

## Between hammer and anvil

**Throughout the Western world we are stunned, perplexed, frightened. Radical Islam has come against us unexpectedly. Its power of reaching into our cities the finger of death, its glee in ruin and blood, its religious zealotry, have destroyed the slumber of our civilisation. We have been awakened from dreams of peace, plenty and pleasure by the roar of a nightmare reality.**

“Why? And why us?” These are the questions we ask. We phrase them in the language of justice denied. We set them in tones of wounded innocence. We colour them with righteousness and sentimentality. We who have created the earthly paradise - and who want nothing but that others should enter into it - have been rejected. We who, for the common good, have brought history to an end, find our achievement despised and the engines of history set whirring again. Were it not tragic, we Westerners would make in our confusion a pathetic spectacle.

### Key to history

For an answer to the questions raised by every Islamic bomb, we might turn aside from the empanelled commentariat, and enter for a moment into a Benedictine monastery. The day is Saturday; the hour Lauds; the monks are chanting.

*Ipsi me provocaverunt in eo, qui non erat Deus, et irritaverunt in vantibus suis:*

*Et ego provocabo eos in eo, qui non est populus, et in gente stulta irritabo illos.*

(“They have provoked me with a false god and angered me with their vanities:

So I will provoke them with a false people and vex them with a foolish nation.”)

The ‘educated’ westerner would likely dismiss it. “The music is haunting and lovely. But the text propagates an ancient and dangerous

**Religion is  
the problem;  
the Church the  
problem-in-  
chief.**

myth about the jealous God of the Jews and how he set Egyptians and Babylonians against his own people when they took a legitimate interest in other ‘spiritual realities’. Well, we know that there is no God – and, if there were a God or gods, we would have no room for the jealous kind. Jealous gods mean war, and we are men of peace. The cultural imperative for today is to put an end to religions

based upon gods who will brook no rival.”

But the Canticum of Moses that the monks are singing contains not only religious doctrine about the one God and his exclusive worship. It also contains a sociology of strife between peoples and nations. Nations are related to one another by their virtues and vices: and the vices of each bring them into collision with one another.

The presumption, greed, complacency, self-obsession, infidelity, sexual perversity and child murder practiced by one culture calls forth first the resentment, then the hatred, and finally the violence of another marked by pride, vanity, envy, spite, grievance, and fratricide.

### Law of conflict

The law of equal and opposite reactions is not confined to the physical realm. It applies also in the social, political, and cultural spheres; it operates within communities and between peoples and nations. Atheism and moral relativism on one side calls forth religious fanaticism and puritanism on the other. In one culture the idealisation of human loves finds expression in another as the celebration of hatreds. Among one people the cult of life here-and-now finds its response among another people as a cult of death. Such are the elemental forces that underlie conflict between nations. Each threatens its own chastisement – to use the biblical term – by drawing

*continued page 3*

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### Page 1

#### Editorial – Between hammer and anvil

The Church in the West is caught between the rising tide of Islam from without and radical secularism from within.

### Page 4

#### Young Austrian without illusions

Oriens interviews the new President of Una Voce International, Mr Ralf Siebenbuerger.

### Page 7

#### Changelings cry discipline

Fr Ephraem Chifley OP looks at *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

### Page 9

#### Letters from America

Kirk Kramer reports on the American scene.

### Page 11

#### The rise of Muslim Europe

By Irving Hexham

### Page 13

#### Christians in the cross hairs

A report on the persecution of Christians in Egypt.

### Pages 15ff

#### Reviews – Books & “The Passion of the Christ”

*continued from page 1*

down upon itself the enmity of others with opposite vices.

So when Mr. Average Westerner looks horrified upon the sight of his own bloodied and mangled flesh, he blames radical Islam – and, of course, radical Islam is the immediate cause. But it is not the root of the evil. We ourselves are the ultimate cause of our agonies. In a certain sense, such injuries as we have suffered are self-inflicted. By denying God and his law, we have sown the whirlwind, and have reaped its harvest.

The condition of the Catholic Church in the western world figures centrally in these misfortunes. Within hours of the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington voices were raised decrying religion and, in particular, the Catholic Church. It is, certain intellectuals claimed, the real cause of all our woes and as such a fit object of hatred and of warfare. Books of revelation, faith, orthodoxies, the very name of God, must be expunged.

### Correlation of opposites

Here Oriens takes part with the intellectuals. They are right, up to a point. Religion is indeed the problem; and the Catholic Church is the problem-in-chief. However, it is not that we believe too much or too ardently. The issue is that we believe too little and with too little fire. The ferocious certainties of fundamentalist Islam, its infatuation with martyrdom, and its lively expectation of an erotic heaven, provides the perfect counterpoise to the Catholic faith as it is lived and believed in the Western world: its few remaining beliefs tentatively held; its evasion of death, suffering, and sacrifice; its pre-occupations with sexual liberty in this life and its

vague hopes of a spiritual heaven in which personal identities fade away. Even the stormy mullahs of Islam serve as an exquisite correlative to the studied hesitancy and, in some cases, downright unbelief to be found among the Western Catholic clergy. Many are the bishops and priests for whom the passion of the Christ, and its unbloody representation in the Mass, are an embarrassment. Many too are those who will not declare with the Apostles that “Jesus” is the only Name under heaven by which men can be saved. It is, then, on account of the infidelity by Catholics – on account of our flirtation with apostasy - that times such as these have broken upon the West.

Unfortunately, our political and religious leaders do not see it this way. The former are preoccupied with ensuring that the latter are joined in syncretic embrace with mullahs and rabbis, and the latter are all too ready to oblige. If, however, Presidents and Prime Ministers really understood what was happening, and if they really had the interests of their countries at heart, they would be putting the hard word on the Catholic bishops:

Why aren't your churches full of praying and fasting people? Where is your Blessed Sacrament, and where your processions? Where are your ancient symbols and rituals? Why do you not deploy them and invoke a blessing on us and the gift of wisdom? Where are your monks and nuns, their houses of austere life, and the daily round of prayer that would surely move God to mercy and to our help? Why have you allowed your spiritual arms to go rusty when their exercise is what makes for peace between nations and harmony within the state?

We dream of course. There is no one to ask such questions, and if there were, few who could understand them.

### Hammer and anvil

It is just possible then that we Catholics have much further to fall, and greater things to suffer, before we understand how far we have betrayed the blood of Christ and repent of it. Turning points and New Pentecosts are frequently sighted and announced. Oriens does not doubt that the future is full of good things that it cannot now see. But when official organs report, for example, that in Australia levels of Catholic practice are down to 15 per cent - much the same as in France - and with no end to the decline in sight, then we might just as plausibly compare the present state of the Catholic Church in the West to that of the Kingdom of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar appeared before Jerusalem in 586 BC. For today, in 2004 AD, the Catholic Church is caught between the Koran, carried forward on a rising demographic tide, and the propagandists and agents of the secularist democratic state whose animosity is rising fast. We can expect to feel the blows of the latter long before we experience the impact of the former.

So there is no hope? Not at all. Even at this late stage, the course of history can be changed. Each one of us can start today by rejecting the post-Conciliar revolution and emulating our Catholic ancestors in their ways of life, in their worship, and in their faith. The only thing that could stop us is fear of what others might say. In fact the distance between where we are now, and where we could be in a moment from now, is not very great at all: just the distance between our knees and the floor.

*“Veni sancte Spiritus...”*



## Young Austrian without illusions

Gerard McManus interviews Ralf Siebenbuerger, the new President of the international Una Voce Federation

**An Austrian journalist, Mr Ralf Siebenbuerger, aged 44, was recently elected president of International Una Voce Federation, replacing pioneering writer and polemicist, Michael Davies, in the important role.**

In a frank interview with *Oriens* Mr Siebenbuerger discussed his background, his thoughts on the traditional Mass movement, as well as outlining his hopes for his term in office. Some of Mr Siebenbuerger's views suggest that the new president will be no less a forthright defender of Catholic tradition than his formidable Welsh predecessor.

Explaining his background and attraction to tradition, Mr Siebenbuerger first explained that his homeland had been one of the most traditional Catholic countries in the Europe.

"We owe this to our role as the centre of the Habsburg Monarchy," he said. "For centuries, the Habsburgs were Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. And the Roman Emperor - as the secular counterpart to the Pope - had to be Catholic as well. And so did his subjects.

"That's why I am the first president in the history of the International Una Voce Federation who has been Catholic since his childhood and not a convert.

### Contemporary biography

"That's definitely not a merit. If it is an advantage, I don't know. For a convert doesn't accept things as self-understanding like someone who has been growing up with them."

However, Mr Siebenbuerger said the historically Catholic culture in Austria did not necessarily translate into personal faith here and now.

"My biography corresponds to many of my contemporaries. Sometime in puberty, the Church started to bore me. I felt myself less and less at home in the Church - elegant, hollow phrases, humanity babble, but no warmth, no feeling of God.

"I ceased to attend Mass. My self-definition at that time was: 'I believe in God, but not in the Church!'"

"At first, I started to study law, communication science and the history of art. Then, I became a journalist, and my attitude towards the Church was quite adequate for this job."

Mr Siebenbuerger came back to the faith after 10 years while studying at university under the influence of several orthodox priests, including a prominent bishop and a brilliant Benedictine monk who celebrated the *novus ordo* but who were superb preachers.

"My friends and I became acquainted with another priestly personality that became important to my spiritual development," he said.

Mr Siebenbuerger said the young priest, Msgr Reinhard Knittel, was from the remote Alps and had "benefited from the Old Rite in his childhood much longer than we young urbans".

"It was he who introduced us to the secrets of liturgy and who

explained the necessity of preserving the Old Rite," he said.

Together with a group of students the nucleus of the Indult community in Vienna was founded in 1988.

In 1993 Siebenbuerger was elected president of Una Voce Austria, and in October last year president of International Una Voce.

Mr Siebenbuerger described the traditional Mass movement as being in a "quite healthy" state with strong member organisations in most of Europe and new countries wanting to join.

"Africa is waking up now and discovering the liturgical tradition, with Nigeria leading the way," he said.

"In North America the Una Voce is vigorous. In Latin America, we are now present in Argentina and Chile, and in at least one other South American Una Voce is on the point of forming an organization."

There was an "undeniable backlog of demand" in Asia, according to Mr Siebenbuerger, where for now Una Voce organisations are present only in India and Singapore.

"It is conspicuous at least in Europe - but I presume that it would not be different in Australia - that in communities where the Mass is celebrated in the Old Rite, the average age of Mass attendants is clearly lower than in communities that celebrate the *novus ordo*.

"The fairy tale, that the Old Rite was something for old ladies only, was refuted long ago.

### 'Me generation' Mass

"In contrast, the liturgical Woodstock of the new rite is for the '68ers' only: it is for those Catholics who cannot understand that the younger generation does not admire their achievements."

Mr Siebenbuerger said the contrast between the two age groups made him all the more optimistic that the *novus ordo* would ultimately remain an "episode in the history" of the Church.

"One can make fun of God, but one will not get away with it: He straightens everything crooked," he said.

Asked what he believed was necessary for the traditional Mass to flourish again, Mr Siebenbuerger answered with an Austrian anecdote.

"In 1938, when Nazi Germany had invaded Austria, the *Reichspropagandaminister*, Dr Joseph Goebbels, came to Vienna in order to visit the cultural institutions."

Goebbels also met Paul Horbiger, a very popular Austrian stage and film-actor who appeared later in Graham Green's *The Third Man*, and was known to be anti-Nazi.

"Goebbels asked Horbiger: 'What can we do for the local film industry?'"  
"Horbiger replied: 'Let it alone!'"

Mr Siebenbuerger said the Traditional Mass was just like the Austrian film industry.

"If the hierarchy 'let it alone' it will continue on its way just as unperturbedly and successfully as it did in previous centuries," he said.

"We just want to remain Catholic, nothing more. Once the Traditional Mass and the *novus ordo* operate under equal conditions, the more vital, the authentic rite will prevail," he said.

"That's why those who do not want to admit that the liturgical reform

went into a wrong way, put up a fierce resistance to the general indult.

"Only so long as the sometimes vexatious restrictions against the Old Liturgy are maintained, only so long as those who attend the Old Liturgy are defamed in public and treated like lepers by the hierarchy, only under such conditions will dominance of the *novus ordo* be upheld."

Mr Siebenbuerger said he could not say whether the old liturgy was the antidote against the systematic crisis of the Church, but it was *an* antidote nonetheless.



Una Voce President Ralf Siebenbuerger

"Doctrine has a lot to do with liturgy," he said. "Liturgy expresses doctrine. What liturgy expresses, is believed by the faithful. Or, as we say in Latin: *Lex orandi, lex credendi!*"

Nevertheless, it would be naive to believe that the Church would enter into a golden age, once the Old Mass has returned, he said.

### Crisis of shepherds

Mr Siebenbuerger said the Church had failed to preach Catholic doctrines, and the bishops cannot escape responsibility for this. The teaching the

faith is their responsibility alone, so they must answer for what is taught.

"Often, when I have to deal with them, I ask myself 'What do they really believe?'" he said.

"You surely know the proverbial saying: 'A fish rots from its head.' The crisis of the Church is a crisis of the bishops. There should be more care applied to the selection of the bishops."

Mr Siebenbuerger welcomed recent attempts by Rome to fix some aspects of the *novus ordo* Mass through the publication in March this year of a series of directives under the title of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, but he warned that these measures only masked the underlying problems with the new rite.

"The *novus ordo* is a creation of the 1960s, and is now out of fashion. As a result, the desire to pep it up will actually increase in coming years. But so, consequently, will the abuses endure."

He cited several reasons for the document's unlikely success:

- Details of that document were published long before it was released to provoke protests that in turn induced the Vatican to adopt weaker disciplinary language.
- As in the past, even when documents have the Pope's own signature, they are simply ignored by those committing liturgical abuses.
- The adverse Church-wide reaction to last year's encyclical on the Mass, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* which foreshadowed the recent disciplinary measures, and to a long list of other similar documents issued during this pontificate, testifies to the Holy See's limited power to correct liturgical abuses.
- Abuses are "like computer viruses" and the job of Cardinals Arinze and Ratzinger's staff could be

compared with that of employees in an enterprise producing anti-virus-software. No sooner have they created a fix for one problem, a new one arises. The good Cardinals cannot contemplate a systematic reform.

- The *novus ordo* is not repairable. Abuses are inherent in the system.

### Waltzing with Cardinals

Mr Siebenbuerger met in March this year with senior Vatican officials, including Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, whom he described as a kind and generous man with a good sense of humour.

“But the fact we laughed together did not obscure the fact that our meeting was not very encouraging,” he said.

“The Cardinal confirmed what has already been said months ago, that the Vatican is working on a solution for the easier application of the Indult in dioceses where the local authorities are not co-operative.

“I cannot imagine how that shall work, particularly as plans for an Apostolic Administration have been dropped.

“Any solution that pleases the local bishops will be toothless. And a toothless solution is no solution.”

Mr Siebenbuerger said there would be no retreat by Una Voce from the demand for either a general indult or an Apostolic Administration.

“This is not because of obstinacy or disobedience, but because there is no other practical solution in sight,” he said.

Mr Siebenbuerger said that after the Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos’ homily last year at Saint Mary Major, many people thought it might be only a short time before a general indult would be granted and that tradition would regain

“full citizenship” in the Church.

“What a pious error!” he said.

“Friendly words are quickly spoken. But words are one thing and deeds another.”

“A significant section of the hierarchy does not intend to grant citizenship to the tradition in the Church, but just want to win us as allies for the rescue of a ‘purged’ *novus ordo* and against the Church’s Jacobins who consider the reforms have not gone far enough.”

However, Mr Siebenbuerger said the hierarchy would have to recognize that it would not find allies in the traditional movement for this purpose.

“One cannot cure malaria with chamomile tea,” he said. “And neither can one cure the crisis of the Church with cosmetic operations at the corpse of the *novus ordo*.”

### Romanità perplexa

Mr Siebenbuerger said he found Rome’s view that there was only one Roman rite perplexing.

“Especially, because Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos explained in the very same audience with us that the Old Rite cannot be celebrated in St Peter’s Basilica because this basilica is the center and the heart of the Universal Church and for that there should only be celebrated the rite that the Church celebrates worldwide.

This position, Mr Siebenbuerger said, posed a problem rather than solving one.

“If the *novus ordo* and the Old Rite are one and the same, then I don’t understand what is the obstacle to celebrating the Old Rite in St. Peter’s Basilica.”

“Are they the same rite or not? Rome will have to make a decision.

Either it is one rite, or they are two different rites. They cannot be, at one and the same time, *only one* and *two different* rites.”

Mr Siebenbuerger said he was also astonished by the Cardinal’s claim made during their audience that the Fraternity of St. John Vianney at Campos was given an Apostolic Administration because Bishop de Castro Mayer had gone much farther than Archbishop Lefebvre and had gone into schism by creating a counter-diocese so that granting the Apostolic Administration was the only way to heal this schism.

“What does that mean in plain language?” he asked “That one has only to be disobedient to be taken serious by the hierarchy?”

Mr Siebenbuerger said he viewed his role as president as being similar to that of a head of a trade union organisation.

“I am the chairman of a union of faithful who stand true to the traditional faith,” he said.

“So, I’ll open my mouth whenever it is necessary in order to protect the interests of the traditional faithful.

“I don’t cherish illusions: From my own power, I cannot achieve anything. What I might achieve depends on God only. For that, the most important thing in my charge is prayer. We all will only achieve, what He allows us.”

“So, I stick to the sentence in St Paul’s letter to the Romans: “*Si Deus cum nobis, quis contra nos?*” (Rom 8, 31) and trust in Him.

“It would be nice, if Lord God would allow me to see the general indult one day. But I have no claim upon Him that He will fulfill my wish during my term of office.”



# Changelings cry discipline

By Ephraem Chifley OP

**“To have been born into a world of beauty, to die amid ugliness, is the common fate of all exiles,” Evelyn Waugh lamented in his autobiography – an observation that we can easily make our own in matters liturgical. The latest document from the Roman curia, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* demonstrates the true dimensions of that exile.**

*Redemptionis Sacramentum* takes as its point of departure *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* – last year’s document from the Holy Father that held out so much hope. It seeks to bring some principles to bear on the general chaos in which the western liturgical tradition currently finds itself, reinforcing or enacting regulations concerning vestments, vessels, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, who can give the homily (only the priest or deacon), the bread and wine for use at Mass. Notably the communion plate has made a comeback. There is even a list of *graviora delicta* (serious crimes) punishable by excommunication.

## Harrowing

This new call to order from Rome makes for harrowing reading. It is not so much the many reported abuses but its contradictory tone of optimism about the conciliar liturgical reforms. These abuses are just “shadows” on a brave program of plainly necessary *aggiornamento*. We’ve heard it all before but it still leaves us soaking in the warm bath of middle-class hospitality rites that characterizes most parochial liturgies. Despite the Instruction’s stern tone there won’t be much positive change in any Parish Sunday Mass

anywhere in the world. Good “stern” was needed about 25 years ago. It was needed when Episcopal Conferences played fast and loose about communion in the hand, when altar girls were tolerated, then approved - thereby alienating any priest who had made a stand on the issue, when communion services became the norm in nun led parishes, when gyno-fascists enforced gender-neutral language. The list of occasions on which Rome backed down on liturgical questions is a long and sorry one. All of these abuses are still tolerated, arguably encouraged at the Episcopal level. Rome telling deacons that wearing the dalmatic is commendable is simply sewing sequins onto the Emperor’s new clothes.

## Ungodly centred

The progressive wing of the Church will resent and ignore this document as a bolt from the blue. It doesn’t represent Rome’s accustomed position of measured accommodation

ideologically driven change in ritual and in its functional teaching that lost the Church two generations. “Shadows” these abuses may well be, they are not, though, unfortunate aberrations. They are a consequence of that anomie - that sense of personal and social displacement, exile if you like - engendered by radical change in such a total structure as the Catholic Church. What began as a de-mystification process, a making accessible to the common man, has become a thorough disenchantment, not just with ritual forms but with the realities they used to incarnate. When people stop kneeling for the Canon and to receive Holy Communion they don’t just give up a medieval worldview, they give up a living experience of the Eucharist as Divine Presence. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* is already a dead letter, because the vibrant God-centred liturgy it speaks of no longer exists - except in scattered pockets. Rome,

**That instinctive familiarity with the grammar of the Holy that once characterised the Catholic people no longer exists**

to the Spirit of the Age – for this, at least, we can be thankful. A juridical document, though, based on a self-evident paradox is an exercise in a non-existent authority. In Western countries at least, it was principally

in its misguided collegiality, killed it off by three decades of neglect and, on occasion, active opposition. That instinctive familiarity with the grammar of the Holy that once characterised the Catholic people

no longer exists. Let us take but one example - the disrespect that is shown to the altar in our churches. It is not unusual to encounter the ladies of the parish having a good old natter around the sanctuary after mass, elbows and handbags resting conveniently on the pre-eminent symbol of Christ our Saviour and His Sacred Passion. Even the mildest of rebukes is met with philistine incomprehension – they’re just celebrating community after all. The task of liturgical catechesis that confronts a church which has so far forgotten its own ritual language is humanly impossible – certainly beyond the law to repair. You have to say, though, that it’s better to have *Redemptionis Sacramentum* than what we’ve been used to. At least these odd rituals cannot claim any longer to have the legal force of custom – perhaps Rome’s main idea.

The new draft translation in English of the modern Roman Missal invites similar reflections. Though here an enduring contribution to sacrality in the celebration of the *novus ordo* could yet be made. It is literal to the point of

being a bit clunky. Phrases that were not translated in the 1972 Missal have been inserted once more: the climactic, repetitive series of enunciations of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist in the Canon; the threefold *mea culpa* in the *Confiteor*; “my sacrifice and yours” in the response to the *Orate fratres*; “And with your spirit”.

### Latin in effect

It seems that the Vatican is interested in the English not only because of its importance as a language, but because it has become the de facto Latin of the modern Church. Translations into local languages frequently follow the English rather than being directly rendered from the Latin. If the English version fails the test then it has doctrinal and liturgical ramifications for churches in the Third World – hence the literalism of the new draft. This is a shame for the English liturgy, perhaps unavoidable but a shame nonetheless. The language of Gerard Manley Hopkins and T.S Eliot (we also have to mention Cranmer and Coverdale) is an elegant

and sonorous instrument made by political necessity to play from an inferior score. On the positive side, time and solemn repetition wear away the rough edges of words. The ancient is good – eventually.

You have to wonder whether Rome has learnt much about changing well-known texts. The shift from liturgical Latin and the various interim translations was bad enough. How the people will cope with another major interruption to their life of prayer remains to be seen. For all the best reasons, and maybe some of the worst, there will be spirited resistance to the new New Missal. For all its faults the 1972 translation has weathered 30 years and formed the Eucharistic life of two generations. Should it now be tossed to one side? Again curial expediency seems to have won out over a careful anthropology of human ritual and liturgical memory. There should be no joy in that for any thoughtful traditionalist. We need no more exiles in this vale of tears.

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## Promises! Promises! Promises!

Recent reports out of Rome hint – yet again - that good things are on the way for traditional Catholics. But are we really getting closer to a credible solution?

**According to a report carried in the American Latin Mass Magazine, and given wider circulation in The Catholic Herald in June, the Vatican is about to set the traditional Latin Mass on a firmer legal foundation.**

Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, Prefect for the Congregation of the Clergy, has been quoted as saying the Vatican was preparing to issue a

“juridical guarantee” in favour of the classical Roman Rite of Mass.

The Catholic Herald interprets these remarks as “clear indication that Rome wants to embrace traditionalists by ensuring that they can attend old rite Masses if they so wish.”

The classical rite of Mass is available to Catholics under the *Ecclesia Dei*

regime established *motu proprio* in 1988. But the effectiveness of the measure is dependent upon local bishops, many of them hostile, who decide whether or not to implement *Ecclesia Dei* in their dioceses.

Meanwhile, as the *The Catholic Herald* remarks, “controversy over the new rite has increased rather than subsided, with many Catholics demoralised by liturgical abuses that have occurred since the old rite was replaced in the 1960s”.

“The paradox running through liturgical debate [is that] traditionalists are now the ones clamouring for

# Letters from America

United States journalist **Kirk Kramer\*** reports for Oriens with news and views about events in American Catholic life

**A mixture of setbacks and successes has marked the first half of the year 2004 for Catholics in the United States who love the old Mass and the old Faith.**

An English-speaking prelate working in Rome, who is friendly to the aspirations of traditional Catholics, described the situation for *Oriens*.

“The bishops in the U.S. are so intimidated because of their malfeasance in the way they have governed,” he said.

## Credibility shot

“Their credibility is shot and they know it. They are afraid to make any moral or prophetic statement. But the only way to get their authority back is to act. It’s as if God is saying to them, ‘You’ve really failed as shepherds. I’m going to give you a chance to redeem yourselves with the election.’ It’s so clear with [presidential candidate Senator John] Kerry.”

Kerry, a Catholic of a sort, is one of the most virulently pro-abortion politicians in America.

In December, then-Bishop Raymond Burke of the Diocese of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, took the hitherto unheard-of step of writing to Catholic members of the Wisconsin state legislature, telling them not to receive Holy Communion until they conform their voting record on abortion to Christian moral principles.

Faithful Catholics with long memories could not help contrasting the reaction to Burke’s act with another incident 25 years ago, when another

American prelate, Bishop Joseph Sullivan of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, stood up for the Gospel of Life. When a university chaplain invited moralist Father Charles Curran, a dissenter from the teaching of *Humanae vitae*, to speak at his parish, Sullivan cancelled the invitation. For his trouble Sullivan became a pariah on America’s hapless bench of bishops, and died in obscurity.

Burke, by contrast, has been named Archbishop of St Louis. And his example seems to have emboldened many of his episcopal colleagues. In April, Joseph Galante, the newly appointed Bishop of Camden, New Jersey, located in a heavily Catholic population center between New York City and Philadelphia, announced that he would refuse Communion to New Jersey’s pro-abortion Catholic governor, James McGreevey. In May, Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs issued a pastoral letter saying Catholics cannot receive Communion if they vote for politicians who support legal abortion, stem-cell research, euthanasia or homosexual ‘marriage’.

This is not the kind of talk, or more to the point, action that Catholics in America are used to. A recent article in the *Catholic World Report*, ‘The Peasants of Autun’, summed up the experience of the last few decades well:

“In broad terms, at this moment in history, those of us who believe in hell are governed by bishops who don’t ... Bishops can get quite animated about battered women or water quality or even Bolivian debt relief, but when the conversation turns to sanctifying grace their eyes glaze over, their lips part,

and they start blowing bubbles with their spit. With very few exceptions, they’re just not interested in religion.”

This calls to mind comments made by Roger Cardinal Mahoney of Los Angeles during his ad limina visit to Rome in May. Catholic News Service (the public relations arm of the bishops’ conference) reported that Mahoney told a journalist, apparently without irony, “I’m slightly mystified why all this is coming up now. We’ve had pro-choice Catholic politicians going to Communion since *Roe vs. Wade*,” the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

While some younger bishops are acting like shepherds, many of the aging radicals of the 1960s remain in power, and their decisions sometimes are disheartening in the extreme to traditionalists.

## Pastoral ‘sensitivity’

In May, Catholics in Orange County, California, in the suburbs of Los Angeles, were heart-broken when one of the largest and most successful indult communities in the country was effectively dismantled when ill health forced the retirement of Father Daniel Johnson.

Father Johnson had been given St Mary’s by the Sea in Huntington Beach, a run-down church on the verge of closure, 25 years ago. By dint of a zeal worthy of St Paul, he has made hundreds, if not thousands of converts, by walking his entire parish and knocking on the door of every residence within its boundaries, Catholic or not. As soon as he finished

the last residence, he would begin again, so that he visited every house in the territorial boundaries of the parish five times.

Father Johnson added an extra Sunday Mass to the parish schedule, initially Latin using the Missal of Paul VI. Later the Bishop of Orange gave permission for Mass in the traditional rite. But following Father Johnson's retirement, the traditional Mass has been cancelled. In its place, priests from a conservative Norbertine abbey nearby will offer a Latin Mass in the new rite. Not exactly Bugnini and his band playing "Bring in the clowns", but for the crowds of young families who have grown accustomed to the traditional rite, this is an eminently unpastoral solution.

### Son of Pearson

Graduates of Pearson College at the University of Kansas, whose faculty included Professors Dennis Quinn, John Senior and Frank Nelick, are part of a new effort to establish a Catholic liberal arts college in the state of Wyoming.

In American usage, the word "college" refers to an institution for post-secondary undergraduate education. The college will be grounded in the educational principles so successfully employed in Pearson College, which regarded as fundamental Aristotle's saying that philosophy begins in wonder - that is to say, delight, awe, admiration. This disposition to wonder does not begin solely by the study of texts, but by a direct apprehension of the created world. In Pearson College, this took the form of studying calligraphy, singing folk songs, making candles, riding horses, baking bread, learning to waltz.

Father Bob Cook, a Wyoming priest, was interviewed in an article in the May 11, 2004, edition of the *Casper Star-Tribune*.

"Some members of the founders committee have noticed that so many young people, they read a poem about a horse, but they don't know what a horse is. I mean, they've seen a picture, but knowing a horse? They don't."

Part of the idea behind the college was that young people today get caught up in a technology-heavy world, and they would benefit from a college experience that involved such things as caring for a horse, or a calf, and hikes through the country.

"It is really an attempt to establish a remedial connection to the real world... The creativity that's engendered by living on a farm is pretty good, pretty helpful."

Fr Cook said the founders consider Wyoming to be an ideal place for learning the kinds of natural values that come from living close to the land.

The college committee is looking for a site, and hope that the college will open in the next three years. Enrolment will be limited to 400 students.

### Clear Creek

Another institution whose original members were largely drawn from the ranks of Pearson College alumni, the Benedictine Priory of Our Lady of Clear Creek in Oklahoma, saw the blessing of the first stone of their new monastic church by the Bishop of Tulsa in November of 2003.

In April of this year, the monks were obliged to suspend construction owing to a lack of funds. But several candidates arrive each year to test a monastic vocation, including, in recent months, two Australians. The monks make do in converted ranch buildings while awaiting the completion of their new church and monastery.

"God's got lots of money," says one of the monks.

On Holy Thursday this year, Dom Philip Anderson, the Prior of Clear Creek, preached a sermon worthy of his old teachers at the University of Kansas. He said in part:

"In one of his most famous works entitled Symposium, Plato takes up the theme of love, soaring to heights rarely attained by human genius. But what Christ's own words during the Last Supper teach us about love utterly surpass the most penetrating intuitions of the philosophers. There is here something altogether new and transcendent: 'A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you.' After washing their feet in a gesture of unprecedented familiarity, Jesus, through His great discourse of farewell, leads His disciples (and us with them) upwards into the perspective of a participation in the very life of the Most Holy Trinity. Friendship is about a common appreciation of something higher than ourselves, of a beauty which touches us from above in such a way as to unite us..."

"Let us ask Our Lady, Mother of the Church, Mater Ecclesiae, to obtain for us, who enjoy the incomparable riches of the traditional Latin liturgy, a sense of thanksgiving for this grace for a grace it is, indeed. Let us not give into any form of that spiritual pride, which empties our liturgical life of all its authenticity, that is to say, of its truth. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy Eucharist, is the banquet of Divine Life, of Divine Love and of unity, or it is nothing. *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. Where charity and love abound, there God is. Amen."

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# The rise of Muslim Europe

Islam is invading Europe by stealth. Immigration and the power of demographic change could hand to Islam what its armies could not take.

By Irving Hexham\*

**Anyone visiting Western Europe today encounters a deceptively secular society where the nominal religion is still Christianity. Therefore, it is easy to assume that Europeans are essentially Christian even though many churches are empty and real faith is rarely encountered.**

Appearances are deceiving.

The truth is that many people in Western Europe are rapidly turning away from Christianity to Islam. Thus there are more practicing Muslims in England today than practicing Christians if attendance at weekly prayers or church services is used to measure religious commitment.

Equally startling is the fact that official German statistics show that if present trends continue there will be Muslim majorities in all major German cities within fifty years.

## Demographic imperatives

The growth of European Islam needs to be seen as a long-term trend. For example in 1900, after centuries of Muslim rule, a third of the population of Turkey were Christian. By 1970 however 99% of Turkey's population were Muslims while today that figure is 99.8%. In 1900 there were next to no Muslims in Germany. By 1970 0.7% of the German population was Muslim. This figure rose to 2.4% by 1980 and is around 3% or 4% today.

The situation in the United Kingdom is similar. In 1900 there

were no Muslims in Britain. By 1970 there were around 635,000 or 1.1% of the population. Today figures range from 1.8% to 3% of the population depending on one's source. The growth rate of Islam in America follows a similar pattern. There were approximately 10,000 Muslims in the USA by 1900. The number had risen to one million or 0.5% by 1970 and increased to 1,883,000, 1.8% by the mid-1980's. Today it stands around 6,000,000 or 2.3%.

Most American and European Muslims were born into immigrant families that converted to Islam centuries ago. There are however growing signs that an increasing number of Europeans from Christian and secular homes are converting to Islam. In England it is estimated that this figure is around 2,500 per year.

This seems insignificant. In fact, it is a remarkably high rate of conversion given the short amount of time Islam has actively sought converts in Britain. Rodney Stark and Lynne Roberts have convincingly demonstrated the ease with which significant growth rates can be mistakenly dismissed as "insignificant" in their article "The Arithmetic of Social Movements: Theoretical Implications." They argue: "a lack of awareness of the arithmetic of growth rates often has obscured the vision not only of social scientists studying social movements, but, more importantly, the vision of the movement founders and their first generation of followers."

To demonstrate their point they give the example of someone who starts a new religion and after 20 years of hard labour has just under 4,000 converts. At that point the founder and his or her early converts may essentially lose hope and practically give up. This is because they project the past growth in terms of numbers onto the future and falsely assume that in another 20 years they will only have 8,000 members.

Actually if the early growth continued at its previous rate, which was around 30%, the true membership in 20 more years would be over 70,000. When we examine the growth of Islam in Europe and North America we find a situation that replicates Stark and Roberts' theoretical model suggesting that in the next decade we will see a surge in conversions and the number of people claiming to be Muslims making possible the conversion of the majority of people in Europe by 2050.

## Defying the culture

Equally important as the rate of conversion is the dedication of new converts. Probably the best known English convert is the former pop singer Cat Stevens who, after a long course of training in Iran, became an outspoken British Muslim leader. Stevens is not alone in his religious quest or willingness to take a lead in creating a truly British Islam. Nor are British converts milk-and-water Muslims corrupted by liberalism

and the secular society into which they were born. Rather they are as devout as any Muslims anywhere as can be seen from their willingness to fight against the teaching of religious studies courses to Muslim children in state schools, they have demanded and received sexually segregated classes for teenagers, and have successfully fought for the right to run their own Muslim state schools.

### Making War

British Muslims have actively raised large amounts of money to support the liberation of Palestine, many embraced the teachings of the Taliban before the American led destruction of that regime, and others are busy recruiting volunteers to fight for Muslim rights throughout the world. British Muslim leaders have also declared a holy war against Russia because of Russian involvement in Chechnya. Of course many of the people doing these things are the children of Muslim immigrants to Britain whose parents were once very Westernized liberals, while they are devote traditionalists. But, a significant number of their leaders, like Abu Ibrahim, who is leading the crusade against Russia, are British born converts who have abandoned Christianity for Islam.

The swelling tide of Muslim society is reflected in the sympathy expressed by Prince Charles for Islam. He wants the British monarch to be called "Defender of the Faiths" not "Defender of the Faith." No wonder that British Prime Minister Tony Blair felt it necessary to assure British Muslims that he has "read the Koran three times" and is said to have "impressed" leaders of the Muslim community with his knowledge of Islam.

Looking at the amazing growth of Islam in Europe three things stand out. First, part of the explanation for Muslim growth lies in the response of

the Islamic world to the establishment of the State of Israel and the defeat of Arab armies in the Six Day War of 1967. As Sigvard von Sicard has shown the humiliating defeats of Arab forces by Israel led Muslim statesmen to search their souls for an answer to why God had apparently deserted the Arab cause. This soul-searching led to widespread repentance for the ways in which they and their people had abandoned the teachings of Islam and a call for spiritual renewal. Consequently, starting in the 1970's various Muslim countries began reform programs and dedicated a proportion of their wealth to both the teaching and spread of Islam. The result was the present Islamic World Mission that we see today.



and friends into Islam creating a steady stream of converts.

Third, Muslim scholars have developed convincing apologetics that present Islam in a favorable light when compared to Christianity. Here there

**Defeat by Israel drove Muslims to search their souls for why God had deserted them. This led to a call for spiritual renewal**

Second, many converts are made through marriage. Faced with the reality of Muslim conversions many people respond by saying "but most of them are through marriage" as though this fact somehow diminishes their significance. Actually, the fact that many are a result of marriage is highly significant and a sign that the conversion rate will continue to increase. This is because Muslim conversions follow an identifiable pattern of social ties where the conversion of a friend or family member leads to further conversions by creating "Networks of Faith." Thus instead of being insignificant, conversions as a result of marriage are likely to draw other family members

are three main lines of argument. First, in a manner reminiscent of Tom Paine's polemics, Muslims assail the reliability and trustworthiness of Christian scriptures. Second, they claim that in practice the adoption of Islam leads to a more ordered and humane society. Finally, they argue that while Islam is compatible with modern science Christianity is not. It is against the background of the rapid growth of Islam that all Christians need to consider the future of our Faith and the world mission of Christianity.

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# Christians in the cross hairs

For Egypt's Copts life is getting much harder. **Zenit** reports on how one Islamic country treats its Christian minority

**CAIRO - Egypt's Christians are living through times that only get harder thanks to the country's anti-conversion laws and legal discrimination against Christians.**

Not until December 3 last year, for instance, did police release the last of a group of 22 converts who had been arrested in late October, their only crime being an attempt to convert to Christianity from Islam, the Britain-based Barnabas Fund reported. Mariam Girgis Makar, the last detainee, was released on bail for 1,000 Egyptian pounds (\$US162).

According to the Barnabas Fund in its December 4 report, the converts were arrested on charges related to falsifying their names on documents. In Egypt, a Christian who converts to Islam can change identification papers, inserting a new Muslim name within 24 hours. But there is no reciprocal arrangement for a Muslim who converts to Christianity. All citizens are required to have listed on their identity card whether they are Christian or Muslim.

## One way ticket

According to Helmy Guirguis, president of the United Kingdom Coptic Association, Muslims who convert to Christianity and don't change their names are forced to live a double life. "They convert, keep their [Muslim] names ... go to church and take communion, [but] when they go out of the church, they behave like classic Muslims," he said in an interview with Cybercast News Service published October 29, 2003.

Usually, only the priests know about their true identity, Guirguis said. Converts are unable to befriend other congregants unless they too are converts living a secret life, he noted. If discovered and arrested, the converts are tortured and forced to reveal the identities of accomplices and other converts, Guirguis added.

On December 2 the Barnabas Fund publicized another case of persecution, involving a convert's Christian husband who was arrested while trying to leave Egypt. On November 28 Bolis Rezek-Allah tried to escape what the Barnabas Fund termed "the mounting persecution he is suffering at the hands of the Egyptian authorities because of his marriage to Enas Badawi, a Christian converted from a Muslim background."

The press release explained that he was put in the custody of Hussein Gohar, a security officer noted for his vindictive behavior to converts from Islam. Gohar has reportedly threatened Rezek-Allah that he will track down his wife Enas and execute her in front of her husband. Rezek-Allah was eventually released, but police say they will continue to block him from leaving the country even though he has the correct documentation to leave for Canada.

Rezek-Allah troubles started last summer when he was arrested on the charge of marrying a Muslim. It is illegal under Egypt's Islamic law for a Christian man to marry a Muslim. Badawi had in fact converted to Christianity before the marriage, but the Egyptian authorities had failed to recognize her conversion.

## Double standards

The organization International Christian Concern calculates that Muslims make up 85.4% of Egypt's population. The government estimates the Christian population at 6%, but other sources put it as high as 14.2%. The vast majority of the Christians are members of the Coptic Church, which existed before the arrival of Islam in Egypt.

Despite being a long-standing sizable minority group in Egypt, Coptic Christians face numerous difficulties, said a background briefing by International Christian Concern. A major obstacle is obtaining permission to build churches. An 1856 decree dating back to the Ottoman Empire still requires non-Muslims to obtain a presidential decree to repair, remodel or build a place of worship.

A 1934 decree of the Minister of Interior added more than 10 conditions to the 1856 law. They include not allowing a church to be built within 100 meters of a mosque, requiring the permission of any utility official when the construction is near that utility, and requiring that none of the Muslim neighbors object to the construction.

Another problematic area deals with names given to children. Youngsters with Muslim names are automatically enrolled in Islamic religion classes, regardless of parents' wishes. Children with traditional Coptic names face the risk of a life of discrimination.

### Killers go free

Further evidence of the partiality of the Egyptian legal system came earlier this year when those accused of a 2000 massacre were acquitted. A March 4 press release by Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom expressed alarm at the decision by an Egyptian court to acquit those charged in a massacre of 21 Christians in the village of El-Kosheh in January 2000. The Washington, D.C.-based center also called on the Egyptian government to investigate police misconduct in El-Kosheh.

Egypt's State Security Court in Sohag found none of the 95 defendants guilty of the murders, in what was the largest massacre of Copts in several decades, according to the Center for Religious Freedom on Feb. 27. The court convicted only two men on manslaughter charges for the death of a Muslim in the nearby village of Al-Balabish.

A member of the Center Paul Marshall conducted a fact-finding mission to El-Kosheh in 2000 and interviewed eyewitnesses to the

massacre. They named the murderers, many of whom are still living in the village and threatening further attacks.

Another example of discrimination against Christians was published in the November bulletin of the religious rights organization Compass Direct. The bulletin reported on the case of 19-year-old Ingy Nagy Edwar. The Coptic teen-ager was kidnapped in September by Muslims who claim she has now converted to Islam. Her family is being prevented from contacting her.

In fact, reported Compass Direct, state security police officials went so far as to temporarily detain her father and other male relatives a few days after the teen-ager's disappearance. The police accused them of trying to interfere with her conversion to Islam and showed them an alleged declaration of conversion to Islam signed by Ingy. Under civil law, a daughter under age 21 cannot change her religion without the legal permission of her father.

Ingy's family, who spoke to her by phone in October, believes the teen

is being given mood-altering drugs that make "her personality different," explained her brother, Nagy Edwar Nagy.

Meanwhile, Christians and Muslims are engaged in a bumper sticker war in Cairo's streets. The Associated Press on Nov. 29 reported that some Copts imported fish bumper stickers from the United States. Soon after, Muslims responded with their own bumper stickers: fish-hungry sharks.

Emad, a Muslim, laughed when asked about the competing symbols but was unapologetic about the two shark stickers on his car. "The Christians had the fish so we responded with the shark. If they want to portray themselves as weak fishes, OK. We are the strongest," said Emad, who would give only his first name.

Recent events show that behind the competition over bumper stickers lies a far uglier reality. Two thousand years ago Providence advised Joseph to take Mary and the child Jesus and escape persecution by fleeing to Egypt. That option no longer exists.

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*continued from page 8*

change, while liberals are defending the status quo."

As a result, apparently, of this clamour, Cardinal Hoyos is now saying that "the idea is constantly growing that it has become necessary to provide for the concession of the Indult in a broader fashion that would correspond more with the reality of the situation."

"It is thought that the times are mature for a new and clearer form of juridical guarantee of that right, which has already been recognised by the Holy Father with the 1988 indult."

Cardinal Hoyos is reported to have said that the Pontifical

Commission Ecclesia Dei, set up to oversee implementation of the 1988 legislation, has studied the matter carefully and is trying to thrash out the best possible solution.

### Una Voce view

Mr Ralf Siebenbueger, President of the International Una Voce Federation, has told Oriens that the position of Cardinal Hoyos, reported in The Catholic Herald, "corresponds exactly to what the Cardinal told me [during our meeting] in March."

"The Cardinal himself is quite favourable to the so-called 'Tridentine' Rite and he announced that the

Holy See is willing to improve the application of the Indult." However, Mr Siebenbueger said, "I am not at all excited by the Cardinal's announcement."

"I would be excited if it proved that the solution the Holy See wants to introduce is a real improvement. But as long as the decision about the application of the Indult remains in the hands of the local bishops, nothing will change."

- Editor

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# How Stoic cosmology has been smuggled into Western thought

**Augustine and Modernity;** by Michael Hanby; Routledge: London, 2003.

**Reviewed by Dr Tracey Rowland**

**In this work published under the banner of the Cambridge Radical Orthodoxy circle, Michael Hanby seeks to do three things: to disassociate the thought of St Augustine from that of Descartes with whom it is often linked; to examine the Stoic contribution to the culture of modernity; and to offer a new interpretation of Augustine's *De Trinitate* by which Augustine's theory of language, anthropology, moral psychology and treatment of *voluntas* (will) emerges as a function of what is doctrinally most important: Trinitarian theology, Christology, and the ecclesiology and doctrine of grace which flow from them.**

Central to all these projects is the rejection of the modern understanding of the will as a faculty of desire having its origins in the thought of Augustine. Following Etienne Gilson, among others, Hanby argues that the notion of the will as a power of choice is a Pelagian fiction, and indeed, that 'it is precisely this aspect of Pelagianism that Augustine opposes'. For Augustine, acts of the will always entail the work of memory and intellect, and while delight (desire) is integral to the intelligibility of our actions, 'choice' is not. The contemporary emphasis upon the so-called autonomy of the individual's will as the basis of human dignity and the related notion of rationality

as thought severed from all affective sensibilities, cannot by this reading be traced back to Augustine but has a much more recent pedigree.

## Truth and intention

Hanby observes that this mutual entailment of memory, intellect and will within the Augustinian framework means that our perception of the truth will be dependent upon the quality of our intention, which is always mediated socially through language and habit. Thus "if 'truth' is to mean more than logical coherence, truth claims are dependent upon the cultic context of their utterance, upon the Church as the historic form of the new creation".

According to this reading, the modern detachment of the two sources of human motivation from one another represents the undoing of the unity of knowledge and love in creatures created in the image of the Trinity. Therefore at issue within the culture of modernity is the Trinity itself and specifically whether the meaning of human nature and human agency are understood to occur within Christ's mediation of the love and delight shared as *donum* between the Father and the Son, or beyond it. Since it is Christ who determines for Augustine what it means to be human and Christ working inseparably with the other Trinitarian *personae* who

incorporates us fully and finally into our being, it follows that readings of human nature and human agency which are offered without reference to Christ's mediation, are radically - that is, from their very roots - different from the Augustinian understanding.

Hanby is critical of Pelagianism for instituting a rupture in this Christological and Trinitarian economy, and he argues that insofar as it determined the direction of subsequent Christian thought, Pelagianism created possibilities for human nature 'outside' the Trinity and the mediation of Christ. He further demonstrates how this was due largely to an account of volition which the Pelagians imported from Stoicism. For this reason he defines the Pelagian tendency as 'philosophising without a mediator' and an attempt to smuggle Stoic cosmology into Western Christian thought.

## Credal or mechanical?

The different theories of what it means to be human, and in particular rational, are commonly described in theological parlance as exhibiting a difference between a credal logic and a secular or mechanical logic; while cultures built upon these different notions of humanity and rationality are described as being driven either by a Trinitarian logos or a mechanical logos. For example, John Paul II juxtaposes the utilitarian rationality of the culture of death with the Trinitarian wisdom of the civilisation of love, David Schindler contrasts the disintegrating form of the machine with the integrating form of love, and

Catherine Pickstock speaks of the different desires of the city of death and the liturgical city.

While the above juxtapositions tend to rotate around different notions of rationality, Hanby's work supplements these distinctions by examining two different understandings of the work of the will:

In the one, *voluntas* is the site of our erotic participation in an anterior gift, and it is at once self-moved and moved by the beauty of that gift. Here will, whether human or divine, is constituted in a relation of love for the beloved and its freedom is established as dispossession. In the other, will names an inviolable power, and freedom consists in demonstrating this inviolability, through the double negation both of itself and of created beauty.

Not only is the Augustinian account of the will different from the standard Cartesian caricature, and heretical Pelagian and neo-Stoic accounts, but as a matter of logic it follows that the Augustinian account of freedom must differ from these also. Here Hanby notes

that freedom for Augustine consists not in unqualified *arbitrium*, but in a single-minded love of the good where the need for choice never arises. Accordingly, 'consent' merely denotes our acting at last with the continence of a unified desire toward that which supremely attracts us; that is, participation in the life of the Trinity.

Within the culture of modernity Pelagian conceptions of the will and human freedom have profoundly influenced theories of human rights. Here Hanby is critical of scholars who fail to notice that a standard like human dignity is actually a different standard depending upon whether the source to which one appeals is Reason or God.

A similar criticism was recently made by Robert P Kraynak in his work *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy*. Kraynak observed that whereas modern philosophers see reason as an autonomous power that reflects on itself or legislates for itself, the patristic and Scholastic theologians viewed reason in Platonic and Aristotelian fashion as a kind of *eros*. According to this classical conception of reason, 'human dignity and cosmic order appear on a comparative scale of

rational substances' and 'dignity within the human species depends on one's fullness of being as a rational substance whose mind and soul are drawn upward to God'. Such an account of human dignity is fundamentally different from that commonly offered by liberal philosophers and human rights lawyers, and it highlights the dangers associated with the Catholic defence of natural law by reference to the rhetoric of rights.

This work is therefore an important contribution to the growing body of literature on the genesis of the culture of modernity. It supplements other accounts of the rise of the modern self which have focused more on the faith-reason relationship than on the intellect-memory-will relationship, and it places Trinitarian theology at the centre of the debates about the compatibility of creedal Christianity with the culture of modernity. Above all, in emphasising the link between love and knowledge it explains why a flourishing Catholic culture is, as Christopher Dawson and others have argued, erotic rather than bourgeois.

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# A third of the World

How the Church fought for North Africa

**The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World;** by Maureen A Tilley; Fortress Press, Minneapolis, USA, 1997.

**Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Apocalyptic Theology of a Roman African in Exile;** by Daniel Van Slyke; St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, New South Wales, Australia, 2003.

**Reviewed by Julian O'Dea**

**In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Church struggled against schismatics and heretics in North Africa which was known as “a third of the world”.**

Maureen Tilley, has written something unique - a sympathetic study of the Donatists. The Donatists are generally seen as a mere historical curiosity, embalmed like insects in the amber that flowed from the pen of St Augustine. The image we have is of a rigorist sect that stressed the purity of its members, placed great emphasis on martyrdom and appealed primarily to the poor. However Tilley claims that Donatist theology evolved to encompass human frailty, that they flourished even during the more mundane times when they were not actively persecuted, and that they appealed to the rich as well as the poor.

## Scandal of weakness

The Donatists originally broke with the Catholics over the behaviour of clerics. They believed that some bishops had behaved so weakly during a persecution that they should never have been permitted to retain office. That was the basis of

the Donatist schism. So, what were they to do when their own bishops behaved badly? Since they had split from the main church over a question of clerical misbehaviour, what did it mean for the Donatists when their own clerics behaved badly?

What they needed was a clever theologian. Parmenian did the job by locating the power of the church – to baptise for example – in its overall purity. A sinful cleric would not invalidate that. The Donatists came to see their church as an enclosed garden, but one to which others should be invited. This gave them the motivation to convert both Catholics and their own schismatics and, from a sociological perspective, mitigated their fundamental separatism.

Another Donatist theologian, Tyconius, applied biblical prophecies to the situation of his time and argued that only Donatists could reliably interpret scripture under the guidance of reason and the Holy Spirit. Tyconius also believed that Catholics could and should repent and join the Donatists. Once they did they would be able to interpret the Bible correctly.



*St Augustine: friend and mentor*

The echoes with the extreme Protestants and their use of the Bible at the time of the English Civil War, for example, are interesting. It is almost as if the Donatists had discovered some of the notions used later by Protestants. They also pioneered geographical chauvinism: the idea, later used by both English and American Protestants, that their land had a special role in the Christian story. The Donatists found a text in the Song of Songs that they interpreted to mean that the “flock” of the Lord could be found in the South, that is Africa.

## Imperial persecution

The Donatists survived the official disapproval of the State. There were times when the Catholics were allied with the imperial authorities. For example, the Catholics used the strategy of labelling the Donatists as heretics in order to have the anti-heresy legislation already in place

used against the Donatist schismatics. Imperial harassment, together with a weak performance in theological debate at the Conference of Carthage in AD 411, reduced the fortunes of the Donatists. But they did not disappear.

Persecution can increase fervour but it can also succeed. Referring to the case of the Japanese Christians, Paul Johnson wrote in "A History of Christianity" that "persecution, if applied with sufficient ruthlessness, intelligence and pertinacity, will eventually succeed, even against the most courageous". However, the Donatists clung on.

Nonetheless, in the final analysis, Donatism did not survive. No doubt this was Providence at work; but what tools did Providence use to destroy Donatism? Two hammer blows in North Africa were the Vandals, who were Arian heretics, and the Islamic conquest. Donatism had some presence elsewhere, but it was Africentric in every sense. Although it evolved theologically, it never transcended its African roots. In the end, its fundamental separatism, however mitigated over time, left it vulnerable.

Maureen Tilley explicitly takes the long view of historical sociology in attempting to rehabilitate the Donatists. However, to take a still longer view, Donatism, along with the Arian Vandals, weakened the North African Church and prepared the way for the success of the Islamic conquest of North Africa.

### End of all things

What of Van Slyke's book on Quodvultdeus? As a fifth century Bishop of Carthage for the people who even then called themselves Catholics, for Quodvultdeus the Donatists represented "leprosy of the body". However, Donatists were not his main problem. In AD 439 he was forced to

leave Carthage and seek refuge in Italy by the Vandals, barbarians who had learned seamanship. The Vandals, fierce even by barbarian standards, and Arian heretics, were unwilling to live in peace with the Roman Catholic Africans.

Persecution and disaster can give rise to apocalyptic religious thought. A Jewish example is the false messiah, Shabbetai Tzvi, who appeared among the Jews in the 17th Century. A Jewish writer explains that "the century had been filled with horrors, and devastated Jews were looking for solace from any quarter. The promise of the Messiah was a comfort they couldn't resist."

In the case of Quodvultdeus, his personal experiences led him to conclude that the Roman world was nearing its end and that the Final Judgement must be near at hand. The Donatist schismatics acquired a power

coming to an end. By contrast, St Augustine did not associate the fortunes of the Church so closely with imperial Rome, but developed his theory of the City of God, which was to provide needed inspiration for the future of the Church.

Some African Christians believed that the king of the invading Vandals, Geiseric, was the Antichrist. Quodvultdeus merely believed that Geiseric was one of the apocalyptic kings who would prepare the way for the Antichrist. It is not hard to see this as a recurring problem in Christian thinking, the tendency to regard one's own time as uniquely cursed or uniquely propitious (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes?*)

In terms of theological responses, Quodvultdeus represented a dead end, whereas St Augustine and Pope Leo I, an exact contemporary of

**A recurring problem in Christian thinking is the tendency to regard one's own time as uniquely cursed or uniquely propitious.**

base among the lower classes, including the agricultural workers known as Circumcellions, who were useful if things got physical, which they often did. Quodvultdeus, by contrast, made his appeal to rich young aristocratic men in Italy, presumably because they would one day be influential heads of households. His message was simply that they should take their religion more seriously, since the world was

Quodvultdeus, represented the way ahead. Pope Leo and St Augustine evidently believed that the Church had a future and acted and theorised accordingly. Quodvultdeus - like the Donatists ironically enough - applied scripture directly to the events of his time. Augustine did not - and his longer view became the Catholic view.

O

# Reflections on “The Passion”

By David Allen White, Ph.D.

**Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ* is not a “movie”; it is a great work of Catholic art and a turning point in human history.**

Who would have guessed back in the year 2000 that in a few brief years the highest grossing five-day opening in cinema history would be for a film that chronicles in excruciating detail the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ? In a world gone secular and filled with lies, ruled by hatred of the Truth, especially the Truth of God; in a world awash in sin and rife with proud human desires, governed by hatred of the Good, especially the Goodness of God; in a world defaced by ugliness and revelling in deformity, governed by the hatred of Beauty, especially the Beauties of God’s Creation; in such a world who could have imagined the box office triumph and the heart-felt response to a true work of art, a good work of art, a beautiful work of art, especially one that demands so much of the viewer?

## Inspiration

The extreme reactions evoked by the film provide a straightforward spiritual litmus test. Will you see the film or not? Will you believe the film or not? Will you obey His Commandments or not? Has there ever been a work of art so miraculously designed to separate the sheep from the goats, or to see if the sheep will follow the shepherd or stray off on their own? The film must be divinely inspired.

Mr. Gibson has said that the real maker of the work is the Holy Spirit. He has been mocked for saying so. In a historical sense, he has said nothing

unusual. All artists and poets and musicians from the dawn of time have known that they are dependent on an outward force that works through them to produce the end product. Some arrogant artists have assumed they were themselves the source of their genius, but for the most part such men are aberrations. The majority of great artists have appealed to the “muses” or to “divine inspiration” or to God Himself for assistance. Following their creative act, they have thanked the source, such as Bach writing “S.D.G.” at the conclusion of his compositions – “Soli Deo Gloria”, “To God Alone the Glory.” The director of *The Passion* merely places himself in line with these great artists.

The howling voices in the press would deny Mr. Gibson the status of artist. A real artist, according to their perverse judgment, mocks our Lord, as do many in the film who jeer as Our Lord passes along the Via Dolorosa. You may place a crucifix in a beaker of urine or create a “portrait” of the Blessed Virgin with elephant dung, you may suggest Our Lord had unruly passions directed toward Mary Magdalene or unnatural relations with His Disciples – this is real spirituality and profound insight say the twisted, liberal, academic, worldly commentators. Yes, the spirituality of the demonic, the profundity of the abyss. To show the truth of Our Lord’s sorrow and suffering and sacrifice drives them into a violent frenzy, just as when a vampire is confronted with a crucifix. The elite “intellectuals” in America are indeed the walking dead.

## Proud Romans we

These same voices who sang hosannas and built shrines before the bloody carnage and gory excesses of Peckinpah and Spielberg and Tarantino now hold their noses in the air and sniff at the “violence” in Mel Gibson’s masterpiece. This is a self-evident red herring. There have indeed been times when violence was considered unsuitable for human viewing. The Greeks of the fifth century B.C. allowed violence on the stage with only rare exceptions. They considered it “obscene”, which in Greek means “away from the scene” or “off stage”. These actions, not being proper for civilized men to witness, were to occur off-stage. Thus Oedipus blinds himself off-stage and Medea slays her own children off-stage. The Greeks were also so sensitive to religious piety that when Aeschylus put the female goddesses of revenge, the Furies, on stage in a scene set at the Temple of Apollo, the mere thought of such sacrilege so disturbed audiences that grown men fainted and pregnant women miscarried.

Such is not our time. We are more like the Romans, a society centered on politics and law and engineering, legitimate pursuits that too easily descend into manipulation, legalisms and pride. Like the Romans, we have a thirst for blood. For decades our cinema screens have been awash with blood. We have had no qualms about allowing our young to grow up watching (via movies and television and video games) thousands and thousands of simulated horrors. We called this artistic freedom. Such freedom stops, however, when it

comes to Our Lord. His Passion should not be shown. Why not?

### His blood denied

The simple fact, of course, though the raucous voices of hate would never admit it, is that they know quite well what His Blood represents, as opposed to all the rest of the blood shed for years on many of those same screens. And the director makes this fact very clear. This is His Precious Blood, made Precious because it is the Blood sacrificed to the Father in atonement, as the reparation for the sins of the world. His precious Blood had to be shed, among thousands of other causes, because parents in our time would love their own children so little as to allow them to be killed in the womb or, if they survive, to grow up watching bloody horrors and other obscenities that will scar their young souls. The Preciousness of the Blood of the Christ is underlined in the magnificent scene where Pilate's wife brings the white cloths to the two Marys. Unable to bind Our Lord's wounds as He has already been taken away, they kneel in the courtyard and wipe up that Blood, letting it be absorbed into the large swaths. They are not cleaning the ground; they are preserving His Precious Blood, the Precious Blood shed for the critics and the academics and the self-appointed "intelligentsia." They know this and it drives them mad.

### The outsider

It should also madden the *novus ordo* establishment. God in His infinite wisdom has allowed the greatest work of Catholic art, and thus the greatest work of art, of the age to be created by a traditional Catholic. In a post-Vatican II Church that has turned its eyes away from the Passion of Our Lord, Mel Gibson has shoved this hard Truth before the eyes of the world. He has done more apostolic work in

the last week than the entire Church hierarchy has in the last forty years. In their pristine, sentimental new order temples of felt banners and eagles wings and liturgical dancers and altar girls and resurrecifixes and kisses of peace and lay ministers and Father Bobs and Father Mikes and social justice, where has the Precious Blood been located? Not on the supper table and maybe not even in the chalice at the consecration, given the arrogant sentimentality of these reformers which allowed them to change Our Lord's very words to be spoken at the moment of the consecration of the wine into His Precious Blood. The Great Sacrifice is back, but not in the *novus ordo* temples; no, it is on the screen, placed there with devotion and faith and love by a great artist to

lie to years of deliberate falsehood and disinformation coming from the post-Vatican II Church.

### Wonderful things

There are wonderful touches throughout the film to catch the eyes and to delight the hearts, not to mention to comfort the souls, of Traditional Catholics. The Latin language and the correct translation of "for many" at the Last Supper are only the beginning. How about the glorious moment when, as the cross is raised up and falls with a tremendous jolt into place, thus beginning the Great Sacrifice, Mary Magdalene covers her head with a veil? How about all those who love Our Lord kneeling before the Great Sacrifice? How about the Blessed Mother on that first Good

## In our age we are witnessing the Passion of the Church.

be witnessed by millions of viewers who have forgotten this great gift or have never been aware of it before.

That Mel Gibson in his subtitling gets the words of Our Lord correct in his translation of *pro multis* as "for many" shows what a simple task such precision is. You do not have to be a scholar or a linguist or a genius to get the translation right. You simply have to love Our Lord more than you love the praise of the world. The faulty translation of "for all" in the *novus ordo* Mass shows that the New Church loves its own ecumania more than it loves the words of Our Lord. And how about the canard that the "people" will no longer respond to the Mass in Latin? Oh, no? Well, how about a popular film in Latin and Aramaic? The voices of "those who know" insisted the "people" would never respond. The film instantly gives the

Friday coming forward to kiss the feet of Our Lord as He hangs on the cross, an action re-enacted by millions of Catholics over the centuries on every Good Friday?

I have no doubt there are countless other sublime touches from this man devoted to the Traditional Catholic Faith. I have only seen the film twice. On a second viewing, it offered a very different experience. Not as shell-shocked with the visceral impact of Our Lord's profound suffering, I saw new things and experienced different emotions. This is a work of art and will demand multiple viewings which, being a great work of art, it will repay with new insights and new sublimities.

As to the non-Catholics who have seen the film or spoken against it, we have obligations in charity. This is a perfect occasion to explain to

Protestants the connection between the Crucifixion and the Real Presence. Through his brilliant crosscutting, Mr. Gibson has given us all the material we need to bring the point home. We must also explain the central role of the Blessed Mother in salvation history. Again, this great artist has done the work for us. We have an obligation to make clear that the film is obviously not anti-Semitic. At the same time, we need to understand the central role of the Jews in God's providential plan. Just as they unwittingly did God's work two thousand years ago, they have played a central role in turning this film into a worldwide phenomenon that will be seen by millions of people. Once again, God is using these people. He has brought forth great good. We must try to convert them to the Truth, to accept finally the Messiah who died for them.

## Church crucified

And the *novus ordo* Catholic Church that, with the exception of some good devout priests, has stood silently by and given no support or encouragement at any point in the production or dissemination of this great work of Catholic art? I could not help but be struck in both my viewings by the pompous arrogance of the High Priests who stood by unmoved, unrepentant, with, in fact, a slight hint of smug self-satisfaction, as Our Lord was tortured and abused. Could there be a more obvious parallel to the attitude of our own hierarchy who has delivered up the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ and stood silently by with a measure of pompous self-assurance as His Mystical Body has been abused and humiliated, spat upon and vilified, tortured and crucified? Surely Solange Hertz is correct when she states that in our age we are witnessing the Passion of the Church.

*This is an edited version of an article published originally in "The Remnant"*



# Remember our work in your will

***Do you wish to support the work of the Ecclesia Dei Society and its magazine "Oriens" in advocating a return to the Traditional Latin Mass of the Catholic Church?***

***Do you wish, in the event of your death, that the Ecclesia Dei Society arrange to offer the Traditional Latin Mass for the repose of your soul?***

Then perhaps you might consider adding appropriate clauses to your will to give effect to your decision in these matters.

*(Suggested testamentary clauses that can be added as a codicil or included in a will. Please consult your solicitor before adding any of these clauses)*

1. I GIVE AND BEQUEATH to the Ecclesia Dei Society (incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory, Registration No. A0000 1696) the sum of (\$\_\_\_) and I HEREBY DECLARE that the receipt of my bequest by the then Treasurer or other proper person of the Ecclesia Dei Society shall be full and sufficient discharge to my executors/trustees for this legacy AND FURTHER my executors/trustees shall not be bound to see to the application of this legacy.
2. I GIVE AND BEQUEATH the sum of (\$\_\_\_) to the Ecclesia Dei Society for the specific purpose of the payment of a stipend fee by the Ecclesia Dei Society to a Priest or Priests as nominated by the then Chairman of the Ecclesia Dei Society for Masses to be offered for the repose of my soul AND I DECLARE that the receipt of my bequest by the then Treasurer or other proper person of the Ecclesia Dei Society shall be full and sufficient to discharge my trustees for this legacy AND FURTHER my trustees / executors shall not be bound to see to the application of this legacy.
3. IT IS MY REQUEST BUT NOT MY COMMAND that immediately upon my death my executor/trustee contact the then Chairman of the Ecclesia Dei Society and request the Chairman to arrange for a Requiem Mass to be offered in the Roman Rite according to the Missale Romanum of 1962 and I FURTHER DIRECT my executor to pay to the then Treasurer or other such proper person of the Ecclesia Dei Society all such costs incurred by the Society for the arrangements pertaining to the said Requiem Mass.

# Traditional Masses in Australia

*Note: this directory covers Sunday Masses only. For other times, use contact details provided.*

## VICTORIA

### ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Contact: FSSP Melbourne Chaplain  
Fr Glen Tattersall  
Ph 03 9583 9926  
Fax (03) 9583 7981, melbourne@fssp.net  
Website: <http://fssp.net/melbourne.html>

#### Caulfield

St Aloysius' Church  
233 Balaclava Road  
Sunday, 11.00am (Sung Mass)

#### East Kew

St Anne's Church  
Cnr Beresford & Windella Sts  
Sunday, 8.30 am

#### Oak Park

St Francis de Sales Church,  
626 Pascoe Vale Rd,  
Sunday 5.00 pm

#### Geelong

St John's Church,  
St David St., North Geelong  
Sunday 11.30 am

## DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

### Bendigo

St Francis Xavier Church  
Strickland Rd  
Sundays & Holy Days, 9.30 am

## DIOCESE OF BALLARAT

### Skipton

St John's Church  
Cnr Anderson & Wright Sts  
3rd Sunday, 5.00 pm

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth/WA Masses, contact: Rev. Michael Rowe  
Ph/Fax: (08) 9444-9604  
rowe@webace.com.au

## ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH

### Palmyra

Our Lady of Fatima Church  
10 Foss Street  
Sunday, 12.00 pm

### Perth

St John's Pro - Cathedral  
Victoria Avenue  
Sunday 7.30 am & 9.15 am

## TASMANIA

### ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART

Lower Sandy Bay  
Presbytery: 036 2252157

#### St Canice

15 St Canice Ave, Lwr Sandy Bay  
1st Sunday, 11.30 am.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY

#### Darlington

Chapel of the Resurrection  
St Michael's College, City Rd  
Sunday, 10.00 am

#### Lewisham

Contact: Fr L Gresser Ph (02) 9688 4287  
E-mail: southerncross@fssp.net  
Website: <http://www.maternalheart.com/>  
Chapel of the Maternal Heart  
Cnr West & Thomas Sts  
Sunday, 10.30am

## DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

### Doonside

St John Vianney  
Cameron St  
Sunday, 11.00am

### Prospect

Contact: Fr L Gresser Ph (02) 9688 4287  
E-mail: southerncross@fssp.net  
Website: <http://fssp.net/sydney.html>  
St Marks,  
Coptic Catholic Church  
Cnr Reservoir Rd & Prospect Hwy  
Sunday, 8.00 am

### Lawson

Our Lady of the Nativity  
254 Great Western Highway  
Sunday, 5.00pm

## DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA

Contact: Diocesan Office - 0269215667

### Albury

Holy Spirit Church  
Lavington  
Sunday, 3.00 pm

### Wagga Wagga

Mount Erin Chapel  
Edmondson St  
Sunday, 11.00 am

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### ARCHDIOCESE OF ADELAIDE

#### St Peters

Contact: Rev Fr G Small: 0883621644  
Holy Name Church  
Payneham Road  
Sunday 9.30am

## A.C.T.

### ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA

#### Dickson

Contact: Fr J Fongomie FSSP 0410 121 588  
Sts Peter & Paul Church  
Boake Place, Garran  
Sunday, 11.30 am

#### Anstralian National University

St John the Evangelist Chapel  
Sunday, 8.30 am

## QUEENSLAND

### ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Contact: Fr G Jordan, S.J.: 0738780638

#### Buranda

St Luke's,  
Taylor Street, Buranda  
Sunday, 9.15 am

## DIOCESE OF TOOWOOMBA

### Toowoomba

Holy Name Church  
190 Bridge St  
2nd Sunday, 11.30 am

### Diocese of Rockhampton

Nth Rockhampton  
St Mary's Church  
Nobbs St  
2nd Sunday, 7.30 am

## DIOCESE OF CAIRNS

### Cairns

Contact: Mr Bob Stewart 074 095 8066  
Our Lady, Help of Christians  
18 Balaclava Rd, Westcourt  
First Saturday, 10.30am

Mary wakes from sleep, alert to the commencement of her Son's suffering, to His being taken down from the Cross, Mary's perspective is shown consistently to the viewer. It never overtakes in importance Christ's suffering, but it is also never apart from it. Her intuition and her fidelity are perfectly credible as manifestations of maternal love, but this serves to emphasise that her love and her grief are qualitatively different from that demonstrated by Mary Magdalene or St John. Thus is revealed the superior degree of grace with which she participates in the Passion – as is symbolised by the blood smeared upon her face.

Those Catholics who find themselves bewildered by difficulty practising Marian devotions must consider Maia Morgenstern's portrayal of Our Lady as one of the great graces of the film. She shows not only that Our Lady's likeness and unlikeness to ourselves can exist in the one person, but that such a person must inspire love and not repel it.

### Light and darkness

Gibson is quoted as saying of the art of Caravaggio, "I think his work is beautiful. It's violent, it's dark, it's spiritual, and it also has an odd whimsy of strangeness to it." The tradition inspired by Caravaggio uses light and darkness to focus the attention of the viewer onto a single point – a face, a hand, or a candle. That tradition is skilfully carried from painting into this film.

Light and shadow do more than tell us the time of day. Consider the golden half-light of the Jewish court as opposed to the blinding light which surrounds Christ during the Sermon on the Mount. The former signifies a good awaiting something – is it about to be snuffed out, or made more complete? The significance of the brilliance around Christ becomes obvious.

Consider, similarly, the attention given to the human eye. The 'confrontation'

between Mary and Satan is played out through a meeting of gazes; her victory is shown by the turning away of her eyes. In final moments of Satan's defeat (which was a little too MTV for my taste) his eyes, which have been wide, steady, and unblinking throughout the film, cannot be seen at all. Only Mary is able to stare directly into the camera after the descent from the Cross.

In close shots, the single open eye of Christ conveys pain, fear, compassion, strength, and the eventual arrival of death. In slightly wider shots, the battered eyes of Christ are aligned with the round and rolling eyes of Simon of Cyrene - an image that merits an entire essay. Suffice it to say that many long and fruitless arguments with Protestants about 'works' could be silenced by this paradoxical yet visual proof that a man can really help Christ to carry His cross, even though it is Christ who enables the man to do so. I can only assume that the reviewer for *The Guardian* who stated

of the Last Supper - one of a series of flashbacks which link the institution of the Mass to the Sacrifice of Calvary (as well as preventing de-sensitisation during the crucifixion scenes). In this flashback, Christ speaks the words, "No greater love..." and holds out His hands in the position we have just seen, being nailed onto the Cross. If we have forgotten that the Last Supper and Calvary are connected, and that both proceeded from His love, this single line and repeated image remind us of it. With two shots and a few words, more is conveyed than by an hour of preaching.

Some find the score too intrusive. There certainly is plenty of music; whether or not this is bothersome is probably a matter of personal taste. Its strength seemed (to me, at least) to be in the combination of standard tropes of Western cinematic music with Middle Eastern patterns and tones. The result was something that transported this viewer to another

## Caravaggio uses light and darkness to focus the attention of the viewer onto a single point

that this scene above all demonstrated Christ's pride had, in fact, wandered into the wrong cinema, and was too stupid to notice that he was watching the wrong film.

### The power of less

The film's script is spare and the words are well chosen. It avoids the pitfalls of long 'holy' speeches, which - no matter how edifying they are during *lectio* - make very dull film. The words support the images, rather than the other way around. For example: we are shown a shot of a nail being driven into Christ's hands. We move to a flashback

culture, without completely alienating her Hollywood-trained ears.

These are some of the reasons why this reviewer feels that there is more available to the thoughtful viewer of "The Passion of the Christ" than a superficial experience of violence or of a religious message. Viewed with an open mind, the film impresses upon the memory, not images of bare pain, but images of human and divine love, that not only endure, but also transcend and transform, the greatest pains. It is this love, in all its forms, that remains with the viewer, long after the immediacy of torture has been forgotten.

## The reality and nature of love

**The Passion of the Christ:** a film produced and scripted by Mel Gibson

**Reviewed by Lucy O'Connell**

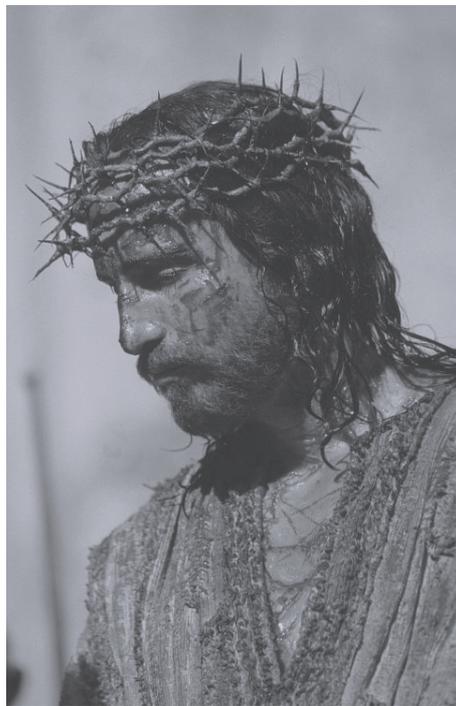
**The Passion of the Christ is a work of love – Christ's love for men, the love of individuals for Christ, and the filmmaker's love both for his subject and his art. These loves are revealed, not only in the film's content, but also in its crafted-ness: a source of wonder to those who experience through the film's linked images and symbols a new or renewed understanding of truths which have been lost to over-familiarity.**

It may be as well to dispense with the standard charges against the film. The Passion is not anti-Semitic; the worst of the Jewish rabble are neither as coarse nor as brutish as some of the Roman soldiers. However flawed the Jewish leaders may appear, they do not enjoy the scourging; some of the Romans do, quite clearly, treat it as a game.

### No villains

In fact, the film carefully avoids apportioning blame to the traditional villains, while acknowledging the consequences of their actions. It is impossible not to recognise the weakness in Pilate as the very 'prudence' which we all practice during those moments when our faith is embarrassing. Even Judas' post-betrayal sufferings can be read in various ways: as simple demonic activity, as a startlingly accurate representation of the torments of psychological illness, (drawn from Gibson's own experience of suicidal depression?) or as both of these things. Thus does the film tell us Judas' story while maintaining the Church's traditional silence as to his ultimate fate.

There are certainly moments of grisliness which are intolerable to many – particularly during the scenes of the scourging at the pillar. Those of us who cannot stand such images have the convenient option of closing our eyes for a few seconds, for plenty of warning is given us, the most terrible scenes are very few, and these moments are accompanied by the horror and the grief appropriate



*Jim Caviezel as Christ in The Passion*

to violence. In no way do these scenes resemble, for example, the cold and amoral violence of a Tarantino film, or the mocking depictions of murder and assault found in the most shocking teenagers' videogames.

### The hidden disclosed

It may seem to Catholics that the film depicts only half the truth, focusing on Christ's physical sufferings, without showing that His greatest agony on the Cross was the burden of our sin. That burden is referred to during the opening scenes of the film; I do not know how one would go about representing it on screen. I would suggest that the representation of physical pain – blood, maceration, and so forth – serves a similar function to the vestments and the altar-cloths of the liturgy. Liturgical vestments signify the invisible realities of the Mass; so too the superabundance of blood offered in *The Passion* represents the invisible as well as the visible realities of Calvary.

So much for anti-Semitism and violence!

The apologetically-minded will question such aspects of creative licence as the rewriting of Christ's seven statements from the Cross, or the absence of the ministering angel in Gethsemane. However, the film obviously assumes a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the viewer. From what is shown, the largely ignorant would never guess, for example, even that there were twelve Apostles - never mind how many times Christ spoke from the Cross and in what order He did so. This suggests that the intention of the filmmaker was not to teach everything, but only some things. Those things which it set out to tell are told marvellously.

A major theme of the film is the reality and nature of the love between Our Lord and His Mother. It is a little like the Rosary, in that it gives us, scene by scene, the story of Christ from the perspective of His Mother. From the moment when