Catholic Life
Diocese of Lismore

Lourdes – 1858 - 2008
The Journey of Faith
With mind and heart renewed

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, During Lent I am often reminded of the solidarity which exists during these weeks between faithful people throughout the Diocese and across the universal Church united in prayer, self denial and spiritual growth through the discipline of this season. Together we look forward with a joyful anticipation to Easter, as the first Lenten preface says, with mind and heart renewed through "loving reverence for You, our Father and willing service to our neighbour."

Loving reverence, or piety, that gift of the Holy Spirit (translated these days as “wonder and awe in God’s presence”) is an essential aspect of a Christian spirit. It’s like the love that flows spontaneously from the hearts of children towards their parents. But for people of faith today it has to be under constant cultivation in a noisy and distracting world which easily fixes our attention on the goals which satisfy only immediate needs and gratify desires which do not go beyond the self and its material concerns.

Well prepared for the celebration of Easter

In the Lenten liturgy the Church prays often that everything we do in this holy season may prepare us “with minds made pure” to arrive with the greatest benefit to celebrate the Paschal feast – Easter, the heart and centre of the Church’s entire year. The tendency is always to settle back and be content with just enough practice of the faith to get us by. Now it’s time to break out of the ordinary and the hum-drums, ‘the same old thing’ – as if we are capable of nothing more! The truth is that none of us is merely ordinary: we have powers of soul that make us capable of knowing and loving God, of recognising Christ and we are capable of being united with Him in the deepest happiness, of which the Eucharist is the pledge and the means. The Mass and the Eucharist are also anything but ordinary, the entire drama and grace of our salvation through Christ working on us in every celebration to fulfil our deepest needs.

Desire for the Eucharist, hunger for the Lord

So our personal renewal during Lent should have as its focus the renewal of our union with Christ through the Eucharist. His words which we hear at this time, “With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you...” challenge each of us to a similar desire. Nobody in the Gospel seeking Jesus makes just an ordinary approach to the Lord: they come with great reverence and respect, with ‘desire.’ So the mother of the sons of Zebedee kneels before Him, Jairus falls at His feet to make his request, the woman seeking healing reaches out to touch but the fringe of His garment. The crowds follow Him around the lakeside, in awe listening to His teaching and witnessing the power that flows from Him. The ones who persevere in their desire are the ones who believe Him when He declares: “I am the Bread of life; whoever eats this Bread will live for ever and the Bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.”

What we can discover more deeply during Lent is that this heavenly Bread demands that we must hunger for it, because it fills only those who make themselves worthy of receiving it by the fervour of their desire. Receiving without desire leaves us empty. We must reach out our hands expecting our need to be filled, open our mouths like children expecting to be fed with the Food we could never supply for ourselves. The practice of fasting before Communion serves to remind us that only if we are hungry in spirit can we be filled by what God alone can give us: the grace to live truly as His sons and daughters with our hearts set on everything that is true and good and beautiful and which will last for ever.

Gestures of reverence and respect

Elsewhere in this issue there is an article outlining some forthcoming changes in the celebration of Mass in Australia. One of these is a gesture of reverence to be made by all approaching to receive Holy Communion. It is important to understand that such external actions are made not as ends in themselves, but because they proceed from what is believed and from what is desired. In turn, when an assembly of Catholics at Mass conducts itself with reverence...
and devotional actions which reflect beliefs commonly held, the effect is to make the realities of faith visible. The liturgy is faith in action in worship and itself becomes a powerful teacher. If someone were to ask us to explain the Mass to them, we could certainly guide them by the Scriptures, the Catechism and good books on the subject. But the best explanation to give might simply be and hopefully should be, “come and observe how we worship.” When Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, was searching for the true religion for his people, in the year 987 he sent emissaries to Constantinople to find out about Christianity. Having attended the Divine Liturgy in the basilica of the Holy Wisdom they went home and reported to Vladimir that so captivated were they by the experience that they had not known whether they were on earth or in heaven: “all we can tell is that in that place is God’s dwelling among men.” That liturgy was the beginning of the conversion of Russia. On a humbler scale there are many stories of people who began their journey to the Church by slipping into the back seats at Mass or Benediction and were touched by the power of God’s presence in the liturgy at the altar and in the spirit of faith and reverence among Catholics at worship. Liturgy thus celebrated converts people.

Converting the culture through our witness to the sacred

As our social environment seems to move further away from its Christian foundations it not only loses respect and reverence for God but increasingly loses respect and reverence also for the human person. If we do not take a stand and consciously evangelise the secular culture by our witness to faith, we can only expect to be further ‘evangelised’ ourselves by its alien values. Our principal fortification is in our families, parishes and schools, all part of a united worshipping community focussed on God in the Church’s liturgy, celebrated with conviction, reverence and love.

As Easter draws near, I pray that every member of the Diocese may emerge from the prayer, penance and Lenten works of charity ‘with heart and mind renewed.’ Re-energised by our dying and rising with Christ in the powerful ceremonies of the Paschal Triduum and the Easter Mass, in each parish may we all come happily to rejoice with Mary, Queen of Heaven, in the glory of her Son’s Resurrection.

With every good wish and blessing,

Yours devotedly in Christ,

Geoffrey H. Jarrett,
Bishop of Lismore
Franz Werfel, of Jewish faith and an anti-Nazi, fled from Vienna to Paris with his wife Alma when Austria was absorbed into the Third Reich.

In early 1940 as the German Army circled Paris, the Werfels fled south to Lourdes. There they tried to arrange an illegal crossing into Spain and were taken with what they learnt about Bernadette Soubirous, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary who declared herself to be “The Immaculate Conception” and the miracle cures. He and his wife drank the water from the spring and prayed as refugees for deliverance from the Nazis.

Franz Werfel, in his own words, tells his predicament: “One day in my great distress I made a vow. I vowed that if I escaped from this desperate situation and reached the saving shores of America, I would sing as best I could, the song of Bernadette”.

He did. They escaped by foot over the Pyrenees eventually reaching California where he wrote the book “The Song of Bernadette” which in turn became an Academy Award winning film.

Franz’s story is one of millions of stories in the pages of Lourdes.

His life is one of millions of lives touched by the sanctuary of Lourdes.

This year celebrates 150 years since the apparitions of the “beautiful lady” to Bernadette. This year Lourdes sings the song of Bernadette in a special way, calling to the world yet again to come to Christ and reflect on the compassionate consolation that the Virgin Mary offered through her appearances at Lourdes.

To kneel at the grotto, to bathe in the spring, to drink and bless with the water, to light a candle, to proceed in torchlight to the Basilica and Grotto with those who plead and pray, is a unique spiritual experience. At Lourdes there is no meaningless life, no wasted body or soul, no thought of useless time, energy or pain. It is still a message for our time... that faith in the power of prayer gives courage to live with uncertainty and the fragility of life. The sanctuary of Lourdes, expands our faith and gives us reasons to believe what we do.

Lourdes is more than wanting to be cured from physical sickness. In fact compared to the number who have visited Lourdes over one hundred and fifty years, the number of medically certified cures is quite small. The impact of Lourdes and its story continues to be written and read by the countless number of pilgrims who come to pray for healing of mind and body, for forgiveness and for Our Lady’s intercession and protection. At the grotto where the apparitions took place, the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist is central and the statue of Our Lady is to the right of the altar, expressing the significance of Lourdes...

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The Song of Bernadette will always challenge the depth of our belief.

Father Peter M. Karam – Editor
In the first weeks of this school year I have addressed a number of meetings and invited participants to reflect on what it is that we seek from Catholic schools in 2008.

I have drawn attention to an historical map of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore which shows the development of Catholic schools since the 1860s to the current day. This is a story of ongoing faith-filled commitment by parish communities to support Catholic education for young people.

In the Diocese of Lismore we commence the 2008 school year with 16,599 students educated in 47 parish schools staffed by 1,182 teachers and 547 support staff.

In 2008 we will strive to respond to the challenge of the Bishops of NSW and ACT communicated in their Pastoral Letter of 2007, Catholic Schools at a Crossroads. In reaffirming their commitment to Catholic education, the Bishops challenged us all to take note and respond to the signs of our times, and to strengthen our commitment to ensuring the essential Catholic identity of our schools. In particular, each of us involved in Catholic education, leaders, staff, clergy and religious, parents and parish communities, is asked to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that our schools:

• Are truly Catholic in their identity and life
• Are centres of ‘the new evangelisation’
• Enable our students to achieve high levels of ‘Catholic religious literacy’
• Are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals

A significant step for the Diocese of Lismore in responding to this challenge has been the publication of the document, Foundational Beliefs and Practices of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore: The Essential Framework. The articulation and documentation of our foundational beliefs and practices has been the first step in ensuring that parish schools maintain their strong Catholic identity and fulfill the aspirations of Catholic education for all enrolled students. In 2008 we will continue to work to embed this document into our work in parish schools and the Catholic Education Office.

As Catholic schools we continue to strive for educational excellence. One measure of attainment is the results students achieve in the Higher School Certificate. Students and schools deserve to be recognised and congratulated for outstanding achievement. The nine secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore offering Stage 6 studies are all to be congratulated and thanked for the efforts and commitment of staff in working with, encouraging, challenging and guiding their students during their final two years of Catholic education.

Particular recognition is given to the following parish schools and their students for outstanding achievement in the 2007 Higher School Certificate:

**HSC Outstanding Performances**

**Rankings of Top 200 schools in NSW based on number of credits (subject score of 90 or above) earned divided by the number of times all students in the class sat an exam.**

- Mt Saint Patrick College, Murwillumbah
- MacKillop Senior College, Port Macquarie
- Xavier Catholic College, Skennar’s Head
- Trinity Catholic College, Lismore

**All Rounders: Students who scored 90 or above in 10 or more units:**

- Matthew Hartsuyker (John Paul College, Coffs Harbour)
- Tenika O’Brien (MacKillop Senior College, Port Macquarie)
- Daniel Maynes (Mt St Patrick College, Murwillumbah)
- Rachel Hew (Trinity Catholic College, Lismore)
- Samuel Cromack, Meghan Ellis, Sophie Francis (Xavier Catholic College, Skennar’s Head)

**Best in Subject Order of Merit List:**

- Visual Arts: Laura McKell (MacKillop Senior College, Port Macquarie), First in Course.
- Studies of Religion 1 unit: Sophie Francis (Xavier Catholic College, Skennar’s Head) and Emma Rayward (MacKillop Senior College, Port Macquarie)

**Business Studies:** Beth Cartaar (Xavier Catholic College, Skennar’s Head)

**Personal Development Health and Physical Education:**

- Tenika O’Brien (MacKillop Senior College, Port Macquarie) and Denise Campbell (John Paul College, Coffs Harbour)

Each school celebrated significant achievements and these will be published in the next edition of Catholic Life.
In the weeks ahead in your parish and for uniform implementation throughout the Church in Australia, everyone at Mass will be asked to make two changes during its celebration.

The Holy See has approved an English translation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) which guides the way we celebrate the Eucharist and accompanies the third Latin edition of the Missale Romanum. All of the provisions of the new General Instruction come into force in Australia on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 11th May 2008.

The First Change relates to a Posture

At present when the priest invites the people to pray at the Preparation of the Gifts we remain seated until we have responded May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands to the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His Church. And then we stand for the Prayer over the Gifts.

You will now be asked to STAND at the moment the priest returns to the centre of the altar after washing his hands and invites you to pray: Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

Having stood, we respond, May the Lord accept the sacrifice... etc.

Why stand?

In the Catholic liturgy there are two postures for praying: standing and kneeling. Each reflects something of our relationship with God and helps define that relationship.

To stand in response to the priest’s invitation is a sign of our readiness to enter into the Great Prayer of the Mass which is now to follow and which the priest will pray, in the person of Christ, on behalf of the whole assembly.

To stand is to make a formal recognition of the importance of that invitation.

The Second Change relates to a Gesture

At the time of receiving Holy Communion, the procession of communicants to the altar is a very important ritual act in the celebration of Mass. It is the time when those disposed to receive the Eucharist come forward consciously as the Body of Christ to receive the Body of Christ.

An individual sign of reverence when the congregation receives Communion standing has long been directed, but not always applied. For a long time many people have been in the habit of genuflecting out of reverence when approaching, just as the celebrant is directed to do before he receives Communion. Of course they may continue doing this as their gesture of reverence. What is new is that the Bishops of Australia have specified that approaching communicants should make a bow in reverence to the Mystery that they are to receive. This is understood as a bow not just of the head, but of the body.

An appropriate place for making your gesture of reverence is as you come level with the front of the pews, before moving out to the space in front of the minister of Communion.

About Receiving Holy Communion

In Australia until 1975 Catholics received Holy Communion in the manner common throughout the Church over the centuries. Receiving the consecrated Host directly on the tongue still remains the ‘default’ Catholic way of doing so. However, in September 1975, among the various liturgical changes and alternative customs that came into use in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Bishops of Australia received permission from the Holy See to offer communicants who wished to do so the alternative of receiving Holy Communion on the hand. The free choice was given to and still remains with the communicant, to receive either on the tongue or in the hand.

At the time, official directions were given as to how receiving in the hand was to be done. While for the most part these have been reverently observed up to the present, it is also evident that some communicants are unaware of the correct procedure and others appear confused as to what they should do. Hence a review is timely. Priests, parents and RE teachers are asked to attend to this within their areas of responsibility.

The procedure for receiving Holy Communion in the hand is as follows:

Having made your gesture of reverence, come forward and stand in front of the priest or minister of Communion.

Put forward both hands, slightly raised, the left palm crossed over the right and look up at the host. Respond with your ‘Amen’.

When the Host has been placed on your left palm, step to the side and still facing the altar, use your right hand to place the Host in your mouth.

After having received the Host, turn to go back to your place, or if receiving from the Chalice, go to the other minister of Communion. Many communicants are in the habit of making the Sign of the Cross after receiving the Eucharist, which is a very reverent and appropriate gesture at this point. Please note: Both hands are to be used and the Eucharist is to be received in the mouth before the communicant turns away to return to their place. Communicants unable to use both hands should consider receiving in the traditional way on the tongue. Communicants receiving in the hand should also be aware of the possibility of small fragments breaking off the Host and remaining on their palm. These also should be consumed.

At Masses where Holy Communion is administered under both kinds, communicants may also choose to receive the Precious Blood. Having consumed the Host, the communicant moves to the minister with the Chalice. In Australia, the Precious Blood is generally given
by drinking directly from the chalice, which the communicant holds with both hands. The alternative is to receive both Host and Precious Blood together by intinction directly onto the tongue from the same priest or minister of Communion. Though it may have been done in some places in the past, it is not permitted for communicants to take the Host across to the chalice and themselves dip it in the Precious Blood and so receive. (Redemptionis Sacramentum n.104)

More about Posture: standing and kneeling

In Australia, the congregation kneels during the Eucharistic Prayer after the Sanctus and throughout the Consecration until after the Great Amen, unless prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space or some other good reason. In such cases, apart from those compelled by reason of health to sit, all remain standing throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. The General Instruction specifies that “those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the Consecration.” (n. 43). Especially in the case of large Masses celebrated in school halls where kneeling may not be possible, priests, catechists and teachers should instruct the young people to remain standing and to bow deeply after each Consecration. In these instances, it may be advisable for the priest to use one of the shorter Eucharistic Prayers.

Speaking of Christians at worship, St Paul exhorts that ‘everything be done with propriety and in order’ (I Cor 14:40). In the same spirit, the above liturgical instruction is given by the Most Revd Geoffrey Jarrett, Bishop of Lismore, for implementation within the Diocese.

Feast of the Chair of St Peter, 22 February 2008.


Requiem Mass for Father James Carney

Pontifical Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Reverend Father James “Jim” Carney was celebrated in St. Carthage’s Cathedral, Lismore on Monday January 14, 2008.

Interment followed at East Lismore Cemetery. Father Carney had been living in retirement in Melbourne. He was the son of the late Tom and Mary Carney and loved brother and brother-in-law of Maureen and Barry Power, Dorothea and Ian Roy, Ellen and Terry Barnes and uncle of their families. Principal celebrant of the Mass was the Bishop of Lismore, the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, assisted by Bishop Peter Elliott, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne and a friend of many years to Father Jim. Priests of the Lismore Diocese also concelebrated the Mass. The homily was preached by Bishop Peter Elliott. He spoke of Father Carney’s commitment to the Priesthood, his deep spirituality, his efforts to cope with sickness and his outreach to many people in Australia and overseas.

The full text of the homily is on the Lismore Diocese Website: www.lismorediocese.org under NEWS.
During the weeks prior to the assembly the sisters were challenged by such questions as: How do our current practices express our love for Jesus Christ and our commitment to the Church in a credible way? How do they support and enhance our mission? How do they promote greater passion for the gospel and for the service of the poor?

Catherine McAuley, writing to one of her younger Sisters, advised: Do not fear offending anyone. Speak as your mind directs and always act with courage. Looking to the values of honesty and courage and other values that have always been part of the Mercy story, the Grafton Mercies came together having already pondered questions such as What values, there since the beginning, continue to sustain us? If Catherine paid a visit to our works and living arrangements as they exist currently, would she recognize the congregation that she had set in motion, or would she, instead, be moved to found it once again?

One of the values dear to Catherine McAuley was good communication; communication was the first item on the agenda at Yamba. To proclaim the Good News Jesus climbed a mountain or got into a fishing boat. In the 21st century we make use of technology, not for technology’s sake but as a medium to facilitate the communication of the Message. Fraynework, a ministry of the Melbourne Mercies, has developed a website for the Sisters of Mercy in Australia: http://www.mercy.org.au through which people can explore Mercy ministries, receive newsletters and where members can communicate with each other. Several of Fraynework’s staff members were present at the Yamba gathering. They provided valuable insights into the working of the website and practical tips for using it more effectively on the local scene.

Before dinner on Friday night the Sisters took time to celebrate the work of Sr Mary Quinn. For the past few years Sr Mary has been gathering information for a story that presents Grafton Mercy life since the 1950’s. She has spent countless hours researching, interviewing the Sisters and others, finding photographs and generally pursuing her interest with passion. Finally, it all came together and was ready to be shared with the community.

On Saturday morning, having spent time with the issue of communication and ministry, the Sisters took up the challenging questions around community and religious life. Sister Lauretta Baker, a Lochinvar Josephite Sister, facilitated the work done in this area. Lauretta led us in a reflection on communion – the relational side of our lives – our shared life with each other. Exploration of contemporary writings on religious life helped us focus on the fundamentals of the vowed life. The Sisters’ commitment to Jesus, his way of life and his ministry, was obvious in the discussions and the vision that took shape during the course of the day. The Spirit of Jesus and the spirit of Catherine live on!

As Sisters of Mercy in Australia, PNG and Pakistan are engaged in strengthening our mutual ties through reconfiguring congregational structures, part of the weekend was spent in exploring models for a reconfigured Mercy congregation in Australia. Leonie Crotty, one of our Grafton Mercies has been appointed the Executive Officer for reconfiguring; this was the first of many meetings throughout Australia and we are pleased to say Leonie did us proud by the excellent facilitation of the process.
Some time during the first decade of the 20th century a small Catholic church was erected at the gold-mining settlement of Drake in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. Dedicated to St Joseph it was part of the Parish of Tenterfield in the Diocese of Armidale. The gold soon ran out and the village declined leaving the little church to pass away as many had before it. It was not to be however. A short way down the highway lay the little village of Tabulam in the Parish of Mallanganee. The local Catholics had been having Masses in the Public Hall for many years but longed for a church of their own. This dream became a reality in 1960 when the old church of St Joseph was dismantled, transported to Tabulam and re-erected as the church of St Pius X. This red-letter day for the faithful of the far west of the Diocese was recorded by The Northern Star:

"An overflow congregation yesterday witnessed the solemn blessing and opening of the Roman Catholic Church at Tabulam by the Bishop of Lismore, Most Rev. Dr P.J. Farrelly. The church was brought from Drake and reconstructed and renovated by Evans Head builder M.F. Eastoe, at a cost of 3000 pounds. Yesterday completed moves for a church at Tabulam which began in 1912."

The article provided some brief background to the church:

"Mr W. Hynes of Drake, extended best wishes on behalf of the Roman Catholic Community of Drake. He said the church was at least 53 years old and had originally been built at Drake. His grandfather was one of the people responsible for the original erection of the church."

The decision to move the church to Tabulam proved indeed to be an inspired one as today, one hundred years after it was first built in Drake, the little church of St Pius X is still in use standing proudly and prominently on the same corner in Tabulam where it was first erected 48 years ago.

60 Years a Priest – Congratulations!

Father Eamon Leonard was ordained a priest in St Carthage’s Cathedral, Lismore on 30th November 1947

It was a great occasion when, on the day of his 60th Anniversary of ordination, Fr Leonard celebrated Mass in the Sacred Heart Church Murwillumbah, the town where he had served some twenty-eight years of his priesthood. In the absence on sick leave of Murwillumbah Parish Priest Fr Colin Reinhard, concelebrants were Fr Bill Mills, Fr Tony Hoade, Fr Michael Brady and Fr John Worthington SM.

A large congregation attended, including friends, parishioners and former parishioners of Murwillumbah and Kingscliff parishes, Legion of Mary members from throughout the region and representatives of Mt St Patrick College, Mt St Patrick Primary School and St Joseph’s School South Murwillumbah.

Mass was followed by light refreshments, the cutting of an anniversary cake and the sharing of many memories in the Catholic Hall.

Much of Fr Leonard’s sixty years of priesthood has been spent in the Murwillumbah and Kingscliff parishes. After his ordination in 1947 he worked as an Assistant Priest in many parishes throughout the Northern Rivers including two periods in Murwillumbah. He was appointed the first Parish Priest of Kingscliff in 1960 where he served until the end of 1971 when he was transferred to South Lismore. He became Parish Priest of South Murwillumbah in mid 1973 where he worked until his retirement from full time ministry at the end of 1997. He has been Spiritual Director to the Legion of Mary since 1979.

Since retiring Fr Leonard has lived at Kingscliff.
Most Rev. Peter Elliott is an Auxiliary Bishop with pastoral care of the Southern Region of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. He is Director of the postgraduate John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family. A sacramental theologian, he holds a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Lateran University, Rome, a Master of Arts in theology from Oxford and a Master of Arts in history from Melbourne University. He was an “auditor” at the World Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in 2005. His work on the Liturgy is widely read through the Ignatius Press books, Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite, Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year and Liturgical Question Box. He is Editor of the Religious Education Texts, “To Know, Worship and Love” used in all schools in this Diocese. His happy association with the Diocese of Lismore began when he was a seminarian.

Part 1
The Real Presence

From time to time it is good to focus on the great truths of the Eucharist starting with the core essential – the Real Presence. In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is really present under the visible appearances, or “signs”, of bread and wine. But how does this come about?

The Marvellous Change

When the priest says the words of consecration, a real change of bread and wine happens. The Church calls this invisible change “transubstantiation”, meaning a change of the very inner reality of bread and wine (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1373-1377, 1413). The bread is changed or converted into his Body, the wine into his Blood.

Pope Paul VI taught that “on the conversion of the bread and wine’s substance, or nature, into the Body and Blood of Christ, nothing is left of the bread and wine but the appearances alone. Beneath these appearances Christ is present whole and entire, bodily present too, in his physical ‘reality’, although not in the manner in which bodies are present in place.” Mysterium Fidei, 46. Pope John Paul II reminded us of this change in Ecclesia de Eucharistia 15.

The Meaning of this Change

Just reflect - after the consecration there is no bread and wine on the altar, only Jesus Christ is present, the risen Lord among us as the Bread of Life. On the paten and in the chalice what looks, feels and tastes like bread and wine is really our Lord Jesus Christ, “my body… my blood”, “given up for you”.

Transubstantiation teaches about the power of God, through the work of the Holy Spirit who is invoked by the priest just before he consecrates the bread and wine. But this marvellous change also assures us how much Jesus loves us. He holds nothing back of himself. For your sake and mine, he is present really, truly and substantially, present in his body, blood, soul and divinity, truly God and truly Man. We accept and honour his “Real Presence” by prayerful adoration, because this is the personal Presence of the Son of God. He invites us to respond in a personal relationship of faith, hope and love.

Present in Other Ways

In the Church Jesus is present among us in other ways, for example when the Church performs works of mercy (see Matthew 25:40), or as the pilgrim Church moves forward towards heaven in faith, in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.’ (Matthew 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly, gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species.”

Read these words carefully. Note that all these different ways Christ is present in the Liturgy are linked. They lead up to, prepare for, or depend on his Real Presence “under the Eucharistic species” achieved by transubstantiation. This is why we speak of his unique and supreme Presence in the blessed Eucharist as the Real Presence.

Responding to the Real Presence

The bow we will soon be called to make before receiving Communion is an act of reverence for the Real Presence. We
respond to “The Body of Christ.” with “Amen”, meaning, “Yes, Lord I believe that this is You.” Genuflecting to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle acknowledges the Real Presence.

In Sacramentum Caritatis 66-68, Pope Benedict, promotes the beautiful practices of Eucharistic adoration, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, Benediction and Eucharistic processions. These ways of adoring the Lord are strongly encouraged by the Church and are being revived all around the world. A strong emphasis on Eucharistic adoration is a popular feature of World Youth Day.

Teaching Children

Great truths call for careful language. Anyone who grasps the awesome truth of the Real Presence would never refer to the Host as “holy bread”. This is just not true. After the consecration, in the context of certain liturgical prayers, we find references to “bread” and “cup.” But these words only make sense in the context of the prayers and in the use of words of St Paul in the third acclamation: When we eat this bread and drink this cup…” Outside of this context, it is very misleading to refer to the Blessed Sacrament as “holy bread” or, worst of all, “bread and wine.” This merely describes the outward appearances, ignoring the true reality, of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ himself brought about by transubstantiation.

What applies to adults applies to children, who must never be allowed to speak of the Eucharist in false ways. Sound educational practice tells us that children should never be taught something they will have to “un-learn” later. Eucharistic catechetics always should focus on the great essentials, which may be taught at an early age without any need to “dumb down”. Some people have used expressions like “blessed bread” and “holy wine” in a clumsy attempt to teach, but young children easily accept the real change of bread and wine and the Real Presence of Jesus among us. Older children can also comprehend the Real Presence and the Holy Sacrifice. The RE textbooks mandated in the Diocese of Lismore enrich children’s Eucharistic faith (Cf. To Know, Worship and Love, Yr 5 unit 12; Yr 6, units 14, 15).

Food for Our Journey

However, Christ is really present among us as our Food in a sacred banquet. He gave the command, “take, eat.”, “drink of it, all of you.” He gave us the Eucharist at the Last Supper, a sacred Passover meal. In plain words he tells us that “my flesh is real food, my blood is real drink” (John 6:55). Therefore, every Host consecrated at Mass ultimately has but one destiny, to be eaten in Holy Communion. Every drop in the chalice will be consumed.

The first purpose of receiving the Holy Eucharist is to unite each of us to God. Christ comes to us and we come to Christ. We receive Christ but at the same time we should reflect on another beautiful truth – Christ receives us. “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.” (John 6:56) This gift of himself, through grace, nourishes us spiritually, so that we depend on Jesus for the life of body and soul‚ “… whoever eats me will live because of me.” (John 6:57). Therefore, we can speak of the “saving presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

Holy Communion, received worthily and frequently, helps us to grow in grace, to reflect Christ in the world, to bring him to those we meet day by day, to make us more Christ-like. As Pope Leo the Great indicated, we are called to become the One we receive.

This leads into the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist. The Eucharist nourishes Christians for eternal life in heaven, “… whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me has eternal life and I will raise him or her up on the last day.” (John 6:54). This hope-filled dimension of the Sacrament is found in the prayers, readings and hymns of the funeral rites of the Church.

Bowraville Aboriginal Community Receive the Cross

Catholic Life (September 2007) reporting the Lismore Diocese pilgrimage of the WYD Cross and Icon, included images of the Bowraville Aboriginal community and of the reception of the Cross and Icon at Stuart Island. Though now a golf course, the Island lives in the memory of the older generation as the special place of their childhood and that of their parents. Since 2008 brings together WYD and renewed focus on national Reconciliation it seems good to put down Aunty Jessie’s telling of the Cross and Icon visit. Her words, spoken softly and with feeling, hint at the hidden story our Aboriginal people always bring to the national conversation:

“The people of the families that had grown up there were waiting on the Island. And then the procession came along the causeway. Uncle Martin Ballangarry was at the front. And then there were the children, so nice in their school uniforms. Before then, Uncle Richard Campbell had made Stations of the Cross. Now one of the children and then another one held up the right station. The other children stood still, making each station. And every time, we all said the ‘Our Father’ in Language and sang a hymn. Children who had died are buried on the Island. And because the Cross and Picture had come, some of the people cried. And we all felt good; yes, all the people felt good that day.”

by Pat Coughlan
Let's start with some faulty, misleading, or incomplete ideas about it. In the minds of some Christians the idea of 'grace' conjures up a range of images. Grace is thought of as the 'whitening' of a soul. Some even think of it as like a milk carton which can be a quarter full, a third full, or full to the brim. In this somewhat crude imagery grace is thought of as a quantity. Or else grace is regarded as a kind of heavenly bank account, or as a sort of spiritual superannuation. Still others think of grace in almost biological terms when they refer to it as an infusion or injection of the life of God. Other images liken grace to an electric current or to petrol in a tank.

What is faulty or misleading or incomplete about all these images is that grace is thought of as a thing, a product or an object added on to persons and from outside themselves. GRACE, IN FACT, IS NOT SOMETHING, BUT SOMEONE. It is an interpersonal relationship of love, a relationship of love freely initiated by God. Like the ebb and flow of the ocean, God's love flows to us and draws us back to God. Grace is God (and more specifically God the Holy Spirit) graciously turning his face to us and, in the process, changing us. Grace is God being present to us and our being present to God. Grace is God staying with us so that we might live and move and walk with him. Grace is God reaching out to us and saying, 'Let's be friends'. Grace is God calling on us to dedicate ourselves to him. Grace is God drawing us to love him with all our mind, heart, soul and strength. Grace is God drawing us to our fellow human beings and loving them with the heart of God. It is God speaking to us in the depths of our conscience (i.e. our consciousness of right and wrong) and urging us to know and do what God wants. (Rejecting God's gift of friendship is called 'sin').

What has just been said about grace is supported and illustrated in page after page of the Bible. Here are four particularly 'telling' references to THE GRACE, i.e. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF GOD, two from the Old Testament and two from the New!

Exodus 33: 19: ‘And [the Lord] said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the name, “The Lord”; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I show mercy’.

Ezechiel 36:26-27 ‘A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.’

Ephesians 1:5 ‘He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.’

Romans 5:5 ‘... God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.’

In those samples, God's Word illustrates a central theme of the Bible and of liturgy too – God is at work in history as Liberator.

God sets people free FROM oppression, slavery, hunger, poverty, sickness, despair, ignorance, fear and selfishness. On the other hand, God makes people free FOR love, service, generosity, communion (i.e. union with; sharing) and community. The samples therefore suggest that the grace which divinises people through the gift of the presence to them of the Holy Spirit, also humanises them, making them more like Jesus, whom the Father sent as the Liberator of the poor and the broken.

In A NUTSHELL, grace is the interpersonal relationship between God and us, a relationship initiated by God and maintained by God, but a relationship which requires our cooperation. More simply, it can be said that GRACE IS GOD’S LOVE (i.e. the Holy Spirit of God) PRESENT AND AT WORK IN OUR LIVES.

God loves us not because of any goodness or merit on our part, but because that's the way God is. In his first letter John says simply but deeply, 'God is love' (4:8). God’s nature is to love. God’s life is to love, to pour himself out in graciousness, affection, goodness and kindness.

Like all genuine love, God’s love is active and dynamic. It reaches out to people, touches them and changes them. It empowers them to become what God wants them to be, which may also be what they want to be. The effects of the loving activity of our loving God in our lives has been called by St Paul ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal 5:22). He specifies the effects of grace as ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’ (Gal 5:22). In a word, the poured-out goodness of God makes us good, humanises us and even in a real if limited sense, divinises us.

The impact of God's love on our persons and our lives is, on our part, an ever purer and more generous love for God. We must make a choice. Either we surrender to God as the source and goal of our existence, or else we refuse to be loving people and remain wrapped up in ourselves – selfish, self-centred and self-indulgent. Not living for God and others but living by the motto 'It’s all about me'!

Liturgy in general and sacraments in particular, are best understood as God’s loving self-giving on the one hand and on the other, as our faith-response. So the sacraments of the Church are all about the workings of grace, as we shall see this year. So they should never leave us just as we are now.
Bernadette described the lady as wearing a long white dress with a blue belt and a gold rose on each foot. Through all kinds of criticism, challenge and harsh treatment, the fourteen year old Bernadette went 18 times to pray, listen to “the lady” and dig in the ground for a spring of water that would become a sign for healing, repentance and refreshment.

On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, the “beautiful lady” revealed herself to Bernadette with the words: “I am the Immaculate Conception”. For four years church representatives, doctors and psychologists conducted investigations. On January 18, 1862 the declaration was made: The Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared to Bernadette Soubirous.
God our Father among all creatures You have formed Mary, the perfect creature, the “Immaculate Conception”. Here in Lourdes she proclaimed this name and Bernadette repeated it. The Immaculate Conception; this is a cry of hope: evil, sin, and death are no longer victors. Mary, precursory sign, dawn of salvation!

Mary, You, the innocence and refuge of sinners We pray to you.

Hail Mary………..!

Lord Jesus, You gave us Mary as our Mother. She shared Your Passion and Resurrection. Here in Lourdes she showed herself to Bernadette, saddened by our sins but radiant with Your light. Through her, we entrust to You our joys and our sorrows, our own, those of the sick, and those of all people.

Mary, Our sister and our mother, our confidant, and our help We pray to you

Hail Mary………..!

Holy Spirit, you are the Spirit of love and unity. Here in Lourdes, through Bernadette, Mary asked for a Chapel, and for people to come in procession. Inspire the Church which Christ is building on Peter’s faith: that it may be one. Guide the pilgrimage of the Church: that it may be faithful and daring!

Mary, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you are the spouse and the servant. You are the model for Christians, and the maternal face of the Church. We pray to you.

Hail Mary………..!

For the many graces received here, for all the conversions, all the forgiveness, all the healings, for the vocations and promises which you have witnessed or engendered, for the love of serving others, which you have let us experience, Our Lady of Lourdes we thank you!

With all our brothers and sisters of the human race, with all people in need of peace and justice, with young people in search of a way, you who appeared so young to little Bernadette, with all those who are in mourning, who are ill, handicapped, or facing a setback, with those who may have a reason for despair: Our Lady of Lourdes We pray to you!

Because you are the smile of God, the reflection of the light of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, because you chose Bernadette in her misery, because you are the star of the morning, the gate of Heaven, and the first resurrected creature we praise you, we acclaim you and with you we sing the wonders of God

Magnificat!
150 years of Faith and Devotion at Lourdes

The Grotto where Our Lady appeared to Bernadette

Editor’s Note: We thank L’Office de Tourisme de Lourdes (www.lourdes2008.com) and Sanctuaires Notre-Dame de Lourdes Photothèque (www.lourdes-france.org) for their assistance with providing the images for our special commemoration of the Lourdes Jubilee Year. We invite you to visit their websites for more information about the Jubilee year. All images in “Catholic Life” carry copyright and may not be reproduced in any form.

Father Peter Karam, Editor

Celebration of a Pilgrimage Mass