How should religious and secular culture interact? Should they interact at all? What do we give to those who complain that Bible-reading is boring, and immoral comedies are entertaining? One thousand years ago, a young Benedictine nun asked herself these questions. Her solution pre-figured the Second Vatican Council by over 1,000 years.

Hrotswitha was born around 935 AD, and entered the monastery of Gandersheim, Saxony, when she was about 23 years old. Gandersheim was a center of learning, and Hrotswitha had extensive training and access to a library well-stocked with the works of the classical poets and historians and of the Church Fathers. Her studies included the works of Publius Terentius Afer, one of the greatest playwrights of ancient Rome. Hrotswitha discovered that Terence was a highly skilled and entertaining playwright, but she was frustrated by the contents of his plays - and especially by his portrayal of women, who were often foolish and immoral drunkards. His talent made his works attractive; his content set a bad example.

How to resolve this dilemma? Hrotswitha chose to engage with Terence’s plays, rather than rejecting them outright, or ignoring their weaknesses. She used his writing style to create new plays in which women featured as strong moral leaders rather than as easily corruptible. Her six plays and eight sacred legends were so well-received that she was commissioned to write a history of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto II.

Hrotswitha showed us that non-Catholic culture does not have to be rejected in its entirety, and that it is right to praise the gifts and achievements of non-Catholics. She also showed that Catholics need not be passive before the weaknesses of other cultures. She set an example of fruitful dialogue between cultures, and enriched the lives of her contemporaries as a result of it.
On the strength of this unending testimony the Church has grown, and is now spread throughout the world. Today is the feast of all witnesses... Today they come from the great tribulation and sing the glory of Christ: in him, rising from the shadows of death, life has been made manifest.

Today, we too are witnesses to the Risen Christ and we repeat his proclamation of peace to all humanity... Christ, who died and rose for us, you are the foundation of our hope!

Pope John Paul II, April 12, 1998

A memory...

In 1957 or 1958, Father Hine, assistant priest from St Mary’s, was anxious to help the children in the parish who were in the state schools and to give the generous people who taught scripture something to help them.

Until then they just taught the children from their own wonderful faith. Father asked Sister Rose (may she rest in peace) and myself to help him print a book. He gave us the framework, Sister Rose did the drawings and I did the typing. Father was a pioneer from the Green Catechism to My Way to God Series.

A useful mid-lesson shift...

While I was teaching a Yr 6 Scripture class recently I commented that Jesus is God. One of the students expressed surprise at this so I asked those in the class to put up their hands if they believed that Jesus is God. Interestingly, only about a third of the class raised their hands. So I postponed the topic — Lent — and took the opportunity to explain our teaching about the Blessed Trinity. I considered it important for the students to be clear on this important point. Hopefully they had a better understanding by the end of the lesson! I wonder if other teachers have had a similar experience?

Michael Cummins, Oatley

Saint Peter Chanel was born in 1803 in Clet, France. He became a priest, and spent three years revitalising a run-down country parish. In 1831 he joined the newly formed Society of Mary. He hoped to become a missionary, but was appointed to teach in a seminary for five years. Finally, in 1836, he was sent to the Island of Futuna with a laybrother, Thomas Boog. After three years, the king’s son asked to be baptised. Enraged by jealousy, the king had the missionaries clubbed to death. Within the next five months, the entire island converted to Christianity.

"You know what took place regarding Jesus of Nazareth...we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem" (cf. Acts 10:37-38).

Yes, today the witnesses speak out: not only the first ones, the eye-witnesses, but also those who, from them, have learned the Easter message and have borne testimony to Christ crucified and risen from generation to generation.

Some have been witnesses even to the shedding of their blood and, thanks to them, the Church has continued on her way, also amid harsh persecutions and obstinate rejection.

On the strength of this unending testimony the Church has grown, and is now spread throughout the world. Today is the feast of all witnesses... Today they come from the great tribulation and sing the glory of Christ: in him, rising from the shadows of death, life has been made manifest.

Today, we too are witnesses to the Risen Christ and we repeat his proclamation of peace to all humanity... Christ, who died and rose for us, you are the foundation of our hope!

Pope John Paul II, April 12, 1998

A Saint’s Day

8 April—Easter Sunday
16 April—St Bernadette Soubirous
21 April—St Anselm
25 April—St Mark, Evangelist
28 April—St Peter Chanel
30 April—St Pius V

A Moment with God

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Pope John Paul II, April 12, 1998
Questions and Answers...Questions and Answers...

Q. Did God die on the Cross?

A. This depends upon whether one is asking about the Divine nature (what Jesus is) or the Divine Person (who Jesus is.) The answer to the first is ‘No’, and to the second, is ‘Yes.’

Jesus was one divine person with two natures (CCC 481). Who was he? He was the second person of the Blessed Trinity. What was he? He was God and man.

Now, persons possess natures. They ‘own’ them. Lucy owns a human nature. Jesus owns a divine and a human nature. Persons also ‘own’ actions. That is why we say, “Lucy stole the biscuit,” rather than “Lucy’s hand stole the biscuit” or “Lucy’s nature stole the biscuit.”

What died on the Cross? A human nature, a human body died on the Cross. Who died on the Cross? In this case, the ‘owner’ of that death was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In other words, the Divine Nature did not die on the Cross. But the Divine Person died on the Cross.

Normally, it is correct to say, “God died on the Cross,” because questions are normally about persons, rather than natures. But we must be very clear about what we mean. We do not mean that Jesus’ Divine nature was hurt on the Cross. We mean that the Divine Person ‘owns’ that death on the Cross, is responsible for it, and makes it meritorious.

What They Know

The World of Narue is a nine–volume series about Lizuka Kazuto, and his half–alien girlfriend, Narue.

What is Manga?: ‘Manga’ is the Japanese word for comic and print cartoons. It is a style which originated in Japan, but has spread throughout the world, covering most genres and subject matter, and all age–groups. The market for manga in Australia and the US has tripled every year since 2002.

Manga is read ‘back-to-front’ and pictures are arranged diagonally, as well as in rows. Manga uses pictorial codes e.g. a throbbing vein for irritation, sweat drops for confusion, and a nose–bleed for sexual attraction.

On February 10, 2007, the Sydney Morning Herald ran an article, ‘Superheroes for a Complex World,’ examining young Australians’ growing interest in manga.

Though women and girls rarely purchase Western comics, they make up 60% of manga readers.

Osamu Tezuka: Dr Tezuka is the icon of the modern Manga movement. He is most famous in the West for creating Astro Boy, and Kimba the White Lion, but he did, in fact, create over 700 manga titles in his lifetime.

To See More... Until April 29, the Art Gallery of NSW is showing Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga, an exhibition bringing the full scope of Tezuka’s artwork to his Western audience for the first time.

Visit the comics section of Books Kinokuniya (Level 2, the Galleries Victoria, 500 George Street) to find, not only Australia’s largest range of manga, but also the children, teenagers, and adults who spend their weekends and evenings reading manga.

Tohru Honda, from the 22 volume-series Fruits Basket, is drawn in the stereotypical manga style, with large eyes and a small, simple nose. The kind and obedient Tohru tries to help her friends, who are possessed by their zodiac animals.
Around the Archdiocese...

- Interested in Philosophy, Theology, Scripture, Psychology, Liturgy, or Canon Law? The Centre for Thomistic Studies, Level 5, Polding Centre, recommences classes on 23 April. Courses are held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights; mid-semester sign-up is welcome. Visit www.cts.org.au for course details.

- Mary Mackillop Place Museum 2007 Students Poetry Award. Students aged 10 to 17 are eligible to enter; there are four age divisions: 10/11, 12/13, 14/15, 16/17. The poem must reflect the meaning of the Cross in the life of Mary Mackillop and in our own lives. Poems are to be presented on paper (handwritten or typed) or emailed as text only in a Microsoft Word Document or Rich Text Format. All entries need to include the student’s name, age, school/college, suburb, state and a title for the poem. There will be three prizes in each division. Selected poems will be exhibited at the museum from 10 Dec 2007 to 31 Jan 2008. Entries must be received by 4pm Friday, 22 June, 2007, and will not be returned. Send entries to Christine Richards, Education Officer, Mary Mackillop Place Museum, PO Box 1081, North Sydney, NSW 2059, or christine.richards@sosj.org.au. Ph 02 8912 4883 Fax 8912 4835.

- Br Julian’s Resources are now ready for Years 4 and 6. We hope to deliver them early next term. However, if you are in the city or wish to collect them earlier, they can be collected from the Polding Centre any time.

Vital Statistics

Researchers at the University of South Australia have conducted a study to assess the multimedia activity of 1,039 South Australian young people aged 10–13 years. Participants were required to keep a diary of their multimedia activity over a 24-hour period. Each participant completed two – four of these 24-hour diaries, including at least one school day and one non-school day, during 2002. The median ‘screen time’ for participants was 229 minutes per day (264 minutes for males, 196 minutes for females). Screen time was higher on non-school days (260 minutes) than on school days (190 minutes).

Screen time was found to increase according to participants’ age and decrease according to participants’ socioeconomic status. Participants categorised as ‘extreme screen users’ (those in the top quartile of results) were more likely to be male, have low levels of physical activity, devote over 25% of their screen time to video games, get less sleep and be of lower socioeconomic status than their peers. One in 10 participants had an average daily screen time of seven hours, while one in 10 participants played video games for almost three hours per day. On average, participants’ screen time made up 27% of their waking hours.

Media viewed as a percentage of total screen time

- Television 73%
- Video games 19%
- Non-game computer use 6%
- Cinema 2%

Results of the study were published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

REMINDER

Archdiocese Catechist Gathering
Friday May 4 2007
Catholic Club 24 John St,
Lidcombe
10.30am to 1.30pm