

REVIEWS

Julian Filochowski and Peter Stanford (eds.), *Opening Up. Speaking Out in the Church*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 2005, ISBN 0232 52624 9.

The title reads like a warning and a promise: all who take up this book to read it are in for an airing of the tough issues in the present-day Church. The title does not disappoint.

This is a collection of essays to mark the sixtieth birthday of Martin Prendergast, described as one who has ‘given most of his life to cherishing those who are on the margins, whether of society or the Church’. In earlier days Martin Prendergast was an English Carmelite priest. He left the Order and has been involved ever since in a variety of social roles. He co-founded Catholic AIDS Link and worked in various capacities in support groups for HIV/AIDS sufferers, and he has been an occasional irritant to other Catholic groups. He is currently Chair of Christians for Human Rights. In the year 2000 he was appointed to a government independent advisory group on teenage pregnancy. He describes the Catholic Church, for all his experiences, as ‘a sign of the Spirit still moving, breathing, fluttering across the face of the earth’.

Julian Filochowski, co-editor of this collection, was director of CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, from 1982 to 2003. Peter Stanford, the other co-editor, is the former editor of *The Catholic Herald*.

A great strength of this collection is that the various conversations start with real issues and move on into theory and doctrine. The reader’s interest is aroused because we recognise the importance of discussions around these subjects, especially when someone as credible as Enda McDonough writes on ‘Love and Justice: In God and Church, in Sexuality and Society’. I also appreciated Kevin Kelly’s

‘Do We Need a Vatican III?’ which opens with the statement:

The older I get and the more I listen to the gospel texts, the clearer it becomes to me that why the religious authorities of his day rejected Jesus was because he opposed their subordination of the human person to their interpretation of the law...

Then, he takes a tour of ‘lay participation’, ‘general absolution’, ‘intercommunion’ ‘divorced and remarried’, ‘birth control’, and concludes:

I am not advocating that every exercise of authority should be rejected and disobeyed unless it can be proved to be manifestly for the good of all the persons concerned. Far from it. What I am suggesting is closer to the view of Aquinas. He presents obedience as the virtue of cooperation for the common good. Cooperation does not mean unquestioning obedience. Rather it may demand questioning obedience – and occasionally even faithful disobedience.

The author’s conclusion is that we do not need a Vatican III at the outset of the papacy of Benedict XVI—‘we are not yet ready for the glorious grace and life-giving inspiration that Vatican III could be’. We have yet to succeed as a Church to live out Vatican II. He concludes with Pope Benedict’s call in his inauguration homily:

Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and He gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ—and you will find true life. Amen.

Another essay that especially caught my attention was ‘Can a Catholic Be a Good Democrat?’ by Aiden O’Neill QC, a specialist in constitutional and human rights law. He writes:

The question I wish to address is whether

Catholics can indeed fully, unreservedly, and conscientiously carry out the duties of their various public offices in accordance with the laws and constitution of the democratic and pluralist State in which they live. Or does the fact of being a Catholic mean that their ultimate loyalty, even in the performance of their public office, lies elsewhere? Put crudely, are Catholics committed by their religion to being the Pope's 'Fifth Columnists', supporting the structures and laws of the State only in so far as permitted to do so by the institutional Church. Or can one instead be both a faithful Catholic and a loyal citizen and servant of the State?

This is a very topical essay in the light of experiences of Catholic politicians in Australia and the United States.

This is not a tidy collection: it is 'sometimes contrary', as we are warned in the introduction. But it provokes, and that is a good thing. With some authors I find myself in strong disagreement. I am reminded of those noisy discussions that build in relaxed social gatherings of people who really love the Church.

—Barry Brundell MSC

Terry Wade (ed.), *The Parish Companion to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, James Gould House Publications, Melbourne, 2nd Edition 2005, ISBN 0646 12532 5. \$40.00 + \$6.00 postage.

Orders can be directed to: Margaret Russell, Worship Resources and Formation, Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation, PO Box 146, East Melbourne VIC 8002, ph: (03) 9412 3328 or fax: (03) 9412 3330.

This is a valuable resource for all who are engaged in conducting RCIA programs: priests, pastoral associates, members of RCIA teams, lecturers in sacraments and liturgy.

As a 'Companion' it explains and comments on the contents of the Church's docu-

ment, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* promulgated in January 1972 as an interim text, then revised and published in its final form in 1987. It presents its commentary for each of the rites/periods along the RCIA journey in the following order: documentation; focus and elements of the rite/period; pastoral comment; questions for reflection. It provides models for adapting the rites, e.g to include both Catechumens and baptised Candidates in the same ceremony.

The latter part of the book provides a series of reflections: the RCIA as challenge to the local church; discernment and the RCIA; the Eucharist as culmination of the process; the Easter Triduum; marriage questions; music for the rites; the place of the Word of God; the RCIA and the ministry of justice; Christian leadership and the RCIA.

For participants and congregations the rite, with all its language and rituals, can seem a little overwhelming if followed as if it were a book of rubrics. The commentary in this Companion emphasises the desirability to adapt the rites and the language to make them suitable to the persons and the circumstances. The ideal is that they will be celebrated with imagination and in a way that will enhance the essential meaning of the rites and periods, bearing in mind that the journey is all about preparing and welcoming people into the local church community through baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Rubrics must not get in the way of that very human/divine action. This book gives many helps to enable that to happen. It gives similar assistance for the process of welcoming baptised candidates into full communion in the Catholic Church.

—Barry Brundell MSC