The teaching is unequivocal. ‘The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary’ (Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes), 2). With these words Vatican II laid the responsibility of proclaiming the Good News to all the world on all of us. In this issue of Compass we reflect on missionary activity and the many forms it takes.

The first article, by Gerard Hall, provides an overview of the developments in missionary theory and practice since Vatican II, and the variety of challenges to which the Church is trying to respond.

In the second article, written by Dennis Murphy at our request, the focus is on one style of missionary endeavour. On 21st October next we are celebrating the centenary of the death of Jules Chevalier, the Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. We felt it appropriate to include a reflection of Chevalier’s mission.

My review (p. 44) of Damien Cash, The Road to Emmaus. A History of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation in Australia serves to remind us that the work and witness of religious men and women, and the ways they have enabled lay people to be involved, are significant missionary efforts.

Gerard Hall, in the first article, mentioned the need for appropriate evangelising strategies and ministries. Today lay ministers are assuming a large responsibility for furthering the mission of the Church. This is a new and welcome development which needs to be carefully managed so that right practice is followed. The situation has changed—we cannot thoughtlessly follow old practices. So Sharon Messina’s article on Human Resource Management addresses a subject that needs careful consideration. The article is somewhat longer than what we normally include in Compass but the relevance and importance of the topic recommend inclusion in this issue on mission and ministry.

Those of us who live anywhere near Sydney might have the impression that the biggest Catholic Church event in 2008 will be World Youth Day. A Sydney Morning Herald journalist believes it will be the biggest religious event Australia has ever seen (SMH 18.08.07). There is a poster in the rear of our church that proclaims that World Youth Day 2008 will be ‘big BIG like the Olympics big’. There is no doubting that the event will be very big, and there is a deal of confidence abroad that it will all be worth it. Wish us Sydney people well!

However, for the Catholic Church globally there will be another event that will be bigger in its own way than World Youth Day. That will be the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of Synod of Bishops—‘The Synod’ for short—that will be held in Rome 5th-26th October, 2008. The assembled bishops from all over the world will deliberate on ‘The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church’. Their point of reference will be Vatican II and its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum).

It is well recognised that the most fundamental and potentially far-reaching achievement of Vatican II was the re-instatement of the Word of God in the Catholic Church as called for in Dei Verbum. The Synod will review and assess the reception of that re-instatement of the Word—how the teaching in the document has impacted on the People of God, what have been its effects, its fruits in the life and mission of Christ’s faithful.

The preparatory document (Lineamenta) published on 27th April last (cf. www.vatican.va then click on ‘Latest Up-
dates’) asks us to reflect on practical matters, such as the ease or otherwise of access by our people to the Scriptures, and what programs are available for assisted reading of Scripture. We are also asked to reflect on deeper topics, such as the power of the Word of God ‘to take hold of and convert a person, making him [sic] discover its riches and secrets, widening his [sic] horizons and promising freedom and full human development’ (Lineamenta no. 33). These two reflection topics—how the Word of God is offered and how it is received—sum up the missionary task: to tell the Good News and enable all peoples to hear it.

The Church is on mission in obedience to Christ’s command, ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation’ (Mk 16.15). This mandate is far more than a mandate to preach. The Gospel is proclaimed in as many ways as there are Christians who witness to it. St Francis of Assisi is reported to have urged his hearers to tell the Good News at all times, sometimes even in words. The richness of the Good News is unfathomable and inexhaustible. To witness to the love of God in Jesus’ human heart and to witness to the love of God in the Eucharist are but two of many ways of proclaiming the Good News.

It is important for us to remember that it is God’s mission that we are sent on, and that we are but blunt instruments that God in his wisdom has chosen to use. That should save a lot of anguish on our part. God can write straight on crooked lines. God only asks that we do our best to get things right, and He wants us to leave the rest to Him.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor.

The Bible is a necessity in the Church’s mission; it contains its fundamental message. Despite much insistence by the Church, it must be admitted that most Christians, in effect, do not have personal contact with the Scriptures; and those who do, have many theological and methodological uncertainties in communicating their content. The danger exists that the Bible will not be a viable part of the Church and communion, but something open to subjectivism and arbitrariness, or even reduced to an object of private devotion as other things in the Church. Therefore, the Church must necessarily foster a strong and credible pastoral activity on the Word.

—Lineamenta, no. 26.
IN THE PAST, the purpose of Christian mission was clear: to ‘save souls’ by converting people to Christ. In the theology of the day, conversion implied baptism and membership of the visible Church as the (only) means of salvation. Christian missionary strategy was equally clear: ‘implant the Church’ wherever it did not exist and ‘extend the Church’ (especially through schools, hospitals and development agencies) where it did exist. The model of Church being reproduced was predominantly European and worked well where Christian mission was aligned with Western colonization.

All this changed with events in the twentieth century which challenged assumed European cultural supremacy. Witness the rise of post-colonial independence movements, the resurgence of local and Indigenous cultures, and the awakening of non-Christian religions such as Hinduism and Islam. To this we could add the impact of secularization and the decline of Christian belief and practice in the West. This gave rise to theological challenges encapsulated in the title of a book: The Gospel is not Western. Demographically speaking, Christianity has already become a non-Western religion; yet, most churches remain European in their structures, laws, liturgical rites and theologies. With the emergence of local theologies—such as Asian-African theologies of inculturation and Latin American theologies of liberation—further questions were raised regarding the purpose of Christian mission. Other challenges were more fundamental still: does one need to be converted to Christianity to be saved? If not, some asked, does the Church even have a mission?

Vatican II Theology of Mission
The Catholic Church takes up these challenges at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

The Council affirms the missionary character of the Church locating it in the mystery of the Trinity: ‘It is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father’ (Ad Gentes 2). Since the Trinity is the source, origin and goal of Christian mission, what then is the role of the Church? In the Council’s view, the Church is called to be universal sacrament of God’s saving presence in the world. The goal of mission then is not the Church itself, but God’s reign in the world, a reign which cannot be restricted to membership of the Church.1 We are reminded it is Christ, not the Church, who is ‘light of the world’ (Lumen Gentium 1). The Church’s mission is to be sign and instrument of Christ’s illuminating presence—both within and beyond the visible Church.

The Council also enriches the Church’s theology of mission by acknowledging the importance of local churches, diverse cultures, interreligious dialogue, liturgical inculturation and integral human development.2 There is new emphasis on people’s freedom in view of the Church’s aim to bring Christ’s freedom and peace to people. Missionary activity is now described in terms of witness, solidarity, mutual encounter and enrichment (AG 26). The conquest model of mission is replaced by the model of reciprocity in which we ‘learn of the riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations’ (AG 11). This also means the Church’s missionary agenda is set by listening to the ‘hopes, joys, griefs and anxieties’ of all people (Gaudium et Spes 1). Through dialogue, we learn to speak the Gospel in ways the modern world will understand.3

Mission as Evangelization
Post-conciliar thinking about mission is con-
cerned with the complex interaction between Gospel, Church and culture. This discussion is spearheaded by Paul VI (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975). Mission is now described in terms of ‘evangelization’ which aims to bring ‘the Good News into all the strata of humanity’ (EN 18) through direct proclamation, authentic witness and profound dialogue with culture. The Church begins the process of evangelization by ‘being evangelized herself’ (EN 15) especially by being formed into the community of Jesus’ disciples through the Word of God and celebration of the sacraments. The ‘evangelization of cultures’ (EN 20) includes the work of justice, peace and liberation. The document also gives prominence to the roles of local churches and popular piety in the Church’s evangelizing mission. Finally, we are reminded that ‘the Holy Spirit is the principle agent of evangelization’ (EN 75).

The diverse situations in which the Church is called to live out its evangelizing mission are enunciated by John Paul II (Redemptoris Missio, 1990). He distinguishes three distinct types of mission: ‘mission ad gentes’, for those who have not heard the Gospel; ‘pastoral care’, for established communities of faith who always require ongoing evangelization; and ‘re-evangelization’, for those who have lost contact with their Christian roots (RM 33). More specifically, he calls for new methods and expressions of evangelization. This ‘new evangelization’ is directed to particular groups—the urban poor, youth, immigrants, refugees, women and children—as well as to cultural sectors—communications, peace, development, rights of minorities, safeguard of the environment, liberation of peoples, scientific research and international relations. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are integral to the Church’s evangelizing mission. Base Christian communities can also be a force for evangelization, especially in the younger churches.

**Missionary Metaphors**

There are three metaphors which help us draw together these various threads for contemporary mission. The first is the ‘sending out’ image of mission highlighted by classical missionary approaches. It is based on solid biblical foundations: ‘As the Father sent me, so I send you’ (Jn. 20:21). This gives priority to evangelization through direct proclamation of the Gospel. The second is the ‘gathering in’ image epitomized in the life of the first Jerusalem community and later monastic communities. Finally, we are reminded that ‘the Holy Spirit is the principle agent of evangelization’ (EN 75).

Other insightful images for mission are instructive. The missionary is a treasure hunter who not only brings the message of the Gospel to cultures but invites people to unearth the treasures already buried in their own history, cultures and traditions. As educator, the missionary seeks to capture the imagination of others, to invite them to reflection and action arising from their own life experiences. Jesus’ own teaching, appealing to the whole person—mind, heart and spirit—provides the clearest example of the visionary educator. In the tradition of Israel’s prophets, Jesus presents another side of the missionary vocation by denouncing oppressive structures and attitudes as well as calling for personal, social and even cosmic transformation. The missionary also
comes as a guest, especially when working in other cultures. The attitude of the guest is epitomized in the manner of Jesus’ acceptance of hospitality and table-fellowship in his own Jewish culture where he nourishes respect and friendship. Other images of the missionary as stranger, partner and migrant worker present themselves. Finally is the image of the missionary as a friendly ghost who appears and then disappears leaving the local people to take full responsibility for their own way of responding to the invitation of the Gospel.

Missionary Strategies

If the goal of mission is now understood in terms of the broader concept of evangelization, this does not eradicate the importance of conversion and Church planting as specific missionary strategies. This is affirmed by Vatican II and subsequent Church documents. However, there are important caveats. People’s freedom of conscience as well as their cultural and religious identities are always to be fully respected. There is no place for intrusive proselytizing or forced conversions: proclamation of the Gospel is an action of invitation rather than imposition. Nor is there any place for ‘transplanting’ a foreign church into another culture. According to Vatican II, ‘seeds of the Word’ are already present in peoples and cultures prior to the arrival of the missionary. If the Church is to take root there, this will be through the action of the Holy Spirit enabling the message of Christ to be freely received and genuinely inculturated in local soil. It is a work to be done on the basis of authentic witness, true dialogue and genuine solidarity with the people. In this way, inviting people to convert to Christianity, and implanting the Church where it does not yet exist, retain their validity in context of the wider agenda of evangelization.

Recent emphasis on ‘new evangelization’, especially in the increasingly post-Christian environment of the Western world, also calls for new imagination. At base is the call to bring the Gospel into active and sensitive dialogue with the forces of secularization, pluralism and postmodern thought—both to challenge and be challenged by them. Three steps are required. The first is to accept the challenge of Christian self-renewal: evangelization begins at home with Jesus’ own disciples providing new zeal for the Gospel. Second, new methods are required to establish contact, let alone create vital relationships for dialogue, with emergent alienated groups and cultural sectors of contemporary societies. The Church’s apostolates in education, health and development work remain important to the extent they become agents for dialogue and cultural transformation. The third step grows out of increased commitment to Christ and the Gospel (step one) as well as meaningful encounter with secular cultures (step two). It produces new expressions of evangelization capable of engaging the political, moral, social, economic and scientific questions of our time.

At this point, it may be helpful to reflect on the distinction between mission and ministry. The mission of evangelizing belongs to the whole Church and is the responsibility of all Christians. Ministries, on the other hand, belong to individuals in particular churches. Yet they also exist for, and are expressions of, the Church’s universal mission. If there are now more vibrant theologies of lay-ministries and local churches, current structures—not to mention mentalities—must also change. The relationship between the universal Church and local churches resembles the relationship between mission and ministry: one cannot exist without the other. For the work of evangelization to be effective at the local level, there needs to be diverse and extensive local ministries—with appropriate specialist formation in media, culture studies, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, to name a few.

As well, members of church communities with expertise in such fields as science, economics, politics or the environment should be encouraged to see their work in the secular field as expressions of Christian mission. These could also be validated as forms of Christian ministry. In biblical language, some
are ‘called’ to be prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists; others specialize in ministries of healing, works of mercy, prayer or community leadership. Not everyone, nor even every local Church, can do everything. Yet, through prayerful discernment, each local Church is challenged to develop appropriate evangelizing strategies and ministries in accordance with the particular needs of local situations. This also requires the establishment of missionary priorities.

**Priorities for Mission**

Here I suggest seven missionary priorities. Others will perceive equally pressing, perhaps more urgent, priorities in response to their situations. While the task of discernment belongs to each local Church, it should be done through reflection on the Word of God, openness to the vision and voices of those speaking for the universal Church, and attentiveness to the demands of the situation in which the Church is called to live out its evangelizing mission. This discernment of priorities is integral to each local Church’s process of self-evangelization.

**Role of Women**

Jesus’ own ministry is significant in establishing relationships with women in a manner quite contrary to the culture of his day. Women stand in solidarity with Jesus at Calvary; they are the first to witness and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. Women are also prominent in leadership roles in the first Christian communities. Today the Church is challenged to authorize women’s experience, roles in ministry and essential place in the Church’s evangelizing mission. We recall that if the Church is to be an agent of evangelization, it must first of all be evangelized itself. This entails transformation from overemphasis on hierarchy and institution to renewed emphasis on Church as the inclusive community of Jesus’ disciples.

Otherwise stated, the Church is called upon to develop an ecclesial feminine sensibility which is hardly achievable without women’s leadership in creating communities of welcome, hospitality and openness. There is also the all-important challenge to evangelize through expressions of solidarity and dialogue where women’s often more finely-tuned skills in communicating ‘matters of the heart’ are a particular asset. While all of this is quite independent of the issue of priestly ordination, the establishment of ministries in which women are ‘called forth’ to exercise leadership responsibilities must be encouraged. For many churches, this requires significant re-thinking in regard to the role of women in mission, ministry and Church life.

**Interreligious Dialogue**

Dialogue with Jews and Muslims, fellow-followers of Abraham, is important religiously and politically: we are all descendants of Abraham and the revealed Word of God to Israel; we also make up half the world’s population. In the increasingly globalized world we also acknowledge the importance of dialogue with the mystical traditions of the East such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Yet, as Australians, our most urgent need is to enter into dialogue with the Indigenous peoples of our land—a dialogue already lived by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who embrace the Christian faith. Yet, they will be the first to tell us this dialogue cannot be exercised outside of the acknowledgement of their suffering at the hands of colonization. This may also have a political dimension of which Church involvement in defending Indigenous Land Rights is one expression. If local dialogues are often more humble, the importance of establishing life-giving relationships with people of other religious and ethnic traditions is integral to the Church’s mission.

The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference in association with other Church bodies has recently taken a lead in regard to these first two priorities through the establishment of the
'Young Catholic Women’s Interfaith Fellowship'. Over a three-year period, full scholarships are provided to some thirty young Catholic women to study for the Graduate Certificate in Interfaith Relations with the aim of encouraging their appreciation of other traditions and promoting their participation in the Church’s life and mission with a specific focus on interreligious dialogue. There are of course many other worthwhile initiatives such as the Columban Mission Institute’s Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations which gives particular emphasis to religious dialogue among women. These are but two examples of how specific strategies for mission and ministry are responding to the Church’s changing missionary priorities.

**Struggle for Human Liberation**

Since ‘all liberation is an anticipation of the complete redemption of Christ’, work for justice is at the heart of the Church’s evangelizing mission. In his own ministry, Jesus sides with the poor and opposes the unjust powers of his day. Consequently, Christians have a double responsibility: to walk in solidarity with those at the margins of society; and to challenge the forces of injustice which lay heavy burdens on the weak. Inspired by Christ and empowered by the Spirit, Christians are called to work selflessly for the coming of God’s reign of peace and justice on earth. They are also called to practical collaboration—or ‘dialogue of action’—with people of other traditions. This occurs when churches join with other community groups or agencies in providing hospitality, education, pastoral care and legal advice to migrants or by challenging government policy toward refugees. This can also be a work in which the Church is evangelized by learning from ‘the stranger’ the spiritual riches of other cultures and religious traditions.

We should also recognize the need for liberation within the Church as part of its call to constant renewal. Churches can find themselves in collusion with oppressive regimes. They may be dictatorial in suppressing voices of legitimate dissent. We might also consider the treatment of gay and lesbian people or the divorced and remarried. As we know, homosexuality and divorce are contentious issues. However, what is not contentious is that the Church’s evangelizing mission involves the task of reaching out to all people, regardless of sexuality or marital status, with the Gospel message of divine mercy. The Church is not, or should not be, God’s policeman. It is perhaps easier to side with innocent victims of injustice than to stand in solidarity with those whose genetic make-up or life-circumstances lead them to decisions the Church considers ‘too sinful’ to be invited to full communion. While there are no easy solutions, there is the challenge to rethink how the Church may best express its evangelizing message of human liberation to those at the edges of the Church as well as at the margins of society.

**Reconciliation**

The Church is called to make its message of hope and reconciliation a priority for our time. We know we live in a world where violence and oppression know no bounds, where war is often the first rather than the last resort, where five year olds are forced to become boy-soldiers and girl-prostitutes, where sexual abuse and exploitation are rife, where suicide bombers and terrorists kill innocent people at will, and where market forces require billions of people to be cheap fodder for global capitalism. It is a divided world in economic, ethnic, political and religious terms. The Church acknowledges it is no innocent bystander through its historical association with colonial powers. By apologizing to Jewish and Indigenous peoples, John Paul II demonstrates that reconciliation must begin with our own acknowledgement of sin and guilt. More recently, the Church has apologized for sexual abuse scandals. So the work of reconciliation is a task the Church cannot avoid. It is nonetheless a task in which the message of the Gospel offers victims and perpetrators alike the possibility of healing and salvation. This is an urgent need and most rel-
evant expression of the Church’s contemporary mission of evangelization.

Ecumenism

Healing divisions among the Christian churches is an important and urgent expression of the work of reconciliation. First, the tragedy of division among Christians contradicts Christ’s own injunction that ‘they may all be one’ (Jn. 17:21). Second, the division is blight on the one mission we all share as members of the one Body of Christ. Healing these divisions therefore belongs to the very essence of Christian faith. If the Church is to bring the message of Christ’s offer of peace to the world—particularly by applying the Gospel to situations of human conflict—that message falls short of full credibility in view of Christian disunity. Therefore, Christians are called not only to work collaboratively for God’s reign of peace and justice in the world. They must also acknowledge their wounds of division and seek reconciliation among themselves as a Gospel priority. While significant steps have been made, the major work of ecumenism remains profoundly challenging. Taking practical ecumenical steps among local churches—in shared worship and pastoral activity—is an important missionary strategy.

Integrity of Creation

With the advent of global warning, the Church must give priority to its mission of safeguarding the created world. Christian theologies of salvation have relegated theologies of creation to the realm of an afterthought. Yet, biblical eschatology speaks of a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev. 21:1) implying transformation of the entire creation. This is more than a mystical vision of the end of time; it is a prophetic call to incarnate God’s loving care for creation by the way we live and interact with nature. Christianity has been hijacked by the Enlightenment—seeing creation in purely material terms, something to be used and exploited at will. There are many resources in the Judeo-Christian tradition—ranging from the Book of Genesis to the cosmic mysticism of St. Paul, Francis of Assisi or Teilhard de Chardin—challenging Christians to develop a spiritual attitude to the earth. Christians will learn about their own repressed theology of creation through dialogue with Indigenous traditions where respect for the Creator Spirit and Mother Earth provide hope and the promise of healing.

Dialogue with Secular Culture

Dialogue between the Gospel and culture is an essential component of Christian mission. How then does the Church engage in religious dialogue with the secular world? This problem is compounded by two realities: many ‘left’ the Church on account of its perceived rejection of modernity and modern values; increasingly, secularized people have little knowledge of—and even less interest in—Christianity, the Church or its teachings. We can no longer begin this dialogue on the basis of shared religious language given that belief in God itself is now considered a dubious proposition. Nonetheless, as we enter the new phase of post-modernity, there is genuine awakening to the need for spirituality and spiritual experience. Here is an entrance point for dialogue—not in the traditional sphere of religion, but in the secular search for spiritual meaning and values.

In fact, secularity can be defined as a spirituality which focuses on the ultimate values of freedom and justice. This is often expressed through political and ethical commitment to human rights. Although the Church’s historical record may be tarnished, the underlying values of freedom, justice and liberation are essentially Judeo-Christian. Christians can certainly enter this dialogue with significant resources. However, political and moral issues can also be polarizing—for example, human sexuality, euthanasia, bio-ethics, abortion. Perhaps the place to engender more effective dialogue is spiritual experience. The focus is not on belief or doctrine, but on the spiritual needs we share in connecting
to some greater cosmic power. Christians celebrate this connection through prayer, sense of sacred space, various rites of passage and use of symbols. Meditation is taken up by many people today who do not espouse a specific religious belief. If they turn to religious guidance in the practice, it is normally to the Eastern traditions. These are just some examples of where Christians need to recover spiritual connection to their own tradition as a way of entering into dialogue with their secular contemporaries.

Conclusion

The Church’s missionary task is to be a sign and instrument of God’s reign in the world. This mission is carried out through ‘prophetic dialogue’15 announcing the Good News in ways that speak to our contemporaries; witnessing to Christ’s love among us; finding new points of contact between the Gospel and cultures; respectfully dialoguing with other religious traditions; and working for justice and liberation. Given the complex nature of evangelization, each local church needs to establish specific missionary goals and strategies. For all that, we do well to recall this is God’s work and that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization. In the past, and no doubt today, there are instances where the Church actually impedes the divine mission. This is why we must approach the task of evangelization with ‘bold humility’16—knowing the divine treasure is entrusted to earthen vessels.

NOTES

2 A good account of mission in contemporary missiology, focusing on official Vatican documents, is Francis Oborji, Concepts of Mission (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2006).
6 The expression is taken from St Justin Martyr in the Second Century CE; cited in Ad Gentes 11.
7 For the role of the laity in Christian mission and ministry, see Russell Shaw, Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church (Bethune SC: Requiem Press, 2005).
8 While no list of priorities can be exhaustive, contemporary missiology highlights the kinds of priorities suggested here. See, for example, Dorr, Mission in Today’s World; Andrew Kirk, What is Mission?: Theological Explorations (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); and Stephen Bevans, ‘Witness to the Gospel in Contemporary Australia: Celebrating Thirty Years of Evangelii Nuntiandi’, Australian Ejournal of Theology, Issue 6 (February 2006), [accessed 9/05/07]: http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_6/bevans.htm
9 For example, St. Paul emphasizes ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:28).
13 Known as the principle of *semper reformanda*, the Church is ‘always in need of purification’. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 8.


A DATED VIEW OF MISSION?

Jules Chevalier (1824-1907)

DENNIS J. MURPHY MSC

Jules Chevalier, the founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, identified his idea of mission with the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Nothing could date him more. Nothing, it would seem, could make him more irrelevant and out of touch with the many positive developments in mission since Vatican Council II. Gerard Hall SM has given an overall view of these developments in this issue of Compass.

A return to the past certainly highlights differences; it pinpoints defects; but it can also highlight things we may tend to overlook. A return to the past does not necessarily give us new solutions; but it may widen our horizons and increase our wisdom in searching for them.

I limit myself mainly to one aspect: mission is not merely a matter of spreading information; nor merely a matter of something we do for others; it is something we are. In other words, mission consists in fully living our faith in Jesus Christ as individuals and communities—as Church. And furthermore, our living of this faith has and should have an effect on how we live in society and hence be an influence on society itself at every level.

A Basic View

We cannot really accept Jesus without accepting also the purpose of his existence; the two are identical. For him, the purpose of his existence was identical with the purpose that God, his Father, had in creating the world and making a series of covenants with it. The mission of Jesus—and our mission—is simply living in accord with that purpose and encouraging others to do the same. In its broadest terms, we refer to it as the Kingdom of God, which is not primarily something we do, but a gift of God to us, and our cooperation with that gift through the power of the Spirit.

Jesus experienced his mission above all in terms of unity: union with God his Father and consequent unity among people—imperfect, sinful people. Thus, forgiveness was basic in it, for forgiveness requires a readiness, on God’s part and ours, to start again and again and to continue the struggle against contrary forces. This was not merely a matter of abstract ideas and ideals about unity; it involved an expression of it in history. Thus, Jesus formed a community around himself as a central core together with the Twelve—a sign of a renewed Israel but also of its universal mission.

We find this integrated understanding of the incarnation, the Church and its mission in Scripture, in Vatican Council II, and in the teaching of Pope John Paul II, which has been continued in a variety of ways by Benedict XVI. Brief references may suffice for our purposes.

Scripture:

It is not for these alone that I pray, but for those also who through their words put their faith in me. May they all be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, so also may they be one in us that the world may believe that you sent me...Righteous Father, although the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love you had for me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:20-22; 25-26).
Second Vatican Council:

The Church in Christ is in the nature of a sacrament—that is, a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of all men (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium n.1).

John Paul II:

In his Encyclical, Redemptoris missio, the Pope outlined four complementary aspects of mission found in the Gospels, concentrating in a special way on St John:

The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion that exists between the Father and the Son. The disciples are to live in unity with one another, remaining in the Father and the Son, so that the world may know and believe (cf. Jn 17:21-23). This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed’ (n. 23c).

A consequence is that a failure to live according to the Gospel is not only a failure in morality, be it individual or social; it is a setback also to Christ’s mission to the world.

An experience of God

Mission is not ours, it is God’s—the One God who is Father, incarnate Son and Spirit. The source of Jules Chevalier’s call to mission was an experience of God he had as a seminarian. He was familiar with devotion to the Sacred Heart from childhood, but it was when studying Christology at the Seminary in Bourges, France, that its scope, importance and relevance struck him. ‘This doctrine went straight to my heart. The further I went into it, the more new attractions I experienced there’ (Chevalier 1989: 13).

His Sulpician professor, M. Pelissier, followed the theological tradition of Cardinal de Bérulle. It was a theology of remarkable depth and breadth, centered on the incarnate Word, the logos, in whom we could find the meaning of God and of his creation. At the end of the course, the professor gave detailed notes on devotion to the Sacred Heart presenting it not merely as a set of pious practices, but as a summary of the Christology he had presented, based on the centre of Christian faith, ‘God is love’ (1 Jn 4:16)—incarnate love.

Bérulle was known as ‘the apostle of the Word incarnate’. Within this tradition, devotion to the Sacred Heart came to be understood not only in the context of love, but also as a revelation of the creative wisdom of God. As Chevalier wrote,

Who is the Word? Where does he come from? What is his essence? His nature? The reply to these questions will remove a number of veils, clarify more than one mystery, and throw a strong light on devotion to the Sacred Heart (Chevalier 1900: 139).

Thus, for Chevalier, the Heart of Jesus was the Heart of the Word incarnate.

We know where the Word comes from; he comes from the depths of the divine essence, from the Heart of God. If he is the splendour of the glory of his Father, he must also be the substantial expression of the Heart of God from which he is brought forth. He must be love eternal. And this infinite love, which constitutes the very depths of God, is contained in a human heart born from the blood of a Virgin. Christ is the whole of God, his living sacrament, his complete gift, he is his Heart with which to love us. (Chevalier 1900: 146. Italics original).

Interestingly, we can see in the writings of Chevalier and the theologians he quotes how Teilhard de Chardin could claim the Sacred Heart as one of the influences on his vision of God and the universe.
In the universe, a human being is the eye of all that does not see, the heart of all that does not feel, the tongue of all that remains mute. A human being is not only a mineral that blossoms, a shrub that feels, but an animal who prays, adores and gives thanks. In us, matter becomes religious (Chevalier 1900: 63f. Italics original).

Thus, the dignity and misery of human beings was redeemed, enhanced, and even divinized by the incarnation.

The Heart of God descends in haste to his creation with the weight of an infinite love, and the heart of creation rises towards God, drawn by an attraction that dominates all others in it. It is in Jesus that these two hearts meet, and they unite so profoundly that the two hearts become one (Chevalier 1900: 76).

Following a long tradition, Chevalier drew together the creative, incarnate Word (John 1:1-3, 14) and the piercing of Jesus on the Cross (John 19:34, 37).

The Word, coming from the Heart of his Father, made the world emerge from nothing; and from the Heart of the incarnate Word, pierced on Calvary, I see a new world emerging... (Chevalier 1900: 145f).

Chevalier’s position in this is along the same lines Pope Benedict XVI takes in Deus caritas est:

It is there [i.e. Jn 19:34, 37] that this truth is contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move (n.12).

Chevalier’s vision can be reduced to quite simple terms. His director advised him to read Bishop Languet’s biography of Margaret Mary. The Bishop highlighted four points: Jesus’ love for his Father; his love for us; our response to that love; and the language of the heart as the most suitable way of speaking about it—a language found in Scripture and in a long tradition of spirituality in the Church.

The young seminarian was convinced he had entered the very centre of Christian faith and felt called to found a missionary congregation that would share this same experience with others. He gave his missionaries the motto, *May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.*

In all this, Chevalier used ‘heart’ in its biblical sense: a word bringing the multiplicity of a human being to a unifying centre. For God, the heart is the real person (1 Sam 16:7); thus, ‘Our heart is ourself’ (Chevalier 1900: 105). In this terminology, the Heart of Jesus is what makes Jesus to be Jesus.

When God looks at Christ, he sees the entire world; when we look at Christ, we see him whole and entire in his Sacred Heart (Chevalier 1900:132).

**Social Implications**

The young seminarian’s experience of God, which he saw summed up in devotion to the Sacred Heart, was not individualistic piety. In an extant manuscript (1856) describing his seminary experience he said it came to him ‘while reflecting on the sickness consuming society’ (Chevalier 1989:106). Put simply, if social life was basically a matter of knowing how to live together constructively, God’s incarnate Word had much to contribute. And since it was God’s Word, it could not be ignored with impunity.

Towards the end of his long book on the Sacred Heart Chevalier wrote:

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a whole world of theology... It embraces everything: dogma and moral, the past, the present and the future. When one practices it, its influence penetrates irresistibly. That is why this devotion is essentially social, setting things right (Chevalier 1900:280. Italics original).

At that time, some used this sort of language in favour of a restoration of the monarchy. Certainly, Chevalier did not see much liberty, equality, or fraternity in the ruling bourgeois republican government; but neither did he canonize the monarchy. He felt a missionary ‘should avoid all discussion and talk about politics’ (1857 Rules). Rather, he highlighted indifference and egoism as the corrosive forces...
COMPASS

in society; they were challenges to each and every particular system.

Indifference

For Chevalier, ‘indifference’ was one of the basic ills of society. A growing number in Catholic France and elsewhere were seeing Christianity as a side issue, or a non-issue, or even as socially obnoxious. Yet Chevalier would claim that society of his time was dying precisely because of its lack of a theology; a lack not only of the meaning of God, but of the meaning of the world in which we live.

Today people do not want theology anymore. They believe they can bypass it. That is why society is dying. Yes, it is dying for lack of theology. That is a fact (Chevalier 1900: 280).

And he was convinced that devotion to the Sacred Heart, as he had come to see it, was the answer to this lack, for ‘it contains the quintessence of all that can readily lead people into social life’ (ibid. Italics original).

This was not a matter of seeking readymade economic and political systems in religion itself; but of affirming facts and principles that could and should provide a foundation for each and every system if it was to remain in accord with God’s own plan for the world, and at the same time remain truly human.

Without wanting to put into Chevalier’s mind all the developments and refinements of the Church’s social teaching during the one hundred and fifty years since his seminary experience, basically his insight seems to me to be along the lines that Pope Benedict XVI has outlined in Deus caritas est.

If reason is to be exercised properly, it must undergo constant purification, since it can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests. Here politics and faith meet. Faith by its specific nature is an encounter with the living God—an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying force for reason itself. From God’s standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly (ibid. 28a).

Thus, Chevalier felt an urgent need to present to the world the beauty and relevance of Christian faith which he had discovered in devotion to the Sacred Heart. And this was not only for the good of religion but for the good of society itself. In this, he did not have an illusionary dream of some Christian social utopia. He realized that the battle with contrary influences would be a continual reality, but Christian influences should do their part to counteract them on every level of society.

To carry out this mission, priests and religious were not enough; it was imperative that laity also be involved; since the influence of the Heart of the Word incarnate had to enter every level of society. This is clear in his 1869 description of his congregation when he was seeking approval in Rome. It is also in earlier documents.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was also essentially opposed to ‘Jansenistic’ moralizing which he felt had given a false image of Christianity to the world. He would not accept either a narrow view about salvation in general and of non-Christians in particular. ‘God did not die on the cross to reap a lean harvest’ (Chevalier 1900:300). He quotes Pius IX’s positive statement about the salvation of unbelievers and finds support in contemporary theologians (ibid. 299-301).

Egoism

‘Egoism’ was not limited to moral peccadilloes or small scale interpersonal relationships. In fact, egoism (self-first) was one of the roots of indifference. His descriptions clearly identified it with excessive ‘subjectivism’ and ‘self-interest’ in response to others and to God. He saw this as a pervasive negative force in philosophy, theology, morality, politics and even in some forms of religion itself.
He also detected in the growing liberalism of his time the subjectivism and relativism that was undermining not only western Christian culture but faith itself. We should not see this as the fears of a narrow minded country parish priest; the great minded Newman was voicing the same fears.

**Devotion**

Jules Chevalier’s Christology was influenced by the Letter to the Hebrews: redemption consisted not merely in the forgiveness of sins, but above all it enabled humanity to offer perfect thanksgiving, praise and adoration to God.

For Chevalier, the material universe was not merely a platform or stage on which human beings could live:

Let us not forget, this is God’s aim, to associate the Religion of man and external matter, so that He can be glorified, known and loved (Chevalier 1900: 65).

And in Jesus, the material universe becomes united with God in a perfect way:

Jesus is the supreme and infinite glory of God, the revelation par excellence of his infinite goodness, the universal Eucharist and the permanent ecstasy of creation in God. If you want to sum up in a word what is itself a summary, we would say that Jesus is Religion, Religion par excellence, living and infinite (Chevalier 1900: 76).

And all this is made present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which Chevalier accepts unhesitatingly as the act of worship in devotion to the Sacred Heart (ibid.214)—a worship which also has social consequences (ibid. 241).

The linking of ‘mission’ and ‘devotion’ today would probably seem outlandish to many with a risk of tying it to some time-bound piety. Chevalier sensed part of this difficulty when he refrained from speaking of devotion to the Sacred Heart as ‘a devotion’, preferring to see it as a summary of Christianity itself. The papal encyclicals written on the devotion make the same point. However, Chevalier retained the word ‘devotion’ in the accepted meaning used by Francis de Sales and others for whom it referred to religion permeating every aspect of life and expressing itself in worship.

Terminology can legitimately change and often must necessarily change. However, if mission ever ceased to be, among other things, essentially a call to worship—to a ‘devout’ life—on the part of missionaries and those to whom they are sent, serious questions could be asked of it.

**REFERENCES**


Fr. Chevalier proposed to his missionaries the mind and example of the Good Shepherd whose heart was full of compassion. One gets the impression that this is the Christ he sees in all the Gospels: ‘During his mortal life, he was happy to pour out all the tenderness of his heart on the little ones, the humble, the poor, on those who suffer, on sinners—and all the miseries of mankind. The sight of a misfortune, an unhappiness or any pain, touched his heart with compassion’ (Chevalier, *Meditations*, Vol. II, p.32).

WHAT AN HONOUR it is for me to represent the Christian Faith at this Interfaith Dialogue, ‘One World Many Paths to Peace’, in the presence of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. We are so honoured by your presence with us, Your Holiness.

I am a Catholic Bishop. I understand that over the years you have had dialogue with many Catholic leaders—in fact, no less than with three Popes and several well known Catholic monks, including Thomas Merton and Laurence Freeman. You have become a real pioneer of peace making between our two different traditions. You are willing to meet with us, to talk with us, to learn from each other. For this we are so grateful.

You understand well that these encounters are new to both Buddhists and Christians. I believe that these encounters are forging a fruitful friendship between the both of us. Friendship is surely the ultimate answer to the misuse of religion as a false pretext for war and terror. If the perception is that religion only causes world problems and creates enemies, then friendship between us is an urgent priority.

But friendship cannot be forced upon anyone. There first must be a willingness to be friends.

For Catholics, this willingness has been expressed in more recent decades. Our Vatican II Council (1962-1965) opened the door to such dialogue when it stated that:

Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach perfect illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. (Nostra Aetate, 1965, n.2)

So our willingness for friendship has been established. This is a great achievement in our times. Where do we go from here? How can different faiths deepen friendship so that the one world of peace may flourish?

May I offer humbly a suggestion? It has three parts. (I am indebted to Fr Patrick O’Sullivan sj for this expression.)

- When power meets power, there is a power struggle.
- When power meets vulnerability there is alienation.
- When vulnerability meets vulnerability there is intimacy.

History is replete with examples of power struggles arising from individuals or communities, even religious communities, refusing to give way or make room for each other. Likewise, the alienation of vulnerable peoples when they meet the force of an advancing power can be devastating. For example, our own Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are witnesses to this. But when vulnerability in the human heart meets the vulnerability of another, the intimacy of a strong and constant friendship has a chance of growing. It is like a little seed that might just grow as tall and strong as a mighty Australian gum tree.

It is this latter type of encounter between us that may enable a friendship to grow that is worthy of our common humanity. It is a shared...
vulnerability that becomes a fertile soil enabling peace to grow and the flowers of mutual respect to bloom.

Are we strong enough to be vulnerable to each other?

Let me explain from a Christian point of view.

For us, friendship based on vulnerability is not sentimental or individualistic. It is strong and arises from the dignity of the human person who is made in the image and likeness of God. The foundation of all human rights arises from this union of the creator with the created. This type of friendship with God and each other condemns outright caricatures of itself as a reason for war or terrorist acts. It embraces the common good. Friendship is motivated by compassion. It works towards a global peace ethic based on solidarity with each other.

It is ready to see ‘the other’ not as a threat but as a brother or sister who ‘completes’ me. It desires that the poor and marginalised come into the centre of the circle of life. It is ready to forgive and show mercy. It acknowledges the beauty of all creation and strives to respect it.

Christians believe that the greatest form of vulnerability ever shown was the death of Jesus of Nazareth. The Crucified Jesus is our living symbol of the divine vulnerability that our loving and merciful God was prepared to make for us by sending His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. Jesus gave himself up for us all. He took on all our vulnerabilities and weaknesses in everything, except sin. In profound humility, Jesus became for all time the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’.

In the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and by the sending of His Holy Spirit upon us, true intimacy with God has been established. This is our Good News. Together with all religions and all men and women of good will, Christians desire to build continuously a culture of peace. This is the fruit of true friendship and it dispels the midnight of war and welcomes the dawn of peace.

This friendship is a work of justice. It builds and restores damaged or broken relationships with God, humans and the earth. It is a permanent task. It is the fruit of love. Its soul is compassion and mercy.

Given the fragile nature of the world today, global friendship is the medicine so badly needed. It is almost as if, please excuse this strange expression, we are ‘condemned’ to friendship. Alternatives seem unthinkable. Buddhists and Christians, Muslims and Jews are well placed to continue to offer leadership in global friendship. Loving kindness is surely at the heart of all our religious traditions.

I conclude by offering a beautiful story that I believe originates from ancient Jewish texts. Understandably, over time many variations have arisen but this is the version that I have received. It is a story of a Jewish teacher who asks his students how they can tell when the night has gone and the dawn has arrived. One student suggests it is when you can look out and a person can be distinguished from a dog. Another suggests it is when you can look out and distinguish the difference between a house from a tree. But the theologian’s response was that the night has gone and the dawn has arrived when you can look into the eyes of another and say: ‘You are my brother; you are my sister’.

Your Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black and Professor Abdullah Saeed, I look at you today with eyes of loving kindness and I say: You are my dear brothers. Let us go forward together!
THE TRIDENTINE MASS AGAIN

Can the Church Celebrate in Two Rites?

JOSEPH GRAYLAND

The Motu proprio Summorum Pontificum, issued by Pope Benedict on 7th July, has elicited reactions from various sides of the debate. Both the Motu proprio and its accompanying ‘Letter to Bishops’ stress that the reintroduction of the 1962 Roman Missal does not compromise the authority of the Second Vatican Council or its liturgical reforms, and that it is a significant pastoral move to heal the rupture brought about in the life of the Church through the incorrect application of the liturgical reforms of the Council.

Summorum Pontificum allows a priest to celebrate the sacraments of baptism, marriage, confession and extreme unction according to the 1962 usage (Article 9/1), and bishops to confirm according to this usage (article 9/2).

Private celebrations of Mass using either missal are permitted, except during the celebration of the Easter Triduum. Summorum Pontificum instructs pastors to ‘willingly accept’ any requests from a community of people who desire the use of the 1962 missal. Priests are given the freedom to decide for themselves if they wish to use the 1962 missal, without having to refer to their bishop for permission, as was formerly the case. They may also use the Divine Office in the form in use before Vatican II if they wish. In accord with Canon 518, bishops are permitted to establish paroeciam personalem or personal parishes for the celebration of the ‘ancient form of the Roman rite’ (Article 10).

In a departure from the traditional practice associated with the 1962 missal, it is now permissible for the priest to read the epistle and gospel in the vernacular or common language of the congregation, rather than in Latin. Future developments of the 1962 missal are alluded to in the Letter to Bishops, where the Pope indicates that the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei could study the possibility of adapting recent Mass texts, such as the Proper of the Saints, for use in the 1962 missal.

In considering what Summorum Pontificum offers the church, I believe it is important to reflect on the following two issues: the ecclesiology underpinning each missal and the validity of the position that the church is now able to have a ‘twofold use of the same Roman rite’ (Summorum Pontificum Article 1). I would like to argue that these two missals do not share the same ecclesial context and, because they do not share the same ecclesiology, the assertion that they can exist as a ‘twofold use of the same Roman rite’ cannot be sustained.

Ecclesiological Context and the Meaning of Rite

In the whole liturgical debate since the introduction of the Roman Missal or Novus Missae promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 the common perception has been whether or not Latin should be reinstated as the official language of Catholic worship. In point of fact, Latin was not abrogated by the 1970 Missal even when it allowed for the use of vernacular or common languages. Latin is still its normative language. What did change was the Church’s theological self-understand about its place in the world and its mission to the world as the mediator of salvation. This theological move changed the ecclesiological context in which rite and ritual exist as expressions of that self-understanding. In changing the ecclesiological...
context, the church’s ecclesiology developed and formed new rites and rituals of worship. In this process, the church regained the understanding of liturgy and moved beyond the concept of ritualism. With the reinstatement of the 1962 missal the evolution in ecclesial-liturgical thinking and practice of the 1970 missal away from the ecclesial-ritual thinking underpinning the 1962 missal is the key element that is being ignored.

Rites of worship are always the product of a specific belief community. Rites are an articulation of a religious community’s theological understanding of itself as mediator of salvation, or as an agent of blessing and damnation. Rites have ritual structures, norms and laws that evolve out of a specific belief-context based on a foundational myth or foundational story, often including a primal act of violence that begins the religious group or society. The foundational myth and the belief-context that rites rely on exist within a wider social context that also plays a major role in the evolution of the foundational myth and its belief-context. The effects of these significant contextual forces are observable in a religious community’s worship patterns, statements of belief and its structures of government and power. Such contextual forces are observable in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and have formed both our ecclesial or church structures and our theology about those who can and cannot be saved. This dynamic of salvation/non-salvation is most observable in the rites and rituals of Christian initiation and post-baptismal reconciliation-penance. All of this is what I call ecclesiology.

The Christian Tradition of belief and prayer seeks to take the believer beyond the structure of worship and rite into the experience of liturgy through the power of the Holy Spirit present in the church’s anamnesis or active memory of Christ’s saving death and resurrection and into a ritual sharing in the Liturgy of God, which is the salvation of humankind. In the Christian tradition, liturgical rites express the church’s understanding of the ‘how’ of salvation as this is mediated through the ministry, mission and worship of the church.

As ecclesial rites, the 1962 missal and the 1970 missal show the believer who can and cannot be saved and it is at this fundamental point that they part company, to such an extent that their difference becomes irreconcilable. These two missals ritualise totally diverse understandings of salvation, damnation and the Church’s role as mediator of salvation. In this decision, we appear to have reached a point where the Church’s internal confusion has led it to a compromise that makes little ecclesiological or liturgical sense.

In order to understand this ecclesiological and liturgical confusion it is necessary to review briefly the ecclesiological contexts that produced the sacramental rites and ministerial theologies contained in these two missals.

The Ecclesial World of the 1962 Missal

The 1962 missal corresponds largely to the missal promulgated by Pope Pius V and is often called the Tridentine Rite, although the adjective ‘tridentine’ is also used for anything associated with the Council of Trent (1540-1570). In the centuries between its promulgation and Vatican II this rite was modified on various occasions, the last two being the modification of the Holy Week ceremonies by Pope Pius XII and the addition of Saint Joseph to the Roman Canon by Pope John XXIII.

The ecclesial world that nurtured the ritual patterns and presumptions of the 1962 missal was the intellectual and experiential world of

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the Catholic Counter-reformation. The reforms set in motion by the Council of Trent, and made explicit in the missal of Pope Pius V, sought to stem the Reformation tide through a singularity of ritual and linguistic usage that would define Roman Catholic worship in contra-distinction to the worship and authority patterns of the Protestant and Reformed churches. In doing so, it accentuated the emphasis on the character of the Mass as a true and singular sacrifice, without ever giving a clearly defined understanding of that sacrificial character, and sought to strengthen the role of the ordained priest as the only minister of sacramental rites.

While it is true that there were, and remained, local rituals throughout Europe, these were never attributed a status of ‘equal’ to the promulgated rite of Pius V. The intention was that these rites would, over time, cease to be used.

The Missal of Pius V held to the use of the Latin language as a means of preserving Roman Catholic worship from error, in a time when written texts were not always available in every parish, diocese or religious house. Further, vernacular languages were considered theologically inferior, to the extent that many theologians taught that only the precise use of the ritual words in the Latin text could effect the sacramental ritual. It was little wonder that the missal prescribed every word and action of the cleric. It introduced the directional words or stage directions in red that we know today as the rubrics.

The nature of Pius V’s missal was essentially ritualistic, clerically centred and highly formalised. The priest did not pray the Mass as a member of the praying assembly of the laity. In this sense, he did not pray at all with the assembled congregation. Even the 20th century development in the Dialogue Mass, where a reader might read the lesson and the congregation respond to some prayers, the priest still recited silently all the prayers, readings and songs of the Mass. In a similar vein, the congregated laity did not pray the Mass with the priest but, as attested to by the multiplicity of prayer books, they attended the Mass, at which they prayed their own prayers.

Even when these prayers might have included, for some at least, the texts of the Mass their prayer was not an intrinsic part of the ritual of worship, as it became with the 1970 missal.

The ecclesial presumption of the 1962 missal’s ritual is that sacramental ministry is a purely clerical function and that there was only one praying voice, that of the priest. In terms of the Mass, our common parlance picks this up where we hear: ‘father said his Mass’; ‘who’s saying Mass today?’; I heard Mass being said’. ‘Saying Mass’ was not necessarily a prayerful experience for the priest, either. There are many instances of priests whose main concern was how swiftly they could get through the ritual prayers that they were required to recite correctly.

The significant change in the rites from 1965 onwards was the move to an experience of worship where the priest and assembly prayed the sacramental rituals together; where both voices are intrinsic to the nature and form of the rite, and where ministry is exercised by both clergy and laity. This paradigmatic shift in liturgical functioning is possible because the evolution in ecclesial thinking allowed for a development in theology around ministry and sacramental mediation.

The Ecclesial World of the 1970 Missal

By contrast the world of the 1970 missal was that of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Key elements throughout this period include the missionary expansion of the nineteenth century, two world wars, the world depression and greater advances in science and in the science of research. The vision of the church was becoming more ecumenical and more willing to engage in a theological debate about the means and purpose of salvation. Evidence of this debate is observable in various documents of the Second Vatican Council, where the means of salvation are broadened and
one gains the sense that the questions: ‘Who can be saved?’ ‘How can they be saved?’ and ‘What is the church’s role in salvation?’ are being answered more inclusively, with a greater willingness to consider positions beyond that of a narrow understanding of the necessity of belonging to the Roman Catholic baptismal community and beyond a minimalist understanding of emergency initiation.

The ecclesiology of the ‘Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965) is one of the most important sources of this new ecclesiological vision. In this document (as in others) the Church sought an ecumenical engagement with the Christian world as well as an engagement with the wider human world.

It is the ecclesiological perspective, articulated in this seminal document that best interprets Vatican II’s agenda for the liturgical reform in ‘The Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy’ (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963).

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* emphasised sacraments more as signs than causes of salvation (without denying the latter) and sought to increase the signifying quality of its rites, and particular attention needed to be paid to their particular form and pastoral quality. Within ecclesiology, the most influential change was in understanding liturgical rites as sacramenta ecclesiae or sacraments of the Church, ministered in the name of Christ by the baptismal community, which was local or particular, as well as universal—an aspect that was largely unimportant beforehand.

Liturgy, not ritual, was to become the new hallmark of Catholic worship but only then as pastoral liturgy, engaged with the world and responsive to the needs of the people of the times.

*Gaudium et Spes*’ ecclesiological direction is observable in *Sacrosanctum Concilium’s* communal-sacramental approach to language, culture and the exercise of baptismal ministry in worship. It is evident, too, in the Council’s wider desire for ecumenical dialogue and evangelical charity. In this way, the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes* represented a significant challenge to the theological thinking that evolved within the Catholic Church following the European Reformation and to the ecclesiological perspective that produced the missal of Pius V, of which the 1962 missal was the final edited version.

Before, during and following Vatican II, the Church’s sacramental rites, breviary and liturgical calendar were reviewed and re-formed according to the norms set down in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and subsequent documents. In the process of doing this task, it became obvious that many of the accretions of the past that dominated the 1962 missal had to be removed, such as the multiple signs of the cross, while other major lacks, such as that of a clear *epiclesis* (calling down of the Holy Spirit) over the bread, wine and community in the Roman Canon, had to be addressed and were, in the new Eucharist Prayers.

A direct result of improved historical research led to the development of the new rites which were considered a ‘return to the original norms of the holy fathers’ (*General Instruction to the Roman Missal*) in a way that the reforms of the Council of Trent had been unable to do. In this way, the ‘older Roman Missal is brought to fulfilment in the new’, wrote Pope Paul VI, in the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, 6.

It is, therefore clear, that for Pope Paul VI Vatican II completed the task that Trent had set itself and in this way the liturgical reforms expressed a continuity of tradition, while actually breaking with some elements of previous ritual expression. Given this situation, and the canonical authority of a Constitution of an Ecumenical Council, it is difficult to argue that, with the promulgation of the 1970 missal, the missal of 1962 was not suppressed.

**A Twofold Use of the Same Roman Rite**

Article 1 of the *Summorum Pontificum* declares that the Roman Missal (*Novus Missae*)
COMPASS

of 1970 promulgated by Pope Paul VI (with its various later editions) is the ‘ordinary form’ (Forma ordinaria) of the lex orandi of the Latin rite and that the Roman Missal of 1962 is to be understood as an ‘extra-ordinary form’ (forma extraordinaria) of that same lex orandi, and that that form was ‘never abrogated’ by the promulgation of the 1970 missal. This new position, which has no precedent in the liturgical history of the Latin Church, is much more than Pope John Paul’s permission (1984/1988) to use the 1962 rite in limited circumstances for particular needs.

Using the maxim lex orandi/lex credendi, attributed to Prosper of Aquitane (435-42 C.E.), is problematic because it is open to various interpretations and applications. In arguing from lex orandi/lex credendi as the justification that ‘these two expressions of the Church’s lex orandi will in no any way lead to a division in the Church’s lex credendi’ (hae duae expressiones ‘legis orandi’ Ecclesiae, minime vero inducent in divisionem ‘legis credendi’ Ecclesiae; sunt enim duo usus ritus Romani.) Summorum Pontificum appears to deal with the complex relationship of the ‘law of supplication (prayer)’ to the ‘law of belief’ in a manner that reduces credendi to dogma and orandi to ritual (Article 1. English translation: Papal Letter on 1962 Missal, Vatican City, July 7, 2007, non-official English translation issued by the Vatican Information Services).

Yves Congar wrote that ‘the lex orandi is not the liturgy but the evangelical and apostolic precept of praying without ceasing and for all necessities; this entails a belief in the necessity also of grace, which is the lex credendi’ (Yves M-J Congar, Tradition and Traditions. London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 429).

In Congar’s understanding, orandi cannot be reduced to rite nor credendi to dogmatic definition. The relationship is far more complex, because it indicates how worship rituals manifest the Church’s faith—as a praying-faith-filled community—and how worship is a theological expression of the Church’s engagement in the world, as an expression of the grace that the Church has already received. Here, we are confronted with an ecclesio-liturgical expression of the dynamic of salvation.

The relationship between the lex orandi—lex credendi, suggested in Article 1 of Summorum Pontificum, is only possible when one accepts that orandi is essentially rite and ritual, and that credendi is little more than a matter of dogmatic precision. Viewed from this perspective, the distinction of ordinary and extra-ordinary rites is a possible but unnecessary distinction, because one rite should be as ‘ordinary’ as the other. What makes the distinction necessary, and at the same time theologically questionable, is the need to make it at all. It is the necessity to make this distinction in order to support the argument that there can be a dual use of a single rite that reveals the reduction of orandi to rite and ritual and credendi to dogmatic definition. Summorum Pontificum displays both a clear lack of understanding of the nature of liturgy and a substantive move away from the theology of worship that underpins the Novus Missae in its creation of a ‘designation [that] has no precedent in the liturgical history of the Church and is based on the debatable presumption that the use of the Tridentine Rite was not abrogated by the publication of the liturgical books mandated by Vatican II’ (Mark Francis, ‘Beyond Language’, The Tablet, London 14 July 2007, pp 6-7). For these reasons, ‘a twofold use of one and the same rite’ as argued for in Summorum Pontificum is seriously flawed.

Reconciliation and Rupture

Summorum Pontificum indicates that the reinstatement of the 1962 Missal is a clear move to address the needs of those who have experienced deep pain through the liturgical changes. Those who, like the Pope himself, ‘…have seen how arbitrary deformations of the liturgy caused deep pain to individuals to-

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tally rooted in the faith of the Church’ (Letter to Bishops, p20). In this regard, the unity of the Church is a key concern and any fear that the reinstatement of the 1962 missal will lead to greater division within the Church is unfounded. Worldwide, the requests to use the 1962 missal have been very small given Catholicism’s near billion members. According to Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, head of the Papal Commission Ecclesia Dei, there have been requests from around 300 Priests, 79 religious men, 300 religious women, 200 seminarians and around one hundred thousand believers in France, North America, Brazil, Italy, Scandinavia, Australia and China. The question as to how many more requests will be made, in the light of this letter, remains to be seen.

An alternative to the reinstatement of the 1962 missal would have been to demand a full acceptance of the Second Vatican Council from the schismatic-traditionalists before making this move. The wish for the reinstatement of the 1962 missal is most often an element of the rejection of the communion ecclesiology that underpins the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council.

Another reason for this move is alluded to in the ‘Letter to Bishops’—the growing numbers of younger people who find solace and joy in the pre-conciliar forms of worship. It cannot be discounted that the Motu proprio is also intended to nurture a growing number of neo-conservative young Catholics and seminarians worldwide. In responding to this development, Summorum Pontificum opens up real vistas of possibility in most seminaries, where any request by seminarians to be instructed in the sacramental rituals of the 1962 missal (as well as the 1970 missal) will have to be considered legitimate. The future direction of seminarians’ formation must include a serious debate over the use of two liturgical calendars, two forms of the liturgy of the hours and two forms of confession/reconciliation-penance. In order to effectively minister as priests of ‘a twofold use of the same Roman rite’ seminarians will require formation in two theologies of church, priesthood, (lay) ministry and salvation.

Notwithstanding the Pope’s desire to be a bridge-builder this decision is also the recognition of a deeper, more significant breakdown within the Church’s own magisterium itself, namely, a schism of belief in the programme of the Second Vatican Council as also being the programme of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the Pope’s concern for continuity and the avoidance of rupture in making this change is a serious concern. In an address to the Roman Curia in 2005 the Pope emphasised that Vatican II, especially in its liturgical reforms, must not be interpreted using a ‘hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture’ with the past, or as a new beginning, but rather, it should be understood as part of a ‘continuity of the one subject – Church’ (Address to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005, quoted in Sandro Magister, ‘Liturgy and Ecumenism: How to Apply Vatican Council II’, Chiesa, Rome, July 19, 2007). Pope Benedict’s emphasis in Summorum Pontificum is clearly to show that this move promotes growth and avoids rupture in the Church’s liturgical-theological tradition.

The concern for continuity is a particular concern of theologia secunda or derived theology, of which magisterial theology is an example. It is secondary or derived theology because it does not act as a source of theology. Theologia prima or primary theology (liturgy and scripture), because they are sources of theology, must always deal with the theological continuity and discontinuity evident in ritual, rite and belief-context.

The irony of Summorum Pontificum’s position regarding rupture and continuity is its assertion that the use of these two missals constitutes ‘a twofold use of the same Roman rite’. This assertion is thoroughly new and a rupture of the liturgical tradition within the Latin rite. Historically, the existence of two distinctly different rites within the one ecclesial-ritual community, has led to an antagonist competition between the adherents of the two rites and...
to the division of their ritual communion.

Conclusion

Beyond the questions of ritual, gesture, language and the right to choose an ordinary or extra-ordinary form is the necessity to understand the ecclesial context that formed the ecclesial-liturgical expression we call Christian rites. In order to understand this context it is necessary to consider the role of liturgical prayer in the dynamic of salvation and its sacramental-liturgical mediation. With the reinstatement of the 1962 missal we have the reinstatement of an ecclesiology and an understanding of priesthood that is fundamentally different from those underpinning the 1970 missal.

To view the reinstatement of the 1962 missal as just a liturgical change, offering another equally valid option for ‘saying Mass’ indicates, at least to me, a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and role of liturgical worship in the life of the Christian Church. Those who will have no problem with this development will do so, because their understanding of worship is essentially ritualistic, not ecclesiological, and not liturgical.

What is rejected and reinstated here are not two forms of religious ritual but two entirely distinct, and in my opinion, two irreconcilable theologies of how the Church mediates salvation sacramentally and pastorally. This development cannot be reduced to a crass competition between liturgical traditions or equally valid ritual gestures, as if the significant issue lay at that level. What is at stake here is the Church’s self-understanding of her role in the work of God’s salvation and how that role is mediated theologically through the Church’s liturgical worship.

As a Church, we are left with the reality that Catholics may now view the divergent theologies of salvation and sacramental-liturgical mediation as simply additional choices available to them as ritual-consumers. As long as they suspend their understanding of liturgy as being more than just ritual then worshipping according to one rite or the other will not constitute a choice by the worshipper for one understanding of salvation and sacramental-liturgical mediation over the other. This would then be, as Mark Francis observes, to ‘have succumbed to…relativism’ and to have created the ultimate expression of ‘the Catholic cafeteria’ (Mark Francis, art. cit., p. 6).

The reinstatement of the 1962 missal must include, if it is honestly intended, an acceptance by all Catholics of a return to the values and attitudes of the Counter-reformation and all that it held dear. It is naïve to assert that one can accept the ritual without at the same time accepting the belief-context that created it and is enshrined in it.

There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place.

—Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops.
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FOR CHURCH MINISTRY

SHARON MESSINA

...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. (Romans 1:5, NRSV)

What is Church Ministry today? Are the business practices of Church Ministry different to those in Commercial Organisations? If the business practices in these two different types of organisations are different, why and how are they different? What drives the Human Resources Management (HRM) practices in each of these types of organisations—Church Ministry and Commercial Organisations? What are some of the challenges of HRM in Church Ministry? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this paper as it seems that HRM is not properly understood in Church Ministry (Bacik, Fall 2005; Brown, May/June 2005, 257; Power, 2003, 112).

The Catholic Church did not have any authoritatively defined concept of the non-ordained (or laity) before the last half of the twentieth century. It wasn’t until the work of Yves Congar in 1953 entitled, Lay People in the Church, in which a theology of the lay ecclesial ministry appeared. His was a concern for the mission of the Church in the world, in which he stated:

Many people do not realize sufficiently that a big space is left empty between, on the one hand, a rigid canonical attitude in sacred things, wherein all the emphasis is on the receptive position of the faithful and their subordination to the clergy, and, on the other hand, the field of social and international secular activity. Nowadays lay people are becoming conscious that it is their business too to fill that empty space, through a properly spiritual activity, an active role in the church. They are everywhere asking for a proper theology of laity to instruct them in their uncontentious approach to this task (Congar, 1957, xxvii).

Congar’s book, as Zeni Fox comments, ‘at times unfolds like a meditation on two texts, that of the tradition of the Church and that of the lived experience of the contemporary community.’ (Fox, 2003, 127) Congar’s starting point was that the non-ordained, the laity, are baptized Christians and by this very membership of the People of God can exercise sacred activities, but that their exercising of these sacred activities is different from and complementary to those of the clergy. This seminal work of Yves Congar certainly had some impact on the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) during its discussions and decisions throughout the years 1962-4. And while commentary on the laity and ministry is rather limited in the documents of Vatican II (Fox, 2003, 135), it was nevertheless present quietly and at times implicitly, particularly in Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC29), Ad Gentes (AG23), Lumen Gentium (LG4,31,33), and Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA2 and 22). There was a consensus throughout the world, by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, that Vatican II was seeing with fresh eyes and breathing in fresh air with its emphasis on a
‘theological and liturgical renewal’ that affirmed ‘the Church as communion rather than as institution’ (Wood, 2003, vii) and called the laity into active participation in the ministry of the Church in response to their baptismal call and the example of Jesus the Christ. In other words, Vatican II saw a return to an understanding of communion from the biblical and patristic concept of koinonia or communio, prominently reflected in the letters of St. Paul (Gaillardetz, 2003, 31). However, while Vatican II has certainly positively effected change in opening up church ministry beyond the ordained to the non-ordained, from the vantage point of 40+ years on, it still seems that the conciliar concepts of communion, response and mission, all very Pauline in nature, have not yet permeated into all areas of Church Ministry, most notably, Human Resources Management (HRM).

Sadly, we frequently hear stories of the lowly paid and over-worked pastoral associate, the burnt out priest and/or deacon, the parish priest who refuses to delegate, the Curia filled with religious on stipends because of inability or non-desire to support real (fair) salaries, the recruitment behind closed doors, the quiet letting go of staff without due process, the changeover (redundancy) of staff and re-appointment of handpicked staff upon new appointment of priest, the bullying antics of parish or agency leaders usually a result of inadequate managerial and/or leadership skills and insufficient training and support provided, the inability to port service and other benefits as lay ministers move between parishes, and all of this still happening in the 21st century. As an HRM professional with twenty years of experience at both the grassroots and corporate level in the commercial world, and having more recently, worked within and experienced Church practices at both the parish and diocesan levels for 6½ years, it is time that this anomaly is addressed.

This paper will be looking at the ‘priesthood of all believers’ (Brown, May/June 2005, 256) in Church Ministry today and for tomorrow, how the Human Resources Management (HRM) function of the Church should be engaging with its staff, and how it should be supporting and challenging its staff (both managerial and non-managerial, as well as clergy, religious and lay). It will also be identifying some key tenets on which the HRM function within Church Ministry should be founded if it is to reflect the ‘mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16), particularly in light of the outcomes of Vatican II. So let’s begin.

**What is Church Ministry in Today’s and Tomorrow’s Catholic Church?**

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium (LG)* of the Second Vatican Council, offered a new framework by which to situate church ministry. In LG2 we learn of the ‘place of charisms [gifts] in the context of the whole people of God’s participation in the life of the Church’ (Gaillardetz, 2003, 13). The assertion is made that charisms are given to all the faithful ‘for the renewal and building up of the church’ (LG12) and that this is done through the tripartite office of priest, prophet and king (Wood, 2000, 13-14). So effectively, and as confirmed in Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes (GS)*, the Church believes that through each of its members and its community as a whole it can ‘help to make the human family and its history still more human.’ (GS40) As Elissa Rinere confirms: ‘The conciliar principle that the mission of the Church belongs to all the baptized has found clear ar-
ticulation in the 1983 Code of Canon Law’ (2003, 74). Furthermore, ‘Canon 781, based on the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, Ad Gentes, indicates that the primary mission of the church is the preaching of the Gospel’ (Rinere, 2003, 74). Moreover, in LG4, we see Vatican II’s effort to provide the Church with a firm foundation in the triune life of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Richard Gaillardetz explains: ‘The Church is not an autonomous entity; rather, its very existence depends on its relationship to God through Christ in the Spirit’ (2003, 31). So what does this mean for Church Ministry?

Through baptism we are initiated into a life in Christ. We are Christian! Whatever we say and whatever we do is in service to this baptismal call which is a call ‘to participate in the mission of the Word and the Spirit and, by so doing, to share in the very life of God’ (Downey, 2003, 11). Michael Downey beautifully conveys our baptismal initiation as life rooted in the covenant:

This covenant is itself rooted in the love of God given in Christ and the ongoing gift of the Spirit, the life of God pouring itself forth in gift here and now. Our lives are shaped by an awareness of responsibility more than obligation, a responsibility springing from our membership in God’s Holy People. We commit ourselves to being and building the Body of Christ in the Church and in the world, so that both will be transformed by love (Downey, 2003, 12).

Our baptismal call is affirmed in our Confirmation where we pledge to live according to the Spirit as one body in Christ, and is nourished through the Eucharist, a meal of ‘communion and justice’ together as members of one Body (Downey, 2003, 18). But while Church Ministry for Michael Downey and many Catholic theologians today, means participation of all members within the Church, not just the ordained, in strengthening the ‘People of God, to be and build the Body of Christ as a sacrament of the magnitude of God’s love in and for the world’ (Downey, 2003, 19), this isn’t so for many at the coalface (particularly, religious) who, because of their pre-Vatican II formation and training, still hold to the pre-Vatican II belief in a single priesthood of the ordained (Rinere, 2003, 69). Nevertheless, for Thomas Rausch, ‘ordination recognizes a charism for a particular service; it gives the priest a special role, not a higher status’ (2003, 64). For Downey, reflection and contemplation through prayer, is the key to understanding that our baptism into the Church means our baptism into the Church’s mission (Gaillardetz, 2003, 15). Downey says:

A baptismal spirituality is a whole way of life wherein we learn to lean into the Word of God, to find a lamp unto our feet, so that we can behold the gift that is always and everywhere being offered. It is a whole way of life by which we become a living doxology, so that all we say and do becomes an act of praise to the Father, through Christ, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit given in baptism. This is consecrated living. Prayerful living. A way of being held in the knowledge that all that I am and all that I have is first and finally gift. Prayer is a way of living with, in, and from that gift. All the time. Ministry that springs from any motive other than this is misguided (2003, 15).

And the church’s mission is derived from its Trinitarian origins, as Richard Gaillardetz explains:

Salvation history reveals to us a God who sends forth the Word and Spirit in mission as the very expression and fulfillment of God’s love for the world. God’s Word, spoken into human history from the beginning of creation and made effective by the power of the Spirit, in the fullness of time became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. The origins of the Church, in turn are inextricably linked to Jesus’ gathering a community of followers who, after his death and resurrection, were empowered by his Spirit to continue his mission to serve, proclaim, and realize the coming reign of God (2003, 29).

And it is in the triune God that we learn about and experience love, relationship, reconciliation and salvation.

If we look at the etymology of the English word, ministry, we find it has its roots in the Latin word, ministerium, which is based on the Greek word, diakonia, which has most of-
COMPASS

ten been translated as ‘service’. It first surfaced in the New Testament in the letters of St. Paul who used it in a number of different ways:

…in the more general sense of service, as in reference to his efforts to support financially the Jerusalem church (Rom 15:25, 31; 2 Cor 8:4, 19; 9:1) and for personal service (Phlm 13). But most often he [Paul] uses diakonia and its substantive, diakonos, of those whose particular form of service places them in leadership roles in the community. He uses diakonia or diakonos in connection with his own apostolic ministry (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1 Cor 4:1, 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:8; 11:23) or in reference to others claiming to be apostles (2 Cor 11:12, 15) or with recognized roles in local communities (Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1). (Rausch, 2003, 53)

John Collins also provides an extensive discussion on ministry as it was perceived in the New Testament, giving 2 Cor:14-6:13 (Paul’s defense of his ministry) as the most comprehensive outline of the word, diakonia or service.

Thus we read of his [Paul’s] ‘competence from God’ to be a minister (diakon-) of a new covenant (2 Cor 3:6); of a ministry (diakon-) that dispenses the Spirit of God, justification and glory (3:3-9); of the divine mercy that engaged him in this ministry (diakon-) (4:1), which is ‘the ministry (diakon-) of reconciliation’ (5:18). His role in delivering this heavenly message constitutes him an ‘ambassador’ for Christ (5:20). (Collins, May 2005, 210)

Clearly, Church Ministry has for its inspiration the ‘example of Jesus himself who saw his own life and death as a service on behalf of others (Mark 10:45).’ (Rausch, 2003, 53) In developing a theology of ministry for today, we, as John Collins says, must return to the Pauline understanding of ministry as ‘both gift to the church and commissioned responsibility for the Word of God’ (May 2005, 167). Moreover, should the church of the new millennium again re-engage this Pauline understanding of ministry, Collins asks, ‘might it not be drawn to conjure up the enriching and versatile ministries for women and men which it needs and for which many year?’ (May 2005, 167)

Does Church Ministry Differ from Commercial Enterprises?

There is an extensive discussion on Church organisations as not-for-profit organisations in ACCER’s article entitled, The Catholic Church, Employment Relations and the Not for Profit Sector (ACCER, December 2001), which states:

The notion of the not for profit sector appears to be increasingly irrelevant and is not useful in identifying the mission of Church organisations. Indeed, it may be simplistic to conceptualise this issue in terms of commercial and not for profit motivation. There are many differing types of not for profit organisations with which the Church would share very little common ground (ACCER, December 2001, 6).

With this in mind, let’s explore that which makes Church organisations and Church Ministry different to Commercial Organisations.

Church Ministry is predicated on communion (fellowship), love for and of God and each other, service to and for God and each other, proclamation and evangelisation of the Word of God, reconciliation, equity and justice and is open and inclusive. Commercial Organisations, on the other hand, are predicated on customer service, quality, organisation centeredness, profit and greed and is closed and exclusive. Church Ministry is considered to be a success the more it reaches out in service to others, the more it engages those within the church, the more it converts and/or renews the lives of those within and outside the Church. Commercial Organisations are considered to be successful, if their ‘bottom line’ is in the black (profit) and not in the red (loss). Where the Church is accountable to God through its representatives, the ordained (bishops and priests) (Rausch, 2003, 64), Commercial Organisations are accountable to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and its shareholders. Clearly there is a marked difference between the Church and Commercial Organisations, based primarily on its motivation: for the Church, its motivation is God’s salvation of humankind; for a Commercial Organisation,
Its motivation is primarily money, prestige and/or power or some combination of these. Moreover, the motivation driving these two entities will certainly impact differently on their vision, mission, core values, policies and procedures, including HRM. In summary, one could say that Church Ministry seeks not so much to provide a quantitative product, but rather a service that is based on the dignity of each person, the common good, and the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. One could say that Church Ministry is based on and reflects three elements: communion, conversion/renewal and mission (ACCER, December, 2001; Messina, 2003, 10).

**What is Human Resources Management (HRM)?**

Raymond Stone explains that the focus of HRM in the 21st century is on ‘managing people within the employer-employee relationship. Specifically, it involves the productive use of people in achieving the organisation’s strategic business objectives and the satisfaction of individual employee needs’ (Stone, 2005, 4). As is intimated in Stone’s definition of HRM, there are basically two aspects to HRM in today’s organisations—the strategic and the operational.

On the strategic side, HRM is concerned with aligning human resources (people) objectives with the business objectives of the organisation; that is, it is seen as contributing to the ‘bottom line’ (Stone, 2005, 9). Strategic HRM is proactive and looks towards the organisation’s vision or dream to help it design, deliver and evaluate policies, practices and activities that concern the employer-employee relationship and explores how this relationship affects the organisation’s business objectives. It has been said that strategic HRM is concerned about giving the organisation its ‘competitive edge’ (Dessler et al, 1999, 25). Some examples of strategic HRM could include the following:

• Ensuring that the employees know what the organisation is about, that they are committed to this understanding and to the organisation’s vision and can share this vision with those around them.
• Ensuring consistency of policy and procedures to enshrine fairness and justice in the workplace.
• Attracting and retaining the ‘right’ employees who not only do well in their job but whose values are synchronised with those of the organisation.
• Sustaining and enabling a work community by empowering staff through learning and development opportunities.
• Managing change in the organisation in such a way that the organisation achieves the benefits from the change without excessive loss of staff or service/product or depletion in morale.
• Recognising the gifts, talents and motivation drivers of their employees that act to encourage and sustain their employees within their employment in the organisation and to flourish within the organisation.

With strategic HRM, there is HR representation at Board level and a partnership formed between the Business and HR Managers (Stone, 2005, 9).

Operational HRM, on the other hand, is that which concerns itself with the design, delivery and evaluation of processes, tasks, activities that support strategic HRM. It provides the ‘nuts and bolts’ (the ‘what’ and ‘how’) of achieving strategic HRM initiatives in an organisation and tends to be of a transactional nature. Operational HRM encompasses processes and procedures (many of which are underpinned by legislative requirements) and generally oversees the following areas:

• Recruitment and Selection processes and procedures.
• Commencement of Employment, including Employment Contracts, Induction and Orientation processes and procedures.
• Legislative Requirements including: Privacy; Ethics, Occupational Health,
COMPASS

Safety and Rehabilitation; Workers’ Compensation; Grievance Handling; EEO, Anti-Discrimination, Leave, Affirmative Action.
• Processes and Procedures surrounding the Conditions of Employment.
• Remuneration (salary and wages) and Benefits processing and procedures.
• Learning and Development, including training needs analyses, gap impact analyses, training program co-ordination and associated processes and procedures around registering for training and development programs.
• Performance Management Systems including processes and procedures around reviewing past performance, setting objectives (outcomes) for future performance including determining a development pathway.
• Industrial/Employee Relations (IR/ER) which includes Conflict Resolution processes and procedures.
• Processes and Procedures surrounding Employee Separation (exits from the organisation) such as Exit Interviews.
• Database Management and Reporting.

The HRM Unit or Function is generally not conceived of as a profit centre because it is not considered to have products or services that can be purchased by the organisation’s external clients. The HRM Unit is, instead, conceived more as a service centre for internal clients (other functions or departments within the organisation) and is, therefore, considered a ‘cost’ to the organisation. Although in some businesses, for example, banks and other financial institutions, HRM is provided as a shared service offering advice and providing training, and is operated along the lines of a ‘profit centre’, adding value through the provision of organisational strategies and HR initiatives.

What should HRM be in Church Ministry?

The above definition of HRM could be used effectively as a basis for HRM in Church Ministry, but it needs to be adapted to reflect the communion, conversion/renewal and mission orientation that differentiates Church Ministry from Commercial Organisations.

A look at St Paul the Apostle, the Church’s first pastoral theologian, is appropriate at this time. Paul’s theology is based on the concept of wholeness: ‘For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.’ (1 Cor 12:12, NRSV) Each part equally important as the other! Each part working in harmony with each other! Each part taking responsibility for working in concert with the rest of the body! Each part within the Body of Christ! As Richard Gaillardetz explains:

For Paul, life in Christ meant life in the body of Christ, the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12; Rom 12). There was no such thing as an individual believer understood apart from the life of the Church, for the Church was no mere aggregate of individuals. Rather, by baptism into the Christian community one participated in a new reality, one was a new creation. Individual believers did not make a church; initiation into the Church through faith and baptism made the believer. Faith and baptism introduced the individual into a new mode of existence (2003, 31-32).

Effectively, this is strategic HRM in Church Ministry and perhaps not unlike strategic HRM in commercial organisations which strive to achieve the objectives determined by the organisation’s vision.

However, not only are Christians one body in Christ, their existence is based on love, for without love they are nothing (1 Cor 13:2). And it is because of this love that there is a shift from a focus on ‘I’ or ‘me’ outwards to a focus on ‘you’ or ‘we’. There is a mission orientation as we cannot help but to serve others (1 Cor 14:12) (Murphy-O’Connor, 1996, 288).

So it is this idea of ‘love’ that we must take into HRM for Church Ministry. If we view the Church and Church ministry as a whole, that is, as the ‘one Body of Christ’, anything that we do to one part of the body will affect the other parts of the whole Body of Christ. The
questions that must be asked, therefore, to help guide the Church towards a more organic view of HRM, particularly for Church ministry, are:

Is the Church being and building the Body of Christ in its HRM practices? Do the HRM policies and procedures reflect the love, respect, patience, consideration, generosity, fellowship and service that is the way of Christ? Does what we do in HRM reflect what we say and do in liturgy? Does what we do in HRM reflect the primary aim (or objective) of the Church which is proclamation of the Gospel? Do the HRM practices recognise that it is always the human being who is ‘the purpose of the work’ and that work is for human beings and not human beings for work? (Laborem Exercens, 1981) Do the HRM practices recognise and foster ‘balance’ in a person’s life? Do the HRM practices adopt a pastoral approach, like that of St. Paul? In other words, do the HRM practices reflect the ‘mind’ and ‘attitude’ of Christ, as St. Paul would ask?

It has been mentioned earlier in this paper that the church’s mission is derived from the triune God from whom we learn of and achieve salvation through the relationality out of which emerges love and reconciliation in the persons of the Father, Son and Spirit. It is this concept of relationality that is of crucial importance for HRM in Church Ministry. All human beings are ‘essentially relational beings: who a person is, is fundamentally shaped by who a person is related to, and in what ways…’ (Gleeson, 2004, 19). This relational ecclesiology is the basis for the work of the famous orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas. The Church has been gifted with the Spirit from the Father through the Son to bring the Church into the communion of the paschal mystery—death, resurrection, new life in a new humanity’ (1 Cor 15:22, 45) (Gonzalez and Zaida, 2002, 89), in a reconciliatory movement. So the Church as seen in the light of the Trinity, is an eschatological being: ‘it exists and acts in virtue of its expectation of fullness’ (Power, 2003, 111). The Eucharistic table is the place where the Trinitarian Mystery is manifested and realized, ‘where as a corporate personality, all receive the gift of the body and blood of Christ and with it the gift of the Spirit for ‘forgiveness of sins and for immortality’ (Power, 2003, 111). In this respect, as David Power, explains:

Institutions and roles are necessary, and by no means a contradiction of this basic corporate oneness of the royal priesthood. They are better understood as relations and responsibilities within the one body than in terms of power and office, and need to be placed within the context of the Eucharistic and eschatological community. They are secondary to the union expressed and realized at the Eucharistic table, where all receive the gift of the body and blood of Christ, and through it participation in his mission of love and his presence to humanity, or what in the patristic era was called sacrifice and his royal priesthood (2003, 111).

This suggests that every ‘service, ministry, and office must find its place within this eucharistic and eschatological communion’ (Power, 2003, 42). A question needs to be asked, that has been asked by David Power:

In what sense does a ministry contribute to that communion which is oneness with Christ in the reception of the spirit and the witness to the call to be children of God the Father, receiving with the Son the gift of love? (2003, 112).

An exploration of the Trinitarian Mystery will certainly impact on recruitment and selection, ordering (organisation hierarchy) and remuneration within Church Ministry. With this in mind let us look more closely at HRM for Church Ministry.

**Underlying Principles in HRM for Church Ministry**

Elissa Rinere highlighted three major things that we have gleaned from the experience of ministry in the years since Vatican II:

First, experience has shown us that the need for effective ministry is real. That is, people are not indifferent to the sort of ministry they encoun-
COMPASS
ter, and many will deliberately seek out what they need in order to grow in faith. This is evidenced in the changing patterns of parish membership. Second, experience has shown us that collaboration between clergy and laity in ministry enriches the whole Church. Parishes are able to offer more varied outreach, pastoral care, and educational opportunities because of the presence and gifts of parish lay ministers. Third, experience is showing us that although the work of lay ministers can be very advantageous, to bring laity into significant pastoral leadership positions without providing suitable structures, stability, or even sufficient formation is harmful to minister and community alike. Some dioceses have carefully worked out job descriptions, pay scales, and diocesan-wide hiring and firing practices for lay employees. Other dioceses have not made the same progress, leaving lay ministers little job security with the coming of a new pastor or bishop (2003, 78).

With this in mind, Church Ministry must keep before it the concepts of communion, conversion and mission, for only then will HRM be seen in the following light as:

• The conscience of the Church, the litmus test, so to speak, ensuring that people are treated equally and justly at all times to meet the Christian’s obligation for social justice and stewardship of resources (Gleeson, 2004, 43-44).
• Developing and sustaining relationships of love, trust and respect within Church Ministry and outside Church.
• Affirming staff in their roles and in themselves, through supporting, recognising and challenging staff.
• As a catalyst for transformation of both staff and ministry through the rejuvenation of faith, combined with the affirmation of belief in the obtainment of knowledge which progresses the learning spiral towards transcendence of self and ministry to transformation and a radical new way of perceiving humanity and the world.
• Ensuring consistency of policy and procedures to ensure that there is no possibility of inequity and achieving this through an understanding of the key concepts of love, relationship, reconciliation and service.

• Responding to legislative requirements particularly in the areas of privacy/confidentiality, prohibited employment, leave, occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, discrimination in the workplace, workplace harassment, grievance handling procedures as well as requirements identified in canon law.

On the topic of legislative requirements, Canon 225 in Book II on ‘The People of God’, in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, focuses on the role of laity in the mission of the church. As Aurelie Hagstrom explains of Canon 225:

No longer are the laity seen as merely participating in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Rather, as canon 225 affirms, the laity have the general right to participate in the mission of the church. This is not only a right, but also a duty or obligation which, by virtue of their sacramental identity, the laity share with every other member of the church (Hagstrom, 2003, 161).

Elissa Rinere has suggested that the Church law (canon law) needs to be reviewed in three areas of church ministry—flexibility, charism and consistent employment practices—with a view to adopting some changes, such as: ‘flexible universal structures that will allow nations and regions to develop stable ministerial structures of their own’ (2003, 80); ‘some work on the inculturation of lay ministry’ (2003, 80); ‘the need for recognition of charisms [for lay ministers] that might not be life-long and that need to be regional or national rather than universal’ (2003, 81); the need for ‘structures that provide a consistent and stable means of discerning and utilizing charisms of service for specific communities’ (2003, 81); the need ‘to present a consistent commitment on the part of the institutional Church to those laity who undertake ministry’ as in not just recognising the right of a just wage for lay ministers, but the ‘need for consistent and mandated employment practices’ (2003, 81).
It is beyond the mandate of this paper to delve into the practical side of HRM for Church Ministry, however, what must stated is that in order for HRM to act as the conscience within any of the Church’s agencies, be it parish communities or organisations, they must ensure: the development of relationality within and outside the Church and Church Ministry; the affirmation and recognition of staff; creation of fertile ground for transformation of both staff and Church Ministry; consistency of policy and practice; and appropriate responses to legislative requirements (federal, state and canon law). With regards to employment practices of the Church, it must also be emphasised: that they must not only comply with legislative requirements (which are the minimum acceptable requirements), but must also adhere to the social teaching of the Church; that all employment policies and procedures must be made available at all times to each employee; and that the employer needs to review each employment issue with regards to the employee on its own merits when applying policies and procedures (ACCER, February 2002, 4).

**Challenges in HRM for Church Ministry**

This paper contends that there four challenges for HRM in Church Ministry today, namely: in Recruitment and Selection; in Remuneration and Benefits Management; in Performance Management; and in developing a Spirituality of Work.

**In Recruitment and Selection** we must be ever vigilant in four areas: the cultural and position fit of applicants for the position; a deliberate, planned and unhurried process; an openness and transparency in the process; and finally, recognition that job security is a legitimate expectation of employees. First, as strategic HRM practitioners, we must not fall into the trap of believing that the best person is the one who should be appointed. We should be searching for the ‘right’ person, that is, the one who is both a cultural fit and a position fit for the Church Ministry. Cultural fit refers to whether a person’s values and standards are in ‘synch’, so to speak, with the parish’s values and standards. Position fit refers to whether a person’s knowledge and skills are a ‘match’ with the job’s requirements. To focus solely on the position fit of the candidate, may get the Church the ‘best’ candidate but not the right candidate. And it’s important to get the cultural and position fit right for this simple reason: The ‘right’ candidate may not have the highest levels of skills that the ‘best’ candidate has, but because their values and standards are the same or similar to those of the parish, they will have a better overall FIT with the parish and as a result may stay longer in the job. Furthermore, with respect to the right fit for a job and concerning those who are physically or mentally disabled,

It would be radically unworthy of man and a denial of our common humanity to admit to the life of the community, and thus admit to work, only those who are fully functional. To do so would be to practice a serious form of discrimination, that of the strong and healthy against the weak and sick. Work in the objective sense should be subordinated in this circumstance, too, to the dignity of man, to the subject of work and not to economic advantage’ (Laborem Exercens 1981).

HRM in Church Ministry, therefore, must support the ‘new humanity of Christ’ (1 Cor 15:22) by consciously embracing a range of workers in proactive inclusiveness.

Second, from an operational HRM perspective, we should not hurry the recruitment and selection process; it must be a time for discernment to enable a re-evaluation of the team dynamics in the light of the new skill sets that would be required and to draft a position description that is clear and concise. Third, again from an operational HRM perspective, our recruitment and selection process must always be open and transparent, that is, advertisements should be placed both internally and externally, a proper time period given for the submission of applications, fair and well planned interviews conducted using behaviourial questioning, enabling an objective as-
COMPASS

essment to be made and reference checks conducted before a job offer is made. Fourth, in recognition that job security is a legitimate expectation of employees, the church employer should be open and honest with the employee with respect to the duration of employment. In addition, the Church:

[Should] not seek to improperly utilise fixed term, part-time, casual and contract forms of employment so as to avoid their responsibilities to employees. While these approaches can be legitimate and might be the only means of meeting the needs of the organisation in particular circumstances, Church employers need to question the motivation for introducing such forms of employment (ACCER, February 2002, 5).

With regards to the strategic HRM concerns around Remuneration and Benefits Management, it is important to remember that while many of the clergy and religious may have taken a vow of poverty, the laity have not. The laity not only have need of the basics (food, water and shelter), if they are married they usually have family members who are dependent upon them to meet these needs in addition to huge repayments on mortgages on their homes as well as high education costs for their children. Also, many—clergy, religious and lay—have obtained specialist training through tertiary studies and practical experience (usually at a huge cost to their religious orders or diocese in the case of religious and parish priests, or to themselves personally, in the case of laity) that they are either repaying or to which they are heavily indebted. So Remuneration and Benefits Management is a key area in which review and change is necessary. A just ‘living’ remuneration and associated benefits (Laborem Exercens, 1981) recognising the accommodation of these needs must therefore be offered; and this remuneration and benefits system should be documented and reviewed on a regular basis.

It should also be remembered that our clergy and religious are ageing, and the ‘stipend’ system that has provided exceptional human resources for the Church for literally next to nothing, needs to be reconsidered in the light of remuneration as opposed to stipend, not only from a social justice perspective, but also from a sociological perspective. Ours is an ageing population, and many of our clergy and religious will have to support more and more their ageing community, and this certainly cannot be done on a ‘stipend’. Perhaps one needs to look at why the ‘stipend’ was brought into effect for the religious in the first place. Its vision was threefold: to assist the Catholic Church within Australia to develop using ‘religious’ who were ‘formed’; to improve the pay conditions of the religious who, in the early history of the Australian church, were paid ‘a pittance’ on which they couldn’t survive; and to create an equality amongst the religious (the cook, cleaner, teacher, pastoral associate) who would all be equally recognised for their contribution in the form of equal pay. However, it seems that the stipend has adopted a utilitarian flavour and has become synonymous with cheap labour for parishes and dioceses. It should be noted that religious who work in Catholic Schools Offices and at universities, for example, work on contract, not stipend. Furthermore, the ageing population of ordained has already been reflected in the dwindling number of parish priests which has necessitated the twinning of parishes within many Dioceses in Australia as well as overseas (Philibert, 2005, 6), and in some cases, the quadrupling and quintupling of parishes in regional Australia as well as overseas; and appointing foreign born priests to become parish priests in local parish communities, usually bringing with it a whole host of problems, particularly concerned with inculturation. What this does mean for our parishes is a need to rely on local, informed, educated pastoral laity who cannot survive on the equivalent of the priest’s or a religious’ stipend as they now stand. It must also be noted that there has been a steady move for religious out of community into independent living arrangements which means that a stipend may not be adequate to meet the daily basic needs
If Church Ministry wants to attract and retain well-educated and committed people, a fair and equitable salary is mandatory; no longer can Church Ministry afford to pay its staff with a ‘pittance and prayer’. Currently there are anomalies in remuneration which exist in some places between different parts of the Church (ACCER, December 2001); for example, teachers in Catholic Schools/Education Office (CSO/CEO) are paid award or above award salaries while pastoral associates who are sacramental co-ordinators working within the Parish Community or within the other parts of the Curia (many of whom are former teachers and who have responsibility not only in co-ordinating those teaching the scripture classes but also in the material that is being taught) are being paid wages far below their counterparts in the CSO/CEO. These anomalies must be carefully investigated and addressed. If both positions (teacher and pastoral associate) require tertiary qualifications at a particular level and both have similar responsibilities levels, then this should be reflected in a similar remuneration and benefits scale. Just because the teacher is protected by state industrial legislation and the pastoral associate is not, and is considered to be ‘award free’, it doesn’t mean that unfair advantage should be taken of the ‘award free’ situation (ACCER, February 2002, 5). Similarly, if religious and clergy working in Catholic Schools Offices (or Catholic Education Offices as they are also known) and/or universities have access to benefits such as sabbaticals for further ‘upskilling’ (learning and development) or education, then this should be made available to those in Church Ministry, who are working in the same or similar capacity.

Finally, Remuneration and Benefits should reflect the expectations of the position. For example, if it is expected that a lay minister needs to keep clergy hours (that is, access 24 hours 7 days a week), then this must somehow be reflected in either remuneration and/or benefits, as there is an imposition on the family life of the lay minister and certainly a request to work longer than the legislated 38 hours per week. It is appropriate at this time to remember that ‘Catholic social teaching places significance on the interaction between the family, society and work. Importantly, the principles of the right to rest and the right to a just wage interact to support the formation of strong family and social relations’ (ACCER, February 2002, 8). It is certainly not the contention of this paper that the remuneration paid and the benefits proffered to staff in Church Ministry need to be linked to the private sector, but recognition must be made of things like job responsibility level, skill level and education level. Perhaps remuneration and benefits (such as, salary packaging) should be linked to equivalent responsibility and remuneration levels within the public sector.

As for Performance Management, this is an area that, sadly, is not well understood or practiced by the Church. At a strategic level, it includes: Induction, Performance and Development Reviews, Learning and Development, Mentoring and Succession Planning for sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), right through to the exit of the employee from their position within Church Ministry. What Performance Management really means is stewardship of the Church’s wonderful human resources. But let’s look at these more closely.

With respect to Induction, this is simply how the Church welcomes the newly appointed staff member: to the culture of the Church organisation, to the people within and outside the Church organisation, to the position, to the place and location of the job. Induction should be carefully planned prior to the appointment of a person: the physical setup of the office needs to be prepared (desk, telephone and computer) to ensure that there is ‘home’ for the newly appointed person; introductions need to be made within the functional unit and outside the functional unit of the church organisation; facilities need to be noted and directions provided (kitchen, toilet,
COMPASS

photocopier); a mentor or buddy appointed to look after the newly appointed person; regular conversations need to be made between manager/leader and newly appointed staff member; clear communication of upcoming events (meetings, social activities, parish or diocesan events calendar) must be made available on a timely and regular basis; training and direction on how to access the databases on the computer, use email and MS-Office software as well as training in other areas must be arranged; even simple directions as to where to find the photocopier and how to send documents to print is crucial; and finally, an invitation to an orientation session (perhaps held on a quarterly basis) that would provide an opportunity to the many ‘gathered’ newly appointed/commissioned people of the Church to be introduced to the vision of the parish or diocese/agency, its mission, and the other members of the Body of Christ is imperative. In other words, Induction is all about welcome, celebration and pastoral care of newly appointed staff. But it doesn’t stop here!

The Induction Program (usually of 3-6 months duration) is really the front end of a Performance Management System. A Performance Management System, at its simplest, is a process that allows the church employer and the employee to ‘openly discuss the expectations of the organisation and the achievements of the employee, with an emphasis on the future development of the employee within the objectives of the organisation’ (ACCER, February 2002, 7). It entails regular sessions between the Leader and team members in unit meetings, general staff meetings, regular and scheduled conversations between Team Leader and individual employee, a coming together in some cross functional activities (across units), listening, affirming, supporting, mentoring and, in this way, resolving potential problems before they become too big and too bad to manage or escalate to become harmful conflicts. This leads to an awareness of further skill development and education needed or wanted that will help the member to develop and grow and ultimately the body of Christ to develop, grow and improve (Canon Law 231-1, 1983). Performance Management also leads to the recognition and celebration of an employee’s gifts or charisms through discussion, feedback and constructive criticism and can lead to the discovery of home grown talent for future leadership roles within the parish, diocese or agency. Finally, Performance Management is all about identifying actions and priorities for the unit to which the staff member can contribute, done in a collaborative way between Team/Unit Leader and staff member.

With respect to the aspect of ‘relationality’ in respect of Performance Management, it is of crucial importance that a solid understanding of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ needs to happen if Church Ministry is going to be fruitful in the future. Raymond Brown discusses this at length in his article entitled, ‘The Challenge of the New Testament Priesthood’ when he asks: ‘Do we not have to struggle hard to remind ourselves that the priesthood which makes us saints is the priesthood that we all share?’ (May/June 2005, 257) The ordained and non-ordained need to think organically of each other, each one complementing the other, each one having charisms that are recognised by the other. As Raymond Brown explains:

I think it will be a challenge for ordained priests, many of whom have not been accustomed to think existentially of laity, women and men, as equals, to work side by side with them and occasionally to take instructions from the laity as they function as priests in the church of Jesus Christ (May/June 2005, 257).

And it is this challenge that must be addressed in pastoral leadership development through an emphasis of training in the following areas: community leadership; ‘bite-size’ leadership or smaller leadership roles that are shared amongst several members of the community (Messina, 2003); team building; delegation; conflict resolution; and appreciative planning (Cooperridder & Whitney, n.d.).

With respect to the Spirituality of Work,
HRM practitioners in Church Ministry must be proactive in forming a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the creator and redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threelfold mission as priest, prophet and king, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches (Laborem Exercens, 1981). Developing a spirituality of work recognises the values of human work:

Just as human activity proceeds from man, so it is ordered toward man. For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches which can be garnered...Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race and allow people as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfil it (Gaudium et Spes, no. 35).

As John Paul II stated in his apostolic exhortation, Laborem Exercens (On Human Work):

Let the Christian who listens to the Word of the living God, unite work with prayer, know the place that his work has not only in earthly progress, but also in the development of the kingdom of God, to which we are all called through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the word of the Gospel.

A Spirituality of Work would certainly impact office policies and procedures, for instance, in meetings commencing and closing with a prayer and in the encouragement and support of staff to participate in regular ecumenical prayer gatherings and Masses, just to name a few.

Conclusion

When managing the Human Resources within Church Ministry one must remember that the call to ministry is a different type of response made by a person than merely a response to a job advertisement in the newspaper. The call to ministry can happen: over a long period of time (a spiritual journey); as a result of a renewal or re-awakening, perhaps an outcome of a special experience in a person’s life (eg. accident, death of loved one, illness of a loved one, etc.); or the call to ministry could always have been present within a person, but not given an opportunity to flourish, through invitation; and finally, the call to ministry usually always occurs through prayerful discernment.

As an HR Manager in Church Ministry, one must remember what ministers and those drawn to working within Church Ministry, are actually ‘called’ to. They are called to the ‘service of the Kingdom of God that flows from the call and empowerment of the Holy Spirit through a community of believers’ (McGonigle & Quigley, 1996). Those parts of the statement that are italicised are the key concepts for HRM in Church Ministry as has been highlighted throughout this paper.

Service in the Kingdom of God means: all baptised are equal members of the church and share the responsibility for making the church a credible sign and an effective instrument of the Kingdom of God (Bacik, Fall 2005). We no longer belong to the Church, we are the Church. As Christians we are called upon to have ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16), that is, to identify ourselves with Christ in our life and conduct and to live in Christ with Christ in us.

With respect to the call to ministry, HR Managers within Church Ministry need to be aware of several important things. The call to ministry is found in the ‘stirrings of the soul, the voice of God in the deepest part of us...It is found in the voices of the people around us who mirror back to us our gifts’ (Brown, 2004, 27). Hearing the call requires discernment and response, although at first the call may make us feel uncertain, unsettled...we might even be reluctant because God often calls us out of our comfort zone—recall St. Paul’s experience. Moreover, we discern by listening for
As to being empowered by the Holy Spirit, we recall Jesus’ promise of the Paraclete to strengthen and instruct us: ‘The Helper will come—the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father (John 15:26)...the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you.’ (John 16:15) For John, the evangelist, the Spirit ‘becomes the bond that unites the community with Jesus (both with the teachings of the ‘earthly’ Jesus and with the presence of the risen Lord) and the bond that unites community members with one another as they obey the commandment to love one another (John 14:15-17,26; 16:13-15)’ (Bartlett, 1993, 95). It is the task of HR Managers within Church Ministry to assist the staff within Church Ministry to co-operate with the Spirit and discern the best ways of serving the Kingdom of God and to recognise that the gifts of the Spirit are given not for personal gain but for the common good. In other words, it is the primary task of the HR Manager within Church Ministry to be the conscience of the Church organisation, gently keeping the organisation true to its call and its mission—to proclaim through living the gospel values. Finally, the HR Manager within Church Ministry must always remind the baptised that the spiritual quest is common to all, seeking union with the Father, through the incarnate Son in the power of the Holy Spirit (Bacik, Fall 2005).

It is important to remember that the call to ministry needs to recognise the community of believers; HR Managers in Church Ministry must understand and learn how to facilitate this communion and relatedness. Involvement in ministry can never exist in isolation but only in relationship to a community...as ‘part of the heartbeat, the very life of the community’ (Brown, 2004, 3). Theresa Pirola states: ‘Ultimately, the Gospel is communicated through the evangelising lifestyle of a community: mums and dads, street cleaners and doctors, priests and religious, students and children going about their everyday lives in a spirit of Gospel communio.’ (Brown, 2004, 27).

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and procedures that define our relationships with staff (both paid and volunteers) should not be professional, fair and equitable. Second, though we need consistency of policies and procedures, a quality orientation and commitment to customer service (all the hallmarks of professionalism), we should not let our professionalism develop into an elite-ism within our parishes, our dioceses or our Church (Pirola, 1995, 79). Third, and as James Bacik so accurately stated: 'Pastors today have the task of recruiting talented people, providing them with proper training, and coordinating their efforts to create a viable flourishing parish. All of these ministers are living out their baptismal vocation and are not simply helping out the pastor’ (Bacik, Fall 2005).

It all comes down to HRM in Church Ministry being based on three fundamental Pauline concepts of communion, conversion/renewal, and mission. And these three concepts can and are affirmed through: responding to our baptismal call; confirming and celebrating the Spirit within and around us; and being Eucharist to each other. If we reflect our baptism, our confirmation and our Eucharist, and hold these in our thoughts, actions and prayers, Human Resource Management (HRM) cannot but move forward into Church Ministry as a sentinel for and a protector of the oneness of the Body of Christ!

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The provision of wages and other benefits sufficient to support a family in dignity is a basic necessity to prevent [the] exploitation of workers. The dignity of workers also requires adequate health care, security for old age or disability, unemployment compensation, healthful working conditions, weekly rest, periodic holidays for recreation and leisure, and reasonable security against arbitrary dismissal. These provisions are all essential if workers are to be treated as persons rather than simply a ‘factor of production’.

—Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, 103.
Good News For The Rich
Desmond O'Donnell OMI

Counsellor: You are the local tax-agent. Aren’t you?
Client: Yes, that’s me. In fact I’m the boss of the tax-agents.
Counsellor: It’s hard to be popular, I presume?
Client: By Jove, that’s for sure. At least up until now anyway. That is why I’ve come to see you. I’m no longer sure where I am in the community but more especially inside myself. I need to talk to someone.
Counsellor: So you feel, shall I say, somewhat confused?
Client: I have so many feelings at the same time since I changed. Or is it was changed?
Counsellor: Could you try to name some of your feelings?
Client: Well, the guilt is still there because of past greed, and loneliness too because I have no real friends. Then fear lest I am killed by a Zealot, and now I am becoming very happy because of what happened to me. Or is it in me. Yes, by Jove, in me.
Counsellor: Could we try to look at these feelings one by one?
Client: I’ll try. You see, the Romans rent out the tax collecting business and they give us protection. We pay the rent and after that we can keep whatever we can squeeze out of the people. Then of course, as the local capo, I get a slice from each agent under me. Yes, I’m a wealthy man.
Counsellor: And as you said, feeling guilty too?
Client: Up to now, not so. My parents taught me to be realistic and enterprising. So I knew that being a tax agent was a good job. But with a lot of hurting people strewn behind me, I do now feel very guilty.
Counsellor: I think I can guess why you feel unwanted and lonely.
Client: Mind you I have a lot of people I call friends among the other tax collectors. We stick together and we meet often to celebrate. Wine, women and song, you understand. Not religious songs, by Jove. ‘Wine makes your heart rejoice’ as the religious people say in the Psalm. And we pay the girls well. But of course I never go to the synagogue. So culturally, socially and religiously I’m at the edge, unwanted, even hated.
Counsellor: I think you said that you live with a lot of fear.
Client: You can imagine. The Zealots sneak around with short daggers under their dirty cloaks, not only for the backs of Roman soldiers but for us collaborators. I have to continually keep my eyes moving in all directions when I’m in the street, and I keep out of the souks. Then as can see, I’m not tall nor strong.
Counsellor: You mentioned that you were happy or that you recently became happier, even if the residue of some negative emotions remains.
Client: It was very warm day, as only Jericho can be warm. Word got around that the miracle-worker Jesus from Nazareth was approaching the town. Nearly half the people went out to get a look at him. I was curious too especially because I heard that my colleague Matthew was among his closest friends.
Counsellor: Matthew?
Client: Yes, Matthew is a tax agent, or was one. When I saw them approaching I felt afraid. Anyway I could not get near him and I dared not go into the crowd lest I get knifed. Someone told me, too, that Simon the
Zealot was one of Jesus’ close friends. So.

Counsellor: So, did you stay on the edge or go home?

Client: No, by Jove. Enterprise is my name. Something inside me was telling me that I must see this Jesus. I went back down the road and scrambled up a Sycamore tree. You know those trees with the wide leaves. I positioned myself invisibly but with a view, waiting for the crowd.

Counsellor: Why were you so willing to look foolish by climbing a tree?

Client: I told you. It was something inside me that made me take the risk.

Counsellor: And the crowd passed by.

Client: No, and that’s the beginning of my real story. Jesus stopped the crowd and looked straight up at me. My heart started thumping. By Jove! Some of the crowd began shaking their fists up at me. But there was more to come. Jesus called me by name ‘Zacchaeus’, he said, ‘come down’... (long pause)... He called me by name... (long pause)... By Jove!

Counsellor: And you came down?

Client: No. I did not. I was too afraid. Many of my enemies were in that crowd. Then Jesus called me again and this time he said ‘Hurry down for I must stay at your house today’... (long pause)... I particularly recall the words ‘I must’. I thought of how I felt at the toll booth that I must go to see him. There was already something inside both of us, something pushing both of us to meet. There was... (long pause)

Counsellor: Can you say what it was?

Client: It was very deep, overpowering. Maybe like I felt at my Bar Mitzvah, but this time it was much richer. Much richer. By Jove, it just took me over.

Counsellor: And is that what has made you happy?

Client: No, not entirely. First of all it was the feeling that this good man Jesus was accepting me without reservation. He did not name all the things I did wrong or tell me what a traitor and playboy I was. He did not even ask me to straighten out my life.

Counsellor: So you felt totally accepted after being rejected for so long.

Client: Yes, with no finger pointing, no conditions and no confessions, he chose me, and to stay in my house— ‘the house of a sinner’ as the religious people said. A shared meal just for friendship is very significant in our culture. And he sat down with other tax collectors and some very questionable characters. Naturally I sat near Matthew. Of course we did not bring in the girls this time. But it was great, just great. I welcomed him joyfully and he was very happy too.

Counsellor: So being accepted was the beginning of a new experience for you.

Client: Indeed. I was so happy, that I felt free to give half of my possessions to the poor and to fulfil the strictest law about repaying fourfold what I had taken unjustly. I used to laugh at John the Baptist who told us tax agents, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed to you’. Now I really confessed my sins joyfully after I got the communion of friendship. Communion led me to confession and to change.

Counsellor: And that removed much of the guilt?

Client: Yes, I felt a new man, with new life, a fullness of life. Deep down I was seeking this all the time and this man of God was really seeking me but I did not know it.

Counsellor: So you are happy to be poor now.

Client: No, Jesus did not ask me to give it all away—yet, anyway. He was happy that I kept half of what I own.

Counsellor: This religious experience made you very happy?

Client: Jesus did not mention religion as I know it. He just said that salvation had come to my house. And by Jove, it has. I’m a free man. Yes Sir! I’m a free man. But I must give you a laugh before I go. The derivation of my name Zachaeus means ‘the innocent one’, ‘the clean one’. By Jove! And oh! Send the bill.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE RICH
REVIEW


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This is a book for anyone interested in Catholic culture in Australia past and present. It is also of particular interest to members of religious congregations. It is a very detailed, warts-and-all account of the journey of the Blessed Sacrament fathers and brothers from their first arrival in Melbourne in 1929 to the present, and at the same time it describes the journey of the Catholic Church. Readers will be surprised by how much they find in the book that resonates with their own personal experiences of being Catholic.

The pioneers of the Australian province of the Congregation—the ‘Province of the Holy Spirit’—arrived from Canada and the United States and took over St Francis’ Church in Melbourne. The very next day they were open for business, celebrating Masses and hearing Confessions, and St Francis became a centre of Eucharistic worship in the central business district.

In the early 1950s the Congregation moved into the Haymarket in Sydney, establishing St Peter Julian’s church, also an inner-city church. St Francis in Melbourne was seen as a bulwark against irreligion, which in the 1940s and 1950’s signified communism and other subversive doctrines. St Peter Julian’s in Sydney was seen as place of sanctity in ‘sin city’.

For Catholics of a certain age reading this book will be a walk down memory lane. We are reminded of all the old practices, such as three visits to the church to gain a plenary indulgence on All Souls Day, Solemn High Masses and Low Masses, candlelight Eucharistic processions, bigotry in ecumenical relations but surprise friendly inter-denominational encounters. There were testing times as the Church moved on—even prior to Vatican II—such as the restoration of Gregorian chant in place of the classical works of the great masters. Religious will resonate with the purchase of the first car, and then the first television set, and their impacts on religious life. There was the post-war surge of vocations, the extraordinary system of formation and the memorable novice master. The Congregation was spreading in Australia and into Asia.

The Second Vatican Council’s impact was immediate and long-term. There was considerable pain to learn that it was forbidden to celebrate Mass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and encouragement of communion in the hand surprised many. But more fundamental renewal was called for, and many communities and individuals became unsettled. Formation programs became controversial. There was a renewed commitment to social justice. Mission rather than Adoration became the raison d’être of the Congregation as it went on a journey of rediscovery of the charism of the Founder, St Peter Julian Eymard. A new Rule of Life was formulated and finally promulgated in 1985. It was a blueprint for a eucharistic way of life.

As numbers diminished it was time to think of ‘creative alternatives’. Encouragement of co-operation with the laity was one important new path. The story ends with the question of whether the province will survive. If it does not, it will not be for lack of inventiveness.

The book puts a mirror to Catholic life generally and religious life in particular in Australia in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Above all, it records a remarkable contribution that continues: ‘[A]t the beginning of the twenty-first century, Melbourne people were burning a million candles in St Francis’ Church every year.’ (p.483)

Editor
PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the readings of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed while this issue of Compass is current. It focuses on the readings for Sundays between October 2007 to January 2008, from the Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year C to the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time of Year A. Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

1. The First readings generally are selected with the Gospel reading for the specific Sunday in mind. This could appear to make the first reading simply a precursor to the Gospel. However it would be important to allow the unique insights and celebration of the First (‘Old’) Testament readings to be honoured in their own right. The First Testament readings between November 2007 to January 2008 fall into three main types of literature: prophetic (Is, Mal, Zech, Zeph), historical (2 Sam, Mac) and wisdom (Sirach).

   - Readings from Isaiah dominate this period (in Advent 1-4, Nativity, Baptism, OT 2-3). The selections come from two different authors (called First Isaiah, chapters 1-39, and Second Isaiah, chapters 40-55) writing at different periods of Israel’s history, before the 6th century Exile, and during or after the return from captivity. The Isaiah selections for Advent and Christmas are from First Isaiah written in the 8th century BCE at a time of political crisis. The prophet looks to a hopeful future brought about by God’s presence through an anointed one, a future king. This king should not be interpreted as Jesus, but one from the immediate royal household that Isaiah reflects upon. Christians reflecting on Isaiah saw in Jesus a way in which Isaiah’s vision was expressed in their own day.

   - The selections in the Sundays Ordinary Time (OT) from Second Isaiah are songs of God’s servant, who will suffer and bring liberation to God’s people. These songs look to a future time of freedom and religious fidelity. God’s concern about the social consequences of the nation’s political alliances shape the various stages of Isaiah and the prophetic voice that is sounded throughout these stages. This particular focus through Isaiah provides an opportunity for the local Christian community to reflect on the political and national issues which will preoccupy us in our time and within our country.

2. The Second Reading for each Sunday is drawn from the letters of the New (or ‘Second’) Testament, with the exception of the Feast of the Baptism (Jan 13) when the reading is from Acts 10. This key reading sets up the future missionary agenda for Paul in the Book of Acts. God’s community is called to be inclusive of all peoples, rather than exclusive. This is a central baptismal theme to be celebrated on this particular feast. Apart from Acts
10, the rest of the selections for the second reading are from letters by Paul himself (Romans during Advent, and 1 Corinthians on OT 2 to 3), his disciples (for example, in 2 Thessalonians on OT 32 and 33; Colossians on the Feast of Christ the King – which might be called the Feast celebrating Jesus’ Universal Authority) or the Catholic epistle of James (Advent 3). This broad selection of various writings from early Christian communities offers us a glimpse of the vitality of their lives and some of the pastoral issues they faced.

- **2 Thessalonians**, written towards the late first century, deals with concerns about the delay of the second coming of Jesus and the need for Christians to be alert to God’s coming—appropriate readings for the final Sundays of the liturgical year.
- **Ephesians and Colossians**, penned perhaps in the 70s, to Christians living in Asia Minor, present an image of Jesus as Lord of the universe, and of Christians called to holiness in their union with Jesus, confident of his presence in their struggles.
- **Romans**, Paul’s great epistle written about 57 CE from Corinth, presents the maturity of his theological reflection, especially God’s plan for all people and desire for salvation. These ideas can be well developed in the celebration of Advent as our communities look to God’s care in the midst of their challenges.
- **1 Corinthians** is an important letter from Paul, written around 57 CE from Ephesus. It is heard in 2008 in the first Sundays of Ordinary Time. In the letter Paul attempts to address issues of elitism and factionalism amongst the Corinthian Christians, concerns still with us today.


- We conclude ‘the Year of Luke’ with texts from Lk 20 and 21, taken up with spiritual or theological watchfulness to what is happening and an alertness to God’s presence in the events that occur. These readings prepare for the final Lukan reading on the Feast of Christ the King (Nov 21), where the dying Jesus offers compassion and forgiveness to a repentant criminal. Within our Australian context, this gospel reading subverts the conventional image of leadership. Luke portrays a leadership exemplified by compassion and forgiveness.
- The new liturgical year which begins on Advent 1 (Dec 2) also commences our readings from Matthew’s Gospel. This will be the principal gospel throughout the rest of the liturgical year. Written in the mid 80s of the first century to Christian Jews, it presents Jesus as the authoritative presence of God who is able to interpret the Torah for Christians in a time of dire change. Advent 1, when Mt is first proclaimed, continues the theme of watchfulness, and subsequent Sundays prepare us for the coming of the teacher-like-Moses, Jesus. The readings in the first Sundays of OT from Mt begin to explore the nature of Jesus’ ministry (OT 3).

**PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS**

**October 7—Ordinary Time 27: Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4.** The prophet cries to God for deliverance from violence. God offers a vision of the possible. 2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14. The leader is encouraged to be a person of integrity, reflection and trust. Lk 17:5-10 The disciple is encouraged to be a person of faith who acts authentically. Theme—**Acting in Faith.** In a world of violence, the disciple is encouraged to retain a perspective and trust centred on God. Local communities abound with living examples of such contemporary disciples.

**October 14—Ordinary Time 28: 2 Kings 5:14-17.** A Syrian (and foreign) army-officer obeys God’s prophet from Israel and is healed of leprosy. He seeks to offer the prophet a gift for his healing. 2 Tim 2:8-13. A revered early Christian hymn about Jesus that encourages closeness to him. Lk 17:11-19. Jesus heals those who are excluded from community life because of their disease. Theme—**Exclusion:** The first reading and the Gospel invite a reflection on the power of exclusion which suffering and illness brings. How does the local Chris-
Christian community seek to include those who are excluded into its life? Who are the true healers in our community?

October 21—Ordinary Time 29. Ex 17:8-13. Moses’ prayer for victory is effective. 2 Tim 3:14-4:2. The minister is encouraged to be faithful to what has been taught, to Scripture, and to the task of courageous proclamation. Lk 18:1-8. An unnamed widow’s persistence gains justice and response from an elite judge. Theme—Prayer: The Eucharist is the local church’s moment of prayer for and union with all humanity and creation. What are the current situations and events that could be the focus of our Eucharist celebration and intercession today?


Nov 4—Ordinary Time 31. Wis 11:22-12:2. God’s wisdom (Sophia) permeates everything with love. 2 Thes 1:11-2:2. Paul prays for the Thessalonians aware that God will be revealed in them. Lk 19:1-10. Zacchaeus models true discipleship and conversion to Jesus. Theme—Responding to God. Each of today’s readings reveals God’s desire to be with humanity and creation; they invite an openness to God’s action which reaches out in love to others. Zacchaeus shows us how.

Nov 11—Ordinary Time 32: 2 Mac 7:1-2.9-14. Jewish martyrs witness to God’s power to raise them up in resurrection. 2 Thes 2:16-3:5. God is faithful and loves us especially in adversity. Lk 20:27-38. Jesus teaches about a vision beyond the present which is a share in God’s life. Theme—God’s Life: People constantly reflect on their present and commit themselves to God even in adversity. They witness to God’s presence in their world and God’s life continues beyond what appears to be. Our communities are filled with such ordinary and faithful witnesses.

Nov 18—Ordinary Time 33: Mal 3:19-20. The prophet affirms God’s care (‘sun of righteousness’) will continue to us in the midst of difficulty. 2 Thes 3:7-12. People are encouraged to continue to live committed to the present world rather than focus purely on the world to come. Lk 21:5-19. Jesus encourages his disciples not to be led astray, or follow messianic pretenders, promising everything. Theme—Fidelity. In our local community, many people continue to model fidelity in love of God and discipleship of Jesus even in the midst of difficulties. These people can be named and celebrated. A little note about the gospel. This is apocalyptic writing at its best, not literal description but theological insights into God’s presence.

Nov 25—Jesus’ Universal Authority: 2 Sam 5:1-3. David is anointed king over Israel. Col 1:12-20. A famous hymn celebrating Jesus’ cosmic, universal rule and leadership of the Church. Lk 23:35-43. Jesus’ final word before death is forgiveness to a criminal. Jesus’ compassion continues right to the end of his life. Theme—Compassion: Jesus shows that a true leader (in political, civil or church life) is one who models compassion, especially to those who seem undeserved. Such leadership goes against the convention. Compassion, in this approach, is shown to those only deserve it. Jesus’ approach is non discriminatory.

Liturgical Year A

Dec 2—Advent 1: Is 2:1-5. God’s vision for Jerusalem: a place of union and justice. Rom 13:11-14. Paul encourages spiritual alertness in the present. Mt 24:37-44. Jesus encourages disciples to ‘keep awake’, spiritual alertness and sensitivity to what is now needed. Theme—Alertness: This first Sunday of the new liturgical year begins with encouragement to live sensitive to God’s presence to oneself, the community and world. ‘Spiritual alertness’ is necessary for recognising God’s advent. What ways are helpful for allowing us to grow sensitive to God’s presence?

Dec 9—Advent 2: Is 11:1-10. The prophet envisions a new era of social communion, cosmic harmony and deep kindness initiated through God’s spirit through the ‘root of Jesse.’ Rom 15:4-9. Paul encourages community hospitality and unity as his readers await God’s coming. Mt 3:1-12. John the Baptist proclaims Jesus’ coming as he encourages his audience to prepare themselves through a life of repentance and conversion. Theme—Conversion. The Baptist’s message announces the essential dispositions in us as we prepare for the birth of Jesus: Openness to God and our world, and a spirit of conversion. These have universal and cosmic
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Implications (as in Isaiah).

Dec 16—Advent 3: Is 35:1-6a, 10. God’s coming will bring cosmic and earthly renewal, and human liberation. The whole universe and all enlivens it will be liberated. James 5:7-10. We patiently await God’s coming. We live peaceably with all. Mt 11:2-11. Jesus announces his mission of liberation and healing. Theme—Liberation and healing. Our world struggles and is in need of God’s healing. God’s Will is for wholeness, healing and happiness. We celebrate God’s desire for creation, including human beings.

Dec 23—Advent 4: Is 7:10-14. God promises through the prophet. King Ahaz will receive a sign of royal perpetuity. The King resists God’s promise. Rom 1:1-7. This introduction to Paul’s great letter summarises the heart of the Gospel: Jesus’ role with humanity. Mt 1:18-25. The announcement of the birth of Jesus to Joseph: Jesus is named ‘God-with-us.’ Theme—God’s presence. Every Eucharist is a celebration of God’s presence in this community, and through this community to the world. Many are searching to experiencing this presence. Examples abound.

Dec 25—Nativity: Is 9:2-7. The prophet honours a future anointed leader who will be a source of authority and hope. Titus 2:11-14. God’s grace has appeared in Jesus who offers us hope and release. Lk 2:1-16. The birth of Jesus in a city setting. Theme—Birth. The metaphor of birth is a reminder of hope, promise, newness and freshness. Jesus’ birth brings the promise of these to our world. Can we celebrate how this is happening around us, and name where hope and promise are needed?

Dec 30—Holy Family: Sir 3:2-6.12-14. A collection of wisdom sayings about family harmony and respect. Col 3:12-21. We are God’s saints, beloved and forgiven. (Unless the last few verses 18-21 are explained adequately in the light of the Greco-Roman understanding of the 1st century CE and household relationships, they are best omitted). Mt 2:13-15. 19-23. Joseph responds to God (‘the dream’). This response shapes his attitude to his family. Theme—Family life. Much unhelpful commentary is offered on this day that excludes those who are single or adds more guilt to those whose family living is difficult. How can the attitudes that permeated the relationships of Jesus’ own family be modelled in this community today?

Jan 6—Epiphany of Jesus: Is 60:1-6. God’s light shines on creation and humanity. This makes a difference to how our world is perceived. Eph 3:2-3.5. The mystery of God’s universal and hospitable love means that share in God’s life. Mt 2:12. The wise follow the stars; there eyes are on the heavens, their ear to the Scriptures and their desire on Jesus. Theme—Being Enlightened. At the core of every being is the inner light of God. We affirm our search for God and the way we draw close to God through Jesus. Epiphany is a continuous feast (however unrealised) in the heart of every human being. Can we identify some of the ways this happens today?

Jan 13—Baptism of Jesus: Is 42:1-4, 6-7. God delights in the Servant, who will bring liberation to the disconsolate. Acts 10:34-38. Peter acclaims to a Roman household of Cornelius that Jesus is God’s baptised and anointed one. All people, irrespective of background, belong to God. Mt 3:13-17. Jesus is baptised and declared ‘beloved.’ Theme—Being Beloved. In a world of struggle, this celebration offers an opportunity for the baptised community to remember and celebrate its ‘belovedness.’ God delights in us. This is an important moment to name who God is for us, and we for God, especially when contrary voices seem to dominate.

Jan 20—Ordinary Time 2: Is 49:3, 5-6. God’s Servant is chosen from before time, with a mission of restoration to a broken and dispersed people. 1 Cor 1:1-3. The beginning of a famous letter, in which the Corinthian Christians are reminded of their call to sainthood, and their relationship to God and Jesus. Jn 1:29-34. John the Baptist recognises Jesus as the chosen one and possessor of God’s Spirit. Theme—Spirit Possessed: Our communion with Jesus through baptism and Eucharist confirms us as those who are possessed with the Spirit of God. We are called, like the Servant, to proclaim restoration and hope to people.

Jan 27—Ordinary Time 3: Is 9:1-4. A beautiful poem of God’s overwhelming vision for humanity: light, peace and freedom in the midst of oppression. 1 Cor 1:10-13.17-18. Paul addresses the problem at Corinth of division. The true source of unity is Jesus, the Good News. Mt 4:12-23. Jesus’ presence and ministry echoes the Is reading of liberation, and the first community of disciples is called. Theme—Liberation and Hope: The hope expressed in the vision of Isaiah in the first reading is always desired. Mt’s Jesus expresses this as he calls his first disciples. How is this community today an expression of that hope and liberty, of Isaiah’s vision?