

'The Price of Sparrows' Experiencing God Today

Eamonn Conway

Introduction

Religion is in decline in Ireland. Many questions spring to mind. Why are fewer people experiencing active and involved membership of the Church as fulfilling? Why does the prevailing attitude of the media to the Church fluctuate between hostility and indifference? Why are fundamentalist movements within and without the Church increasing in popularity? Why are some people no longer searching for God, while others seem to believe quite readily in apparitions, healings and other apparent manifestations of the supernatural? Why is there an alarming decline in the number of candidates for ordained ministry?

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation reminds us that 'it pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will.'¹ Yet fewer people seem to experience God's self-revelation in any meaningful way today. This is why religion is in decline. In this paper I intend to examine how adequately we interpret our experience of God today. This will involve both a study of theological method and of the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church. I presuppose here that experience of God is possible, that is, that God exists and is present to us.²

'Experience of God' – what is meant?

A shared understanding of what we mean by 'experience of God' cannot be presumed. *Experience* results from the encounter between the individual and reality. Experiences are lodged in a memory bank which we partially inherit from and partially share with society. We relate new experiences to previous ones. In this way, for example, previous knowledge is confirmed and illusions are shat-

tered. New experiences, in turn, join in forming the horizon for future experiences.

It is only when we sift through our experiences for meaning that the question of experiencing God arises. When we search for ultimate meaning we are searching for a motif which unifies our life, which grounds it, gives it direction and purpose. The search for happiness, wholeness, love, certainty, hope and success is a quest for such meaning. Experiences of alienation, isolation and disintegration, as well as of achievement, acceptance and forgiveness, cause us to reflect on 'how it is' ultimately with reality as a whole. As Walter Kasper says, 'When man ceases to ask about the whole, he will have evolved back into a clever animal.'³

Enquiry about the meaning of reality as a whole is already enquiry about God. God is not one object, among others, 'out there in reality'. God is the ground, the goal and the horizon of all that is.⁴ This is why God is not experienced directly. God is co-experienced in smiles and tears, in anxiety and fear, as well as in calm and joy.

Interpreting experience today

Because God is co-experienced, changes in the way we experience the world, in how we relate to ourselves, each other and our environment, affect our recognition of encounters with God. Today it is more difficult to forge a unifying motif for human experience through which we become conscious of God's presence. In fact, it is easier today to avoid the pain sometimes involved in such a welding process. I wish to highlight here just two ways in which the interpretation of human experience can be curtailed or reduced today.

The first is that our rapidly expanding consumerist society, a society of 'instant everything,' can laminate us from what is deepest within us. We can move rapidly at the flick of a mental button from one 'high' to another whenever our boredom threshold is reached, without even realising we are doing so, until something happens to make us stop in our tracks in disturbing puzzlement. Perhaps for many today the only occurrences of this kind are serious illness and death. Such occurrences still awaken us to the fragility of our

understanding and send us scurrying off in search of ultimate meaning.⁵

The second is a suspicion of authority which effects how we interpret our experience. A community should provide the horizon of understanding (wisdom) within which our individual human experiences can be understood, a horizon which each of us gradually appropriates and to which each of us, in turn, contributes. We should refer our own interpretation of our experiences to the wider wisdom of the community to see if it is valid. Today, however, we are forced to choose between the conflicting claims to authority and wisdom of various agencies (media, Church, politicians, advertisers).⁶ For many, personal experience is now self-authenticating. There is a danger of an arbitrary subjectivism or emotivism in this shift 'from the experience of authority to the authority of personal experience.'⁷

It cannot be denied that there were real dangers in the contrary over-reliance on an external and alienating authority. Loyalty to authority, for example, was valued over authenticity, relevance and meaning. However, when there is an over-reliance on personal experience which is not referred for verification to the wider experience of the community, genuine meaning and relevance can be displaced by merely emotivist expressions of preference. When emotivism takes over, as M.P. Gallagher points out, 'I feel like it' and 'I don't feel like it' become common yardsticks for serious decisions.⁸

Interpreting experience of God today

Both the difficulty of finding time for reflection in a rapidly-moving society and the danger of subjectivism reduce or curtail valid interpretation of our experiences. They also spawn a reductionist understanding of God. An inadequate, 'vulgar' theism can prove a greater block to authentic interpretation of encounters with God than no understanding of God at all. ⁹

Today believers are less likely to be troubled by rationalists asking them to show how belief in God is reasonable. The crisis today is not one of facts but of relevance. Today people want to know how

belief in God will make life meaningful. This is difficult to explain if meaning has been reduced to an arbitrary subjectivism; if what is 'meaningful' is 'what makes me feel good' at any particular time.

In addition, there is a danger of reacting, rather than of responding, to the openness to God we encounter today among those who still hunger for meaning and relevance. Arguably, fundamentalism both within and without the Roman Catholic Church is such a reaction. Fundamentalism panders primarily to people's emotions. Drawing on a naïve and uncritical interpretation of scripture, it feeds an inadequate notion of God, a God very often created in people's own image and likeness. For a time this eases hunger pains which are important signals of deeper privation. But it fails ultimately to nourish, leaving people in a famished state especially when confronted with the incomprehensibility of suffering and evil.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, there is always a risk of a reduction when we discuss God in the context of the meaning of human existence, however thoroughly meaning is pursued. A relationship with God gives human life value and purpose, indeed the most profound value and purpose. But in our anxiety to give our lives meaning and purpose there is always a danger of assigning God *merely* a role or a function. There is a risk that God becomes of interest only to the extent that God is of use to us. Such a consumerist attitude to God reduces both God's dignity and ours.

Mediating God as God – a challenge for the theologian

In an effort to avoid a consumerist attitude to God, it would be natural to turn to the theologian for guidance. Theology's task, after all, is to mediate an *understanding* of Christian faith, hope and love. However, since René Descartes (1596-1650) acknowledged the collapse of medieval cosmology and looked inward for an unshakable foundation for knowledge, theology has had particular difficulty mediating Christian faith meaningfully and faithfully at the same time. The problem has been to develop a theological method which is anthropologically sensitive, yet which leaves God intact.

One of the problems Descartes encountered in his search for certainty was the possibility that he could be deceived into thinking

that he existed when in fact he did not. If God is good and true, argues Descartes, surely God will prevent this from happening? For Descartes, then, knowledge of God occurs in the medium of human subjectivity and God's role is primarily functional. John O'Donnell claims that something 'pernicious' happens at this point: God's existence becomes dependent upon human subjectivity and God is now wholly at the disposal of human self-fulfilment.¹⁰ A logical outcome is the recognition that God must be disposed of, if human self-fulfilment is to be realised. This is precisely the atheistic philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach for whom 'God' is merely a cipher for the human being's own infinity and absoluteness.

Theology attempted to take the 'anthropological turn' seriously. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) set out to provide a firm rational basis for knowledge of God but seemed to succeed in destroying all possibility of so doing. Karl Rahner (1904-1984), familiar with the work both of Maurice Blondel and Joseph Maréchal, and influenced by Martin Heidegger, made the best attempt in recent times at overcoming the Kantian problem.

Rahner's main thesis is that anthropology is essentially deficient christology. A careful examination of the structures of human being and knowing demonstrates that the human spirit is, from the very outset, beckoned beyond the self toward union with God and others. Such a study makes us aware that we dwell 'at the edge of the infinite ocean of mystery' which we do not always see because we are forever occupied with the grains of sand along the shore.¹¹ At the very edge of human experience we find ourselves listening for a possible revelation of a hitherto unknown God. Should God not have revealed himself, argues Rahner, then the greatest human perfection would have been to stand waiting and listening before God's silence.¹² Yet God chooses to reveal God's self through a plan of revelation which has a dynamism towards incarnation from the very beginning. In Christian dogma, therefore, we find the highest expression of human potential. In this way Christology fulfils anthropology.¹³

Rahner takes anthropology seriously, yet avoids asserting the reality of God on the basis of the human spirit's openness and desire for God, which is the mistake of German idealism.¹⁴ Is Rahner then well placed to mediate Christian faith faithfully and meaningfully at the same time? Rahner recognises how many people are alienated and estranged from Christian faith and he shows that divine revelation corresponds to the deepest hopes and desires of humanity. But there are two difficulties.

The first is that, due to the way in which interpretation of human experience today becomes so easily truncated, many people are not only alienated from Christian faith but also from their own deepest hopes and desires. If people no longer search for, or expect, a unifying motif for their experiences, even a theological method as anthropologically sensitive as Rahner's is unable to penetrate and mediate faith meaningfully and credibly.¹⁵ In fact, if people interpret human experience in such a way that the God-question does not arise, all theology is severely crippled.¹⁶

The second difficulty relates to the danger mentioned earlier of a consumerist attitude to God. Rahner's method presents divine revelation as corresponding to the deepest hopes and aspirations of humankind, and only that. This is Hans Urs von Balthasar's main gripe with the anthropological approach to theology:

It might be true that from the very beginning man was created to be disposed toward God's revelation, so that with God's grace even the sinner can accept all revelation. *Gratia supponit naturam*. But when God sends his own living Word to his creatures, he does so, not to instruct them about the mysteries of the world, nor primarily to fulfil their deepest needs and yearnings. Rather he communicates and actively demonstrates such unheard-of things that man feels not satisfied but awestruck by a love which he never could have hoped to experience. For who would have dared describe God as love, without having first received the revelation of the Trinity in the acceptance of the cross by the Son?¹⁷

Rowan Williams points out that Rahner's Christ is the answer to

the human question, whereas Balthasar's Christ 'remains a question to all human answers.'¹⁸ Surely we look to the theologian to mediate to us fully both aspects of the one mystery of Christ because, through Jesus of Nazareth, humanity's deepest needs and yearnings are fulfilled by a love, the depth of which puzzles us, which we could never have adequately anticipated, and still only inadequately appreciate. In the wake of this love we are both heartened and challenged.

Letting God be God – as Christ did

Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God's love. The Church, as the sacrament of Christ, is to re-present and effect the mystery of God's love in the world. In a unique way, then, the Church is entrusted with enabling people to experience God. Ways the Church could do this more effectively might emerge from a study of Jesus' experience of God and its effects. We begin with the effects.

Jesus was convinced of the ultimate worth of human life. This conviction was the source of his power.¹⁹ Because of Jesus' faith in the power of goodness and truth, he did not need and did not accept any other authority. As Nolan puts it, Jesus did not make authority his truth; truth was his only authority.²⁰ In this way it was impossible for authority, as Jesus exercised it, to be experienced by people as alienating or as imposed upon their experiences from outside. The parables, for example, frequently began or ended with questions which challenged the listener to recognise that what Jesus was saying was the self-evident truth about reality: 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons ...' (Mt 21:28); 'Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the brigands' hands?' (Lk 10:36); 'Which will love him more?' (Lk 7:42)

In addition, Jesus' faith gave him what we might refer to today as a robust self-image that liberated him from control and manipulation by others. Jesus was a free man.²¹ He was free to keep company with those who most needed him, with those whose vision of the ultimate meaningfulness of human life had been blurred, with those whose sense of their own worth and dignity had long since

been eroded. He bodied forth God's particular and extravagant love:

'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.'²²

Jesus' power and freedom sprang from his experience of God. He experienced God in such a way that he was convinced that God meant nothing but goodness and love for humanity. Jesus allowed God to express goodness and love in and through him in a unique way. He accepted God as God, and this gave him a tremendous serenity and, at the same time, an urgent sense of mission.²³ Jesus acted upon his conviction about God and he committed his life to awakening a similar conviction in others. He remained faithful to his conviction to the point of death.²⁴ Jesus' resurrection testifies that even death has no power to destroy such faith. ²⁵

Experiencing God today – the mission of the Church

Jesus' experience of God, and his witnessing to this experience by his actions, are normative for the Christian community. We speak frequently of the importance of witness. The Christian community will only succeed in its mission when Christians testify to their experience of God by the way they live their lives. But witness is not an imposition on Christians. Genuine witness inevitably emanates, freely and joyfully, from a correctly interpreted experience of God. Why does bearing witness often seem such a burden today?

At this point we can begin to look a little more closely at the Irish context. Despite the Church's enormous investment in education here there has been, nonetheless, a failure to 'hand on the faith'. To some extent we have succeeded in communicating that aspect of Christian faith which consists of a system of values or mores, summed up in John 13 as 'Love one another ...' We have been less successful in creating or sustaining a kerygmatic Christian community in which the second part of this commandment, '... as I have loved you,' is experienced. It is only in the context of such an experience that the entire love-commandment seems reasonable and vi-

able. This helps us to understand why people in Ireland appear to be 'picking at the package' and why we talk of *à la carte* Catholicism today. Ireland has failed to 'hand on the faith' because what Kavanagh once said of Lough Derg can be said of our island as a whole: the twentieth century blows across it now. Consumerism and subjectivism will make experience of God as difficult in Ireland as elsewhere. How can we respond?

The questions of experience of God and of human dignity are inseparable. An impoverishment or enrichment in our understanding of our experience of God is matched by a loss or gain in terms of our dignity. Restoration of human dignity is at the heart of the gospel and therefore forms the core of the Church's mission in every age.²⁶ The Church is effective in its mission only when the forces in society which blind, deafen and cripple people are overcome.

Jesus understood himself as sent especially to those whose dignity was compromised by both religious and civil institutions of the time. As the New Testament relates, each person who met Jesus, and whose disposition was ultimately, however vaguely expressed or understood, one of faith and not of despair, had a renewed sense of dignity and self-worth. Sometimes this inner healing was expressed in a physical way, but this was secondary. Of more importance was the experience of being at one with God, others, and oneself.

To be able to restore dignity to others we must ourselves be convinced of the ultimate value of human life, and of our own dignity. In a society such as ours, which is becoming increasingly materialistic, the Christian community has a responsibility to ensure that a person's value is understood as intrinsic, and not as something measured according to criteria of usefulness determined by a minority who control market forces.

In this context, one problem in Ireland which demands the urgent attention of the Christian community is unemployment. Through work we contribute to our own development and the development of society. Without working it is difficult to hold on to a sense of dignity and self-respect.²⁷ There are three steps Christians could

take to enhance dignity and self-worth and bring about the kind of society in which God's presence is more easily felt.

First, while there is a shortage of jobs in Ireland, there is not, strictly speaking, a shortage of work. There are many ways in which people can and do contribute creatively and valuably to the fabric of Irish society. In fact, we have an extraordinarily high number of people who care for the young and the old, support married couples, console the bereaved, and provide and maintain facilities which make all of this possible. Much of this work is done 'voluntarily', sometimes on a full-time basis by people who are considered 'unemployed'. Because these people survive financially on social welfare assistance, they carry the stigma of being 'unemployed', of being dependent, of 'getting something for nothing.' This stigma is unfair and unjust. There is no shortage of work in Ireland, only paid jobs. A re-think is called for.

The second relates to the existing paid jobs in Ireland and is more radical. Work-sharing, with an inevitable decline in the quality of life in terms of possessions and conveniences for some, would give everyone the opportunity of a more balanced life-style, with time and energy for 'being' as well as 'doing', and a greater opportunity to reflect and wonder.²⁸

Third, the Church itself can provide employment opportunities for people who are already trained in pastoral ministry and frustrated at the dearth of opportunities to put their expertise at the disposal of the Christian community. Failure to do this affects the sincerity of the Church's preaching on employment as well as the realisation of its mission.

Conclusion

If we feel that we do not encounter God today, or cannot recognise God at the root of our everyday experience, we have to accept that somehow we, by the way we live our lives, have 'plugged ourselves out'. God still loves the world.

It might seem foolish to attempt to reconstruct society along Christian lines. It would be, if it were not for the fact that through Jesus of Nazareth we experience God's love for us, and in Jesus of Nazareth

we encounter one human being who was transformed by God's love. God gave Jesus the power and the freedom to transform society. Market forces did not dictate the extent of Jesus' love. The power of love to change should not be underestimated.

The Second Vatican Council reminds Christians that they share in the prophetic mission of Christ.²⁹ Prophets are, as Rahner puts it, none other than believers who can express their own experience of God correctly.³⁰ Prophets put their own experience of God at the disposal of others in such a way that they (others) can see faith in God as the purest and most profound expression of their own experience of life. It was precisely in this sense that Jesus was prophetic.

If we could fully experience God's love for us, if we could see ourselves even for one moment as God sees us, as salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5:13-14), we would be transformed people. We would realise our dignity and our self-respect, for God's acceptance of us brings self-acceptance and acceptance of others. We would give up constructing plastic paradises. We would be liberated of our possessiveness. We would have more, simply by desiring less. We would be free.

Notes

- 1 *Dei Verbum*, n 2 (reference to Eph 1:9).
- 2 Atheism and sceptical positivism (which restricts the human search for meaning, claiming that the only data accessible to the human being comes in and through the natural sciences) are therefore rejected as fundamentally false.
- 3 *Möglichkeiten der Gotteserfahrung heute*, *Geist und Leben* 42, 1969, p 333.
- 4 The following quotations, one from a mystic, the other from a theologian, help clarify the Christian notion of God:
"Excuse me," said one ocean fish to another, "you are older and more experienced than I, and will probably be able to help

me. Tell me: where can I find this thing they call the Ocean? I've been searching for it everywhere to no avail." "The ocean," said the older fish, "is what you are swimming in now." "Oh this? But this is only water. What I'm searching for is the Ocean," said the young fish, feeling quite disappointed as he swam away to search elsewhere.' (A. de Mello, *Song of the Bird*, India, Diaz del Rio, 1982, p 14).

'That God really does not exist who operates and functions as an individual being alongside of other beings, and who would thus, as it were, be a member of the larger household of all reality. Anyone in search of such a God is searching for a false God. Both atheism and a more vulgar form of theism labour under the same false notion of God, only the former denies it while the latter believes it can make sense of it. Both are basically false: the latter, the notion that vulgar theism has, because this God does not exist; and the former, atheism, because God is the most radical, the most original, and in a certain sense the most self-evident reality.' (K. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, Freiburg, Herder, 1976, p 72).

- 5 As K. Rahner writes: 'This, then, is the situation in which we find ourselves: we are all sitting in the prison of our own existence as in a condemned man's cell, waiting until our turn comes. Until then one can play cards, enjoy a condemned man's last meal, and forget for the moment that the prison door will soon open and we will be called out for our final journey. But that is precisely what we must not forget. The animal is blind to its approaching death, or has at most some dim fear of losing its life. But we are aware of death and must not suppress this awareness. We should live with death in our view. We know that we shall simply be thrust into the unyielding loneliness of death where no one can accompany us any further, where the chatter stops. The only thing that still counts is what one can take with one in death: that is I myself as I was in the ultimate depths of my own heart, that heart that was full of love or full of spite and selfishness, a nuisance to myself and

others. We take nothing with us into this state of abandonment except what we ourselves are in the ultimate and radical decision of our own hearts. Already in the here and now we must weigh our life day by day on the scales of death with a view to being able one day to die our own death. We should practise, even in this life, how to die ...' (*Was heist Auferstehung? Meditationen zu Karfreitag und Ostern*, Freiburg, Herder, 1985, pp 9-10).

- 6 This is not the only cause of the contemporary suspicion of authority, which has its roots in the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment led to disillusionment with all claims to authority which were not empirically verifiable, including that of Christianity. Characteristic of the Post-Enlightenment period is disillusionment with being disillusioned. Recognising how unharmed technologically-based progress has destroyed much of the environment and how the human imagination has been so devastatingly circumscribed, even science's claim to authority is suspect.
- 7 The post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (John Paul II, March, 1992), concerning priestly formation, comments (n 7): 'We should take note also of a desperate defence of personal *subjectivity* which tends to close it off in individualism, rendering it incapable of true human relationships. As a result, many, especially children and young people, seek to compensate for this loneliness with substitutes of various kinds, in more or less acute forms of hedonism or flight from responsibility. Prisoners of the fleeting moment, they seek to 'consume' the strongest and most gratifying individual experiences at the level of immediate emotions and sensations, inevitably finding themselves indifferent and 'paralysed', as it were, when they come face to face with the summons to embark upon a life project which includes a spiritual and religious dimension and a commitment to solidarity.' Cf. A. McIntyre, *After virtue. A study in moral theory*, London, Duckworth, 1981, p 222ff; D. Lane, *The experience of God*, Dublin, Veritas, 1981, p 10ff; M.P. Gallagher, *Struggles of Faith*, Dublin, Columba Press, 1990, p 51ff.

- 8 M.P. Gallagher, *Struggles of Faith*, p 51.
- 9 Cf Note 4 above.
- 10 J. O'Donnell, *The mystery of the triune God*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1988, p 7-11. Cf. W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, London, SCM, 1984, p 18ff; E. Jungel, *God as the mystery of the world*, Edinburgh, T.&T. Clark, 1983, p 111ff.
- 11 K. Rahner, *The experience of God*, *Theological Investigations 11*, London, DLT, 1974, p 159.
- 12 This is the thesis of Rahner's second major work, *Horor des Wortes*, which appeared in 1940.
- 13 Rahner proposes an interlocking (*Verschrankung*) between philosophy and theology. Only in this way can he 'give people confidence in Christian dogma such that they can believe with intellectual honesty.' (*Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 33).
- 14 Rahner avoids the reductionist position of German idealism because for him there is no such thing as a purely philosophical system. As J. Ratzinger notes, '(Rahner's) transcendental method does not pretend to deduce Christianity purely from itself (i.e. this method); it is a presupposition of understanding which becomes possible because faith had already opened up the field of thought.' (*Vom Verstehen des Glaubens. Anmerkungen zu Rahners Grundkurs des Glaubens, Theologische Revue* 74, 1978, p 184). Cf K. Lehmann, 'Karl Rahner. Ein Portrat' in K. Lehmann and A Raffelt, *Rechenschafts des Glaubens, Karl Rahner-Lesebuch*, Freiburg, Herder, 1979, p 33.
- 15 Rowan Williams comments on Rahner's theological method: 'We must in some degree know our own hearts before we can recognise the heart's desire which is the Incarnate God.' ('Balthasar and Rahner' in J. Riches, Ed, *The analogy of beauty*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1986, p 18.
- 16 As W. Kasper notes, 'It is possibly one of the most severe challenges to believers (at least to those who have to preach the faith) that there is an increasing number of people who lead a

happy and fulfilled life without any belief in God. They seem to lack nothing that faith could give them ... faith is like money that is no longer backed up by the hard currency of human experience. This worrying dichotomy between faith and human experience is so pervasive that faith threatens to become a mere superstructure. Therefore, one of theology's most urgent concerns must be to restore the 'location' (*Sitz im Leben*) to faith and to apply itself to the theme of faith and experience (*An introduction to Christian faith*, London, Burns and Oates, 1980, pp 19-20).

- 17 H. U. von Balthasar, 'Current trends in Catholic theology and the responsibility of the Christian,' *Communio*, Spring 1978, p 80.
- 18 'Balthasar and Rahner' in J. Riches, Ed, *The analogy of beauty*, p 34. In his anxiety to protect the unpredictability and wonder of the historical Christ-event, Balthasar, in his own theological method, plays down the human capacity to anticipate divine revelation. As Claude Geffre says, '... von Balthasar himself cannot do wholly without some kind of pre-understanding. I can only apprehend the beauty of the mystery of Christ if I already have within me some kind of norm of beauty, and it is because I perceive there a certain affinity that I can come to credibility.' ('Recent developments in fundamental theology: an interpretation,' *Concilium* 5, 1969, p 11).
- 19 'The power of faith is the power of goodness and truth which is the power of God.' (A. Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, London, DLT, 1977, p 84.
- 20 *Jesus before Christianity*, p 123.
- 21 We are told that Jesus was not 'afraid of anyone' and that 'a man's rank' meant nothing to him. (Mk 12:14) He was neither controlled by his family (Mk 3:21) nor by the religious leaders of the time. (Mk 3:22) He was unconcerned about his reputation. (Mt 11:16-19, 7:39; Jn 4:27, 9:24) Jesus was a free man because nearness to God amplifies rather than diminishes human freedom.

- 22 Lk 12:6-7.
- 23 Cf Lk 11:2, 10-12, 12:22-26.
- 24 Cf Lk 22:41-43.
- 25 Cf Heb 12:2; Gal 2:20 and 3:23.
- 26 Cf Is 61:1-2, Luke 4:18.
- 27 'Through work man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of society within which he lives ... Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of the creatures ... work bears a particular mark of man and humanity.' (*Laborem Exercens*, Introduction).
- 28 The Mayo theologian, Donal Dorr, outlines such a proposal. Cf. 'Exile and return' in E. McDonagh, Ed, *Faith and the Hungry Grass*, Dublin, Columba Press, 1990, pp 75-77.
- 29 *Lumen Gentium*, n 31.
- 30 *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 163.