

**The following editorial appeared in *Catholics in Australia*.**

Today in **Tom Lee's** commentary we read of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Reading **Archbishop Mark Coleridge's** recent address to the **National Liturgical Conference** in Perth one could be forgiven for believing that today we are witnessing the final collapse of Roman Catholicism. Liturgy is meant to spring from the heart of the people, and communicate to the heart of the vast masses in society, their deepest spiritual yearnings. Today we have an institution hell-bent — literally — on taking us back to liturgical forms that appeal to a tiny, totally unrepresentative minority. How, in God's name, does anyone expect this to rebuild Christianity or Catholicism? The Archbishop deludes himself if he believes this will bring the masses thronging back to Mass. It is a continuation of the thinking and policies of the past forty years that has seen the lay Church drained almost completely of the enthusiasm, vitality and hope that characterised Catholicism in the immediate aftermath of the **Second Vatican Council**. It is a continuation of the deluded "more of the same" policies that have been responsible for driving tens of millions away from sacramental participation in the pontificates of **JPII** and **Benedict**. Give us a break from all the sucking up to Rome. The vast masses in Western society today look to secular liturgies like the recent **Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympics** as something that lifts their spirits and takes them closer to those deepest, inexpressible mysteries of what our life and human journey is all about.

This constant pandering to the needs of a tiny neanderthal element within Christianity is not only pathetic and totally misguided as a pathway to evangelisation or re-evangelisation of the world, it is delusional. Liturgy has to communicate to the hearts of people in each epoch of history. It is not some set of symbols and rituals handed down by Almighty God himself that remains unchangeable over all time. Liturgy is something that has to grow and maintain its relevance to the people using the communication norms of each age — and ALL the people not just some minority who are still hanging on to their mothers' apron strings, or Queens who do not know how to "out" themselves and love prancing around in cassocks and black shirts, dresses and lace, swinging thuribles, and singing Gregorian chant. Liturgy has to intimately connect to the hearts of the people — and 'the vast masses' not some 'self-selected minority of the insecure living 500 years in past'. The tragedy is that the vast majority do relish our heritage and do not want to lose it but they do not see our heritage as lighting our pathway into the future just as we do not see our museums as the place of hope for the future of civil society. This reform-of-the-reform liturgical reform will end up destroying the majority of people's love for their heritage.

We need ecclesial leaders who are no longer running around trying to prove to **His Holiness** how loyal and obedient they are to him. **We need leaders who can show us how to express a sense of genuine loyalty and obedience to the will of Almighty God and the hope our God holds out to all of us** — not to be social conformist idiots who are still running around in the mindset of kindergarten tots with a theological belief that God rewards us for 'being good children'. **We need ecclesial leaders who can show us how to make intelligent moral**

**decisions in our lives, and build our personal sanctity in mature, adult-like ways.** We need ecclesial leaders who are no longer covering up paedophiles and immature men with their fingers in the collection plate pretending holy priests and holy bishops and holy popes are somehow exempt from the failings of ego and insecurity all the rest of us human beings are subject to. **We need bishops and archbishops with the balls, manliness, honesty and courage to say to Rome "our people are not buying your agendas!"**

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**Father Richard McBrien writes about Edward Schillebeeckx.**

### **No salvation outside the world**

One of the fast-diminishing number of theological giants died Dec. 23. Edward Schillebeeckx, a Flemish Dominican priest, was 95 years old.

Unlike Jesuit Fr. Karl Rahner, (d. 1984) and Dominican Cardinal Yves Congar (d. 1995), for example, the bulk of Schillebeeckx's major work was done after rather than before or during the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Professor Lieven Boeve, the president emeritus of the European Society for Catholic Theology, of which Schillebeeckx was a member, wrote a brief statement of appreciation following the announcement of the Dominican theologian's death.

He referred to Schillebeeckx, without any exaggeration, as one of the most important theologians of the post-conciliar period, singling out his efforts to engage the Christian tradition in dialogue with modern secular culture and society.

Boeve noted that Schillebeeckx's insights were the result of a long intellectual journey. He first studied philosophy and theology at the Dominican houses of study in Ghent and Leuven (Louvain).

The formation, however, was typical of the times, which is to say that it was largely neo-Thomistic and classical, although Schillebeeckx did come into contact with phenomenology, a philosophical movement that was especially popular in northern Europe, and the writings of one of its leading figures, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (d. 1961).

His most direct philosophical influence, however, was his mentor and fellow Dominican, Dominic DePetter.

One of Schillebeeckx's best-known books, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (1960; English-language edition, 1963), was strongly influenced by phenomenology and also by the principle of sacramentality in Thomas Aquinas, which was the topic of his doctoral dissertation in 1952.

It was during his post-graduate research in Paris, where he studied at Le Saulchoir

and the Sorbonne from 1945, that he came into close contact with Yves Congar and another accomplished Dominican theologian, Marie-Dominique Chenu, both of whom left a lasting impression on the young theologian. Schillebeeckx learned, especially from Chenu, how to understand the development of tradition within the context of history.

He became professor of theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1958, a position he held until his retirement in 1983. His major works were many, including *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (ET, 1979) and *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (ET, 1980).

Unfortunately, the Vatican contributed a number of distractions from his theological work in the form of at least three investigations by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith -- in 1968, 197, and 1984, each of which ended without any condemnation.

In 1982 he became the only theologian ever to be awarded the Erasmus Prize for his contributions to European culture.

In her excellent statement of appreciation in the Jan. 18 issue of *America* magazine, Dominican Sr. Mary Catherine Hilkert, a devoted friend, fellow Dominican, and master of Schillebeeckx's work, and a valued friend and colleague of my own at the University of Notre Dame, reported on Schillebeeckx's final message to his theological colleagues at a symposium held in his honor in Leuven in December, 2008.

**That message was *Extra mundum nulla salus* – "There is no salvation outside the world."** It was a conviction, Hilkert noted, that "captures the love of the world and the 'grace-optimism' that characterized [his] life's work. ..."

From the earliest to his latest books, she wrote, Schillebeeckx "helped readers grasp the core sacramental insight disclosed by the Incarnation: The mystery of God is to be encountered in human life and creation."

For Schillebeeckx, **"the creative and saving presence of God's grace" becomes manifest "wherever human persons minister to one another, especially to the neighbor in need. Human love is an embodiment, a sacrament, of God's love."** He called these experiences "fragments of salvation."

This sacramental view of the world and of the church's role within the world were, according to Hilkert, at the heart of Schillebeeckx's writing, preaching, and teaching for over seven decades, just as they were central to the vision of the Second Vatican Council, where he served as an adviser to Cardinal Bernard Alfrink and the other Dutch bishops. He served in the same capacity at the Dutch Pastoral Council immediately after Vatican II.

Even in moments like our own, Hilkert observed, Schillebeeckx reminded his readers that "God is new each moment," and that wherever injustice occurs,

whether in the world at large or in the church itself, the Spirit is actively at work, prompting resistance, hope, courage and change.

We can make Professor Hilbert's final prayer our own: "May this gifted theologian and preacher of the Gospel now enjoy the fullness of life that he once described as 'God's eternal surprise.' "

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**In a similar vein, the following article by Bishop James H. Burch, of the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit, addresses the innate holiness of all people, (and all creation).**

### **The Church as the "People of God"**

Ever since Vatican II, up to and including recent articles in *Mirabile Dictu*, the Church is constantly referred to as "the people of God."

Vatican II it may be, but un-Christian it also is. Restricting the "People of God" to the Catholic Church is, essentially, to announce to all other people, to those who are not Christians or not card-carrying members of the Roman Church, that they are NOT the people of God. Not God's people! Belonging to some other class of humans not participating in the God-Life. Separate from God, not a part of God. This, of course, is hogwash. EVERYONE is a person of God. There are no people who are not the people of God. They may never have heard of the Catholic Church. They may disagree with elements of Christianity or of the Catholic Church to the degree that they would never even consider being a part of it. They may even appear to be evil-incarnate. No matter. They are still the people of God.

The essential "Catholic" theology is the fundamental spiritual truth taught by Jesus, that God's presence is the ever-present and life-giving, sustaining force of existence. There is nothing separate from God. There is only One. Not "one thing." Not "One God." Just "ONE," and we call that Wholeness "God." Others call it Yahweh, Allah, Higher Consciousness, Great Spirit, Higher Power, the Force. The people of Jesus' time and locale spoke of "God" using the word "Alaha," the Aramaic word meaning "Oneness" or "Sacred Unity."

To the Aramaic-speaking Jesus and to the Aramaic-speaking listener of Jesus' message, the words used by him 140 times in the Gospels and which we translate as the "Kingdom of God," the "reign of God," and the "Kingdom of Heaven" meant: the all-pervasive and life-giving presence of God in everything, all the time. It meant that there was nothing outside of God, ever, at any time – that the supernatural and the natural were blended, always together. Moreover, the second-most-used word in the Gospels was "ruhah," the Aramaic word that meant: 1) the breath of every and any creature; 2) Wind, the "breath" of the earth, and, by extrapolation, anything in the physical universe that moves (e.g., tidal changes, waves off a fire at night or off a hot rock sitting in the sun, the coming-down-ness of rain ... or even – if they could have known or conceived of the concept – the

movement of electrons around the nucleus of the atom) ... essentially, that movement which gives existence to the physical. The third meaning of "ruhah" was why Jesus used that word so often: it also meant "spirit." Jesus was saying, over and over again, that the "Spirit" which is the "movement giving existence to everything physical" is "Holy" ... the Holy Spirit.

Everything and everyone is within the Wholeness, which is God. There is nothing outside the Wholeness of God. Everyone and everything is, therefore, loved and filled with God.

We should move beyond the haughtiness of thinking that only the Church contains "the people of God."

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**From [times.online.co.uk](http://times.online.co.uk) , the following article by Josephine McKenna describes the journey of Mother Mary MacKillop to canonization.**

### **Mother Mary MacKillop is canonised as Australia's first saint**

Mother Mary MacKillop was excommunicated in 1871 by the Roman Catholic Church for insubordination. Two miracles and 139 years later, this very Australian nun is to become the country's first saint.

The Vatican said yesterday that Pope Benedict XVI had approved the canonisation of Mother Mary, who founded a religious order but regularly clashed with the church establishment.

... She often argued with church leaders, and was excommunicated in 1871 after a local bishop accused her of insubordination. It was a decision that was overturned six months later, before a trip to Rome, where she had several meetings with Pope Pius IX.

"She did some extraordinary things at a time when women often did not," said Sister Maria Casey, the Australian postulator who has steered the case through the Vatican. Education was a low priority for the poor at that time, a shortcoming that she worked tirelessly to address. "She also extended her generosity to prostitutes, the elderly and unmarried mothers, who were vilified," said Sister Maria.

**So, you see, hope remains.**

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