

The first selection is a portion of a reflection on the mass readings for Sunday, January 24. Grateful to Roger who composes them, and to Joe who passes them along.

... Since Judaism had fallen on hard times during the long Babylonian captivity, there's a great need to remind people of the essentials of their faith. So Ezra reads from the law - perhaps from the book of Deuteronomy - "from day break until midday."

When the hearers realize the implications of not knowing anything about Yahweh's commands, they wept and "prostrated themselves before Yahweh, their faces to the ground." Thankfully Ezra isn't into self-flagellation. "Go, eat rich food," he commands, "and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who have nothing prepared; for today is holy to Yahweh. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in Yahweh must be your strength."

Rejoicing is also at the heart of the first public message Jesus delivers in Luke's gospel. Reading from chapter 61 of Third-Isaiah, he proclaims, "The spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to Yahweh." What a liberating message on which to base a ministry! No wonder Jesus' first followers constantly refer to it as "gospel" - good news. It offers people a totally new way of understanding themselves and the world in which they live.

Paul, the first author of the Christian Scriptures, feels called to concretize Jesus' message. Nowhere does he do it better than in this section of I Corinthians. He develops in detail his basic insight that all followers of Jesus form the body of the risen Christ. "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit."

What a freeing concept! People who, everyday of their lives, were reminded of their "place" in a world of human-imposed restrictions are now assured that the risen Jesus has peeled off those limitations. "Now you are Christ's body," the Apostle states, "and individually parts of it."

Paul's certainly not the only Christian author to bring up this liberating concept. More than 20 years after the Apostle's death, Matthew has Jesus lay out his dream of an equal, all-inclusive community. Just check out chapter 23 to hear it: no titles, no privileged positions, no outward signs of importance or status.

Perhaps we who have been brought up with the idea that Jesus divided his followers into clergy and laity should be forced to listen to Jesus' laws from "daybreak to midday." Wouldn't it be terrific if, one day, we also could honestly repeat Jesus' words, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing?" Many of us, formed by the experience and spirit of Vatican II, would be happy just to hear, "We're working toward the day when this Scripture passage will be fulfilled in our hearing."

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From the *Wall Street Journal*, the following article acknowledges the passing of Mary Daly.

AS THE FLAME OF DISSENT DIES OUT  
by Charlotte Allen

Mary Daly, a retired professor at Boston College who was probably the most outré of all the dissident theologians who came to the fore of Catholic intellectual life in the years right after the Second Vatican Council, died on Jan. 3 at age 81. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, which might be called the golden age of Catholic dissidence, theologians who took positions challenging traditional church teachings—ranging from the authority of the pope to bans on birth control, premarital sex, and women's ordination—dominated Catholic intellectual life in America and Europe. They seemed to represent a tide that would overwhelm the old restrictions and their hidebound adherents.

Now, 45 years after Vatican II concluded in 1965, most of those bright lights of dissident Catholicism—from the theologian Hans Küng of the University of Tübingen to Charles Curran, the priest dismissed from the Catholic University of America's theology faculty in 1987 for his advocacy of contraception and acceptance of homosexual relationships—seem dimmed with advanced age, if not extinguished. They have left no coherent second generation of dissident Catholic intellectuals to follow them.

Prof. Daly certainly pushed the envelope. In 1968, she published "The Church and the Second Sex," a book that accused the Catholic Church of oppressing and "humiliating" women by excluding them from its "patriarchal" hierarchy. The title of her most famous work, "Beyond God the Father" (1973), is self-explanatory. At some point afterward, Prof. Daly, despite being raised Catholic and earning degrees in theology and literature from three different Catholic colleges plus the University of Fribourg, left the church to embrace ever more belligerent brands of feminism. She got into trouble with Boston College, the Jesuit institution where she had taught since 1966, for barring men from her advanced classes in women's studies. In the wake of a sex-discrimination complaint launched by a male student, Prof. Daly and her employer engaged in a round of litigation during the late 1990s that culminated in her voluntary retirement in 2001. She spent her last years promoting vegetarianism, antifur activism, a protest of Condoleezza Rice's 2006 commencement speech at Boston College, and the coining of male-baiting neologisms (an example: "misterectomy").

The trajectory of her life story is not unusual among Catholic dissidents. The Young Turk of Vatican II—and pet of the progressive Catholic media of the time—was Hans Küng. A Swiss-born, movie-star-handsome priest whom Pope John XXIII had made a peritus, or theological adviser, to the council, Father Küng swept through a tour of U.S. Catholic universities to accolades in 1963. And his 1971 book questioning papal infallibility—which got him stripped of his license to teach Catholic theology in 1979—turned him into a living martyr among progressives. He is still at Tübingen

(last heard from in October blasting Pope Benedict XVI's overtures to conservative Anglicans as "angling in the waters of the extreme religious right"), but he's 81. The Belgian Dominican priest Edward Schillebeeckx, who had worked unsuccessfully to persuade the assembled bishops of the Second Vatican Council to downgrade the authority of the pope—and who was condemned in 1986 for holding that there was no biblical support for the ordaining of Catholic priests—died in December at age 95. The Rev. Charles Curran, who was a controversial figure at Catholic University as early as 1967, when he was temporarily removed from his tenured position over his views on birth control, and who moved to Southern Methodist University after his final dismissal from Catholic two decades later, is now 75.

Another prominent figure in liberal Catholic intellectual circles is Sister Sandra M. Schneiders, who is famous for her assertions that Jesus was a feminist and that God should be referred to as "she" as well as "he," as well as for her advice that progressive orders of nuns treat representatives of a planned Vatican investigation like "uninvited guests." She is also past retirement age and is listed as "professor emerita" at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.

So where is the second generation of brilliant progressive Catholic theologians? There are plenty of liberal lay Catholics. The church's ban on artificial birth control is nearly a dead letter, a majority of Catholics say they believe their church should ordain women, and 40% have no moral objections to abortion, according to a 2009 Gallup poll. But dissident Catholicism seems to have lost steam as an intellectual movement, and not only because the issues relating to sex and papal authority that originally sparked Catholic dissidents have not changed in nearly 50 years.

The first-generation dissidents were products of a strong and confident traditional Catholic culture against which they rebelled, one whose intellectual standards grounded them in the faith they later came to question. Sister Schneiders, for example, earned four degrees from Catholic institutions, including the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Yet most Catholics of her generation have not passed on the tenets of their faith to their children—the offspring of the Vatican II generation tend either to be churchless or not to go to church, in the case of academics, to their students. It's hard to rebel when you don't even know what you are rebelling against.

Not that conservative Catholicism is in any better straits; it's a vibrant but niche branch of the religion, and its leading intellectuals—Robert George, Mary Ann Glendon—aren't theologians. But it is fair to note that when Prof. Daly died, she left behind no young Mary Dalys to continue waging her quixotic war against the faith that shaped her, whether she liked it or not.

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[The editors of the \*Tablet\* address the American and Irish abuse scandal.](#)

### **Clericalism's malign influence**

The crisis surrounding the sexual abuse of children by priests has been used, particularly in the United States, to raise a hue and cry against homosexuality among

the clergy. The fault, in other words, was too much tolerance. This illiberal scapegoating has enabled some conservative church leaders to divert attention from deeper structural and cultural problems that led not just to the abuse itself but to the scandal of the many notorious cover-ups by senior church officials. These often left abusers free to continue their abuse and do even more damage to young people. The story of the Dublin Archdiocese, laid bare before Christmas by an Irish government inquiry, is but the latest to dishonour the Church's reputation. The resignation of the bishops concerned is only the beginning of the reckoning.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, a former papal diplomat, is emerging as one of the few heroes of this sorry affair. He chose Fr Timothy Radcliffe, former Master of the Dominicans, to grasp the real nettle behind the sex-abuse crisis, which is not about homosexuality but about the pervasive culture of clericalism in the Catholic Church. Invited by Archbishop Martin just before Christmas to address the clergy of Dublin Archdiocese, who were still stunned by the disclosures of the inquiry, Fr Radcliffe went straight to the point. Clericalism put priests on pedestals where they were untouchable (and bishops even more so), from which great height they proceeded to load the people with burdens they could not bear – often to do with sexual morality.

“Unlike the Pharisees,” he said, “the yoke of Jesus is light. If we think about our beloved Church in recent centuries, we do seem to have been more like Pharisees, laying heavy burdens on the shoulders of the people. Often this has been associated with sexual behaviour. We have told families with large numbers of children that no contraception is permitted, and young people who cannot afford to get married that their sexual behaviour must be strictly controlled, and gay people that nothing is permitted – and that they should be ashamed of their sexuality. Regardless of the rights or wrongs of church teaching, this has been experienced by our people as a heavy burden.” He added: “You can imagine the anger of a woman who has had child after child and can cope no more, or a young gay person, when they hear what even a few priests have been up to.”

The message of his address, the second part of which The Tablet publishes today, is that the crisis must be seen as a moment of fundamental change. The clerical culture that emerged from the reforms of the Council of Trent, he said, stressed rank and power. “This terrible crisis of sexual abuse is deeply linked to the way that power can corrupt human relationships.” God will use the crisis by “demolishing our high towers and our clerical pretensions to glory and grandeur so that the Church may be a place in which we may encounter God and each other more intimately”. Fr Radcliffe's incisive analysis, while undoubtedly spot on, leaves one disturbing issue unexplored. This Church where power still “corrupts personal relationships” was supposed to have been reformed root and branch by the Second Vatican Council nearly 50 years ago. The challenge now is to ascertain what went wrong.

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