

triumphant from a time of great trial. But Moloney tells us that when Revelation was written (sometime in the latter years of Domitian's reign, 81–96 CE), Christians were not experiencing persecution and death at the hands of the emperor, nor were they being forced into emperor worship, which was prevalent in Asia. Quite the opposite! Moloney argues that Revelation is written to encourage Christians who have been beguiled by the glitter of the Graeco-Roman world, and as a result they are too comfortably ensconced in the well-governed and economically stable empire.

The interpretative key to Moloney's reading of Revelation is this: God's saving intervention is not something in the future: it has already happened. The decisive victory has already been won in the death and resurrection of Jesus. And, more importantly, the saving effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be limited by time and history; they are effective from the foundation of the world. Revelation is therefore not telling us about something that is going to happen in the future; it is about what God has already done in and through Jesus Christ. So, for example, Harmagedon (16:1-21) is not a battle to be fought in the future; it refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. Babylon the Great is not Rome, as many commentaries suggest, but the former Jerusalem, and the Christian Church is the New Jerusalem, replacing the former Jerusalem (Babylon). Despite the fact that Revelation employs many of the literary features of apocalyptic writing, it should not be interpreted as a traditional Jewish-Christian apocalypse. It is essentially a work of prophecy in which John the prophet speaks the message of the risen Lord directly to the Christian community. In other words, Revelation is forth-telling, not fore-telling. Although I am still struggling with Moloney's interpretative paradigm for reading Revelation, it has certainly enriched my own attempts to come to terms with one of the more difficult books of the New Testament.

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SHAME, HOPE AND THE CHURCH: A JOURNEY WITH MARY,

Thomas Ryan (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2020), pp. 152, \$24.95.

Sometimes a child in distress will be comforted only by their mother. Fr Thomas Ryan SM proposes that a church reeling from the scandal, moral failure and trauma of the sexual abuse crisis would do well to turn to Mother Mary for help. She, he proposes, might offer a way through a desperate and potentially hopeless situation.

Ryan plainly describes the shocking reality of abuse of the vulnerable by members of the church and the associated betrayal of victims by church leaders. It is not only perpetrators but all Catholics who are somehow complicit, and a cloud of shame hovers over the whole church community. The sting is made worse because the secular world has called us out. How are we to recover from this and not lose hope? How are we to heal?

The sexual abuse scandal has been a dramatic break-in for the church, leaving it exposed and violated. Such a shake-up could be a divine disruption, which, if engaged with humility, sensitivity and compassion, could result in a more just, merciful and loving church.

The author considers there is more to shame than disgrace and humiliation, and this powerful emotion can have a positive side. Shame involves three things: fear of disgrace, loss of honour or standing, and a protective inclination to guard privacy and intimacy. Shame is a necessary 'emergency emotion' that can warn us when something is amiss.

In dealing with our collective shame, Ryan suggests Mary is an ideal companion, a fellow traveller in discipleship, one who has herself grappled with scandal and shame. As a practising Jewish mother, Mary's cultural and social framework was very Mediterranean, strongly governed and guided by the honour/shame dynamic. The author explores gospel scenes that show Mary, like us, had been subject to embarrassment, shame and disgrace, and had to make choices.

We are given an 'earth-bound' picture of Mary, who is capable of sharing in our untidy and shambolic lives. We see her standing strongly in the most traumatic and shaming moment of her life, the crucifixion of her son. Crucifixion was a step-by-step humiliation and degradation of the victim. Mary would have suffered public shame in being associated with one perceived as a criminal, her own life surely under threat. The cultural shame and humiliation that threatened to overtake her, and that drove most of Jesus' disciples running away in terror, was not a deterrent for Mary, who was held at the foot of the cross by love.

God's ways turn everything upside down. The cross—an object of public shame and disgrace—is transformed, by God's love in Jesus, into a revelatory symbol of glory and honour. Through the paschal mystery, the realities of evil, sin, violence, trauma, shame and death itself are neither denied nor deleted but overcome, overturned and transformed by love. This is an important point for survivors and for the church trying to contend with the abuse crisis.

One important chapter is devoted to listening to victims of sexual abuse. Not only can Mary be a companion for survivors, but others must learn from Mary how to stand with and deeply listen to them. At the cross, Mary was present to the suffering of the innocent victim, without excuses or cowardice. Mary shows us how to learn from victims, to move from denial and omission to stand with them in solidarity. Only then might we apply restorative justice to the victims, the offenders and the community.

Each chapter in this book ends with a set of reflection points, a useful tool for the reader to enter more deeply into thought and prayer about the place of shame in our personal and corporate lives. The work demands the engagement of the Christian imagination in response to sexual abuse, unravelling the

darkness, confusion, shame and disgrace of the passion and death of Jesus in the light of the resurrection.

We are reminded that the abuse crisis is the church's 9/11, and the ground zero of this cataclysmic event is the rupture of right relationship with God. The restoration needed is profound. How do we regain our sense of moral order? How do we ameliorate our shame? How do we safeguard our church and care for the children and vulnerable people who have been harmed?

A survivor once said to me the most hurtful message they have heard from the church is that we wish we could put this sorry story behind us and move on with our mission. A survivor cannot do that, so are we to leave the survivors behind? If there is a tendency in our church to relegate the terrible shame of abuse to our past and start afresh with a clean slate, Ryan's work is a warning that this is not only impossible but highly risky and dangerous, and a sure cause of grave and further harm.

When one is ashamed, the impulse is to run and hide. The author is asking us not to run but to find a solid place to stand.

The only way forward is to allow God to embrace our shame—to subvert and transform it into glory, grace and honour. The best way to do this is with Mother Mary as our guide, and the most solid place to stand is at the cross of Jesus.

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Books Received

The Editorial Board of the *Australasian Catholic Record* wishes to acknowledge receipt of the following books submitted for review, some of which may be reviewed in future issues.

Goosen, Gideon. *Clericalism: Stories from the Pews*. Bayswater VIC: Coventry Press, 2020. ISBN 978 0 6487251 9 0. Pp. 165. pb. \$25.95.

Jensen OSB, Joseph. *God's Word to Israel*. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2021. ISBN 978 0 814688 17 5. Pp. 380. pb. \$69.99.