

ANGLICANS TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER No. 22 February 2004

ANGLICANS TOGETHER ONLINE: <www.anglicanstogether.org>

Chairman's Column

The state of things

Sometimes I wish that life were not quite so uncertain. However, life is to be lived in the grey and not in the black and white. In the world today there is a constant search for certainty. People of all creeds are seeking for certainty in their beliefs. Fundamentalists who claim to be certain about all things relating to faith are growing in influence. This is in not only Islam, Judaism, and other world faiths but as we all know it is in Christianity. In this Diocese of the Anglican Church, the trend is just the same. People will tell you they know for certain God's will concerning every matter that confronts them and the Church. That certainty includes amongst others liturgical tradition, the exact meaning of the Holy Scripture or sexual orientation.

What a boring world it would if we were to know everything! There would be no excitement, no surprises and no hope. The future would be complete. We would not need to live it at all. The God I believe in is a God whose true nature will always be uncertain, this side of heaven. God's Will, will only ever be partially known to us now. We cannot know God here in this life to the extent that we have complete certainty. Even in God's self-revelation in Jesus, God's nature was revealed in a limited manner. God is like mercury, impossible to grasp. Just when we think we understand then God slips through our tightly argued logic.

Paul says in Philippians 2: "*Jesus*) though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness".

And, in the First Letter to the Corinthians 13, "*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part;*

then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known".

The glory of traditional Anglicanism is that it has always been an association of differing traditions, ideas and practices. Not one person or party has all the answers. **It is an association based upon Scripture, Reason and Tradition.** For the extreme Puritans who now hold sway in the Diocese to say that Scripture is all that makes up Anglicanism is arrant nonsense. They appeal to the teaching of their 'heroes' and that would certainly imply that they

were following in a tradition. Their understanding of their faith is very cerebral and that would imply the use of reason. Moreover, no one can read Scripture without reading it through a cultural filter. No one in the twenty-first century can read Scripture passed down from many thousand of years ago in the manner in which it would have been understood at the time it was written. Amongst other things, the understanding of the Ancients was that the world was flat. The sky hid the heavens and below the world was Hell. How does that sit with plane travel, modern science and our experience? I do not understand how modern Anglicans can sit in churches and listen to sermons that try to contort modern experience of life into a view of God's creation long since dead as many people are forced to do throughout Sydney.

A QUIET DAY

St Alban's Church , Epping
(3 Pembroke Street,)

Saturday 20th March, 2004
Between 10 am to 3 pm

Conductor: Jim Cotter

An ordained member of the Church in Wales (Anglican/Episcopalian), he is 'hospitaller' to a small church in North Wales, Llandecwyn.

Jim Cotter is a wordsmith. He writes from within the Christian tradition, though often on the boundaries of the Church, seeking to shape prayers afresh and make connections between faith and everyday life by exploring such issues as sexuality, healing, and ministry.

Theme for the Day:

What is the character of your God?

Policeman or Protector? Loathing or Liking? Retribution or Restoration? Person or Presence? Powerful or Powerless?

With these questions before us Jim Cotter will guide our thinking and praying.

During the day there with introductory talks, reflective conversation, and times of silence.

The cost is by Donation:

Bring your own lunch - or there are shops and cafes nearby if you wish to purchase lunch.

For more information contact Saint Alban's Parish Office:
Tele: 02 9876 3362; Email: <office@eppinganglicans.org.au>

Vacant Parishes

On another matter, I am very concerned with the number of parishes that are currently vacant and which are of a more traditional Anglican style. It is my fear that the Diocese will seek to place in those parishes, clergy of a style similar to the puritan style that is currently in vogue, as it seems that they have done in the parish of Chester Hill. At this moment parishes of vastly different liturgical style and tradition are vacant; Gordon, Bankstown, Lakemba, Ashfield and Church Hill. The Rector of the Parish of Waverley is due to retire during the year. The nominators in each of these parishes need all the encouragement they can get. We pray for their success in the search program for their new Rectors. If these parishes go to supporters of the current milieu, the Anglican Church that we love will, to all intents and purposes, cease to exist in this Diocese.

The Reverend John Bunyan

With regret, that I have received the resignation of the Reverend John Bunyan as a member of the Anglicans Together committee of management.. John has been a member of long standing and a great contributor. We will miss him as a committee member. There will be a service of Matins, according to the Book of Common Prayer, at **Saint Peter's, Campbelltown on Saturday 27th March at 11 am**, to give thanks for John's ordination as a Deacon forty-five years ago, with a simple basket lunch to follow in the Parish Hall. At about 1.30 pm there will be a short dedication of the book

depot at his house which the *Via Media* project made possible. John spoke to us about the *Via Media* project at the Annual Dinner last year. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Conclusion

In spite of what we may feel from time to time, this is a good world, especially the beautiful part we have been called by God to live. God has created it for us to enjoy. We have been given hope and acceptance through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are loved by God who wishes us to live life to the fullest. We are a part of the wonderful Anglican Church that has so richly enhanced Christianity with its vitality. May it please God that the Diocese of Sydney will return to the true rich even-handed tradition that is Anglicanism.

John Cornish

HONOUR FOR ANGLICARE HEAD

Canon Howard Dillon, Executive Director of **Anglicare**, was awarded an honour in the Australia Day 2004 Honours List. He became a "Member of the Order of Australia (AM)" for service to the community through the Anglican Church welfare services related to establishing chaplaincies, nursing homes counselling and assistance for migrants and refugees.

Published by Anglicans Together

Opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of contributors.

Editor: Moya Holle PO Box 429 Glebe NSW 2037

ORDINARY LIVES -

Extra-Ordinary Relationships

Rough Edges Community Centre opened in 1996 to the street community around St John's Church Darlinghurst (after the closure for more than eight years of PJ's Cafe kitchen and lounge-room.)

Rough Edges meets a much wider cross-section of the community, and has continued to serve the local street communities, offering a place of peace, though not necessarily quiet!

Whether drinking coffee, playing cards or chess, eating together, listening to each other - locals have made **Rough Edges** their home - relaxing and friendly, buzzing with the ordinary things of life. Everyone is welcome - to discover friendships - have a quiet chat - receive assistance that's not a handout - ask questions about faith in Jesus - escape the violence of the streets.

Rough Edges survives because of the **Volunteers** who give their time to sit and listen and talk caringly and with love.

Volunteers are supported by a good Training Programme that prepares people to serve the community in this way.

The trainers have significant experience in the city culture and provide a good foundation for ministry in many contexts.

The next Volunteer Training Programme begins on *Tuesday 24th February 2004*.

Rough Edges Community Centre

is located at 231 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst.
For further information about the Centre and the Volunteer Programme contact Laurie Besant
PO Box 465, Kings Cross NSW 1340
Phone: (02) 9360 6844 Fax: (02) 9360 1759
Email: lauriebesant@stjohnsanglican.org.au

Rough Edges is an integral part of the **Christian out-reach ministry** of St John's Anglican Church, Darlinghurst, Sydney.

SYDNEY PARISH INDUCTIONS

The new Rector of **St Luke's Enmore/Stanmore** was inducted on Friday, 30th January 2004. He is the *Reverend Gwilym Henry-Edwards* formerly of the Parish of Henley Beach, Diocese of Adelaide.

At **St Paul's Kogarah**, on Friday 13th February 2004, their new Rector, the *Reverend Mee Ping Lau*, was inducted. He was previously Assistant Minister, Marrickville and formerly from the Diocese of Singapore.

The Reverend Robert Denham, formerly Rector of All Saints, Parramatta North is to be inducted as Rector of **St Peter's, Hornsby** on Friday 5th March at 7.30 pm.

We pray for God's blessing on them and their congregations.

REMINDER

Annual Subscription now due. Anglicans Together exists because of your support.

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

We are all very aware that in the last twelve months the worldwide Anglican Communion has been deeply divided by questions concerning human sexuality and homosexuality in particular. **The Sydney Synod in October last year passed a motion dissociating itself from the actions of both**

the Diocese of New Westminster for agreeing to bless same sex unions and the Diocese of New Hampshire for electing as bishop a person engaged in homosexual activity. It called on those involved to repent and to reverse their decisions. The debate that preceded the vote on this motion was not really about issues of sexuality but a classic Sydney debate about *the authority of scripture*. When Sydney Synod debates controversial issues from women's ordination to the ethics of sexuality there is an unspoken assumption that there is only one right way to understand the Scriptures and that is based on the so called 'plain reading' of the text. All other interpretations are in error.

The question of the ethics of homosexuality is one that has exercised the Church for many years. When I was growing up homosexuality was a topic that Christians and polite people generally didn't talk about. We have grown in our understanding of the importance and the complexities of human sexual behaviour. It is now widely acknowledged that there is a small but significant proportion of people for whom attraction to the same sex is their normal orientation and that for many this is not a matter of choice but is 'wired in' from birth or early development. Many Christians acknowledge this but the debate continues over the appropriate expression of this homosexual orientation. A conservative reading of Scripture suggests that celibacy is the only option for those of homosexual orientation - a view based on a small number of texts from the Old and New Testaments. Others interpret Scripture differently and argue that the rules are the same for all of us, homosexual or heterosexual, namely, celibacy or a lifelong loving commitment to one partner.

It is important to remember that our attitude to homosexuality is not just an academic, theological issue but one which affects the daily lives of many in our church community. In my years as a pastor to several congregations I have met many people who struggle with questions of sexuality including many fine Christians who are homosexual, some of whom are living in faithful, loving relationships. Many homosexual Christians have felt condemned and alienated by the Church's attitude and sometimes this has had disastrous results. **To help congregations think about the topic of homosexuality in a creative way the General Synod's study booklet called "Faithfulness in Fellowship: Reflections on Homosexuality and the Church" is a very useful resource.** This is based on the larger volume of the same name which was

published in 2001 as a collection of discussion papers by some of Australia's leading theologians and represented a variety of approaches and interpretations concerning the question of homosexuality. The study booklet was prepared by General Synod in response to part of the *1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution 1.10 on Human Sexuality*. That Resolution 'while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture' also recognised that 'there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation' and went on to 'commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons' and 'to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ'. The resolution also called on the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council 'to share statements and resources among us' on the subject of human sexuality.

"*Faithfulness in Fellowship, Study Guide*" is divided into five sections which are designed to be the basis for five discussion sessions. **The opening section addresses the key issue of how do we read Scripture?** It contains edited versions of the two speeches which opened the Report to the 2001 General Synod. **Bishop Glenn Davies** puts the conservative case and argues on the basis of his reading of Scripture that human sexuality can only rightly be expressed in the context of a marriage relationship between a man and a woman. **Dr. Cathy Thomson** questions whether the Biblical texts that condemn homosexual behaviour are still definitive when the Biblical writers viewed all people as heterosexual susceptible to homosexual temptation as a 'vice'. She argues that our interpretation of the Bible 'is always attenuated by our human reason and experience and by the faith context within which it is read'. So even those who accept the Levitical prohibition on homosexual behaviour as normative for today don't accept the death penalty that the law demands of this behaviour.

The *second section* offers papers reflecting on the specific Scriptural material on homosexuality. The *third section* provides perspectives on the topic from science and family relationships. *Section four* looks at homosexuality and Christian tradition and the *final section* deals with the two key issues affecting the Church—the blessing of same sex unions and the ordination of homosexual clergy. Each section has contributors offering differing points of view.

This is an issue which will not go away and it is imperative that within our congregations we address the topic with great sensitivity, recognising that it impacts on many families. We need to read the Biblical texts carefully but we also need to listen to one another with love and respect for those whose experience is different from our own. The "*Faithfulness in Fellowship, Study Guide*" is an excellent resource to use in our parishes as together we seek the guidance of God's spirit in this important part of our humanity.

Philip Bradford

Rector, Anglican Parish of Hunters Hill

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, paid a pastoral visit in January to the Diocese of Jerusalem in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East at the invitation of the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Riah Hanna Abu El-Assal

The following is an Extract from the Archbishop's Sermon at the Anglican Church of the Redeemer, Amman.

'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching'.

Time and again the Christian life demands that we ask ourselves what it is that we really love. When Jesus meets Peter again beside the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection, he asks him three times, '*Do you love me?*' And the challenge of the risen Jesus is always to ask us this: is it me that you love, he wants to know, or something else, perhaps something masquerading as me?

St Augustine said that a community becomes a community when it is united in love of the same thing. But that love of the same thing can be life-giving or death-dealing, depending on what it is that is loved. We can find ourselves agreeing in the love of something that eats away at the very roots of our humanity while we ignorantly suppose that it is good and godly. At times in the past, Christians have reinforced their sense of unity by cultivating a collective contempt or fear or hatred for others - Jews and Muslims in particular. When this happens, we have to ask, '**Is it the love of Christ that unites us? Or do we really love something quite different?**'

Perhaps what we love is our security. We want to be utterly safe, safe from strangers, safe from surprise. So we organise ourselves in such a way that no-one can break through our boundaries. What this usually means is also that we speak as if all that was corrupting and threatening came from outside.

We are so interested in defending the boundaries that we forget how to live day by day on our own soil, the soil we are so eager to protect.

And this relates to another great danger. **Perhaps we are in love with our suffering.** It sounds like a shocking idea, but we need to think hard about it. We have a history of oppression, displacement, cruelty from the hands of others, and our whole sense of who we are becomes bound up with this. We know who we are because we all join to tell the same story of how inhumanly we have been treated. It may be a true story, a terrible story: the world does indeed run with innocent blood and the history of any community will be shot through with the stuff of nightmares. Reading Christian history should tell us as clearly as we could wish that there is hardly any Church that has not been responsible at some point for another Church's suffering. It is so hard to come to the point where we are free to say, 'I must make something from my suffering that will build bridges into the suffering of another'.

In all this, can we hear Christ saying, '*Do you love me?*' Because all of these different kinds of love are ways of shutting him out. We believe that he and he alone is the one who can reconcile all things and people, precisely because he delivers us from the traps and prisons we have just been considering. He tells us that he is our security. When we know that he accepts us as we are and that he will never let go of us in the long work of transforming us into his likeness, we have a security that goes deeper than any external defence. We are able at last to recognise that evil is not somewhere out there in the stranger, the enemy, but in our own hearts, in their fear and narrowness. We learn for the first time that we must live on our soil, turning over what one of the Syrian saints called '*the earth of the heart*' and not pour out our energy on keeping the stranger at bay.

It isn't that this guarantees safety in itself. **It is still the longest and most painful task imaginable to learn how to talk to the stranger, the enemy, and find very slowly and cautiously how it might be possible to share one world.** And part of what makes that just a little more possible is that Christ frees us from imprisonment in the memory of our suffering. He doesn't take it away; but he helps us see how our suffering is like that of others - even our enemy's - and so gives us a language to speak with each other. As he does this, he also frees us from the weakness we love; he gives us strength to take decisions, to think about the future. We readily

forget that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is intelligence, the capacity to see our situation truthfully and act out of that vision, the capacity also to see what God is asking and to do it, even if it is a tiny step of faithfulness or love.

He asks us to look harder and deeper. Do we love him? Do we love the promise that we might be freed from the kind of love that corrupts and destroys us, and that keeps us at enmity with each other?

Christians have begun to learn in recent years how to celebrate the martyrs of each other's traditions, not only their own - a great testimony to the way that Christ makes us live both in the heart of our own territory, our own tradition, while taking away the fear of others.

He gives us a ministry of reconciliation, says St Paul. This surely means that **Christians who have learned from Christ how to grow beyond the slavery of security and suffering and weakness have a unique role in the world.** They can ask the communities in which they find themselves, 'What do you love? Are you held together by things that corrupt your life together and guarantee only that you will never grow out of fear?' What questions could be more needful for the churches to ask in this region? But if they are to ask them with effectiveness and integrity, they must first sit patiently and quietly themselves before God and ask about their own loves and their own failures in love. How do we bear this - because it shows us all that we hate and fear in ourselves? Only because He has promised that He and his Father will make their home with us as we strive to open our lives to him: *in this knowledge is our peace, peace such as the world cannot give.*

BOOKS, BOOKS & MORE BOOKS

The *Via Media Project* initiated by Reverend Dr John Bunyan is now a reality. It will be dedicated as the "*Saint Kiaran Colenso*" *Book Depot* on Saturday 27th March 2004. The date is the 45th anniversary of John's ordination to the diaconate. He will celebrate it with *a Sung Matins (1662) at 11 am in St Peter's Anglican Church, Campbelltown.* Friends and colleagues are invited to join him. There will be a basket lunch followed by the dedication of the Book Depot and Library, at 7 Richard Ave, Campbelltown.

The establishment of this Project has cost \$7,000, with over \$3,500 being donated by those who wish the venture great success.

That chapter leads to one on 'Leadership and Priesthood', which expands on *"the principle that the Church is an ordered community and that everything should be done 'decently and in order'"*. (p 185)

This is a timely book , particularly for questioning Anglicans sitting in the pews of Sydney churches.

Published by Harper Collins ,www.harpercollins.com.au

RRP: \$35.00

LENTWhat's that?

The derivation, in the Macquarie Dictionary, is given as "OE *len(c)ten* spring"

However, Lent, for many in the Christian Church is (even in the southern hemisphere) ***"an annual season of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday and including the forty weekdays next before Easter."***

One of the truly outstanding writers on prayer and living the spiritual life in Christ was ***Evelyn Underhill***. Although she lived and wrote in the first half of the last century, her insights still speak to the reader in 2004.

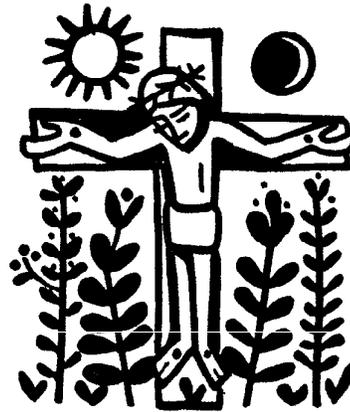
In ***"The School of Charity"*** (1933) she wrote:

"Everyone who is engaged on a great undertaking, depending on many factors for its success, knows how important it is to have a periodical stocktaking.

Whether we are responsible for a business, an institution, a voyage, or an exploration - even for the well-being of a household - it is sometime essential to call a halt; examine our stores and our equipment, be sure that all the necessities are there and in good order, and that we understand the way in which they should be used.."

"Lent is a good moment for such spiritual stocktaking; a pause, a retreat from life's busy surface to its solemn deeps. There we can consider our possessions; and discriminate between the **necessary stores.....** and the odds and ends which we have accumulated for ourselves. Most of us are inclined to pay considerable attention to the spiritual odds and ends; but we leave the superb and massive standard equipment which is issued to each baptised Christian to look after itself."

"Then thought I with myself, who that goeth on pilgrimage, but would have one of these maps about him, that he may look, when he is at a stand, which is the way he must take." *Pilgrim's Progress.*



Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent:

create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Collect for Ash Wednesday and Lent)

OUR CATHEDRAL

Let's build, a great cathedral
For England's rising youth,
A Free and easy temple
Of undogmatic truth.
An ark on troubled waters,
Bearing a motley crew,
And all denominations
May walk in two by two.

All Protestants should welcome
Our comprehensive plan;
And those who love to follow
The merry pipes of Pan.
No popish ceremonial
Shall mar its happy birth;
A rite shall be invented
Like nothing else on earth.

There's room for brave agnostic
For Hindu or Parsee,
Or devotee of Islam
(So very C. of E.),
And if uniting parties
At Bishops take offence
We'll consecrate the ladies
And take our orders thence!

S.J. Forrest

Home Discussion Group

"Meeting Jesus AGAIN for the First Time"

The historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith

A Home Group will discuss this book by *Marcus Borg*. Since it was published a decade ago, thousands have found it a way to reconnect, go deeper and grow.

"*Marcus Borg* is a writer of rare lucidity, original scholarly insights, profound spirituality, and an unusual capacity to connect it all to life in the present." - Walter Wink.

The Group will meet at the home of **Clive H Norton**,

7 Dulwich Road Chatswood West (12 min from trains/buses).

Friday evenings: 7.45 for 8 pm start till 9.30pm - beginning 5th March, ending in mid-April.

Book cost - \$25 (rrp \$26.95) + \$2 postage/packing. Copies available from address above from Mon 1st March, or posted out that day. It is important to read the relevant chapter before coming to discuss. For good discussion numbers are limited, so enrol ASAP. If over-booked a group may be held later in year.

Contact: **Clive H Norton (02) 9411 8606;**

Email: chnorton@bigpond.com.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Southwark Cathedral

The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Sunday 1 February 2004

Long, long ago, very clever people decided that the human body, flesh, all material things, that all of these were in and of themselves, evil, intrinsically, inherently and always. So there was no way that the good, the pure, the sublime and, by definition, the perfectly good spirit could be united with the material. For these people, the dualists, the incarnation, God, pure spirit, becoming a human being was totally and in principle, and always, out of the question. What people thought was God become flesh in Jesus Christ, well, that was all just playacting, a charade. Could you imagine God the all-powerful, God the eternal, dying?

Oh come off it! Get real! When this one was crucified, it was not really Jesus - God - dying. You and I may pooh-pooh all this superiorly and say, "How odd, flying in the face of facts" but aren't so many of us really closet dualists or worse, have we not sometimes been embarrassed with our

physicality, when we have found it attractive to engage in the familiar dichotomies as between the sacred and the secular, the profane and the holy? When we have thought that Original Sin, must somehow have had to do with the facts of life, we snigger a little bit, wink, wink, as if when God said to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply", God meant that they would do so by perhaps looking into each others' eyes!

And have we not heard so many, many times: "Don't mix religion with politics", so very much the philosophical position of dualists. And just look at the tangle we have got into about human sexuality, about gays and lesbians, etc. Now what follows is really in parenthesis. I hope so very much that you have got over the anguish of last summer and may I salute *Canon Jeffrey John* who acted with so much dignity and selfless generosity.

The Jesus I worship is not likely to collaborate with those who vilify and persecute an already oppressed minority. I myself could not have opposed the injustice of penalizing people for something about which they could do nothing - **their race** - and then have kept quiet as women were being penalized for something they could do nothing about - **their gender**, and hence my support inter alia, for the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate.

"ANGLICANS TOGETHER ONLINE"

Visit our website: www.anglicanstogether.org

You will find there interesting and sometimes controversial articles. These can be easily downloaded. You are invited to respond to these articles and have your say on the subject.

For further information: **email: johncorn@zipworld.com.au**

And equally, I could not myself keep quiet whilst people were being penalized for something about which they could do nothing, - **their sexuality**. For it is so improbable that any sane, normal person would deliberately choose a lifestyle exposing him or her to so much vilification, opprobrium and physical abuse, even death. To discriminate against our sisters and brothers who are lesbian or gay on grounds of their sexual orientation for me is as totally unacceptable and unjust as Apartheid ever was.

The God we worship has taken our physical material selves seriously because God declared about everything that God had created - matter and spirit, everything, not just that it was good, God said it was "*very good*". That is why we say in the Nicene Creed: 'maker of all there is, visible and invisible'. That matter is not recalcitrant, hostile and

antagonistic to the spirit and so God could and did become a real human being, a real baby, belonging to a particular couple who have names, who lived in a real, a particular village, Nazareth, in an actual, real part of the world God created, belonging to an actual, real community with particular and specific laws, rules and customs.

So this baby's parents obeyed the law and brought the baby to be redeemed as the first-born male who belonged therefore to God. God took human history seriously and so fulfilled promises God had made earlier to a Simon and to a faithful widow, Anna. God became a real human being; God took on our humanity - why? Other clever people said God became a human being so that we could become God. The epistle of St Peter speaks daringly of us as partakers of the divine nature. In this Eucharist, we will mix water and wine in the chalice and the President prays a remarkable prayer: *'Oh God, who didst wonderfully create and wonderfully renew the dignity of man's nature, grant that by the mystery of this water and wine, we may be made partakers of His divinity, who shared our humanity.'*

Here God uses everyday, mundane, material things to communicate the very life of God, making Christianity, as **Archbishop William Temple** used to say *"the most materialistic of all the great religions."* Yes, we are made partakers of the divine nature, God became a human being so that we could become as God. The Orthodox Church makes far more of our so-called 'deification' than we and you might recall how in the epistle to the Ephesians, the author speaks of us as being those who are going to be filled with the fullness of God - yes, we have been created in the image of God, that is our destiny, our destiny to be God-like, God-like so that we are perfect, even as our heavenly father is perfect.

Be holy, *"even as I your God am holy"* and though this injunction occurs in the book Leviticus, which spends a great deal of time over the minutiae of cultic, ritual things, it turns out that this holiness that God requires of God's people has nothing to do - or very little to do - with cultic purity. No, it is to reflect the divine compassion and concern for the weak and the hungry and so the assertion is when you are harvesting, don't take up everything, leave some, leave some for the poor, be kind to the alien, for you see you were aliens in Egypt. How apt as we contemplate ever more stringent requirements for asylum-seekers and refugees. When you worship this God, if it does not make you see and feel like

God, then that worship is a cult and for God it is an abomination, however elaborate it might be.

God will not heed your worship, your beseeching, for your hands are full of blood, the blood of your sisters and brothers killed in wars that were avoidable. Demonstrate your repentance by how you treat the most vulnerable: the orphan, the widow, the alien. When you are king over this people, and this God gives you God's righteousness, it is so that prosperity will prevail, will prevail because as king, you judge rightly, you judge justice to the poor, you deliver the needy when they cry and the poor man who has no helper. You will pity the helpless and needy and save the lives of the poor. How many of our governments would pass this stringent test: *"how did you deal with the poor?"*

And when God's spirit anoints you, it is so that you may preach the Good News, especially again to the poor, to preach the release of the imprisoned ones and to announce the year of the Lord's favour, the Year of Jubilee, the year of release, the year of the cancellation of debt - of heavy, un-payable, draining international debt.

To be partakers of the divine nature means we become more and more God-like, treating all with an even-handedness, even those we regard as evil. For you know, even the most evil, the Shipmans, the Saddam Husseins, Bin Ladens - we may not like it - but they remain God's children. This God, who lets God's sun shine on good and bad alike; who makes God's rain fall on all, for all, and we, who want to be God-like, are asked to forgive, even as God has forgiven us in Christ, forgive even that which we consider to be unforgivable.

To be like this God, who gives up on no-one, who loves us, not because we are lovable but that we become lovable only because God loves us, God loves us with a love that will not let us go, a love that loved us before we were created, a love that loves us now, a love that will love us forever, world without end. A love that says of each single one of us: *"I love you, you are precious and special to me, I love you as if you were the only human being on earth, I love you and there is nothing you can do to make me love you more because I already love you perfectly."*

How incredibly, wonderfully, it is that God says to you, to me: *"There is nothing you can do to make me love you less. I take you, I take you very seriously, I take you - you - body and soul, you the*

visible and the invisible of you, I love you, I love you, I love you."

[Archbishop Desmond Tutu is the retired Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town]

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**"Silence and Honey Cakes -
The Wisdom of the Desert"**

This recent book by **Archbishop Rowan Williams** was launched at Angus Robertson's, Sydney in February 2004 under the auspices of the "World Christian Meditation Community". It is based on the talks given by Dr Williams at a Meditation Seminar in Sydney in 2001.

"In '*Silence and Honey Cake*'", Rowan Williams returns to the C4th & C5th desert fathers and mothers for wisdom and insight. He discovers their

spirituality resonates strongly with aspects of the modern spiritual search. "

"The author encourages us to enter into the challenges and simplicity of the desert and to take hold of its message for ourselves and our community."

"He has written a deep and powerful book that will speak to many in our fragmented society."

The strikingly unusual book cover design is from the sketches by Sydney artist, *Earle Backen*, created for the banners used at the 2001 Seminar. The three panel design depicts Images of the Australian Desert through Morning, Noon and Evening. Published by Medio Media, Lion Publishing Co. U.K. www.lion-publishing.co.uk

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