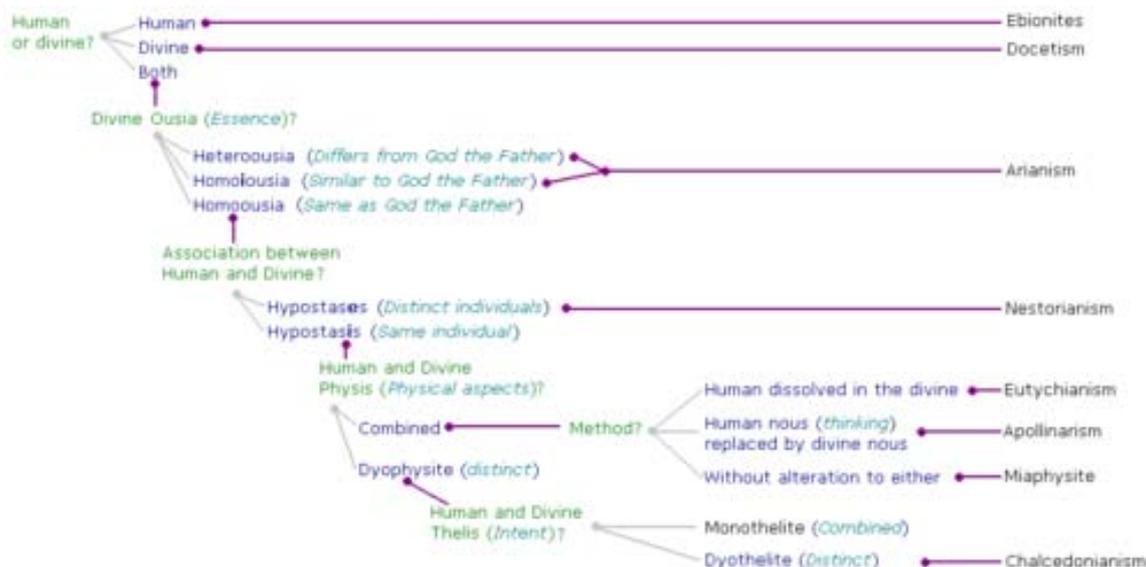
So, you might say, so what? So what if the early believers were not in accord with each other? Didn't they all agree by 325 at the Council of Nicea? Didn't all those heresies just die out?

Actually, no. And then, only by force.

The Council of Nicea was called by Constantine. *Emperors*, not popes, called the first four ecumenical councils. Constantine wanted to establish an 'orthodoxy' because he disliked the risks to societal stability that religious disputes and controversies brought with them.³ Indeed, the Pope only became the 'first among equals' by grace and favour of another emperor, Valentinian II, who instituted the primacy of the papacy by decree in 445. *Imperial* power forced theological consensus amongst the movers and shakers. Catholicism is as much the offspring of Roman power as it is of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴

The intersection of Catholicism and imperial power was unfortunate for belief, because it cut off the organic development of the faith by the faithful. On his deathbed in 337, Constantine was converted from 'orthodox' Christianity to Arian Christianity by the Arian Bishop, Eusebius. Arianism was a major Christian sect which saw Jesus as the first amongst the Angels, but definitely inferior in substance to God. Arianism - which sought to privilege Monotheism as its primary article of belief (with its understanding of the God of Israel as intimately involved with creation) was the most successful of many non-Trinitarian Christian sects in antiquity.

In truth, the imperially-imposed Trinitarian theology of Nicea failed to catch the imagination of the people. The emerging hierarchical church was particularly threatened by Arian Catholicism. Equally threatening was



Judaism, which was still attractive to the pagans, and which indeed continued to attract converts from Christianity; early church canons such as those from the Council of Elvira (Spain, 305 CE) prohibited intermarriage, adultery with a Jewess, the making of the Jewish Sabbath into a festival and prohibited from having fields blessed by Jews. In 353 a law was passed to legislate for the lawful seizing of property from any (Trinitarian) Christian who converted to any 'sacrilegious assemblies'. In 409 a law was passed condemning conversion to Judaism. These prohibitions, designed to prevent Christians from all socialising with Jews, demonstrate the Church's fear of Judaism's ongoing attractiveness to Christians.

The Church would have been very much less effective in maintaining 'orthodoxy' without imperial assistance in legislating anti-Jewish, and later anti-heresy, laws. Between 325 and 379, there was such a resurgence of Arian Christianity that the Emperor called the 2nd Ecumenical Council, for the express purpose of quashing the Arian Catholic faith. They were not successful: Arianism flourished in Western Europe and North Africa until the 8th century, when it was finally wiped out.

And how did the Church/State duopoly wipe out Jews, 'heretics' and other free-thinkers? They burned them. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian (r. 527-565) ordered death by fire to be the punishment for heresy against the Christian faith. In 1184, the Roman Catholic Synod of Verona legislated that burning was to be the official punishment for heresy. As we know, later on, when Jews, Muslims and others were forcibly converted to Catholicism, they were then accused of apostasy so they could be burned at the stake.

Death by fire is a punishment designed to create terror. The Church, with its cooperative instrument, the State, used this most blunt instrument to wipe out all failure to conform, all difference.

The reasons we do not know what we believe is because we have never had the opportunity to have the whole conversation, and because we are not allowed to disagree with authority. Practitioners of what became 'orthodoxy' rewrote the history of the conflict, making it appear that this view had always been the majority one. Writings in support of other views were systematically destroyed.

No wonder the only thing liberal Catholics actually agree on is more inclusive decision-making and altered church 'structures'. No wonder we don't know what we believe.

The Myth of 'Liberal Catholicism'

The third suggestion I wish to make is frankly less polite, so I apologize in anticipation. The third reason we do not know what we believe is that there are real benefits in being one of the 'top dogs'. Who can claim not to have felt a certain satisfaction in multi-million dollar 'works', hospitals, schools, universities? (We blot out the multi-million dollar Catholic super funds, insurance companies, ethical and unethical investments and property.) As a religious community, is there not a residual belief that our sheer numbers and wealth are a sign of God's favour? Do we ever seriously debate whether having a separate system of schools and hospitals is socially just? Do we ever use our clout as Catholics to demand Catholic enterprises opt in to ordinary re-cycling, pay vehicle registration, or buy 'green' products and services in exchange for the massive public subsidies the Church receives? Do we talk enough about the real and present dangers to faith due to the Church's reinvention of itself as a provider of social services, bought and paid for by the government of the day? As we tut-tut about improper influence gained by the ratbag Exclusive Brethren under Howard, do we consider the possibility of improper political influence by the Catholic Church?

We do not.

We do not, because none of this is of personal spiritual import (which it is not). Yet we fail to appreciate that our Church's failure to provide worship worthy of the name, or to nurture the personal and spiritual is *precisely* due to this symbiotic relationship between the Church and State. The bishops know where their bread is buttered, and it is not in the pews.

Now remember the top priority in the ARC survey, accountability (to us) for decision making. Friends, do we want to re-make the Church, or do we just want a piece of the action?

Conclusion

When the 2nd Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the Jews rapidly remade all their observances so they could occur either in the synagogue or in the home. Two of the most important, Passover and Shabbat (the ceremony to welcome in the Sabbath), occur in the home. Thus the father – and the mother – of the family are the celebrants in their communities at the most holy times, remembering the most sacred Jewish events, the Exodus and the Creation.

I suggest we take a leaf out of their book. Our churches, in a generation, will be 'destroyed' because no one will be there. In the time that is left, let's try to complete the conversation about what we believe, and relax if we don't agree on everything. Let us reclaim worship and charitable action as a priestly people.

To begin, let us formally dissociate ourselves from Catholic Church, Inc. It is nothing to do with the person, or the message, or the meaning of Jesus, the One who extended, to the gentile world, the loving-kindness of the God of Israel.

KATE MANNIX worked at the ABC in Radio, Concerts and Television, and was engaged by John Menadue AO and Fr Michael Kelly SJ as foundation editor of *Online Catholics*, the e-zine of church renewal and reform. Kate holds a B.Th. from the Catholic Institute of Sydney and is presently a student at the School of Hebrew and Biblical Studies at the University of Sydney.

Footnotes

1. Bauer, Walter *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, p.xxvi
2. Strecker, George 'On the Problem of Jewish Christianity', in Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, p.241
3. Richards, Jeffrey *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* p.476
 - p.752
 - p.14
 - p.15
 - p.476
 - p.752
 - p.15
4. Constantine himself continued to worship various Roman gods in addition to Christianity. After gaining victory in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, a triumphal arch – the Arch of Constantine – was built to celebrate; the arch is decorated with images of Victoria and sacrifices to gods like Apollo, Diana, or Hercules, but contains no Christian symbolism. In 321, Constantine instructed that Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the "venerable day of the sun", referencing the esoteric eastern sun-worship which Aurelian had helped introduce, and his coinage still carried the symbols of the sun-cult until 324. Even after the pagan gods had disappeared from the coinage, Christian symbols appear only as Constantine's personal attributes: the chi rho between his hands or on his labarum, but never on the coin itself. Even when Constantine dedicated the new capital of Constantinople, which became the seat of Byzantine Christianity for a millennium, he did so wearing the Apollonian sun-rayed Diadem.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I

'If Obama were Pope'

Professor Hans Kung

January 31, 2009

President Barack Obama has succeeded in a short time in leading the United States out of a mood of despondency and a back-up of reforms, presenting a credible vision of hope and introducing a strategic shift in the domestic and foreign policy of this great country.

In the Catholic Church things are different. The mood is oppressive, the pile-up of reforms paralysing. After his almost four years in office many people see Pope Benedict XVI as another George W. Bush. It is no coincidence

that the Pope celebrated his 81st birthday in the White House. Both Bush and Ratzinger are unteachable in matters of birth control and abortion, disinclined to implement any serious reforms, arrogant and without transparency in the way in which they exercise their office, restricting freedoms and human rights.

Like Bush in his time Pope Benedict, too, is suffering from an increasing lack of trust. Many Catholics no longer expect anything of him. Even worse, by withdrawing the

excommunication of four traditionalist bishops who were consecrated illegally, including one who notoriously denies the Holocaust, Ratzinger has confirmed all the fears which arose when he was elected pope. The Pope favours people who still reject the freedom of religion affirmed by Vatican II, dialogue with other churches, reconciliation with Judaism, a high esteem for Islam and the other world religions and the reform of the liturgy.

In order to advance 'reconciliation' with a tiny group of arch-reactionary traditionalists, the Pope risks losing the trust of millions of Catholics all over the world who continue to be loyal to Vatican II. That it is a German Pope who is taking such false steps heightens the conflicts. Apologies after the event cannot put together the pieces.

The Pope would have an easier job than the President of the United States in adopting a change of course. He has no Congress alongside him as a legislative body nor a Supreme Court as a judiciary. He is absolute head of government, legislator and supreme judge in the church. If he wanted to, he could authorize contraception overnight, permit the marriage of priests, make possible the ordination of women and allow eucharistic fellowship with these Protestant churches. What would a Pope do who acted in the spirit of Obama?

Clearly, like Obama, he would:

1. state clearly that the Catholic Church is in a deep crisis and would identify the heart of the problem: many congregations without priests, still not enough new recruits to the priesthood, and a hidden collapse of pastoral structures as a result of unpopular mergers of parishes, a collapse which has often developed over centuries;
2. proclaim the vision of hope of a renewed church, a revitalized ecumenism, understanding with the Jews, the Muslims and other world religions and a positive assessment of modern science;
3. gather around him the most competent colleagues, not yes-men and women but independent minds, supported by competent and fearless experts;
4. immediately initiate the most important reform measures by decree ('executive order') and
5. convene an ecumenical council to promote the change of course.

But what a depressing contrast.

Whereas President Obama, with the support of the whole world, is looking forwards and is open to people and to the future, this Pope is orienting himself above all backwards, inspired by the ideal of the mediaeval church, sceptical about the Reformation, ambiguous about modern rights of freedom.

Whereas President Obama is concerned for new cooperation with partners and allies, Pope Benedict XVI, like George.W Bush, is trapped in thinking in terms of friend and foe. He snubs fellow Christians in the Protestant churches by refusing to recognize these communities as churches. The dialogue with Muslims has not got beyond a lip confession of 'dialogue'. Relations with Judaism must be said to have been deeply damaged.

Whereas President Obama radiates hope, promotes civic activities and calls for a new 'era of responsibility', Pope Benedict is imprisoned in his fears and wants to limit human freedom as far as possible, in order to establish an 'age of restoration'.

Whereas President Obama is going on the offensive by using the constitution and the great tradition of his country as the basis for bold steps in reform, Pope Benedict is interpreting the decrees of the 1962 Reform Council in a backward direction, looking towards the conservative Council of 1870.

But because in all probability Pope Benedict XVI himself will be no Obama, for the immediate future we need:

- First, an episcopate which does not conceal the manifest problems of the church but mentions them openly and tackles them energetically at a diocesan level;
- Second, theologians who collaborate actively in a future vision of our church and are not afraid to speak and write the truth;
- Third, pastors who oppose the excessive burdens constantly imposed by the merging of many parishes and who boldly take responsibility as pastors;
- Fourth, in particular women, without whom in many places parishes would collapse, who confidently make use of the possibilities of their influence.

But can we really do this? Yes we can!

Have your say!

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