



The Journal



Summer 2005

Prophet, Priest, and King in the Tradition of Biblical Radicalism *from Binding the Strong Man by Ched Myers*

“For you, Yahweh, are a refuge to the poor and the needy in distress.

You will destroy the net that is cast over all, the shroud that is spread over all” (Is 25:3,7).

[In biblical language, the ‘poor’ is a term that often describes the faithful who are helpless against the dominant power holders.]

It does not require a great deal of imagination to think that the young Jesus might have been stirred to the core of his being by reading prophetic texts such as the one from Isaiah... what he heard in the prophet Isaiah was the opposite of what he saw in Galilee, the needy had no advocate.

There may have been another word from Isaiah that fired the imagination of the Nazarene: “Whom shall I (Yahweh) send? Who will be my messenger? I answered, ‘Here I am, send me’” (Is 6:8,9). It was not an attractive task, if indeed everyone was already ‘deaf’ and ‘blind’.

Jesus thus first became a “prophet” in the tradition of Israelite radicalism. Like the popular prophets Elijah and Elisha, he pressed Yahweh’s covenantal lawsuit against the wayward leaders of the people... He withdrew his consent—to-be-ruled from the usurpers of power, and he counseled others to do the same; loyalty belonged to Yahweh alone... Jesus relentlessly unmasked the way in which the structures and stewards of the dominant order oppressed the poor. In the footsteps of Amos he delivered sharp oracles to the powerful; in the footsteps of Jeremiah he dramatized his message with symbolic action. And in the footsteps of “Second Isaiah” he understood the cost of telling the truth and of calling the people to account before the vision; he was prepared to be “despised and rejected, a man of sorrows” (Is 53:3).

Jesus of Nazareth was also a “priest” in that he took it upon himself to mediate Yahweh’s healing to the poor and outcast. He unilaterally declared a Jubilee for those doubly oppressed by the symbolic order: the unclean were pronounced whole, the debt-ridden forgiven. And then he liberated Yahweh’s presence from the controlled reclusion in the Holy of Holies, announcing that it dwelt among the people. The people could now eradicate debt by cooperating in a new community of sharing and forgiving; the people could welcome the impure and anoint the sick and cast out demons. Jesus’ role as priest was to do away with priests, to radically democratize the body of Israel. The “blood of atonement” would no longer be a vicarious offering controlled by the temple stewards. The only acceptable sacrifice was that of one’s own lifeblood, shed in service to the people and in resistance to oppressors. So Jesus embraced this priestly vocation: not to rule over, but to be “reckoned with the sinners,” and in the end to “pour out his soul to death” (Is 53” 12).

And Jesus was “king,” but in the tradition of popular and revolutionary Israelite kingship. He was not a royal pretender to David’s throne, for he repudiated the politics of imperial domination. Rather he was a “true shepherd,” anointed to lead a new tribal confederacy into a new promised land... (He) identified with Zechariah’s vision (Zec 9:9f), which “evokes an image of a leader of tribal Israel prior to the time it even possessed the more advanced military technology of horses and war chariots: Lo, your king comes to you riding on an ass.” (Horsley and Hanson)

Could it not have been that in his study of the resistance literature of his people, Jesus came to his most revolutionary insight: namely, that the powers could only be defeated by the power of what we today call “non-violence”? So Jesus founded not a secret society, but a way of life and death, and a hope of resurrection – the apocalyptic promise of vindication... In Galilee he began to proclaim that the moment had arrived to realize the vision of Yahweh’s reign... He became an imperial statistic, another thorn extracted from the flesh of procurator and highpriest.

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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.

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Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official Church, establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism.'

Joseph Ratzinger (Commentary on the Doctrine of Vatican II, vol v, p.134)

FOCUS TOPIC *for the Fall 2005 Issue*

Touched by Beauty: How my experience of a work of art
nurtured my spirit

Note Articles for this issue are due by November 15.

Serving Others Makes Community



Basic Christian Communities by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC

Bishop Remi De Roo fostered the growth of the Basic Christian Community (BCC) movement in the diocese of Victoria. He brought in Fr. Jim Sheppard SJ to lead the way. Jim worked to gather small groups of people and to teach them a model of BCC process and operation. In due time, however, Remi retired and Jim moved on to another assignment, but the BCC groups continue to meet locally and regionally. These BCC groups meet locally, usually each week, and regionally four times a year to connect with one another for encouragement by relating experiences and to witness to the diocesan dimension of the BCC movement.

Each BCC group is unique; each does not follow the same model. Most of those who belong to a group attend and are active in a local parish church; some groups are ecumenical. All are made up of people who wish to gather in a small group for prayer, reading and discussion of scripture, fellowship, and eating together. Some groups have an outreach service to others either in their local parish or in their local community. Each group gathers in the members' homes.

Each group shows a remarkable love and concern for one another. The regional gatherings are joyful prayerful reunions with pot luck lunch, and where common concerns are aired and resolved. The regional gatherings usually use the parish church and hall but where circumstances have dictated, other venues have been used.

Two Duncan BCC's

Just out of Duncan is Maple Bay and there lately one group from St. Edward's parish had its regular get together. This group was formed ten years ago with five members. Currently there are ten members with two of them being part of the original group. They meet every Thursday afternoon. Because of summer, six of the women were present.

Each woman has a life story and a wisdom that inspires the whole group: Maria, the host of the day's gathering for example, was born in Italy and lived 52 years in S. Africa; she has a marvelous garden with almost everything that one could name: figs, cherries, pears, plums, apples, raspberries, strawberries, bay leaves, rosemary and other herbs, potatoes, tomatoes, varieties of beans, and numerous vegetables, and all lovingly tended, shared, and effectively stored for winter use. Everyone enjoyed her golden plums and her cake and cookies.

After a time of catching up with the highlights of each one's past week, Irene led them in prayer,



Focus Continued...

scripture readings and discussion. The gospel read was the story of the five loaves and two fish. Each one reflected on the meaning that the story had for her: Jesus' concern for the poor; Jesus' way of involving the disciples in finding a way to feed the people; some gave up a loaf or a fish in trust/faith for the benefit of all. This was not an exegesis of the text but a meaningful sharing of insights into a gospel story. Then, prayers were spoken for each one's concerns and for people who had been visited during the week.

This group's main outreach is to visit the sick of the parish in hospital and shut-ins at home. Twice weekly visits are made to the acute care hospital, and residents at extended care are visited weekly. Periodic visits are made to Cerwydden, another extended care facility, and to individual homes. Also the members are involved individually in various other volunteer activities as well.

The group then shared Maria's hospitality before going home.

About 6:30 that same evening, another BCC group met in the home of Tony and Ro in Glenora just west of Duncan. After a brief 'check-in' they shared supper. The routine is for the host to provide a pot of soup and beverages and for the others to bring sandwiches. The talk around the supper table was very general with smatterings of parish news here and there. Often after supper they use the time for spiritual formation in discussing topics related to faith and their spiritual growth. This evening when supper was ended, all six moved to the living-room.

During the rest of the evening there was a lot of singing led by Kim, spontaneous praying, reading of scripture, and sharing of thoughts arising from the readings and the hymns. This group has been together for more than ten years though there has been some turnover in the

participants as members move in or out of the Cowichan Valley. Still there is an obvious cohesion among them and deep feelings for one another. They sustain one another in the way they live their faith and gospel values. They are happy that the diocese has supported and approved the BCC Movement but they do not see themselves as dependent on that support. They know that what they do is a good thing; they enjoy their coming together each week; they would continue to do this in any case.

The gospel reading was the story of the loaves and fish. The reflection focused on the following: Jesus' emotional anger (usually politely translated as "compassion or pity") when he went ashore and saw a great throng "like sheep without a shepherd"; Jesus healing their sick; Jesus teaching them many things; Jesus saying to the disciples who wanted to send the crowd away "You give them something to eat." and the resultant sharing of their meagre five loaves and two fish; the eucharistic language of "taking, looking up to heaven, blessing, breaking, and giving to the disciples"; the abundance of the Kingdom of God. Someone wondered if the first suggestion of the disciples to send the crowd away came from the male disciples while the second sharing and distribution of the food was the work of the female disciples!

Their outreach focuses mainly on very practical areas: social justice work, the parish choir, and ecumenism. One member started the distribution of a booklet "Living Faith", a catholic devotional. Some members are active in the basket society in Duncan by picking up and delivering supplies; others are part of Amnesty International and in assisting people in need in the Duncan area.

It was an uplifting evening shared with committed christian people who have found in their gathering a way of making the Kingdom of God a bit more real in their community.





Salt Spring Island BCC

by Rita Thomas, Salt Spring Island, BC

The Salt Spring Island BCC is nine years old. It was born in chaos and pain because of the dramatic change that occurred within the Catholic parish from being a community that was inclusive, participatory, and compassionate to a parish that resembles one in the early 1950's.

As a result, like-minded people came together because of the need for a community that cared, for prayer, and for sharing. At its beginning, unintentionally, we became ecumenical. We were formed by R. Catholics, United Church members, and Anglicans; within a short time, an agnostic and a Quaker joined adding greater depth.

We meet weekly or at times biweekly. Quickly we realized these times to be truly holy and nourishing. The ecumenical nature eliminates the unproductive bemoaning of political matters within the institutional church. We simply focus on how God calls each one of us to conversion. We come together in prayer, song, reading of scripture, and sharing – the Jesuit model for BCC's.

We have found that prayer without good works is quite dead-ended. So over the years, we have undertaken a variety of community works:

for example, respite for care givers, help at times of crisis such as funeral planning, yard work and house repairs for those unable to do it themselves, and so on. We have as a group worked at a soup kitchen at the Anglican Church (Soup's On) for the

past four-and-a-half years. We have also blessed homes and infants, presided over blessings of marriages, and witnessed the renewal of marriage vows. The moment seems to present the task that calls for a response.

We enjoy parties, our yearly retreat that is held in our homes, special feast times such as Seder Supper, and Christmas. We feel truly blessed and nourished.



Top: Rita presides at marriage vow renewal celebration
Left: Katherine & Janet at Soup's On
Right: Katherine & Gloria at Soup's On
not shown: Gwynneth, Doreen, Derek, Barbara, & Florence

KEEPING THE FAITH IN CALGARY

by Sheldon Oleksyn, Calgary, AB

What began as an experiment by four families back in 2001 has lasted longer than any of us imagined. Four years have passed, our numbers have been reduced, but the desire to gather as a supportive and searching community continues on.

All it took was two families speaking frankly with each other about what was missing in their faith lives, and making a decision to create a community providing what we thought was missing at our work, in our neighbourhoods, parishes and city. Two additional families were asked to “come and see” what was possible and our first Small Faith Community meeting occurred.

With everyone in attendance, we are eight adults and nine children ranging from babies to high school age teenagers. We decided on a format for our gatherings and to meet in each others homes on a rotational basis every three weeks.

Everyone being baptised Roman Catholics, eventually some rituals evolved over time. Our goals are to explore faith openly, respect each other, invite everyone to participate regardless of age, understanding or ability, and to have fun doing it. The host family is charged with determining what foods are brought by the guests for the potluck as well as the topic for discussion.

Sometimes we break bread and share wine in memory of Jesus. We always have a “check-in” period during the meal when everyone shares significant events in their lives since our last gathering. Often this exercise of listening and sharing has proven to be an effective way of creating intimacy in our group.

Following dessert, the children play together or view an educational video while the adults and some of the teenagers gather separately. A topic/focus is introduced and sharing encouraged using basic guidelines ensuring everyone has an opportunity to speak without interruption.

We have been creative with our topics over the years; some have required prior reading and reflection, while others invited us to share our faith journey without fear of being judged or questioned. Some of our topics have included:

- Who is God for you?
- How has your relationship with Jesus evolved? Why?

- How do you pray?
- What is your understanding of spirituality?
- Who is the Holy Spirit for you?
- The Discernment of Spirits from St. Ignatius of Loyola
- The “Belief-o-matic Quiz” completed in advance of our gathering and found at: <http://selectsmart.com/PRO/beliefnet/index1.html>

We have also conducted a Seder Meal during Holy Week, made Advent wreaths, created bookmarks celebrating each person's gifts, and reviewed the Apostles Creed. All topics were opportunities for growth in understanding, intimacy and appreciation for each other and the work of the Spirit in our lives. Clearly, each of us has benefited as we keep gathering and growing together while at the same time walking our own unique spiritual paths.

This past year our spiritual community had one family depart for a three year contract in Qatar, United Arab Emirates. Since then another of the Mothers accepted a one-year contract in the United States. At the same time one of her sons literally joined the circus for the summer with his older sister joining him as chaperone.

These departures have reminded us of the fragility of community and how quickly things can change. It is a challenge to build intimacy and community in the best

conditions, but the mobility of people and families today adds an additional challenge. It's been said that the average person changes professions approximately seven times in their lifetime. One wonders how many times the average person relocates, ultimately causing disruption in their relationships and community. Is there any wonder Christian churches have difficulty creating intimacy and community in this environment?

One final comment: our small faith community in Calgary developed as a possible solution to the need expressed for greater intimacy and support along the journey for spiritual growth and authenticity. In a culture that encourages independence over interdependence, mobility over stability, and fear over trust, intimate communities of faith will not be created without the courage and determined leadership of people who initiate the idea and give it a try. Besides, this is the way most religious movements, including Christianity, began.





It is absolutely imperative that I introduce you to my brand new grandsons, identical twins Alistair Joseph, weighing in at 4lbs. 15oz, and his younger-by-three-minutes brother, Kieran David, at a hefty 5lbs. 3oz.

It is to them that I owe a new experience of community.

This is what has happened.

Last month I moved from my home and birthplace in Sydney, NS to the province's capital city, Halifax, and to the home of my son, Andy, his wife, Tania, and three year old Aidan. The goal was to be on hand for the imminent birth of the twins they were expecting. The event has occurred, everything has gone very well, and the household is in re-alignment mode.

I am particularly drawn to the infant stage of life, and appreciate being part of this miracle drama.

I could say that I am here at my new address to "meet local needs".

And that is true. Many hands are needed for this family's current needs, especially since the premie babies need to eat every three hours. When you do the math, that works out to be sixteen feedings a day. For the most part we have suspended any semblance of our personal routines and schedules, especially those pertaining to sleep.

But I am astounded at the powerful spiritual presence that these two tiny beings are generating.

This is what I have experienced.

As I was holding a baby for its comfort (cuddle) time, a very lovely feeling, I found myself reflecting on what it must be like to be that soul, that spirit who is so brand new at being in a body. How did that feel? Frightening? Overwhelming? Uncertain? A struggle? Awkward? And so I found myself talking to it, saying things like, "Kieran's spirit, you're doing great. What you're feeling at this minute is okay. It is called the experience of digestion. You can relax into it. Everything is fine, really."

I don't know why I did that. I have never addressed a new soul before or heard of anyone else doing it, but it seemed natural. I was very aware of how close to the surface the souls of these babies are, and I seemed to be drawn, even though inexplicably, into a relationship with them.

I have been reflecting on this whole phenomenon and have found some insights in the writings of Carolyn Myss, and of John O'Donahue.

I am a proponent of Carolyn Myss' theory of the Sacred Contract. She explains that this contract is the one our soul makes when it agrees to incarnate, when it contracts to make a journey in the flesh, to take on the human experience.

And what about the soul's life after it has arrived at its physical destination? I asked myself.

A further perspective from Myss: in advertising a new workshop she is giving called, "Entering the Castle", she writes, "This workshop was created for people who feel called to pursue a deeper experience of the Divine through enjoying an intimate dialogue with their soul. Many individuals are now ready to move forward in their spiritual life, accepting the possibility that they have become a "mystic without a monastery", and that their role in life is now one of mystical service to humanity.

This path of service includes learning how to channel grace to oneself, to another, or to the global community; how to be a positive force for change through prayer; how to heal through every action; and how to engage with your world through the castle of your soul. The task now is how to be in this world, no matter how grand or small your world is. Few people are called to start healing centers and do other public undertakings; most people are called to make a difference within the world they know and with the people they have a sacred contract to walk this life with everyday."

And again, "Many people know what it is like to feel the stirrings of the mystic in their soul."

In *Invisible Acts of Power* she writes: "It is impossible for your body to live separate and apart from the journey of your spirit."

In the same book she includes this letter from a nurse/social worker: "I leave (her daily shift) feeling I have been with remarkable beings and I am so humble to be with them. I am honored to assist them.

I serve, but I serve people who are great and honored beings who are loved by the divine.



Mind you, some of these people are cussing and delusional. I have been hit and spat upon at times. But somehow the luminous beauty of their souls shines through.”

This is what John O'Donahue, in his book Beauty, The Invisible Embrace says about the soul,

“The moment the Self awakens, the force of the infinite begins to stir.

We came into the world alive with Beauty. As soon as we choose beauty unseen forces conspire to guide and encourage us towards unexpected forms of compassion, healing, and creativity.”

I am here to tell you that four-day old babies can fill you with unexpected forms of compassion, healing, and creativity. And community.

How did serving others create community for me?

I am serving these infants, but was unprepared for the revelation that they are serving me also, and in a service that feels far superior to

mine. Very soon after beginning my communing with them on a soul level, I felt my own spirit being saturated with radiance and love. I heard whispers of, “Know how much you are loved. Come into joy. Live in it. Open up and let love pour through you. You are so loved.” It felt rapturous. The soul knows. And my soul knew the gift with which it was being flooded.

Prayer At A Greek Christening:

“There is an old saying that before a baby is born, God kisses its soul. And as its guardian angel bears it earthward to its little body, he sings.

Is there, in my subconscious self, still a dim memory of that kiss, a faint echo of that song?”

Sophia Wisdom:

Could that memory be the reason why it feels natural for me to have found community with these babies' spirits?

Ministry Without Borders

A Faith-based Non-Profit Service Organization

Mission Statement

Vision:

That all people searching for community, healing, and justice in the spirit of Jesus receive ministry without borders or restriction.

Mission:

To facilitate the development of services that provide justice and healing, especially to the marginalized of society.

To facilitate ministries that model and encourage wholesome leadership and social responsibility.

Beliefs:

That we are empowered by the Spirit to minister to others as Jesus did. We respect and celebrate all of God's Creation including individual and communal gifts. We encourage their development through generous gifting for the benefit of all.

Values:

Faith in the loving power of the Spirit, respect that flows from personal integrity, and dedication to the development of creativity, particularly in the areas of leadership and stewardship.

Openness to exchanging, partnering or cooperating with other like-minded organizations.

We rely on the creative gifts of our members and associates in service of our vision and mission.

Recent History

In a period of rapid globalization, Ministry Without Borders (MWB) is critically aware of the need for leaders who respond to the real life problems of people.

Ministry Without Borders believes that wholesome leadership has a positive impact on these problems. Effective leadership recognizes that everyone has creative gifts given to them to be shared for the benefit of all. Leaders encourage and mobilize such creative gifting.

Ministry Without Borders holds Jesus as a model leader. Jesus chose people to do leadership tasks. Specifically, he asked them to teach God's way of healing the suffering that people experience. This invitation was inclusive regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or past behaviour. MWB is committed to the same leadership.

Ministry Without Borders exists to encourage and facilitate servant leadership that breaks down barriers and borders bringing healing and light where needed.

MWB owns no property and its leaders receive no salary. In important matters of decision-making, Ministry Without Borders uses a collegial approach based on consensus reached through communal discernment in the Spirit. In practical, everyday matters, the community follows the principle of subsidiarity and respects the decisions of those entrusted with particular responsibilities, demanding only that they remain open and accountable at all times.

Ministry Without Borders currently supports two leadership ministries:

1) The priestly ministry of Michele Birch-Conery, the first Canadian RC Womanpriest who was ordained near Gananoque, Ontario on July 25, 2005.

2) A leadership training program for women and men who feel called by the Spirit to ordained ministry.

Ministry Without Borders Needs Your Help

If you feel the vision and mission of Ministry Without Borders (MWB) is timely and needed, please help us pursue our goals by becoming an associate member and sharing with us your unique gifts.

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A DREAM COME TRUE

by François Brassard, Ladysmith, BC



In the last issue of The Journal, I wrote two articles. In “Conversations With Jesus,” I was inspired to create an organization that would be called “Ministry Without Borders.” In “Mid-Island News” I wrote about the connection made

between our mid-island faith community and Michele Birch-Conery of Parksville who was in preparation for ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood.

In this issue of The Journal I will describe how the two realities mentioned above were married, and how, in the process, a new community was born.

As I remember it, the moment of conception took place the last evening that our small faith community gathered before the summer break. At my request the subject of discussion was Ministry Without Borders. I really needed some feedback from my community. At Connie’s insistence, I listened and took notes. The discussion was vibrant. Everyone participated. And for the most part, I felt quite supported. Over the next few days the various comments of that evening gestated. One main point kept coming back: one thing is theory, the realm of ideas, and another is practice, the realm of concrete reality. Then it came to me: “Think globally, act locally.” Though I was very much immersed in the global part, it was a local event that generated all the energy to put the two together.

Someone in our mid-island community suggested putting on a celebration for Michele upon the occasion of her ordination (July 25), once we were all back after the summer break. Presumably, it was to be a small potluck affair among ourselves. The date fixed was September 10, after Labour Day, when everybody was back from vacations, and two days before I would leave to attend the Wiesbaden (Germany) Congress of the International Federation of Married Catholic Priests.

That’s when the new community was born: Connie and I decided to make the celebration a momentous event, a ‘kairos,’ that would encompass, but go far beyond our small faith community.

The celebration would take place at Brassbach Abbey beyond the borders of the institutional Church. As it evolved over the summer, the Celebration came to be sponsored by Ministry Without Borders which now had a practical, local reality urging it to be born.

We went into high gear putting it all together. I worked on some aspects of the celebration: logistics, order of service, media presence, but I was mostly involved with the practical creation of Ministry Without Borders: mission statement, web site and incorporation as a non-profit society. Connie concentrated her efforts on the celebration: the musical elements of the liturgy and all the food and entertainment for after the Eucharistic service at which Michele would preside.

This is when the budding community began bursting with life. First of all, we involved Michele in all the preparations. She took it on and we became a team. Our relationship as mentors evolved: we became family. And her extended family became part of ours.

We started working on the invitations, hers and ours. The response was ecstatic. People were overjoyed to be invited and spontaneously asked what they could do to help. When Connie, in her inimitable way, explained to people what we were doing, how we were supporting the ministry of the first Canadian RC womanpriest, people caught the energy and joyously put their creative gifts to work. They took the initiative to recruit their friends and relatives who, in turn, found others to help. It made no difference whether a person was a Catholic or even a Christian. And the amazing thing is that the volunteers kept getting younger: from a 50 year old dancer to a 40 year old caterer, to a 30 year old baker, to a 20 something year old flute player, to a teen aged choir, to pre-teen greeters. It was truly becoming a ministry without borders.

A local radio talk show host recently interviewed both Michele and myself, her as an RC womanpriest (www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org) and me as an RC married priest. Contrary to what the host expected to hear, Michele explained that ever since her return from Gananoque, she has been overwhelmed with positive support for what she has done, whether it came from passengers on the return flight from Ottawa or from an elderly man in the local mall. The radio host asked me how I might explain this. Based on responses that I have heard, I told her that a lot of people, especially women, saw Michele as a beacon of hope, because here was an older woman in delicate health risking her life to confront an injustice in one of the oldest institutions in the world. If she could do it, then why, in their own way, couldn’t they? Michele added that for her it wasn’t a question of confrontation. Simply put, she felt called to model a new way of being priestly, of exercising a ministry of reconciliation and healing. Indeed, that’s what she has been doing in her every day contacts.

This is what Ministry Without Borders (www.ministry-without-borders.org) wants to facilitate. MWB sees Jesus as a model leader. He chose people to teach God’s way of healing the suffering that people experience. And he chose people regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or past behaviour. MWB is committed to the same kind of leadership.

Ministry Without Borders is a dream come true and it is only the beginning. The circle of community is ever widening. Breathe the Spirit! Plant a seed! Save the world!

THE VICTORIA HUMAN EXCHANGE AS A FAITH COMMUNITY

by Patricia Fitzgerald, Victoria, BC

This group, which is commonly referred to as **The Human Exchange**, is a 'family of friends' who share life's gifts with those who are poor and homeless in the knowledge that, these days, anyone could lose a job or home. The name is taken from a writing of Thomas Merton: "Every meeting of persons is an exchange of life's gifts"

The VHES rents houses from sympathetic landlords and sub-lets rooms to persons in need of short-term accommodation while they solve whatever critical problems they face, with the support of a new 'family of friends'. Such a commitment to others in need requires radical faith; the humility to learn from those who have experienced what it is to be without material things; a non-judgemental attitude; and the ability to compassionate people who are fighting addictions or are challenged by mental illness. One of our inspirations was Jean Vanier, who chose to identify with the broken and handicapped in L'Arche Houses.

Those who initiated this movement in 1992 wished to move away from the benefactor-needy model of dealing with human need which leaves some people powerless and hopeless. Instead they wanted to listen to and support people who had good ideas on how to solve their own problems. People who are poor are often labeled and segregated from the rest of society--their gifts are lost. The VHES develops gifts in the belief that "people known by their gifts flourish; people known by their weaknesses languish." A quarterly newsletter is also a forum for the poetry, art, and writings of those who would not otherwise have their works published.

The VHES is a registered Charity, but it is not an agency with staff and office. Rather it is a gathering of persons supporting each other towards a more equitable and just community. As such, it is a faith community.

Those who would like to take part in the exchange of life's gifts, may phone: 361-2762. Outside Victoria: 1-800-691-9366.

website: www.humanx.org

email: vhesvic@victoria.tc.ca or grandmas@saltspring.com

Hank's Story continued

by Hank Mattimore, San Jose, CA

So it's come to the 11th. hour. My wife, my lover, my best friend is dying. At the hospital, she could no longer hold down her food or even drink; so, as a family, we decided to take her home to die. Here at home, she can look out over our garden and, surrounded by her family and loved ones, make her passage to another life. It sure beats the heck out of a sterile hospital room.

Reaching a decision to withdraw her feeding tube was made much easier because Kathleen had made her wishes known to me and put it in writing to her doctors. She did not want to be kept alive by machine. Her children and I all supported her wishes. That was all there was to it. We all knew that quality of life is very important to Kathleen. Nobody wanted this wonderful woman to have to be in pain or physical discomfort a moment more than she had to.

The Hospice folks are extraordinarily helpful. While being thoroughly professional, they manage to bring something extra, a sense of hominess and warmth. The hospice team reminds me of someone's old Aunt. You know what I mean? Most families have one, the kind of person who comes into your life brimming with common sense and good humor and puts everyone at ease. The nurse trains us how to give the necessary medications and prepares us for what we might expect in the days ahead. The aide comes by to change her bedclothes and freshen her up. She gives Kathleen a sponge bath while Kath's daughter tenderly massages her mom's feet. All are extraordinarily compassionate and respectful.

As I write this late at night, Kathleen seems to be relatively pain free. Is she really free of pain? I don't know. I hope so. Once in a while she lets out a moan and one of us administers morphine for the pain.

When she becomes very restless, we give her ativan, an anxiety medicine. Her kids and I are with her always. Even at night, there are always two of us watching with her, holding her hand, praying with her. I even sing to her "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen," and her favorite (Amazing Grace) and read from the meditation book she likes so much. We all take turns having our private moments with Kath.

Our conversations are pretty much one way because she is unable to respond but it still feels good just to tell her that we love her and say our personal farewells.

It feels like time has stopped for all of us during this time. Her kids all have taken off from work. Friends and neighbors drop by with casseroles or other comfort food. The telephone rings often with friends expressing their sorrow and asking us if there is anything they can do. Her four children and myself are in a kind of time warp. None of us is functioning very well mentally. What energy we have is devoted to caring for Kathleen. My daughter, Laura and little Abby drop by to bring us sandwiches. My grand daughter, at all of 2 1/2 years is way too little to understand what is going on, but her child's laughter and energy are a welcome respite from the grief we adults are feeling.

Today we are beginning the 7th day of our vigil. All of us have thought at one time or another to give Kathleen an overdose of morphine and end this agony but we are acutely conscious that we could not live with that kind of guilt. Her life is in God's hands now. Our job is to stay by her side, to love her, to pray for her, to be present until a loving God takes her.

The angels came for Kathleen the day after I wrote this. She is in a better place now.

Corpus Canada received this sad news from Neil and Gory and we send our sincere sympathies to the Parado family.

May I request you to kindly pray for the eternal repose of my one and only brother **Domingo**, 60 yrs. old, who died at 4:00 A.M., Monday, July 4th, at Southern Island Hospital in Cebu City, Philippines. The funeral was held on the morning of July 15th in the Lourdes Church, in Cebu City, Philippines.
Neil & Gory Parado

Gabriola Ecumenical Society

by Del McCarthy, Gabriola Island, BC

Many living on our special island in the sun have experienced a new ray of light in our personal spiritual journey. We have come from traditional faith traditions: mainly Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran. As individual Christians before we moved to Gabriola, we were deeply involved in our traditional churches, and we still value and treasure this previous historic attachment. However, moving to Gabriola Island presented challenges to many of us.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, traditional Sunday Mass or Sunday Eucharistic services were not available on Gabriola Island; yet we strongly desired to continue our practice of Sunday worship. Then we discovered one another, and undaunted we recognized our mutual deep desire to be involved in a church community and we gathered together in prayer and worship in a little abandoned log church built by homesteaders on the island but owned by the Catholic Diocese.

Permission was given by the Diocese to use this building and we lovingly brought it back to life.

We began worshipping together twice a week joyfully sharing the Word of God. From the Roman Catholic perspective we were fortunate to have Roman Catholic sisters who would come over every second Sunday for Liturgy of the Word services. When they could no longer come on regular bases, lay

presiders were trained and commissioned and Liturgy of the Word services continued. A Roman Catholic priest would come every second Wednesday for Mass. Throughout this time we were blessed with the leadership and services of four retired Anglican priests who held Eucharistic Services on the alternate Sundays and Wednesdays. Roman Catholics and Anglicans participated fully in one another's services. Together we supported one another on our spiritual path. A loving spirit-filled ecumenical community began to thrive.

For 13 years we worshipped together, amazed at all that we had in common while gaining new respect for our differences. The bond between us became very strong and powerful and we recognized that we had been given a very special gift of unity. We had the deep joy of together praying and reflecting upon the Word and of building a loving faith-filled community in which we became deeply committed to following the teachings of Christ... Excitement continued to mount as we learned more about one another's faith traditions, recognizing



our many similarities while at the same time respecting our differences. We gathered together in homes for discussions; we studied the encyclicals, Unitatis Redintegratio-Decree on Ecumenism and Ut Unum Sint, On Commitment to Ecumenism. We also examined the Arcic documents and invited priests involved in the ecumenical movement to lead us in various retreats so that we could become more fully aware of the gift we were experiencing. We strove to remain faithful to our individual faith traditions and to respond to where we believed we were being called. As a group we had our own constitution, managed our own finances and called ourselves the Ecumenical Community of Our Lady of Victory and St. Martin. Our mission statement was **Called by God To Be One** (1Jn 3:2). In anticipation of our continued journey and as our numbers were growing steadily we began

saving for and negotiating with the Diocese for additions to the original log building so that it would better serve our needs. We needed bathrooms, meeting rooms, kitchen facilities as well as a larger worshiping area. However, as happens many times in life, our experience of a loving faith filled ecumenical community became alarming to our Roman Catholic leaders and pressure was exerted to clearly divide us into two distinct parishes – Our Lady of Victory, Mission Church of St. Peter's,

Nanaimo, and St. Martin's Anglican Church, The end result of this has been that now the Roman Catholics have Mass every Sunday in the Little Log Church and The Anglicans have been forced to leave the Log Church and worship in another building.

The majority of the members of the former Ecumenical Community of Our Lady of Victory and St. Martin recognized and valued the profound gift that we had been given by our shared history over the years and we found that we were no longer able to return to 'the Box' of one only faith tradition. The seed of unity had been planted and had flourished for thirteen years, and through the two year period of anguish, pain, and disillusionment it has refused to die but has reemerged in a new form.

Shortly after the devastating news that we must separate, individuals gathered in homes and pondered our shared history, discussed what currently was happening, and prayerfully examined where we might be being called. The result of this was that a new lay-led ecumenical

society was birthed: the Gabriola Ecumenical Society. We have found a way that we can continue on our journey and in the process open our arms to Christians from other faith traditions. On Sundays individuals choose to attend services in their own faith tradition or in one another's faith traditions but during the remaining six days a week, we remain committed to our ecumenical journey. We support one another through our trials and we celebrate our joys; we pray for one another and with one another. Small groups meet in weekly meditation, in Cursillo gatherings, in Marriage Encounters, and in special retreats. We share meals with one another in our homes and in large gatherings, celebrating special occasions. Our Thanksgiving Dinner and our summer picnic are always a huge success. We remain committed to supporting one another in pastoral care and on our spiritual journey. As a large group we meet regularly on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. On one Wednesday we have a lay-led Prayer Circle in which two members, one from each faith tradition plan and lead the prayer. Everyone takes their turn in this leadership. We meet wherever we can find the space to accommodate the 30-40 people who regularly attend. During the summer we meet outdoors enjoying the seaside and the beautiful gardens. We joyfully participate

in song and praise, followed by refreshments and fellowship. On the fourth Wednesday we gather to learn more about our faith through guest speakers, book and/or movie discussions, scripture studies and shared spiritual encounters. Our ecumenical experience continues to thrive.

Through our awareness of the joy we experienced as the Ecumenical Community of Our Lady of Victory and St. Martin and the pain we experienced when we were forcefully dissolved, we have learned many things. We have used our previous faith experiences as our foundation; we have been enriched and guided by our ecumenical experience and we now claim fully who we are, a faith-filled people focusing on justice, love, and compassion. We are faithful to our own faith traditions and in addition, we are fully committed to working towards full and visible Christian unity. We trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us as we journey.

To Quote John Paul II "Jesus himself, at the hour of his Passion, prayed 'that they may all be one' (Jn 17: 21). This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission."

From The Archives: Corpus Board Meets

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



On July 7, 1995, the Board of Corpus Canada met at Dunsmuir Lodge near Victoria, BC. Sharon Gravelle, Vice President of Corpus, took the chair in the absence of Jack Kirley, President, who could not be present due to illness. Besides members of the Board many

members of Corpus Victoria attended, and Most Rev. Remi De Roo, Bishop of Victoria, responding to an invitation from Corpus, dropped in to extend his greetings and share his thoughts on the Catholic Church and Corpus.

As its first item of business the Board discussed the "New Vision For Corpus Canada" and "An Explanation of the New Vision For Corpus Canada" which had been prepared by François Brassard of Corpus Victoria at the request of the Corpus Canada Executive. François based his work on the vision statements that local Corpus groups (across Canada) presented at the May meeting of the Board. After discussing the new vision the Board voted to recommend acceptance by the Annual General Meeting.

As the next item of business the Board discussed "Proposed Structural and Administrative Changes For Corpus Canada" by Grant Crosswell. With a few amendments the Board voted to recommend the proposal to the Annual General Meeting.

Between business items Bishop De Roo spoke to the meeting and answered questions before having to catch a plane. He graciously welcomed the Board to Victoria and then shared his thoughts on a number of issues.

On 9 July after the conclusion of the National Conference and the Annual General Meeting the Board met again.

It was announced that Jack Kirley will be leaving the office of President of Corpus Canada. Jack will now hold the post of Past President. Connie Kurtenbach resigned as Media/Public Relations Officer in order to devote herself to her work on the Transitional Team. The Board thanked her for all the work she has done for Corpus. François Brassard was elected to the position of Media/Public Relations Officer. Grant Crosswell was elected President of Corpus Canada. Sharon Gravelle continues as Vice President, Ron Dobbin as Treasurer, Joe Gubbels as Secretary, and Emil Kutarna as Journal Editor.

The Board voted to send a letter of thanks to Jack and Sheila Kirley for their service to Corpus Canada.

The Board recommends that a representative of Corpus Canada attend the Women's Ordination Conference 10-12 November in Arlington, Virginia.

Emil Kutarna was commended for his tremendous job of publishing the Journal.

Some other items of business were transacted. Sharon Gravelle closed the meeting by thanking Corpus Victoria for hosting the annual conference and providing such warm hospitality.

Theological Soapbox: The Zen of Baseball

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC

We are used to seeing on television and films how eastern martial arts incorporate an explicit spiritual dimension. The martial art is both a practical skill and philosophy of life or religious discipline. No one questions that the martial arts practitioner, in perfecting his art, is also in some way perfecting himself. In fact, the outward ability cannot develop without a corresponding inner development.

Yet if I were to say to you that something similar happens with professional baseball players, you might laugh. The idea of spoiled millionaire professional athletes with egos to match their salaries being in any way exemplars of spirituality will strike many as ludicrous. But I suggest to you that the professional baseball player, when he is practicing his particular art, is no less a practitioner of a spiritual discipline than the karate or kung-fu master.

In order to see this, however, it is necessary to separate the player, when he is playing, from the player when he is off the field. It is possible for the player on the field to exercise the most rigorous spiritual discipline, but not carry over that discipline to his life off the field. But one can imagine a player, doing what has been done by eastern martial arts practitioners, turning his approach to playing baseball into an approach to living. So what are the qualities displayed by a baseball player when playing that, if carried over into the rest of his life, would result in a very spiritual way of life?

1. Mindfulness. This may be described as being aware of your present moment undistracted by thinking, reflecting, or judging. When a batter is at the plate, the pitched ball will travel towards him often over ninety miles per hour. He must react in a split second to what he sees the pitch to be—a fast ball or breaking ball. If he thinks, he strikes out. He must be simply aware, and react to what he is aware of.

This same mindfulness is the operative principle of contemplative prayer. God can only be experienced in the present moment. Thinking distracts. Ideas obscure God. If we look for the God we expect, we will miss God. In the same way we will not be effective in loving others if we do not exercise mindfulness towards them. Our thoughts and preconceptions and expectations of others often blind us to them.

2. Focus. The baseball player must be focused on only one thing. The batter must be concerned only with hitting the ball, the pitcher only with throwing it, the fielders only with being ready if the ball is hit their way. If a batter is thinking of more than hitting the ball (e.g., “I have to impress my team mates/manager/girlfriend/fans” or “I never have any success against this pitcher” or “Is this pitch going to a fast ball or a curve?”), he will fail to hit the ball.

This focus on the one and only important thing is necessary for living the Christian life. No one said it better than Jesus in speaking to Martha: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing” (Luke 10:41-42). Our focus must be on God alone. All competing values are idolatrous.

3. Patience. This applies particularly to fielders. An outfielder may stand in the outfield for several innings without a ball's being hit his way. If he becomes impatient, he become irritated, and if he becomes irritated, he becomes distracted by his own feelings, so that when a ball is hit towards him, he will react without mindfulness and focus, and possibly misplay the ball.

The Letter of James commends patience as essential to the Christian life: “Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains” (James 5:7).

4. Humility. Baseball is a game of failure. The game advances at the cost of some individual's failure. The batter makes an out, or the pitcher throws a pitch that is hit, or a fielder commits an error. The players are spread out in the field and the action is separated by pauses. So when a player makes a mistake, everyone sees him making the mistake, and in the considerable pause before the game resumes everyone has time to have feelings about the mistake and judge the player's worth as a baseball player. The player who made the mistake knows just what the fans and his team mates are feeling about him at that moment.

This happens not just once every few games, but usually two or three times per game. A good hitter will hit the ball only three times out of ten. So he will fail to get a hit on average two or three times per game. If he cannot live with failure, he won't last as a baseball player.

As Jesus said: “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

5. Faith. Every professional baseball player is gifted. There are only a few hundred players in the major leagues out of the billions of human beings in the world. But a baseball player cannot succeed if he does not believe in his gift. Consider a pitcher who throws a fast ball that is hit for a home run. If he then loses faith in his fast ball, so that he refuses to throw it to the next batter, or throws it with doubt in his heart, he will be much less effective as a pitcher. If a shortstop makes an error handling a ball hit to him, and begins to doubt that he can handle balls hit to him that way, he will not succeed as a shortstop. Players must be humble enough to accept failing more often than succeeding, and yet, whenever play begins, have faith in their ability to succeed.

As the First Letter of Peter instructs, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 4:10). We cannot serve others unless we believe in the gifts we have been given, even when our gifts fall short of what is needed from time to time.

6. Courage. It is one thing to believe in one's gift, it is another to overcome the fear that one feels after having failed. The pitcher who has just thrown a fast ball that has been hit out of the park may believe in his ability to throw the next batter a fast ball that will not be hit, but at the same time experience a fear, over which he has no control, that the next batter will hit his fast ball. He has to face that fear and overcome it. It takes courage to act in accordance with one's faith.

St. Paul exemplified courage in the face of failure. “We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10). Play ball!

Addiction To The Institutional Church

by Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK



The only musician in an orchestra that doesn't make a sound is – the conductor.

This remark caught my attention as I watched a video about 'leadership'. The speaker was Benjamin Zander, the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. He maintained that the new leader's job is to *speak possibility*. The way to lead effectively is to *empower* those you wish to lead.

Match up these ideas with the idea of addiction to the institutional church. When look back to my clerical days I realize that it took me a long time to overcome my addiction. By addiction, I mean how tightly I was bound up in the myths of clericalism.

At my ordination (golly, would you believe it was *fifty years ago!*) I really believed that I was suddenly very different from everybody else. In one way this felt good, closer to God and all. But in another way I had a vague sense that this was not right.

What I did not realize at the time was that I had become the institution's man. It was not just the ordination that did it, it was a lifetime of living that myth ever since my days as an altar boy. And at the Seminary, it continued. The priests ate at the head table on a raised platform in the dining hall. The Pope, Pius XII at the time, was considered a living saint. The Catholic Church had a powerful image worldwide, because of this Pope with the Bishops and priests who ran the institution.

Over time, as a country pastor of a little parish, it slowly dawned on me what down to earth life was like. I began to feel left out, like I was on the other side of a fence where the real world was. I was like a fish out of water. Then came Vatican II. Maybe it was how different John XXIII was. He smiled and let people touch him – he was so approachable. And there was talk of "optional celibacy" to be discussed at the Council.

Maybe it was then that I began to figure out why the fence was there – it was celibacy. Everyone else (or so it seemed to me) had human relationships, but I had to avoid that because it would endanger my celibacy. The more I thought about it, the more celibacy became a burden rather than a gift – it put distance between myself and others. I was an institutional man and I did not like being distant.

So now we have a new Pope. Many are wondering what his leadership will be like. What if Benedict XVI happened to view the

leadership video by Zander?

He might believe Zander when he says that so much talk these days is about what's gone wrong in the world – that's the *downward spiral*. And the way to get out of the downward spiral is to think possibilities – "what do I want to have happen?" Zander says that 'it is the characteristic of a leader to never doubt the capacity of the people he is leading to realize whatever he is dreaming'. He gives the example of Martin Luther King Jr. – what if in his speech "I have a dream", he had doubts "...but I'm not sure they'll be up to it".

It used to be a common joke about Catholics having a guilt complex. No wonder, everywhere we turn we are reminded how sinful we are. Mass starts with "Let's think of our sins". Why can't it start with "Let's think how God has blessed us this day, so that we can start the day on a happy note"

Further, Zander says "Give people a possibility to live into, not an expectation to live up to. And finally, he says always remember Rule #6: Don't take yourself so damn seriously! He was asked what are rules number one to five – he replied, "There are no other rules".

Leadership in the Catholic church is one of domination. The leaders are not like conductors in an orchestra. The ordinary folk at Mass are spectators with such minimal parts in the drama. It is made very explicit when the priest says, "Pray friends that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, Our Father". And what do the people answer? "May the Lord accept this sacrifice at *your* hands..."

Zander says, "The orchestra] will play very well in a state of domination. But if the focus is on the players, that is infinitely more satisfying and rewarding, and in the end, I believe, more effective than the other way of dominating people to follow the will of the leader".

This year the Kutarna family celebrated Emil's 75th birthday and his 50th anniversary of ordination. On Oct. 9, Emil and Eleanore will celebrate their 34th wedding anniversary.



Models Of Ministry

by Jack Shea, Corpus-NCR, Ottawa, ON



The U.S. Jesuit publication "America" in an editorial described the challenges in the internal life of the Church in these words: "At the top of the list is the shortage of priests. There are not enough priests now, and the situation is only going to get worse. A Church without sacraments is not Catholic. This situation suggests that it is time to look for new models of ministry. And yet, in the working document for the forthcoming Synod on the

Eucharist scheduled for October of this year, there isn't the slightest mention of the dramatic worsening shortage of male celibate priests. And the only response from the Bishops is profound silence.

Contrast this with the great collective effort of Future Church and Call to Action which have joined together to mount a massive petition directed to the Bishops of the United States called the "Corpus Christi Campaign- Fewer Priests, Fewer Parishes- What We Can Do Now!" Given this critical situation of the increasing shortage we must ask what options are open to the Church today? There appear to be two possible options: first, to expand the present forms of ministry to include married priests, part-time priests, and women priests; and second, to pursue the ecumenical initiatives that are presently at work to open new avenues for pastoral ministry with other Christian Churches.

Regarding the first option, the Australian National Council of priests says "We are concerned about the increasing number of communities being deprived of weekly Eucharist because of the lack of ordained ministers. We affirm our fidelity to the authentic Catholic Tradition, and we value the gift of liturgical legislation in protecting communities from abuse, but we are scandalized when the gnat of abuse is so carefully strained out while the camel of dying communities is being swallowed. Finally, we request that consideration be given to the re-instatement of priests who have continued to be loyal members of the Church, have married with the Church's permission, and are willing to resume ministry as priests." CORPUS (Canada, NCR, and USA) is rooted in a strong eucharistic commitment, promoting an expanded and renewed priesthood of married and single men and women.

But John Paul II said that the Church has no authority to ordain women to the priesthood although there is no prohibition to be found in Sacred Scripture. Yet women continue to meet to "bring together different national organizations working towards the ordination of women in all Christian Churches and to leadership positions" (Women's Ordination WorldWide Constitution).

The second option offering new styles of ministry is represented by two major current initiatives of an ecumenical nature. They represent long-term proposals for coping with the continuing shortage of priests and consequent loss of pastoral ministry. These are essentially

interfaith activities which attempt to bridge the gap between Christian groups in order to foster closer relations and to propose new concepts of Christian ministry. The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) has been exploring cooperation between the Anglican (Episcopalian) and Roman Catholic traditions. This effort at dialogue and cooperation regularly brings together members of each of these faith traditions to explore a common search for unity. ARCIC has to date produced three agreed statements, one on the Eucharist (1971), one on ministry and ordination (1973) and one on authority in the Church (1976). The statement on ministry and ordination, was considered a "substantial agreement" and was included in the Final Report of the Commission published in 1982. It describes ministry in the following words: "The ordained minister presiding at the Eucharist is a sign of Christ gathering his people and giving them his body and blood. The Gospel he preaches is the Gospel of unity. Through the ministry of the word and sacrament the Holy Spirit is given for the building up of the body of Christ."

An interesting example of creative ministry started in the 1980's by a rural Diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada. The Diocese of Qu'Appelle, in southern Saskatchewan, began to exercise great creativity in approving the use of "voluntary clergy" to alleviate the critical shortage of priests in isolated farming communities to provide the people with access to the Eucharist. These small parishes could no longer afford the cost of resident clergy. The program encouraged the formation of small teams of local farming people to meet the parish need. Eventually a few of these team members were selected as candidates for ordination, first to the diaconate and, after short theological training, were ordained priests. The program called "local ordination" proved to be a great success. The new priests, men and women, continued their usual occupations and served without pay, voluntarily. Support and continuing education is provided to the parishes from the diocese and from the provincial seminary.

Another ecumenical initiative by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lima Document, offers a solution to the shortage of ministers: "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM) explores what can be affirmed together by Christian churches of several (and historically separated) traditions. It locates the ordained ministry in the context of the Church as the people of God; it also affirms the diverse and complementary gifts for ministry of all the baptized. The Document asserts that the ordained ministry, tracing its origins to apostolic times, is a permanent and constitutive element in the life of the church. A Vatican response to this Document states that, even though the text falls short at certain points, it demonstrates clearly that serious progress is being made in the quest for visible Christian unity. The Vatican also said that, "while we appreciate the description of ordained ministry as having a priestly character, we would require a treatment of the differences between the priesthood of all believers, the ministerial priesthood, and their relationship to the priesthood of Christ." Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) #10 states: "Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."

On another major issue the Lima Document states that "the relation of the presbyterate to the episcopal ministry had been discussed throughout the centuries, and the degree of the presbyter's participation in the episcopal ministry is still for many an unresolved question of far-reaching ecumenical importance. According to Richard McBrien, writing in "Catholicism" (p. 810), "these theologians (Hans Kung and Edward Schillebeeckx) ask whether the distinction between episcopacy and presbyterate is of divine institution, and whether the episcopacy as it has developed has any real basis at all in the New Testament." This has prompted one theologian to summarize the recent Roman Catholic position as follows: "in the immediate past, in the Tridentine era, the bishop was seen essentially as a priest, but with two additional sacramental powers, the power to ordain and the power to confirm... The post-Vatican II Church no longer tends to see the bishop in terms of the priest but tends rather to see the priest in terms of the bishop. In the Tridentine Church the bishop was a "priest plus". In the post-Vatican II Church, the priest is a "bishop minus." (M. B. Hussey, *Origins*, Vol 17 #34, 1988 p.581). The possibility of the mutual recognition of

ministries seems to be the sense of a statement by Karl Rahner, SJ in "Theological Investigations" at T.I. XX p. 118: "The Church needs *aggiornamento* and adaptation to the world in which it must live and grow... the question of mutual recognition of ministries (must) be tackled with much more theological energy and confidence... so that, as far as possible a united Christendom can exist and fulfill its task in this future society" (Ibid, pp. 127-128).

This, then, is the challenge facing the Church today. If we are to achieve a renewed ministry for today's world and if the Eucharist is to be available everywhere to the people of God, changes will have to be made, certainly within the present models of priesthood. If the present ecumenical initiatives described above are pursued, even greater benefits will result from the creation of new pastoral ministries. Cardinal Walter Kasper, Prefect of the Pontifical Commission for Christian Unity, said, "the Holy Spirit may not be as naïve as many suppose... The Holy Spirit is always good for a surprise". There are many who feel called to serve in new forms of ministry who are waiting in the wings.

(The full text is in the July/August 2005 of *Corpus Reports*.)

The Corporation

by Tom Hassett, Victoria, BC

Most of us think of a diocese as primarily the bishop, priests and people who worship in the parish churches and cathedral of a given geographical area. It is sometimes surprising, therefore, to learn that in many regions and for nearly 1700 years, a Catholic diocese in church and civil law is primarily a non profit corporation, an artificial person owning tax free property. This corporation owns all diocesan property, including churches, rectories, and in many places even the schools. Weekly contributions are diocesan property although most contributions may be allocated for parish needs.

What is even more disturbing is to discover that most dioceses are corporations 'sole'; that is to say, they are made up of only one human person: the bishop - the 'episcopos' or 'supervisor', as the Greeks called him. He does not merely stand for or represent the diocese. He is the diocese. As such, he is not accountable to priests and people for how he uses diocesan funds, whether they are used to purchase real estate or Arabian horses. This is why diocesan synods have proven to be such a farce. Priests and people in synod can talk incessantly but have no real power to change anything. A bishop can lavishly praise their work, adopt some harmless, minor item and then ignore the rest of their recommendations with impunity.

However, the Bishop is very much accountable to the Vatican official (apostolic delegate, papal legate, et cet.) who appointed him and who will appoint his successor. When archbishop Charbonneau took up a collection in the churches of Montreal in 1950 for the starving families of the striking, lung infected miners in Asbestos, Pius XII immediately had him replaced by Léger - whom he then made a cardinal. Archbishop Oscar Romero, a hero to his priests and desperate people, was murdered only a few days before John Paul II was to have him replaced. Bishops, although completely independent of their priests and people, are extremely vulnerable to the power of the papacy. This is why Vatican 2 and the Roman synod that followed

it were like so many diocesan synods: volumes of verbiage but minimal progress.

The obvious, critical change that has to be made - and made quickly - is not to legalize married priests, women priests and same sex marriages or to retract the papal teaching on contraceptives. It is to change dioceses from 'corporations sole' to 'corporations aggregate' which will include, (with equal voting rights - rather like a 'co-op') for every contributor, regardless of the amount of their weekly contribution. Diocesan employees, like a bishop and his clergy, might also be given a vote in these corporations.

In doctrinal matters, the church would not become a democracy, (much less a monarchy, with married bishops and their eldest sons) but would probably remain the military style dictatorship that it is. At the same time, there would certainly be far less protection for pedophiles and fewer of the huge expenditures needed to compensate their victims. Bishops would have to practice collegiality with their employers and not merely preach about it. What is more, a diocese made up of priests and people would certainly have a say in the choice of its next bishop. The diocese of Chur in Switzerland preserved its medieval status of an aggregate corporation which included senior clergy. When John Paul II decided to break with tradition by appointing a new bishop without their consent, the corporation simply refused to pay his salary or otherwise financially support him. The pope eventually had to retreat; he made the interloper an archbishop and then moved him back to his home diocese of Lichtenstein.

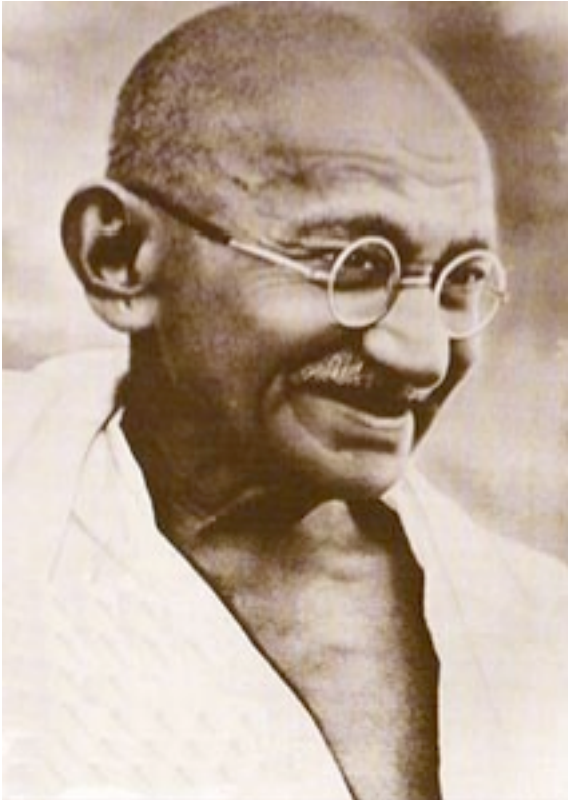
An aggregate corporation could work just fine. Most of all, when the bishops met in council or in synod, with the financial and moral backing of their priests and people, they would not have to follow the Vatican agenda but rather, the reverse. How could this corporate change occur throughout the Catholic Church? Easily. The laity in a particular country or diocese would have to with-hold all donations until it happens.

THE SARABHAI'S AND BAPU'

by Dan Driscoll, Goa, India

'Bapu' is 'pet name' that Indians have for Mohandas Gandhi-'The Mahatma' (Great Soul).

One of India's most gifted and best loved popular writers is Kushwant Singh, syndicated in scores of leading newspapers and magazines. Still writing in his late eighties, and gifted with a prodigious memory, his columns become more interesting with each passing month. I'm sure Mr. Singh will not object if we make note of a recent story (July 2005) recounting how friends of his, whose family knew Gandhi personally, shared a treasured memoir which can help us better visualize, in mind's eye, the complex nature of character Gandhi's personality. (Submitted by Dan Driscoll, 28 July 2005).



Kushwant Singh writes:

I have known intimately every member of the Sarabhai family (builders of the Calico Mills Industrial empire in Ahmedabad-Gujarat), and often visited 'The Retreat' as Gira's guest. Her hospitality was strictly vegetarian and teetotal, but every evening I

broke the laws of the house and State by helping myself to my quota of Scotch I carried with me. Visiting *The Retreat* was always an exciting experience. In this twenty-square acre plot, cut off from the world by high walls, stood a palatial marble mansion and nearly a dozen villas separated by dense shrubbery, ancient trees, ponds and lakes. Peacocks and pheasants roamed about, amongst deer and exotic goats and langours. Though the Sarabhai family is now split, with the scientist Vikram's family on the one side and his brother Gautam on the other, there are no bickering outside this minor-paradise.

Early in 1921 the founder-builder of Calico Mills, Seth Ambalal Sarabhai, happened to be in England, and amongst his many preoccupations was to find an English teacher for his growing brood of sons and daughters. He selected Edwin Mortimer Standing, a Quaker, who had been recommended by Dr. Maria Montessori.

A month later Standing found himself in the Sarabhai's palatial estate "The Retreat" in Shahibag, Ahmedabad, a couple of miles outside the city. He got on famously with the entire family, his fellow teachers in the Sarabhai's private school, as well as with the Sarabhais relations and eminent friends---including Sarojini Naidu, Abbas Taiyabji and Mahatma Gandhi.

Standing was a compulsive letter writer and wrote long circular epistles to his family members and friends telling them of his life in India in minute detail and enclosing photographs he had taken. He stayed with the Sārabhais for about a year and a half, till he sensed that his Christianizing influence on the children was causing concern to their parents who were practicing Jains. The parting was amicable.

Many years later, while rummaging through his sister's attic, Standing found a packet of the letters the he had written from India among his late mother's possessions. He sent copies to Bharati Sarabhai and asked his fellow teacher Ravi Shankar Raval, who had taught drawing and painting to the Sarabhai children, to illustrate them. He made some memorable sketches including one of Bapu Gandhi, and named his memoirs '*Indian Twilight*'.

Edwin Mortimer Standing (b.1886) died in Seattle (USA) in 1967. Gira (who was the youngest of Seth Ambalal's seven children) sent me a typed copy of *Indian Twilight* and I was totally engrossed going over those old letters. Let me share with you Standing's observations about Bapu Gandhi when he first set his eyes on the Mahatma:

"I found it hard to make up my mind finally whether I was on the whole favorably impressed with his appearance and personality or not. One minute his face seemed to be that of a saint; the next of a thinker; the next of fanatic; at another moment it would wear an almost Mephistophelian expression, to change in a few seconds to an impish look, like Puck or Pan---but never foolish or uninteresting. As a landscape varies under changing shadows made by passing clouds on a summer day, so his expression became sad, tender, humorous, stern, or scornful, in rapid succession, according to the changing thoughts within".



Penance: Thoughts On Confession

by Tom McMahon, San Jose, CA

In my younger days, I was taught that obedience to man-made laws governed my relationship to my Creator. How petty that made God. Vatican II showed us the God of Jesus who is too generous to sever ties with creation over the follies of humans. Psychic damage is done by the Adam and Eve apple story. After Vatican II, sin was seen as a matter of misdirected relationships within the community of humankind (justice and peace issues; that sounds like the early church).

We now can see healing as spirituality, whole and holy. The God of Jesus is WHOLE, not schizophrenic, nor in need of placation. (Read Fr. Thomas Berry.) Alphonsus Ligouri, wonderful confessor and rehabilitator of persons' lives though he was, wrote a detailed book of sins for students who were being trained in the new found seminaries of the 1600's. It was a tragic mistake as the students saw conversion/confession as a matter of people keeping the law. The sacrament became an automated one-act stand. How many remarks were made over the years about Catholics just having to run into confession and then being free to go back out to commit the same sins all over again? A merciful Jesus had become a bystander to a human-made sacramental system. By 1700, based on misunderstanding, superstition and ignorance, a pseudo era of penance had arrived with institutional approval. Seminaries taught this *ex opere operato* system world wide; priests worked on an assembly line of forgiveness.

Beloved Fr. Bernard Haring called for women confessors for females in the church but the male hierarchy refused to give up the power, erroneously claiming it came from Jesus. No celibate male priest in his right mind should dare to hear the "confession" of a woman who is undergoing hormonal changes; such stupidity is arrogance; hearing confessions of female children and teens demands skill and patience and is best left to loving well trained mothers.

In 1954 I saw the massive switch of people beginning to receive communion as they attended mass; traditionally no one went to communion at the 12.15 mass, but then the fasting before communion laws changed. Ours was the first ordination class to have water before

saying mass. We moved swiftly from once-a-month communicants to communicants at every mass. Vatican II changed the image of God and Jesus. Vatican II was not an academic venture; it was a pastoral effort to heal the wounds of humankind. Vatican II hit a bull's-eye! and people began to take the Holy Bread in their hands and lay people distributed among the community just as early christians had held the bread up before one another asking "Are you a member of the body of Christ?" People quietly began too to question what sin was. The church took away the prohibition of meat on Friday! What was to be done with those who had gone to hell for eating a hamburger on Friday? Was God still mad at them? The axe was laid to the root of the tree of trust in the confessional system when Pope Paul VI declared birth control sinful; the confessionals emptied out. The people knew better. The priesthood could no longer be trusted with the spiritual guidance of the people of God. Today, the clergy are still by and large ill trained.

Many of God's people today do not know the outward sign of the mercy of Jesus. Some may find reconciliation and forgiveness in faith communities or in the loving bonds of sincere marriage. In 1977 when I was licensed a California State therapist, Archbishop Joseph McGucken pleaded with me to leave psychology to the professionals; my answer was that I had become one of the professionals and I would use my skills especially for the poor and needy, classifying the wealthy of the Silicon Valley among the most spiritually impoverished. When it was discovered that I had a wife and two sons, I was dismissed from the clergy; I was deemed a sinful and unbalanced cleric and branded no longer a 'company man'. Ah the folly of the medieval mind of bishops and their illusions that they somehow are in contact with the people of God. Few bishops have ever been parish priests. As they hunker down in fundamentalism they miss the mark, failing to recognize the evolutionary style of the SPIRIT.

Tom McMahon, still joyfully "hearing" confessions without official approval!

Home Church Works

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC

In the Spring '02 issue of *The Journal*, I wrote *Church Gathers At Our House*. It was about the importance in our family life of gathering people for participatory catholic and satisfying church experience. I told about some of the groups that had gathered with our family or with Naomi and me. I also told of the importance of our contact with the diocese through parish and diocesan commitments and how eventually we were no longer welcome and it was no longer spiritually uplifting to be part of the local parish structure. Our family was happy to be part of small eucharistic communities.

Home church works because everyone feels able to participate equally. Jesus gathered his women and men friends into his community of equals and together they lived the way it is in God's House. They ate together, praised God, and talked. Being marginated has given us the opportunity of finding our own way and it has helped us to serve others in ways that we did not foresee. Along the way, we have been fortunate to make community with groups of caring people.

Roman Catholic Women Ordained Deacons & Priests by Women Bishops

by Bridget Mary Meehan, sfcc, Co-Coordinator of Women-Church Convergence



On July 25, 2005, nine Roman Catholic women were ordained deacons and priests by three women bishops. Sailing down the sparkling international waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the boat symbolized the church floating in the waters of divine love, calling forth the gifts of the feminine to equal ministry. Victoria Rue, a member of Women-Church, was ordained a priest. These courageous women

defied an unjust law banning women from priestly ministry. The three women bishops, Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger, Gisela Forster, and Patricia Fresen, who presided at the ordinations, were ordained by Roman Catholic male bishops in a secret ordination to avoid Vatican reprisal.

Women bishops are part of the Catholic church's ancient heritage. The mosaic on the ordination program depicts Episcopa Theodora, a women bishop in the early church. A Native American woman, from the Algonquin tribe led the opening ceremony with drumming and chanting of "The Strong Women". The readings from the Bible affirmed women's equality in the church. The letter from St. Paul proclaimed that we are all one in Christ: "there is no Greek or Jew, slave or free, male or female." The Gospel encounter between Mary Magdala and the Risen Christ was read.



The three women bishops presented a down-to-earth dialogue homily that roused the community to laughter several times. "The Vatican hierarchy has been at anchor for many centuries. We are saying in a friendly way the Vatican sailors must be reawakened, Bishop Gisela Forster said, "Thousands of people are yearning for an understanding church, they are looking for reforms."

Family and close friends, shared touching anecdotes about their relationships with ordinands over the years as they called them to priestly ministry. The bishops and the community laid their hands on the heads of the ordinands, praying in silence over them. The liturgy utilized inclusive language. Prayers were directed to "Mother and Father God". The entire community prayed the prayers of consecration. After the blessing we closed with a rousing rendition of "Sisters, Carry On".

Then, as they processed out carrying waters from the rivers of the world, the newly-ordained women walked into history, leading the Catholic church into a new age in which the identity of priest will reflect the experiences of women, as representatives of the sacred in a ministry of equals. Women priests remind us that women are equal symbols of what is holy, of what is sacred. Patriarchy's dark lie that women are more responsible for the fall has been smashed as women in priestly ministry defy an unjust law that keeps women subordinate in the Catholic church. Viva Roman Catholic women priests, may you step out of the boat and walk on water, keeping your eyes on God through the rough waters ahead! There was widespread coverage of the ordinations on Canadian TV and over 200 articles appeared immediately on newswires around the world.

Here are a few "news briefs" from stories I heard:

- One nun told me that she was approached by a representative from a priestless parish for a woman priest to staff their church;
- Several nuns from religious orders who were guests at the ordination said that they are going to raise the issue of supporting women in their religious orders who are called to the Roman Catholic priesthood;
- A woman who was ordained in France in July 2005, was approached for confession by a woman who had been out of the church for 30 years, and a priest in her area invited her to concelebrate Mass with him in a private home;
- In California one of the newly ordained women priests was invited to celebrate Mass with a local community.

To read articles on women priests, go to a search engine such as Yahoo news, type in women priests ordained in Canada and you will get around 200 articles.

Here is a link to a BBC article with a great photo of the laying on of hands: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4717277.stm>

There were over 57 media on the boat! So there are lots of stories out there. For photos of ordination, visit www.corpus.smugmug.com

To find out more information on the Roman Catholic Women Priest Movement, visit www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org

Photos are also found here on our website:

www.women-churchconvergence.org/events.html/

Corpus Canada

Who Are We?

We are a faith community of men and women empowered by our baptism in Jesus' Spirit to reach out to others in their need as Jesus did.

We also provide support for married Roman Catholic priests, their family and friends.

Where Are We Going?

This faith community is dedicated to

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

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

How Do We Get There?

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

Corpus Canada

www.corpuscanada.org

Corpus-NCR (Canada)

www.ca.renewedpriesthood.org

Corpus USA

www.corpus.org

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(membership is open to all regardless of denominational affiliation), write to: Corpus Canada Treasurer, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9. Enclose a cheque for \$50 (individual membership) or \$75 (family membership) payable to "Corpus Canada."

Corpus Canada will donate \$25 of your membership fee to Xristos Community Society in your name, and Xristos will send you an official tax receipt. At the request of Corpus Canada, Xristos Community Society distributes The Journal free of charge to the membership of Corpus Canada.

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Thank you for your support of this Christian ministry.

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