

# Reconciliation—

## A SIGN THAT GOD CARES

On the evening of the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples who were huddled in fear in the upper room. As He stood before them He said, "Peace" twice and showed them His wounds, changed now in His glorified risen body. Then He commissioned them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins they are forgiven them; if you retain them they are retained." (John 20:19)

This is the source of the power that the Church has held from the earliest times to forgive and retain sins in the name of Jesus. It is merely the continuation of the ministry of Jesus. At the outset the Archangel Gabriel explained, "Mary is to

have a son and you are to name him "Jesus" because He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Jehoshua which means "God saves". Among the names that we call Jesus are redeemer, atoner, saviour - all indicating His coming into the world to save us from our sins and to restore us to a relationship of friendship with God which had been lost by sin.

All of Jesus' healing miracles point to this purpose of Jesus' life.

God did not send his son just to heal some people from their illnesses; these cures were outward signs (sacraments we now call them) of the inner healing that he was able to effect in them. At Capernaum a paralytic man was brought to Jesus to be healed. Jesus said, "Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven". Some of the scribes who heard this were shocked because only God had the power to forgive sins. Jesus responded by explaining, "To help you realize that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sin - He said to the paralytic man - stand up. Roll up your mat and go home" And the man did just that. (Matthew 9:1-8)

Jesus was engaged in His public ministry for only three years and only in Palestine. After His resurrection He was careful to pass on His



powers to His apostles on whom He founded His community (the Church) to CONTINUE His ministry throughout time and space. And this is what the Church has always tried to do, in offering all people healing and the peace that comes from it. The sacrament of reconciliation makes explicit this forgiveness of sins with the Church is duty bound to offer her members as the chief component of spiritual healing.

God does not offer us useless or superfluous gifts; if Jesus instituted this Sacrament, then it is to be used. We would be foolish to ignore this sign of God's caring for us; we all sin and fall short of the Lord. We need His forgiveness and the strength to overcome our sinful tendencies that the Sacrament confers on us.



# letters

Dear Editor,

The Wits Cathsoc Committee, on behalf of Wits Cathsoc would like to raise an issue of democracy with the NCFS Exec. Believing that Cathsoc Committees are more in touch with those active in Cathsocs this year, and those who work best with people and those who have the best grassroots experience and understanding of the needs of NCFS members, we suggest that the Cathsocs be involved in the choosing of members for the NCFS Conference Theme Committee. Specifically, we suggest that the Cathsocs in the region where the Conference Organiser is should decide

## CLASS, RACE: AND CHRISTIANITY

A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, a woman or a man who tries to give a life consistent with the actions and teachings of the Son of God. A Christian is also a person with distinct and ascertainable characteristics, viz. age, race, sex, economic class, social status, etc. By the very fact that a Christian is a person in society s/he must of necessity have these social characteristics and attributes.

When a Christian, therefore, makes a statement of opinion or belief as to social or 'political' matters, (for they are the same), it is important to reflect on these two facets of the Christian as a person in society. One should always ask the question: "Who is speaking?" Can one hear the voice of Christ in the words or do they merely echo the aspirations and interests of that section of society to which that Christian belongs?

In order to evaluate such a statement it is useful to see whether or

on 4 people who have experience of Cathsoc, NCFS, of working with people, and of the needs of grassroots NCFS people, and of these four, three can be chosen by Exec. Thus the recommendations of the Cathsocs can be taken seriously.

In view of this "bottom up" democracy, Wits Cathsoc has held a provisional election of people to be included in this year's theme comm. While we understand that Exec's decision was taken in accordance with the NCFS constitution, and while we agree that the normal procedure regarding changes to the constitution should be taken at National Conference (and we commit ourselves to raising it



then) we ask that the issue be opened now, and that Exec should seriously consider our recommendations for theme comm now.

not what Christian A says is substantially different from what any other person of more or less the same age, sex, race, economic position, status, etc. would say. If it is not substantially different, then one can come to the following conclusions:

- (a) every person who broadly shares the social characteristics of Christian A adopts an essentially Christian perspective.
- (b) Christian A is not being as true to the actions and teachings of Christ as his or her stated belief implies.

If there are other Christians who do share Christian A's social characteristics but differ in the social and 'political' statements on the basis of a different interpretation of Christ's teaching and action then conclusion (a) cannot hold. We have now arrived at some answer to our question 'who is speaking' - maybe it is not Christ in Christian A

who spoke, but rather Christian A's social position and interest.

This article does not pretend to be a 'guide to discernment in 3 basic steps', rather it is an appeal: look behind what a Christian says, do not accept all statements merely because they claim to be 'Christian' - ask the question - "who is speaking?"

In answering the above question some further questions are useful: eg. who is benefitted, whose interests are protected, who will suffer? In the light of these answers one can then compare them to who was benefitted by Christ's presence in the world, whose suffering did he alleviate, and whose interests did he advance?

If we are careful to listen to what a person is saying, but following the method of reflection outlined in this article, we can come to a clearer understanding of exactly who is speaking: Christ or Society.

NCFS AND  
CROSSFIRE  
WISH YOU  
JOY AT THE  
BIRTH OF  
THE PRINCE  
OF PEACE



*Do not be afraid. I have good news for you;  
there is great joy coming to the whole people.  
Today in the city of David, a deliverer has been  
born to you, the Messiah, the Lord      Luke 2:10*

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