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The Swag

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Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples are respectfully advised that this publication may contain the words, names, images and/or descriptions of people who have passed away.

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:

E: editor@theswag.org.au

ALL ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

E: national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au

DESIGN

Privaro Design www.privaro.com.au

NCP NATIONAL OFFICE

PO Box 295, Belmont VIC 3216

74 Fryers Rd, Belmont VIC 3216

P: (03) 5244 3680

F: (03) 5244 4762

national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au

Skype: [ncpnationaloffice](https://www.skype.com/en/contacts/ncpnationaloffice)

www.nationalcouncilofpriests.com.au

www.theswag.org.au

www.catholicdirectory.com.au

NCP CONTACTS



Chairman

Rev Jim Clarke
2 Taylors Lane
Rowville VIC 3178
P: (03) 9764 4058
F: (03) 9764 5154
chairman@ncp.catholic.org.au



Secretary

Rev Mark Freeman
44 Margaret St
Launceston TAS 7250
P: (03) 6331 4377
F: (03) 6334 1906
secretary@ncp.catholic.org.au



Treasurer

Rev Wayne Bendotti
PO Box 166
Dardanup WA 6236
P: (08) 9728 1145
F: (08) 9728 0000
treasurer@ncp.catholic.org.au



Committee

Rev Boni Buahendri SVD
100 Albion Rd
Box Hill VIC 3128
P: (03) 9890 0065
F: (03) 9899 1937
committee1@ncp.catholic.org.au



Committee

Rev Paddy Sykes
103 Fernleigh Rd
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
P: (02) 6925 2111
F: (02) 6925 6116
committee2@ncp.catholic.org.au



Editor

Rev Peter Maher
109 Lennox St
Newtown NSW 2042
P: (02) 9557 3197
editor@theswag.org.au



Executive Officer

Ms Sally Heath
sally.heath@ncp.catholic.org.au



Administrative Officer

Mrs Christine Moore
christine.moore@ncp.catholic.org.au



ABOUT THE NCP

The National Council of Priests of Australia, founded in 1970 in the spirit of Vatican II, is a voluntary association of bishops, priests and deacons. It is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing all clergy in the public forum. The NCP is acknowledged by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

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James Clarke



The 2016 NCP Convention was held at the Pullman on the Park Hotel in Melbourne. The keynote speaker was Professor Massimo Faggioli from Villa Nova University, Philadelphia. Professor Faggioli is a world renowned scholar on the Second Vatican Council. The material he presented was stimulating and entertaining. His talks opened up to us the background of the Council and the reasons as to why John XXIII initiated the Council. The speakers who responded to Professor Faggioli – Max Vodola, Brendan Reed and Justin Driscoll – were also relevant and informative. Thanks must go to the Melbourne organizing committee, Manny Bonello, Greg Trythall, Brian Collins, Michael Elligate, Peter Matheson and the Chairman, Martin Dixon. Thanks also to Peter Matheson who organised the convention liturgies. The committee was ably supported by our NCP Secretariat, Sally Heath and Chris Moore. Congratulations on a successful convention. We are grateful to the priests of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulbourn and the Diocese of Wagga Wagga for offering to host and plan the next

convention which will be held in Canberra in 2018.

The theme of the convention was “*Let Our Church Doors Be Open*”. It is a theme which the members of NCP know very well. We have endeavoured to be open in our ministry and in our priesthood. We have welcomed the people of our parishes into our lives and have shared our vocation with them. We have been about implementing the spirit and the pastoral and liturgical reforms of Vatican II. We engage with our people and are welcomed into their lives.

However, not everyone agrees with this process. In recent months in the Catholic press, we have read about efforts to bring about a “reform of the reform”. This is merely code for what is in reality an attempt to roll back the initiatives of Vatican II. It is a “neo-Tridentinist” revival. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Cardinal Robert Sarah, has exhorted priests to celebrate the Eucharist “ad orientem”. The “good cardinal” wants us all to face the same way during mass. He wants us to turn our backs on our people. Cardinal Sarah is 71. He was ordained at the conclusion of the Council. His priestly life has been influenced by the Second Vatican Council. It would appear that the cardinal is turning his back on the Council.

As Vatican II priests, we understand the four presences of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. The Risen Lord is present in our congregations. Are we to turn our back on Him in them? The cardinal has said that even if our churches are not built on an east/west axis, we should face the apse. Turning away from our people to face the wall! This is reminiscent of being placed in the “naughty corner” in primary school. Thanks be to God we have a leader in Pope Francis who has shown Cardinal Sarah the

error of his ways and with pastoral and fatherly care, corrected him.

During our convention the letter and signatories criticizing Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*” was released. The signatories accused the Holy Father of doctrinal errors. They believe themselves to be defending traditional Catholic moral teaching. Such actions recall an article I read some years ago in A.D. 2000 (I heard the intake of breath. Breathe easy, breathe in Jesus). In this article the author (name withheld) was praising the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger for having the courage to criticise a Pope. That Pope was of course, Paul VI.

If another cardinal or bishop had the “courage” to criticise either Pope John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI, I doubt that the same periodical would be praising them. In fact I believe that the signatories to the letter to Pope Francis would be calling for their heads.

In Mexico during the 1920’s in the aftermath of the “Revolution”, the Calles government enacted a series of laws which were detrimental to the existence of the Church, the priesthood and the practice of the Catholic faith. This story has been immortalised in Graham Greene’s novel *The Power and the Glory*, and also in the film “*For Greater Glory*”, starring Andy Garcia and Peter O’Toole in his final film. An organization called the “Cristeros” was formed to oppose these laws which they did politically and violently. Their battle cry was “*Viva Cristo Rey*”, Long live Christ the King. In the face of the catch cry “ad orientem”, our refrain should be “*Viva Papa Francesco*”, Long live Pope Francis, the Good Shepherd in the mould of the “*True Shepherd*” Jesus the Christ, servant ruler. ☩



NCP Associate Membership

At the NCP General Meeting, held Thursday 28 July 2016, the motion to offer Associate Membership to religious women and brothers and the laity, to enable those that participate to support and encourage the objectives and works of the NCP, was passed unanimously.

The Constitution of the Association will be amended to include a category of membership to be known as an Associate. An Associate member, on payment of an annual subscription fee will be entitled to receive a subscription to *The Swag* and access to other rights and benefits that will be determined by the Committee, including a subscription to *The Tablet* at the reduced NCP Member rate.

Associate Membership will commence in 2017.

The NCP Convention, Francis' New Ecclesiology and 'What About The Gospel?'

PETER MAHER



The NCP Convention in Melbourne in July was a marvellous success with the rich thinking of Massimo Faggioli who invited us to think about the theology of Vatican II being heralded into its second phase by Pope Francis.

Faggioli claims it is a mistake to think of the implementation of Vatican II as something yet to be done as if we could return to the nineteen sixties and make it happen. He rather believes that the time is right for the implementation of Vatican II theology in the 21st century which is much different to where we were 50 years ago.

Francis is doing this with a definite ecclesiology based in the principles of Vatican II but very much in a 21st century way. The world has not stood still. Francis comes from his particular experience of church, but rather than impose that on the universal church, Faggioli says that Francis wants to embrace an appropriate collegiality and synodality for our time that goes well beyond anything envisioned by the Vatican II fathers. Francis is inspired by the spirit of Vatican II ecclesiology adapted to the current joys and hopes, griefs and disappointments. Faggioli notes that Francis vision is inspired more by *Gaudium et Spes* than *Lumen Gentium*.

According to Faggioli, Francis prefers a gospel proclaiming church over a doctrine proclaiming one, sighting the interesting

fact that in the 3 years of Francis' pontificate the CDF have made just one intervention. That was recently when they talked about the relationship between the charismatic and the institutional in the church noting that the new movements must make sure they are working with the local church, not in parallel. This contrasts with the many statements each year by the CDF over the last 25 years. Faggioli claims never less than four in any given year and often much more.

A book edited by Michael Kelly SJ, *Tomorrow's Church Today*, was launched at the Convention. The opening chapter is by Faggioli and he outlines some of these principles. You can read about this book in the reviews in this edition of *The Swag*.

Sydney Archdiocese has been conducting mandatory training for priests in safeguarding vulnerable people in our care, the legal requirements of working with children and mandatory reporting and professional behaviour standards. I attended a session recently.

We covered topics such as the history of legislation regarding children's rights in Australia with a surprising note about early legislation in the colony being to protect adults against recalcitrant children. We also looked at some of the implications of the document *Integrity in Ministry*. This provided space for a healthy reminder of the need for priests to undertake on-going education, spiritual direction and pastoral supervision. We might become more aware of our pastoral approaches and their outcomes and to learn from experience so we will repeat valuable pastoral strategies and attitudes, and reduce unhealthy or hurtful practices.

During the session the educators presented some scenarios for us to discuss. One scenario was about a family who arrive at the presbytery needing to go away on short notice and they need to find accommodation for their 9 year old daughter overnight. They ask you take her in. What would you do?

Naturally there was chorus of 'of course not'. Except for one younger priest who said he would take her in overnight. Some in the group questioned this seemingly reckless idea. He said 'but what about the gospel?' It was then I began to feel uncomfortable. Yes indeed, what about the gospel. The following Sunday's gospel was the Good Samaritan. This priest gave us a timely reminder that as gospel people our main task is to go beyond the law and act with compassion, not counting the cost.

Then I was recommended Ron Rolheiser's article, *On Caring a Scandal, Biblically* which can be found reprinted in this edition of *The Swag*. Rolheiser points out that the sexual abuse scandal has led us to follow the way of defensiveness, self-protection and blaming rather than the gospel. He goes into great detail to describe how we might see this scandal as moment to live the true humility of the passover sacrifice. We might have to embrace the pain and ponder the mystery in order to become a pattern of healing for the world and our culture.

Maybe the true meaning this shocking and humiliating scandal is to be the scapegoat standing alongside the victims and perpetrators like Jesus on the cross flanked by two other crosses.

This article invites us to question the approaches we normally take to defend, blame, claim we clergy are victims or remain invisible. Rolheiser suggests we are called to stand with, to hold the pain, to ponder in silence, to take the hatred, curses and betrayal and give back compassion, forgiveness and love. This is living the cross whereby we enter the space we believe transforms the world. ☪

Heartiest congratulations to Peter Maher on being awarded the NCP Service Award at the Convention for his superb editorship of *The Swag*.

MELBOURNE NCP CONVENTION

AN AMAZING SUCCESS!

Our recent convention was booked out, and participants from across Australia returned home with a strong sense of being filled with good things.

Our key note speaker Massimo Faggioli presented three extraordinary explanations on the pulse of the Church today in the pontificate of Pope Francis.

With a remarkable grasp of history, together with his expertise in political science, the analysis of Councils, Pontificates and Synods came to life in a dynamic way. The conversation in general forum after each of these presentations was rich and insightful.

The voice of women in the church was given more than a token hearing and the women's team felt honored to make their own contribution.

Word from the break out groups where participants followed up their own particular pastoral interests was very positive.

The gatherings for prayer were particularly helpful. Certainly the voice of priests in song will be a happy memory.

Archbishop Denis Hart led the final Eucharist and joined us at table for the meal.

The convention dinner provided a very happy celebration.

The Melbourne team that shaped the convention is proud of these great days together in sharing, listening and celebrating.

Finally a word of deep appreciation to Sally Heath and Chris Moore for their energetic eye for detail that gave the convention its excellent outcomes.

Michael Elligate
Melbourne 2016 Convention Planning Committee



A new appearance and reality in today's church

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

Massimo Faggioli explores the fresh approach of Pope Francis towards the new movements. Francis insists they no longer operate as separate to the local church. Republished with permission from *Global Pulse Magazine*, 21 June 2016.



Pope Francis is surprisingly candid in denouncing things that Catholics do in the name of their faith just to keep up appearances.

He did so again most recently with a new document on ecclesial movements and in remarks on marriage. In both instances he demonstrated a refreshingly direct contact with reality, which only highlighted just how much the institutional Church remains in a state of denial.

The first news of the week was that, after more than three years of silence, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) had finally published a new document. It is a letter directly inspired by Pope Francis called, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*. It represents a policy change and a step towards a new relationship between ecclesial movements and bishops in discerning the role these movements and associations play in the Church through a particular charism.

The official launch of the letter at Vatican press conference on June 14 was somewhat anticlimactic, however, given that the presenters were all representative of the status quo.

There were two cardinals who head major Roman Curia offices – Gerhard Ludwig Müller of the CDF and Marc Ouellet of the Congregation for Bishops. Then there

was the leading priest-theologian of the Focolare Movement and president of the group's Florence-based university – Father Piero Coda (who is also a member of the International Theological Commission). And, finally, the panel also included a female theologian and professor at the Gregorian University in Rome – Carmen Aparicio Valls.

If this looked like a “business as usual” line-up, the content of *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* marks a change of direction. It is a document that explains how Pope Francis departs from some of the theological starting points that were typical of his predecessors John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Those earlier pontificates viewed modernity in such a negative light that they welcomed whatever could shake up the Church in the battle against secularism and help Catholicism reclaim lost territory. This meant embracing and granting special freedom – from bishops, not from the Vatican – to movements and associations and their expressions of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

They included groups like Focolare and the Sant'Egidio Community, but also Opus Dei and the Legionaries of Christ, as well as other movements functional in the restoration of a reactionary, “law and order” kind of Church. An emphasis was placed on filling up seminaries, no matter how candidates were recruited or trained.

By giving a green light to the movements, John Paul II and Benedict XVI heaped humiliation on the bishops by prohibiting them from supervising these new ecclesial entities in their territories. Additionally, they often filled vacant dioceses by appointing new bishops who were from these movements. This mixture of political conservative ideology and thirst for power brought pastoral disaster to many local Catholic communities. A clear example is the Archdiocese of Lima (Peru), which has been led the past seventeen years by Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, a member of Opus Dei.

Iuvenescit Ecclesia acknowledges implicitly that in the recent past some mistakes were made in the relations between the institution and the new movements, and

that the institutional Church needs to be more vigilant. It admits that the so-called charisms can sometimes damage the spiritual life of the faithful (as Francis said in other speeches to Catholic movements).

This is a change in the Vatican's approach towards the movements. And it is clearly a change in how the pope sees the movements because he sees differently the relationship between the Church and the world. It will be interesting to see what this might mean concretely, and how the movements will respond to the new letter. Fr Coda of Focolare has welcomed the text, which is not surprising since he helped draft it. But other members of the various movements might be more wary of this policy change.

The other event last week that caused even more than slight wariness were Pope Francis' off-the-cuff remarks at the opening of the Diocese of Rome's annual pastoral conference on June 16 at the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome. He said many marriages today could be considered canonically invalid because “we are living in a culture of the provisional” and young people who marry often do not understand the meaning of a lifelong commitment.

The Vatican press office published a transcript the next day in which the pope's words were toned down, but that is beside the point here. Francis said that in some cases pre-marital cohabitation could be a good thing if it helped a couple mature and prepared them emotionally and psychologically for sacramental marriage. His point was that sacramental marriage could be used to impose a shaky and merely superficial Catholicism on young people, just to make the Catholic Church look sociologically stronger and society more culturally Christian.

No wonder this caused such outrage among Catholic conservatives, especially in the United States. What Francis said – and the implications of what he said – are exactly the opposite of the idea of marriage in North American Catholicism. In a country like the United States, where the social and political functions of marriage are key to the moral and religious culture, the pre-modern and post-modern ideas of “family” are stronger than a modern idea of family that is dominant in secularized areas of the world like Europe and in Francis' Latin America.

But for many pastors (including the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires, now Bishop of Rome) it is no longer true that

premarital cohabitation and premarital sex are the ultimate moral hazard for young Catholics. And it is no longer true that encouraging early marriage is the best way to prevent such a hazard. But this is not the moral platform on which US bishops were chosen in these last few decades, so it is no coincidence that many of these prelates see Pope Francis as a threat to the moral and social equilibrium of American Catholicism.

The new CDF letter, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, and the pope's recent remarks on marriage have some things in common. One element is Francis' lack of fear in acknowledging reality. Concerning the ecclesial movements he sees that some of the groups have done good for the Church, while others have brought harm. And he is clear that the Church cannot simply assume that charismatic figures are

always good pastors just because they give the impression of a Church fighting back against secularization.

Concerning marriage, he affirms that certain pastoral practices linked to the sacrament of marriage serve to sanctify people, while acknowledging that some sacramental marriages can do spiritual harm to people when the social and cultural norms surrounding the sacrament constrain the spiritual freedom of the faithful.

Another common element is about the role of the institutional Church. Concerning the movements, the Church is there to help discern the spirits. It verifies whether the charism helps build communion with God and with one another in the Church, or if it serves the will of power of a charismatic figure or Church leader. And concerning marriage, the Church cannot become

the enforcer of a social and cultural view of marriage that does not respond to the existential reality of the men and women of our time.

Francis' view of the ecclesial movements is not institutionalist, just prudent in light of the incidents and scandals of the last few years (which I have studied in my books *Sorting Out Catholicism* and *The Rising Laity*).

And his view of marriage is not liberal, it is just not impervious to human experience. Using a sacrament to keep up appearances (whether they be personal, social or ecclesial) is not in line with the pope's notion of Church. The problem is that he and many of his brother bishops do not agree on the definition of appearance and reality in today's world and Church. ☩

On carrying a scandal biblically

RONALD ROLHEISER OMI

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com

Introduction...

Our topic is that of carrying a scandal biblically. Perhaps it might more aptly be entitled: "From being scandalized to helping to carry a scandal biblically."

I begin with an apology: Clerical sexual abuse is a difficult subject for all of us. It's a topic that's full of pain and anger. Moreover, there isn't just one anger here. The anger is multiple: Victims are angry with perpetrators, priests are angry with their bishops, bishops are angry with the press, Catholics are angry at their church, and a large body of church-goers aren't sure who to be angry at ... and, I suspect, by the time I'm finished with this presentation many of you will be angry at me.

I want to do three things in this presentation: First, talk about this as a crisis for the church, particularly for the American church; then give some necessary clinical information on the disease of paedophilia; and finally, talk about what it means to carry something biblically.

The crisis itself ...

For the church in the United States, and to a certain extent for the Canadian church, this is probably the biggest crisis

of credibility we have ever faced. Analysts point out that it's not really a crisis of faith so much as a crisis of credibility, a massive crisis of credibility for young church. The Catholic Church is 2,000 years old, but many of us grew up in a church that's less than 100 years old.

The Catholic Church in North America is an immigrant church and it's still a very, very young church. By and large too, it's had a wonderful history, with the situation in Quebec being a little exceptional because the church there had some features of an established religion; but the rest of North America Catholicism came in with the immigrants, and it came in from where Christianity is supposed to come in – the bottom. For the most part, until this crisis came along, Roman Catholicism in North America enjoyed a wonderful history of trust with its people.

And then this scandal comes along, creating the biggest crisis of soul and crisis of credibility that the North American church has faced in its young history. This is, in effect, a "dark night of the soul" for us and, like most dark nights of the soul, wounds expectedly and at a particularly vulnerable part of ourselves. When you read the literature on nights of the soul by



the great mystics, you see that a dark night of the soul almost always hits you in the achilles heel, as a surprise, where you are most tender and unprotected. That's true too for this scandal. The whole issue of sexuality, and not just inside the church, is one of those vulnerable spots. Society likes to pretend sex is not an issue, but it's a massive issue within every culture and every psyche. Sex, anthropology assures us, is next to our instinct for breathing, the most powerful thing on the planet. It hasn't worked itself out really well anywhere. Although it hasn't done all that badly either, because it's produced all of us and through it God has kept the human race going, no minor achievement. However, all of that notwithstanding, it is easy to be scandalized, especially religiously, when sexual issues are involved.

Paedophilia as a disease ...

There's a lot of misunderstanding about the disease of paedophilia. We need to highlight its prevalence in our culture, the nature of it as a disease, the utter devastation it does to its victims, and the needs of genuine victims.

First, some stunning numbers about its prevalence: It's very important to name this so as to contextualize the crisis we are in. Though these numbers pertain to North America, I suspect it isn't very different in other parts of the world. This is painful to say but, in North America, one out of every four or five persons, girls and boys, comes to adulthood scarred, having been violated sexually, in either a major, traumatic way or in some minor way (though it's rare that the violation is minor because by its nature all sexual abuse is serious.) In terms of an image, this is what it means: In every fourth or fifth house [statistically] in the Western world, there is some kind of sexual abuse happening. It's important to keep that in mind because (and I'm not trying to excuse priests and the church officials) sexual abuse is a massive problem in the culture at large.

Because of the way the issue has constellated, it's too easy for us to identify the word paedophilia simplistically with priests and with the bishops' less-than-stellar history of handling its clergy who are accused of it. That's not to excuse priests, but contextualizing this in terms of its prevalence in the culture keeps us aware that priests are less than .01 per-cent of this massive problem. In fact, statistically, this disease is marginally lower among the clergy and vowed religious than it is among the population at large.

Moreover, paedophilia is not a celibate disease, not a gay disease, not a married disease, not a man's disease, nor a woman's disease. It's a disease, pure and simple, and, like alcoholism, it cuts across all boundaries, affecting alike clergy and lay, men and women, gay and straight, married and celibate. Like alcohol, it plays no favourites. It's a sickness and not a question of somebody who is celibate not having proper willpower or of somebody who doesn't have sex acting out because of that deprivation.

A comparison can be made to alcoholism: If we could roll the clock back 60 or 70 years, we would see that society then had no understanding of alcoholism as a disease. It naively thought that the problem was simply a failure of willpower: "Why don't they just stop drinking?" Now we recognize that it's a sickness and must be understood and treated as such.

This naive understanding of the nature of the disease is one of the reasons bishops made some mistakes early on. Unaware of the real and deep nature of this as an illness, they believed the perpetrator when he said, "I'll never do it again."

The perpetrator was sincere in saying that and they were sincere in believing it, but, as we know now, that's not a responsible statement and there's a dangerous naivete in believing it because in most cases there's little chance that the paedophile is not going to do it again.

What causes paedophilia? While there is now division over a former axiom that held that "every abuser was first abused", everyone agrees that paedophilia is caused by some massive trauma in childhood. In many, perhaps most, cases the perpetrators were themselves sexually abused as children. Whatever the trauma he or she experienced, the consensus is that it was massively deep and this is part of the very nature of the disease. Paedophilia is an awful disease – but something awful has caused it. Every year we learn more about the devastating nature of sexual abuse. It's the worst kind of "soul-violence" on the planet. Nothing approximates it. And because devastating trauma, especially the trauma of being sexually abused, can be buried so deeply in one's memory, when perpetrators act out they often bury the memories of their actions equally as deeply, giving them incredible denial mechanisms. I've seen a paedophile pass two lie-detector tests in a row. This makes it hard, and in many cases impossible, to treat the disease.

The anatomy of the illness itself helps us to understand it: A paedophile is someone who is attracted to a child who has not yet reached puberty. A normal adult is not sexually attracted to a pre-pubescent child. So why is a paedophile attracted to a child? The literature within this area tells us that a reason for that attraction, perhaps the main reason, is not to do with sex itself but with the trauma the perpetrator experienced as a child, namely, his or her pathological attraction is to the child that was lost in the paedophile's own early childhood trauma. His or her own trauma killed the child in them. Simplistically put, the pathological sexual attraction to children exists in the paedophile because the paedophile has had his or her own childhood stolen from them.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, we need to be clear vis-a-vis the effect of sexual abuse on its victim:

We may never in any way understate the utter devastation of soul that is caused in the victim of paedophilia. There is no

greater form of soul-violence on this planet. Nothing so scars, violates, and unravels the soul – literally pulls it apart – as does sexual abuse. I've heard two highly respected psychiatrists say that their hunch is that teenage suicide, which is so rampant in our culture (the second leading cause of death among young people in the Western world) is, 80% of the time, the result of sexual abuse. That's also true, I suspect, for a lot of adult suicides. Sexual abuse scars deeply and permanently. A victim I once worked with shared how she had a single incident when she was about eight years old, in a washroom. She was now in her 30s, married, with three children, and at least once a week when she goes into a bathroom she nauseates and throws up. It's thirty years later and she is still suffering extreme physical reactions. That's not untypical, but more the norm.

And what do victims want from us?

When victims are asked what we as a church, especially as the official church, can give them, they invariably name several things:

i) An honest acknowledgment that somebody else is sick (which is important for their own healing). Since generally the perpetrator is not going to do that, the bishop, the provincial, the pope, whoever, must do it. Someone who represents the church must say to the victim: "We hurt you, we were wrong, and we are sorry!" There has to be an honest acknowledgment and apology which may not be a rationalization or half-apology.

Today this is made difficult because of legal ramifications. There's tremendous tension today in the church, in chancery offices and elsewhere, between compassion and the Bible, between what we're called to do by Jesus and what our lawyers tell us to do. Richard Rohr, in a recent article on this in *Sojourners*, comments on how, given the state of things, we need too to play the legal game, but we must recognize as well that sometimes this is antithetical to what scripture calls us to do. The biblical and the legal often work in opposite ways: Legally, you're innocent until proven guilty, then punishment is administered. Biblically, you admit guilt, are declared innocent, and there is no punishment. Biblically there is forgiveness, but legally things take a very different course. So today it is often very, very difficult to do the biblical thing.

ii) Victims also ask another thing of us: "Don't be afraid of our anger!" On some previous occasions when I've addressed public groups on this topic, I first phoned a number of victims and asked them what

they wanted me to say. Always one of their responses was: "Tell them not to be afraid of our anger!" By and large, I don't think we have heard that.

On carrying a scandal biblically ...

As Christians we're asked to carry this scandal biblically. What does that mean? Carrying something biblically means a number of interpenetrating things:

1) Name the moment:

Not everything can be fixed or cured, but it needs to be named properly. Jesus called this "reading the signs of times". This scandal, this particular time in our history as a Catholic Church in America, is a moment of humiliation, a moment of humbling, a moment of pruning. We must begin the process of healing by clearly, and with courage, naming that – and then not, through an over-defensiveness or personal distancing, try to escape the humiliation and what that calls us to.

2) The call to compassion:

Our faith is biblical. So the question is: What does our biblical tradition ask of us at this moment, in this painful situation?

First of all, to radiate the compassion of Christ. That sounds obvious, but, so many times, when we are in crisis the first thing that goes is the compassion and understanding of Christ. Simply put, we too often end up bracketing the fundamentals because we think that our cause is so great and our indignation so justified that we may disregard some of the essentials of compassion, namely, respect, tolerance, patience, graciousness, and understanding. To carry something biblically means, first of all, to reground ourselves in the non-negotiables of Christian compassion – respect, tolerance, patience, and graciousness. Wild anger, disrespect, bitterness, personal distancing, and viciousness will not help carry this to any kind of meaningful closure.

And our compassion must, first of all, go out to the victim. The cross itself teaches us this. It highlights the excluded one, the one who has been hurt. Empathy must always move first towards the victim.

Usually, though, we are pretty good at this. Empathizing with a victim generally brings with it a good feeling. This crisis, however, asks us to take compassion to another level: We are asked too to have compassion for the perpetrator because this person was also a victim and he or she is ill ... and ill with the most unglamorous of all sicknesses. No sickness is glamorous

but most sicknesses don't have horrific moral connotations to them. It's easy to be selective in our sympathy, offering our compassion at those places where we feel good and clean when we give it and withholding it from those people and places where we don't get a good, clean feeling when we offer it. Compassion for the paedophile is, I believe, a biblical test as to the real measure of our compassion: Can we love and offer empathy when our love doesn't feel (or look) clean?

3) Healing, not self-protection and security.

To carry this scandal biblically means too that healing, not self-protection and security, must be our real preoccupation. Sometimes for bishops, provincials, religious superiors, and church officials there's a real (and understandable) danger of losing perspective in the face of accusations of sexual abuse. Many times, in fact, we have lost perspective.

In the vortex this crisis, what has to be our primary preoccupation? To protect the innocent and to bring about healing and reconciliation. Everything else (worries about security, lawsuits, and the like) must come afterwards.

Part of this too is how we must understand the role of the media and press in all of this. It's too easy and too simplistic to blame the media for this crisis. They are not the problem; in fact, they are rendering us, the world and the church, a great service, irrespective of how painful this is. The press are not the villain – Don't kill the weatherman for reporting bad weather! Granted that sometimes their coverage hasn't been fair, but that's ultimately not the issue. Beneath it all, the substance is true.

4) Carrying this crisis is now our primary ministry and not a distraction to our ministry.

Henri Nouwen used to say, "For years I was upset by distractions in my work until I realized the distractions were my real work!" That is also true for this sexual abuse scandal. This is not a distraction to real ministry in North America, it is the real ministry for the church in North America.

Carrying this scandal properly is something that the church is invited to do right now for the sake of the culture. It is easy to lose sight of this. The church exists for the world (not vice versa). Jesus said, "My flesh is food for the life of the world [not for the life of the church.]" In essence, Jesus came "to be eaten up by the world".

That's why, symbolically, he is born in a trough and ends up on a table, an altar, to be eaten. The church exists for the sake of the world and we must keep that in mind as we are faced with this crisis. What does that mean?

Right now priests represent less than one per-cent of the overall problem of sexual abuse, but we're on the front pages of the newspapers and the issue is very much focused on us. Psychologically this is painful, but biblically this is not a bad thing: The fact that priests and the church have been scapegoated right now is not necessarily bad. If our being scapegoated helps society by bringing the issue of sexual abuse and its devastation of the human soul more into the open, than we are precisely offering ourselves as "food for the life of the world", and we, like Jesus in his crucifixion, are helping to "take away the sins of the world." And as stated before, this is not a distraction to the life of the church, it's perhaps the major thing that we need to do right now for the world and our culture. There are very few things that we are doing as Christian communities today that are more important than helping the world deal with this issue. If the price tag is that we are humiliated on the front pages of the newspapers and that the Anglican, United, and Roman Catholic Churches of Canada end up financially bankrupt, so be it. Crucifixions are never easy and they exact real blood! It might well be worth it in the long run if we can help our world come to grips with this.

5) Painful humiliation as a grace-opportunity.

Purification and pruning, humiliation leading to humility. This is a moment of purification for the church. Granted the rest of the culture is also guilty, but, for too long, we falsely enjoyed clerical privilege. The chickens have come home to roost. Now we're being pruned, humbled, and brought back to where we're supposed to be, with the poor, the outcasts. That's where we are meant to be. Jesus resisted all power other than moral power. Too often we bought into power. Today the Body of Christ is not just being humbled, it's being humiliated and we have the chance to come to humility through that. This is an important grace-opportunity for all of us inside the church. Biblically, it's our "Agony in the Garden".

What does this imply? Two things:

i) First of all it implies the acceptance of being scapegoated. In the Garden of Gethsemane, before Jesus has his life-and-death conversation with his Father, he

Continued page 10

the swag



invites his disciples to “Watch”. He wants them to learn a lesson. He has just come out of the Last Supper room and he invites his disciples to go with him into the garden. “Watch and pray!” he tells them. But they sleep through it, overcome not by wine or the tiredness that comes at the end of a day, but, as Luke says, “they fell asleep with sorrow”. They fell asleep out of disappointment, as we also often do. And they missed the lesson.

What is the lesson? Luke captures it in one phrase: “Wasn’t it necessary?” There is a necessary connection between humiliation and redemption. We can only carry this scandal biblically (offering ourselves up on the altar of humility for the sake of the culture) if we recognize and accept this connection, redemption comes through this kind of pain. And we learn that lesson through “watching” how Jesus did it: “Stay awake, watch, pray!” Unlike the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, we must not let ourselves fall asleep because of disappointment.

ii) Second, this scandal is putting us, the clergy and the church, where we belong, with the excluded ones. When Jesus died on the cross he was crucified between two thieves. There wasn’t just one cross at Calvary, but three. The onlookers weren’t looking at the scene and making distinctions, sizing Jesus up as innocent while judging the other two as guilty. Jesus was painted with the same brush as the others, seen as compromised and tainted.

Carrying this scandal biblically means precisely to accept that kind of judgement and humiliation without protest. Let me offer an example: A young priest that I know recently went into the pulpit and protested to his congregation: “This thing is very unfair to me! I’m not a paedophile and now people are watching me and sizing me up! I’m scared to wear my collar in an airport, knowing that people will stare at me and wonder: ‘Is he one too?’ I can’t hug your kids any more and can’t be spontaneous in relationships. This simply isn’t fair!”

He’s right, it’s not fair, but, on the cross, Jesus is not protesting his innocence, saying: “This isn’t fair to me! I’m not guilty like the other two! Don’t get Me mixed up with them!” Jesus helps carry their sin, the sin of the world.

The incarnation still goes on: Christ is always hanging, crucified, between two thieves. That’s true too for the young priest whose protest I just quoted and it’s meant to be true for us. The invitation to us as

adult Christians is to help carry this scandal – and not, first of all, to protest our own innocence and distance from it. Carrying it also means that we don’t simplistically project it onto the hierarchy, shrugging and saying: “They have a real problem on their hands!” If we do that then we are doing exactly what that young priest did in his self-serving protest. But his was not really an adult response. What should be the response?

We are the church, all of us, and we need to carry this, all of us. We stand within a tradition that stretches back in time for nearly 4,000 years (of Judeo-Christian revelation and grace). We carry that tradition, but we need to carry all of it, not just the wonderful parts. Yes, we stand in the tradition of Jesus, Paul, the great martyrs, and all the grace that has entered history through the historical church. But, we also stand in a tradition that carries murder, slavery, the inquisition, popes who had mistresses, racism, sexism, infidelity of every sort, and paedophilia. We can’t claim the grace and then distance ourselves from the sin – “This is unfair to me!” We need to carry it all, as Jesus carried everything, grace and sin, good and bad, without protesting his innocence, even though he was innocent.

6) To carry this scandal biblically asks of us “a new song”.

Sing to the Lord a new song! We are invited to do that often in Scripture. Have you ever wondered what the old song is? If we are to sing a new song, what’s the old one and how is the new one to be different than the former one?

Jesus specifies this quite clearly: He tells us that unless our virtue goes deeper than that of the scribes and pharisees (the “old song”) we can’t enter the kingdom of heaven. What was the virtue of the scribes and pharisees? Actually it was quite high. It was an ethic of justice and fairness: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, give back in kind to everyone. What’s wrong with the simple virtue of justice? Jesus, in his most important homily, one which lays down the central criterion for orthodoxy within our faith, points out the defect within an ethic of justice alone.

What’s wrong with the ethic of justice alone? It’s too easy! Anyone, he submits, can live the virtue of strict justice at a certain level. A paraphrase of Jesus might read like this: “Anyone can be nice to those who are nice to them, anyone can forgive those who forgive them, and anyone can

love those who love them. But can you go further? Can you love those who hate you? Can you forgive those who won’t forgive you? Can you be gracious to those who curse you?” That’s the real test of Christian orthodoxy. And it’s what is being asked of us in this scandal: Can we love, forgive, reach out, and be empathic in a new way? Can we have compassion for both the victim and the perpetrator? Can we have compassion for some of our church leaders who made some blunders? Can we give of our money when it seems we are paying for someone else’s sin? Can we help carry one of the darker sides of our history without protesting its unfairness and distancing ourselves from it? Can we carry a tension that’s unfair to us for the sake of a greater good? Can we help carry something that doesn’t make us feel good and clean?

7) We need to “ponder” as Mary did.

Inside of this, we must begin to “ponder” in the biblical sense. How do we do that?

To “ponder” in the biblical sense, as Mary did, does not mean what it means in the Greek sense (from which our common sense takes its notion), namely, that the unexamined life is not worth living and that we are, consequently, meant to be reflective and introspective. When scripture says, “Mary pondered these things in her heart,” it doesn’t mean that she thought all kinds of deep thoughts about them. What does it mean?

Let’s begin with an image, Mary at the foot of the cross. What is Mary doing there? Overtly nothing. Notice that, at the foot of the cross, Mary doesn’t seem to be doing anything. She isn’t trying to stop the crucifixion, nor even protesting Jesus’ innocence. She isn’t saying anything and overtly doesn’t seem to be doing anything. But scripture tells us that she “stood” there. For a Hebrew, that was a position of strength. Mary was strong under the cross. And what precisely was she doing? She was pondering in the biblical sense.

To ponder in the biblical sense means to hold, carry, and transform tension so as not to give it back in kind.

We can be helped in our understanding of that by looking at its opposite in scripture. In the gospels, the opposite of “pondering” is “amazement”, to be amazed. We see a number of instances in the gospels where Jesus does or says something that catches the crowds by surprise and the gospel writers say, “and they were amazed.” Invariably Jesus responds by saying: “Don’t be amazed!” To be amazed is to let

energy, the energy of the crowd, simply flow through you, like an electrical wire conducting a current. An electrical wire simply lets energy flow through it and give it out exactly in kind – 220 volts for 220 volts.

Being amazed and giving back in kind is wonderful at events like rock concerts or sporting matches, but it is also the root of all racism, gang rapes, and most other social sicknesses. Nobody holds, carries, and transforms the energy and everyone simply gives back in kind. That's the flaw that Jesus points out in the virtue of the scribes and pharisees, they simply give back in kind, justice for justice, love for love, hate for hate.

In the gospels only two people aren't amazed – Jesus and Mary. Mary ponders and Jesus sweats blood. They take in the energy, good and bad, hold it, carry it, transform it, and give it back as something else.

Jesus models this for us. He took in hatred, held it, transformed it, and gave back love; he took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness; he took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessing; he took in betrayal, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness. That's what it means to ponder and this is the opposite of amazement.

Two images can be useful in understanding this: To be amazed, biblically, is to be like an electrical wire, a simple conduit that conducts energy, taking in and giving back in kind. To ponder, biblically, is to be like a water purifier; it takes in all kinds of impurities with the water, but it holds the impurities inside of itself and gives back only the pure water.

That is what Mary did under the cross – she held, carried, and transformed the tension so as not to give it back in kind. And that is what we are called upon to do in helping to carry this scandal biblically, namely, to hold, carry, and transform this tension, so as not to give back in kind – hurt for hurt, bitterness for bitterness, accusation for accusation, anger for anger, blame for blame.

And this might mean that, like Mary under the cross, sometimes there is nothing to say, no protest to be made. Rather all we can do is “to stand”, in strength, silent, holding and carrying the tension, waiting until we can transform it so that we can speak words of graciousness, forgiveness, and healing. That's not easy. Luke, in his gospel, tells us that the price tag for that

is “to sweat blood”. There are few phrases, I submit, more apt right now in terms of describing, biblically, what we are called to do in response to this scandal than that cryptic phrase from Luke's gospel: “to sweat blood.” The author of Lamentations puts it this way: Sometimes all one can do is to put one's mouth to the dust and wait!

8) We must re-affirm our faith in God as Lord.

This too will pass. There will be resurrection, even from this. God is still God and firmly in charge of this universe.

Our prayer in times of crisis must be a prayer that precisely affirms that God is still Lord of this world. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, at his most anguished moment, he began his prayer with the words: “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you!” In essence he is telling God, “You are still firmly in control of this world – even though, tonight, it doesn't appear like that!”

We need, in the midst of this crisis, to affirm our faith in the lordship of God. God is still firmly in charge, the centre still holds – betrayal, some bad choices by bishops, inflated media reporting, and predictions of doom on all sides, notwithstanding. The church isn't dying. Crucifixions don't end life, they lead to new, enriched life.

9) We must patiently stay with the pain.

This is a dark night of the soul which is meant, like every dark night of the soul, to stretch the heart. To be stretched is always painful and our normal impulse is always to do something to end the pain, to make it go away. But the pain won't go away until we learn the lesson that it's meant to teach us. Pain of the heart never leaves us until “we get it”, get what it is meant to teach us, and get stretched in the way it's meant to stretch us. This pain will stay with the church until we learn what we are meant to learn from it.

And what is it meant to teach us, beyond a new humility?

That there is a terrible pain within the culture right now, the soul-devastation caused by sexual abuse, and we, the church, are being asked to be like Christ, namely, to have our flesh be food for the life of the world so that this wound might be opened to healing. ☪

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Women's equality in the Catholic Church: 'A paradigm shift'

MARILYN HATTON

Marilyn Hatton, Catholics Speak Out (CSO), argues the case for inclusion of women at every level of church life.

"The Church is an institution in which patriarchy is rampant. All the decision-making is linked to something called 'ordination' and ordination is linked to something called 'gender'" (Sister Teresa Forcades, OSB).

We have been told the door is closed to women's ordination, but here in Australia many of us who have been working for years to rectify the gender imbalance in the church and we're saying: "Enough! Now is the time to act for women's equality! We are all made equal in God's likeness."

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3: 28).

We are strengthened by growing support from priests whose conscience compels them to question the teaching that only men can image Christ and the damaging implications this has for our belief that women too are created in the image of God and, in baptism, have also taken on the qualities of Christ himself.

We are also encouraged by Pope Francis exhortations and his concerns for equality for women and stated desire "to find a greater role for women in Catholicism including participation in important decisions where the authority of the Church is exercised".

In our research to identify possibilities and priorities for immediate action we have drawn on research by Cindy Moynihan (St Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota) in her paper 'Leadership Strategies in Support of Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church'.

Importantly, many of her suggestions can be argued on the basis of Pope Francis Exhortations and comments like those of Cardinal Parolin, the Secretary of State who says: "A woman could become Secretary of State, in the sense that the role of Secretary of State is not bound to the sacraments or priesthood."

Moynihan's research begins with the question of how to advance women's ordination in the Catholic Church. She states: "The purpose of my leadership action project was not to enter into a theological debate over the reasons why women should or should not be ordained,

but instead to take a strategic approach to determine how women could become ordained."

To do this she examined theological similarities between faiths and identified the Episcopalian, Conservative American Jewish and Roman Catholic faiths as similar. The four similarities she identifies relate to the information used in each of the faiths to make a theological decision:

1. Historical evidence
2. Scriptural evidence
3. Tradition compared to cultural differences related to time
4. Biological claims that a woman could not participate in a religious rite or practice because she was not a man."

She then explores the journey each of these faiths took to gain acceptance to ordain women. On the basis of this research, she identifies and prioritises strategies that may be useful for us to consider to pursue women's equality and ordination in the Catholic Church.

She identified three strategies to advance women's equality and ordination in the Roman Catholic Church.

1. To draw on theology as strategy,

2. To foster collaboration as strategy and
3. To pursue equality as strategy.

Based on St Paul's emphasis on the equivalence of men and women, emphasis on equality emerged as the most prominent strategy. The idea of equality brings people together for a common purpose and can be focused as a synergistic message for all organisations working in support of women's ministry in the Catholic Church. Her very useful paper then identifies the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for these strategies.

Applying Moynihan's ideas in Australia, the renewal movement has an opportunity to create a 'paradigm shift' following the horror of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse. This window of opportunity, terrible as it is, gives us a chance to stop this destructive patriarchy and clericalism by focusing on what we can do as first steps for women's equality in the Catholic Church. We are exploring and canvassing the option of supporting and electing women in decision-making positions (that do not require ordination as a prerequisite) throughout the Church as a first step.



Women's presence and influence would start to change the clerical culture as it did in secular society in the early days of the women's movement. It would also work to break the destructive way the church uses 'silence' as power and would augur well for optional celibacy.

Under the umbrella of renewal and structural change in Church governance we will start to build a platform to pursue women's equality. This base is consistent both with Sr Forcades work and Moynihan's strategies and importantly with Pope Francis' words on equality for women. Pope Francis is one of the most prophetic pope's of our time, but his task is enormously difficult as church historian and commentator Massimo Faggioli has pointed out. He needs the support of the Church faithful and will not be able to achieve his vision without us.

We consider the following as first priorities:

1. Develop and implement the change of electing women into decision-making

positions in curial dicasteries that do not require ordination as canvassed by the Cardinal Parolin and simultaneously support electing more women in governance structures in dioceses across the world. Renewal groups 'Future Church' and others have suggested this previously but, at that time, the Secretary of State was not floating the idea.

2. Work to have *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* revoked, an idea supported by one of the German bishop recently. We continue to challenge the 1994 Papal ban on discussion of women's inclusion because it was not an infallible ruling and was not approved by the world's bishops.

3. If the Vatican does proceed with the Commission on Women Deacons, its members must be elected in a democratic process independent of the Vatican to ensure membership of competent women and men appropriately qualified. Most women say "there have been enough Commissions on Women's place in the Church. There is no barrier, just sinful

sexism. Ordain women who are qualified and have a vocation."

In Australia we will continue to collaborate with other international groups and countries who have done the ground work on equality and ordination of women like Women's Ordination Worldwide; the Wijngaards Institute; USA WOC initiative Equal in Faith; and Future Church. This will require extensive dialogue with our bishops, but they are our pastors. Many of our priests and some of our bishops would agree with this approach.

Pope Francis gives us the imprimatur to pursue this relentlessly. If we have to progress women's equality one step at a time, each step will build on the next and all our efforts will impact on the clerical culture. Women's equality in the Catholic Church would contribute to Pope Francis' aims of creating peace and reducing violence and poverty, both issues which impact most on women and children in the world. ☺



Evolving priestly ministry

ERIC HODGENS



Eric Hodgens discusses ministry, the rise of clericalism and the need for change that provides a space for inclusive, competent and effective ministry.

Church ministry is changing. The laity is replacing clergy partly because it is necessary;

partly because it is right.

In many parishes secretary/managers are running parish bureaucracy. Pastoral workers are coordinating sacramental preparation, liturgy planning, liturgical music, discussion programs, prayer groups and visiting of the sick. They are also the ones developing new forms of outreach.

Catholic education is a vast, lay enterprise.

Hospitals, prisons, schools, colleges and universities have lay chaplains who are more specifically trained for the task than the priests they have replaced.

Catholic tertiary institutions are producing graduates in theology, scripture, church history, church music and liturgy.

Planning liturgy calls for specialist sub-groups such as music, liturgy design, liturgical art and environment, celebrant training and sacramental candidate

preparation. Leaders of these groups are getting specialist training more than seminarians are.

The role of the priest has changed. Once he did all the ministering; hopefully now he leads and coordinates it – sometimes well, sometimes badly. And all this started long before Vatican II with lay movements such as the YCW. It grew and changed over the years of Vatican II and in the fifty years since.

Since the mid-70s this trend has been reinforced by the steady drop in the number of priests. Bishops have tried to redress the problem by importing overseas priests. This strategy has largely failed. It is unfair to have minimal gains here when the need may be even greater back home.

More to the point, language is central to leading liturgy and preaching. Sensitivity to local culture is central to effective pastoral care. Unfamiliarity with these is a hindrance. Importing foreign priests is a stop-gap policy staving off the need to face and solve the real issue – how to provide

the type of church ministry needed today.

Meanwhile, local breeding and training have never guaranteed effectiveness in ministry. Seminary training has in recent times been heavy on questionable fields of study and certainly light on praxis. Studies weighted towards doctrine and morals and lighter on history and scripture need re-balancing. Pastoral practice needs to be taught and evaluated by extended on-the-job training.

As with much in the Church, the seminaries are struggling to keep up. And that quite apart from the shallowing of talent due to a drought of recruitment. Clericalism, which was central to the old seminary system, is self-defeating. Lay ministers, unhindered by the confines and pre-requisites of the clerical state and trained in specifically focussed praxis are more effective.

Four characteristics of institutions:

- All institutions evolve;
- practice precedes the formulation of structures and the codification of rules;
- Factions form and contend – dominate and decline;

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FEATURES

- Power, once gained, yields only under pressure.

This applies to the Church, too. Theology explains, but does not create, practice. You have to be careful using old theology to oppose newly developing praxis. Today's bio-ethics debates illustrate this problem.

The Jesus movement evolved into variously structured communities, then to a fully-fledged church then, under Constantine, to an established arm of the state. Its originally loosely structured organization evolved to synagogue-like presbyteral leadership and then to one-man episcopal control. The bishop became sole ruler and the celebrant-in-chief of its liturgy – for life.

Scholastic sacramental theology developed to rationalise this praxis. It asserted that ordination caused an intrinsic change – an *ontological* change – in the recipient, setting him apart from the rest of the Church's membership. Later the imposition of celibacy as a pre-requisite for ordination in the Roman Rite reinforced

the exclusiveness of the clergy. The post-Tridentine creation of seminaries, with their long period of training in isolation from the world, cemented the superior otherness of the clergy. These were all evolutionary changes with the objective of re-enforcing the power of the clergy.

This sacramental theology, though increasingly unintelligible in the light of today's praxis, still prevails. It demands ordination for the validity of sacramental celebrations of Eucharist and Penance. Further, Canon Law, though by its nature always behind the praxis, insists that ultimate church authority must always be in the hands of the ordained.

This clerical takeover has come at a huge price. We are in the double bind of a theology that requires ordained men for our central liturgy while insisting on pre-requisites that debar suitable candidates and attract the clerically-minded.

Something has to change. And it is. Ministry is changing as the values and demands of society are changing. The

fundamental basis of ministry now is *charism*, not *ordained status*. The ordained priest is often ill-prepared for ministry demands. Many priests struggle at leading liturgy and preaching. They would be better replaced by those with the talent or charism to do it well. Either discard the need for ordination or, if the sacramental theology has not caught up, change the pre-requisites and ordain them. But ordain them for a specific job and a specific period – not for life.

This scenario entails a change to the seminaries. Re-design their curriculum to meet current ministerial needs. Their live-in requirement is a hangover from the clerical past, making them schools for clericalism. So, change it. Celibacy is no longer the effective sign it was – another clerical hangover. If celibacy is blocking good celebrants and preachers it is too high a price to pay.

Clerics won't like this and will fight it every inch of the way. But movement in ministry is already in train. Theology will eventually catch up. It's time to get with the flow. ☞

What's killing local parishes?

JEANNE FOLLMAN

Jeanne Follman, author of *When the Enlightenment Hit the Neighborhoods: The Waning of the Catholic Tradition – and Hope for Its Future*, talks about the issues beyond numbers that might be an influence in closing and pairing parishes. This article is reprinted with permission from *Global Pulse Magazine* (May 2, 2016).

Churches in the United States have been closing for decades, especially in the older, poorer urban neighbourhoods in the country's Northeast and Midwest.

These neighbourhoods used to be home to large groups of European immigrants, each of whom built their own sacred spaces. Yet even as many of these neighbourhoods revitalize, church closings continue unabated.

As has been reported, the Archdiocese of Chicago could close as many as 100 parishes by the year 2030.

The archdiocese has 351 parishes served by 700 priests, but only 240 priests are estimated to be available by 2030. This priest shortage plus a lack of funds to maintain aging parish infrastructure dictate the closings, as projections show the status quo is unsustainable.

The process of church closings outlined by Archbishop Blase Cupich is pitched as an eminently practical one, and the

archbishop asks Chicago Catholics to dream big.

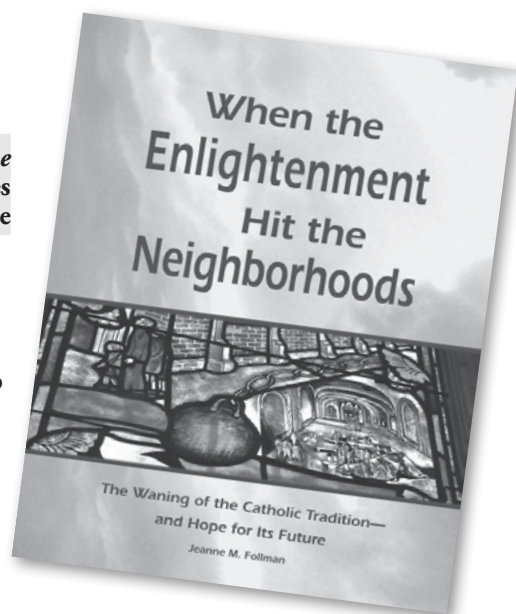
"Just as our ancestors responded in faith to their dreams and built the church we have today, it is our time to dream big and to take up this work," he says.

But what if our dreams include a thriving urban church connected to the past through our inherited gift of gorgeous brick and mortar sacred spaces, and filled with young millennials and millennial families, married or not, gay or not, divorced or not? And what if such dreams include a married clergy and women priests?

Therein lies the rub.

One of the first churches slated for closing is St Adalbert's, a lovely, 102-year-old structure described as one of Chicago's many treasure troves of sacred architecture.

As *Chicago Tribune* architectural critic Blair Kamin says of these old immigrant churches, "Their spires soar above three-



flats and bungalows, etching the skyline of Chicago's neighbourhoods. Their soaring interiors and stained glass windows represent a spiritual home for millions – even those who moved to the suburbs long ago. To believers and nonbelievers alike, they are proud anchors of their neighbourhoods."

The impending demise of St Adalbert's, one of four churches to be closed in the mostly Latino Pilsen neighbourhood, is causing quite a stir. The church was once the mother church of Polish parishes on the city's West and South sides.

St. Stanislaus Kostka, the mother church of Polish parishes on the city's North side, remains beautiful, intact, and alive, serving a diverse community and offering Masses in English, Polish, and Spanish.

As is sometimes the case, such churches can be restored and maintained by local and national fundraising efforts. This is what happened with Holy Family Church, the first Jesuit church in Chicago, saved from demolition in 1990. It too remains beautiful, intact, and alive, serving the revitalizing neighbourhood that surrounds it.

Churches can also be restored and saved by transferring ownership from the archdiocese to an order of priests; this was the case with St Mary of the Angels and the Shrine of Christ the King.

The impending closure of St Adalbert's has also engaged historic preservationists in the city, with the suggestion that a comprehensive planning process be undertaken for all of the buildings that ultimately might close, involving the archdiocese, Chicago's Department of Planning and Development, and other nonprofit groups and real estate developers.

Of course the obvious question then becomes, if the archdiocese can transfer ownership to an order of priests, or sell a building to a school or a developer, what stops it from transferring or selling ownership on a case-by-case basis back to the parish itself?

As it stands today, each parish's land and physical infrastructure is typically owned by the archdiocese in the person of the bishop. Yet when that land was bought and that physical infrastructure was built, it was paid for over the years by the parishioners themselves.

As Chicago historian Ellen Skerrett says of Holy Family Church: "Built with the nickels and dimes of very poor people, it was a place of great beauty in the lives of countless generations of Chicagoans, mostly immigrants."

What possibilities for investment and revenue generation would open up if the descendants of those immigrants, as well as the more recent immigrant arrivals, were able to actually own their own buildings and property?

Questions of fundraising and ownership can be sorted out if reasonable people are willing to work together to make good things happen. There are, however, much bigger possibilities to explore and different questions to ask, to uncover and resolve the impediments inherent in the environment in which the archdiocese must operate.

What about the priest shortage, and what about the even more critical shortage of bodies, especially young ones, in the pews? Preservationists and urban planning departments cannot address these impediments to thriving parish life, even though such impediments blight or eradicate the positive impact the church can have on the vitality of the city.

Loss of churches also means loss of schools, loss of social services, loss of a neighbourhood anchor, and loss of local clout.

Archbishop Cupich has asked Chicago Catholics to dream big and respond in faith to our dreams to build the church, just as our ancestors did. If we really were to dream big, we would take the time to examine the impediments under which the archdiocese must operate, in particular the church's governance structures and beliefs. The environment itself is key to the discussion.

As it stands now, dreams of a thriving urban church in Chicago will shatter on two realities: the reality of the current autocratic structure of governance, and the reality of the dilapidated theology that makes up the current groupthink regarding all things sexual.

It's easy enough to write off both of these realities with the usual rationales: "the church is not a democracy," or "the church changes slowly," or "the church does not accommodate itself to the secular world." Meanwhile, parishes are dying.

Why in the twenty first century does the church still govern itself as an absolute divine right monarchy, in the style of an eighteenth century royal European court?

The Pope exercises supreme executive, legislative, and judicial power with few checks and balances. A bishop rules a diocese in the same way, as do pastors their parishes.

Such autocracy has historically enabled an almost complete lack of accountability and transparency in administration and finances, a fact made painfully obvious by the sexual abuse crisis. And yet it persists.

Why do we so easily tolerate this antiquated style of governance?

And why do we tolerate the current groupthink regarding all things sexual?

Why are priests required to remain unmarried? Why are priests required to be male?

And why do we tolerate the illogical and theologically unsubstantiated ban on contraception? It is thoroughly ignored by

the faithful and has twisted the attitudes of the institutional church regarding all things sexual.

The "pelvic issues" groupthink is based on dilapidated theology that has a life of its own that exists almost completely outside the Catholic moral tradition. And yet it persists.

This groupthink is so patently irrational, unmerciful, and self-defeating that it pushes people out of the doors of the church and away from the sacred and intellectual traditions that could actually make a difference in their lives. Attempts to engage the millennial generation – the future of the church – and bring newcomers into the fold will likely be fruitless until this groupthink is shattered.

It's easy to think that questions such as antiquated governance structures and antiquated attitudes regarding "pelvic issues" are merely theoretical, fit only for discussion among the Catholic commentariat, with no impact on the day-to-day, real-world life of a parish. But they are anything but benign.

Churches aren't closing primarily because they are too old and require too much money to maintain. They are closing primarily because there aren't enough priests on the altar and there aren't enough young people in the pews. That's the real devastation caused by our "quaint" governance structures and the "sexualallergies" of the hierarchy.

The Archdiocese of Chicago does not operate in a vacuum. It has to deal with the realities of modern life while being strangled by anachronistic governance structures and dilapidated theology. When we speak of the future, these unjustifiable impediments should be front and centre.

Change can happen; the past fifty years is certainly a testament to that.

I hope that parishioners suffering through church closings aim their attention at these bigger issues as well, and exercise the power of their voices and their pocketbooks to make change happen.

How else can we possibly keep our rich inheritance of urban sacred space safe from the wrecking ball? ☹️



Forced marriage happens in Australia too

LIZ PAYNE

Liz Payne, ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) Community Development Worker, works towards the elimination of human trafficking, modern day slavery and slavery-like practices in Australia, the Asia Pacific region and globally. This article explores the depth of the problem and ways we can be part of the solution. For more on ACRATH go to <http://acrath.org>



Most of us have seen the television clips for PLAN International and similar organisations, with very young girls, in overseas locations, being forced into marriage.

These clips are disturbing accounts of small children being forced to marry men many times older than themselves, and subsequently living with emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

Many of us are completely unaware, however, that forced marriage happens here in Australia too. Is forced marriage in Australia similar to the overseas experience?

Since March 8th 2013, when Australia introduced forced marriage offences under the Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking Bill, over 50 cases have been reported to the Australian Federal Police for investigation. All of these cases have involved young women, the majority under the age of 18.

Numerous cases are also reported as having been dealt with by non-government organisations and other frontline service

providers. Forced marriage in Australia happens across a range of ethnicities, religions and cultural groups. It is sometimes a family practice – where forced marriage is seen as a tradition to be passed down through the generations.

In Australia we know that forced marriage is an under-reported practice, as it is often the result of fear or an honour-based family arrangement. Those in, or at risk of, forced marriage are often fearful of disclosing this to others, for fear of the consequences to themselves or the impact that it may have on their parents and families.

Whilst the person in, or at risk of, forced marriage wants the forced marriage to be stopped, they generally do not want their parents or families to get into any trouble, and consequently do not disclose it. If a disclosure is made, it is often because the young person is quite afraid, or the marriage is to imminently take place.

An Australian case study

Nikhila is a student in her final year of high school. She usually receives excellent

grades and has just begun a relationship with a male student. This young man is from outside Nikhila's community. During the year, Nikhila's teachers notice that her academic performance has deteriorated and that she has displayed increasingly high levels of anxiety.

After the term break, Nikhila does not return to school. Her friends are unable to contact her and her family tells the school that Nikhila has moved interstate.

The teachers speak with Nikhila's father, who does not seem to be concerned. However, they notice that Nikhila's mother seems upset. Nikhila's boyfriend and friends are also very concerned about Nikhila's welfare.

Nikhila's teachers have received training about forced marriage from a non-government organisation and seek advice from the Australian Federal Police. The Australian Federal Police is able to locate Nikhila interstate and discover that she has been made to marry someone from her community and is worried about her safety.

The Australian Federal Police help Nikhila to access support including financial support, legal advice and counselling. The Australian Federal Police also refers Nikhila to support, which assists her to return to live with other members of her family, where she feels safe. Nikhila then returns to school and, with her teachers' help, is able to finish her school year.

The Australian Federal Police investigates Nikhila's forced marriage. Nikhila chooses to cooperate with the investigation and her husband and father are prosecuted. The Australian Attorney-General's Department provided this case study.

Raising awareness about forced marriage is critical for our young people's safety now, and as a preventative measure for future generations

Imagine what may have happened to Nikhila had the teachers at her school not completed their forced marriage training. How might her life have played out had she been forced to remain married and not have had the chance to complete her education?

Luckily for Nikhila, and many other young girls and boys, many teachers across Australia have become aware of this illegal practice, and have undertaken forced marriage training. They are now aware of their obligations to help to keep young people safe from this practice, and are able

to follow recommended, safe methods for dealing with a situation where a young person is in, or at risk of, forced marriage.

My Rights – My Future

A kit, titled *My Rights – My Future forced marriage*, has been made available this year. The kit was developed in 2015 with funding through the Attorney-General’s Department, for use in Australian Government, Independent and Catholic secondary schools. This kit, available on Anti-Slavery Australia’s *mybluesky* website, provides schools with learning and teaching materials to use with students. It also provides suggested protocols and procedures for schools to incorporate into their existing student welfare processes.

Teacher training on forced marriage focuses on empowering teachers to safely and sensitively incorporate forced marriage into the curriculum, and on helping to manage possible student forced marriage situations. The training explicitly directs teachers to their state or territory’s Mandatory Reporting Legislation and to their own school’s policies.

The important thing now is that even more secondary schools become aware of the forced marriage legislation. In doing so, schools will be able to recognise their responsibility for incorporating forced marriage into their own curriculum and student welfare procedures. Schools will also be able to more explicitly focus on exploring human rights education, and the way that the practice of forced marriage violates human rights.

Understanding forced marriage in the Australian context

- Forced marriage happens when a person gets married without freely and fully consenting.
- Coercion, threats and deceit are often used to make this happen.
- Forced marriage is a slavery-like practice, an abuse of human rights and a serious crime.
- Being involved in a forced marriage is punishable by up to seven years imprisonment.
- Being involved in a forced marriage where a young person is taken overseas to be married carries a penalty of up to 25 years imprisonment.
- These penalties apply to those perpetrating the crime, those bringing about any aspect of the forced marriage, and any person involved in the forced marriage. This includes religious or civil

celebrants, wedding planners, families and friends.

- Forced marriage is not limited to any particular cultural, ethnic or religious group.
- While the majority of victims are women and young girls, men and young boys can also be victims.
- Forced marriage is different to arranged marriage.
- Arranged marriage involves each of the prospective spouses fully and freely consenting to having another person, or persons, make arrangements for the marriage to take place on their behalf. In Australia, arranged marriage is a legal practice.
- Consent is the critical issue. Consent must be freely and fully given for a legal marriage to occur. Often this is not possible for those vulnerable to forced marriage, as they are pressured, coerced, threatened or deceived into seemingly “agreeing” to the marriage – out of a sense of fear, duty or obligation.

The role of marriage celebrants

- Ensuring that genuine consent – freely and fully given – is present for a marriage, places considerable onus on marriage celebrants, whether they are religious or civil.
- How can celebrants ascertain that each of the prospective spouses is entering into a marriage without being coerced, threatened or deceived into doing so?
- It is possible by giving consideration to the following:
- Having individual, private conversations with each of the prospective spouses.
- Including private discussion about decision-making, choices and consequences, resolving conflicts around decisions with which there may be disagreement, methods of communicating needs to others, planning for the future, support structures around the person, and so on.
- Closely considering the person’s responses during the conversation to rule out any possibility the person is being forced to marry.
- If there are concerns by the celebrant that the marriage may be forced, it is very important to seek professional advice about the most confidential, appropriate and safe way to deal with the situation.
- This advice is readily available through the Australian Federal Police, Anti-Slavery Australia and many other

non-government organisations with specific experience in dealing with forced marriage.

- Avoiding mediation with the family at all costs is strongly recommended. Adhering to the advice of the Attorney-General’s Department about things to do and not do when dealing with a person in, or at risk of, forced marriage is critical, as a person’s safety can be easily compromised, even with the best intentions.

Awareness-raising and education about forced marriage is the responsibility of all

Being forced to marry against one’s will, particularly if the person “agrees” as a result of coercion, threat or deceit, is a serious breach of human rights. It is never acceptable and always illegal in Australia, and is an exploitative practice.

It is extremely important to continue to raise awareness about forced marriage if we are to eradicate it. So, what role can each of us play in raising awareness and educating others in the communities of which we are part?

Whilst there are national strategies in place to help to eradicate this unacceptable practice, it is not only up to the authorities to achieve this. We each have a responsibility to be fully informed about the laws around marriage, and what defines forced marriage. We also have a responsibility to help to make others aware of forced marriage, and to seize opportunities to educate our communities about the practice

By being fully cognisant of Australia’s laws, each of us is in a better position to be able to help others to be free to make their own choices about marriage, and to be safe in the process. ☺

Further Information about forced marriage:

The following websites provide excellent information about the practice of forced marriage and ways that those in, or at risk of, forced marriage can best be assisted:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/CrimeAndCorruption/HumanTrafficking/Pages/ForcedMarriage.aspx>
Attorney-General’s Department information about forced marriage and Australia’s laws on marriage

<https://www.mybluesky.org.au> Website developed by Anti-Slavery Australia specifically on forced marriage. Click on learn more and resources for My Rights – My Future forced marriage Kit for Australian secondary schools

Missionary of Mercy in Maitland-Newcastle Diocese

RICHARD SHORTALL SJ

Richard Shortall SJ is working in Maitland-Newcastle Diocese in a special ministry of mercy

“Father, I feel that a great weight has been lifted from me”. These are words I often hear after I have sat with a parishioner in the church during one of my community visits in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, twenty-eight communities where there is a church but no resident priest, are being given the opportunity for a daily celebration of the Eucharist and a private conversation with their Missionary of Mercy. Rather like the settler priests who rode around this diocese on horseback, I lay down my swag in a community for a week at a time. Unlike those pioneer priests, however, my swag is not a blanket but is a mobile home. Archbishop Fisichella, whom Pope Francis has charged with overseeing the Jubilee Year, calls me the Missionary of Mercy on Wheels!

This amazing ministry began in May last year when I was offering the Retreat in Everyday Life to parishioners in Newcastle’s cathedral parish. I was given a copy of *Misericordiae Vultus* which I would read as I waited for retreatants to arrive for their appointments. The more I read the more intrigued I became with what Francis had in mind. When I came to paragraph eighteen where he wrote: “During the Year of Mercy I intend to send out *Missionaries of Mercy*. They will be a sign of the Church’s maternal solicitude for the People of God ...” I felt overwhelmed with the desire to be such a missionary in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

It was one thing to feel such a desire and quite another to imagine what being an Australian Missionary of Mercy would look like. A little later my imagination became filled with ideas. During a conversation with Teresa Brierley, the Vice-Chancellor for Pastoral Ministries of the diocese, she said: “I know what to do. You can spend a week at a time visiting the parish communities which have a church but no resident priest living in a Winnebago”. “And what pray tell is a Winnebago”, I asked in a state of puzzlement. The Holy Spirit was clearly present that afternoon and before long Bishop Bill Wright was lending his support to this project. Once my Jesuit Provincial had given me his support, I was able to submit my application at the end of September – online if you please – to the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation. A month later I received notification that my application had been accepted and that I was expected to join the other Missionaries of Mercy in Rome on Ash Wednesday to be formally commissioned by Francis in St Peter’s.

Despite increasing feelings of anxiety that I would struggle not only to drive the mighty beast which would be my home for ten months, but also to survive my solitary life in it, I booked my flights to Rome. In the preceding weeks I had often said to myself: “why on earth did you open your big mouth”. At the end of January, Archbishop Fisichella issued

a press statement describing the ministry of the Missionaries of Mercy. In one of the final paragraphs I was amazed to read: “An interesting story may help to capture the pastoral interest that this initiative has garnered around the world. Father Richard from Australia will visit twenty-seven communities in his rural Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle where there is only one church and no priests in residence. Travelling in a camper, he will journey from community to community as a “Missionary of Mercy on Wheels”! This is but an example of the way in which the Jubilee is meant to reach all, allowing everyone to touch the closeness and the tenderness of God”. Clearly there was now to be no turning back!

On Shrove Tuesday just over 700 out of 1,000 Missionaries of Mercy were able to gather with Francis in Rome. We were received in the magnificently frescoed *Sala Regia* and this is what I heard him tell us in his usual softly spoken manner:

- As Missionaries of Mercy you are to express the maternity of the Church. The Church is a mother because she offers conversion in a welcoming and loving way. This perception must not be lacking in you because it would be harmful to the person before us. We are called to be a living expression of the Church as a mother who welcomes ALL.
- It is very important to see the *desire* for forgiveness in the other. Let’s give them space for this *desire* for God, which is the grace of the Spirit.
- Please understand the language of gestures! In coming to you, something is bothering them; even they cannot adequately express it. They come to you because they might be afraid. No one must do what is not possible. Notice that the gesture is their shame and you should receive all with the language of acceptance.
- If people say that they went once to Reconciliation and the priest told them off and asked intrusive questions, then PLEASE note that this is NOT the good shepherd Missionary of Mercy, rather the judge who thinks that he does not sin. *APPLAUSE*. If you cannot be merciful, don’t go to the confessional because you can do so much harm.
- Your service is so precious.



The next morning during the General Audience in St Peter's Square I was moved to tears at the sight of Francis greeting a sick person lying on a stretcher. First he gently stroked their arm, then he lovingly caressed their cheek before signing the cross on their forehead. "God forgives us not with a decree, but with a caress" (The Name of God is Mercy, page xii).

Francis' words and gesture gave me much to ponder as I took the long flight back to Australia!

What is it like to move around a diocese in a motor home which is parked next to a church and connected to that church's electricity and water supply?

First, I have discovered that what I have undertaken is a manageable task. The motor home is not difficult to drive and the parishioners are willing to help me in all sorts of practical ways. So far I have not been the object of mischievous or threatening behaviour during the night!

Second, the daily experience of sitting in the church engaged in what Francis calls 'the apostolate of the ear' has been a profound, humbling and privileged one. When I arrive in a community I promise parishioners that I will sit in the church ready to listen with a merciful gaze, open arms, a welcoming non-judgemental heart to any story of pain, sorrow, disappointment, heaviness of spirit which they bring. My hope is that in such a conversation they will experience something of God's closeness to and forgiving acceptance of them.

"Father, I have a secret. It goes back to when I was ..."

"This is the sorrow of my life ..."

"Father, will God ever forgive me ...?"

"I feel embarrassed to admit this, but ..."

At this moment in my life what a privilege it is to be given this mission. I feel a strong sense of connection with my brother, Francis, as I support him in his desires for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. It feels so humbling to be entrusted daily with the untold stories of so many parishioners and to be a witness to what happens as they tell them to me.

All credit to Bishop Wright for accepting me as a Missionary of Mercy and allowing this ministry on wheels to happen in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. Credit also to Teresa Brierley, one of his Vice-Chancellors, for picturing how this all might take place. And finally, credit to Brian McCoy, the Provincial of the Australian Jesuits, for supporting me in my application to be accepted as a Missionary of Mercy. ☺

The problem of prayer as gendered

DAN GRUNDY

Dan Grundy, retired priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, asks the question – "How do we pray in a way that is not warped by gender stereotypes and images?"



Two comments from women have had a huge impact on me. The first was uttered as a truism which no thinking person could object to: "Of course, the Bible is a male book." The second came from a woman in her forties. Her large family of origin had been subjected over many years to unbelievable physical and sexual violence on the part of her father. To all non-family observers, he was an exemplary Catholic lay man. She said, with great bitterness, "Men think they are superior!!"

On reflection, I was forced to acknowledge that at some primitive, but very influential level, I hold that totally irrational belief!

It is a cultural thing.

One strand of that culture is the Bible – which I love, which has been life-giving for me, through which I believe I still hear the voice of God, even if I hear it as largely a male voice for male listeners.

One of the powerful meeting points I have with the Bible is through the Divine Office. In this prayer, God is "Lord", "King", "Father" as well as merciful and loving "Creator", "Saviour", "Protector" and, as Pat Flanagan pointed out in his article on Psalm 149 (*The Swag*, Winter 2016), God can be perceived to be angry, vengeful, incredibly violent. God divides the human family into friends and foes, and, fortunately for God's chosen people,

their foes are also the foes of God. To our great satisfaction, God will eventually destroy them utterly.

As well as this there are the ubiquitous male pronouns. God is "He", "Him", "His" etc.

Of course, it is unfair to be so critical of the Scriptures. They are human documents just as truly as they are Divine. They cannot but take for granted, and so give expression to, the patriarchal cultures which formed their human authors.

And it is true that the New Testament is no different. However, the New Testament authors were formed not only by the revolutionary Jesus of Nazareth but also by the patriarchal cultures of the first century Mediterranean world. The leadership is male, the Christian documents are addressed to the Brethren and so on.

I think that this identifying God as male, in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures undergirds the belief that men are superior and that the repetition of male language about God in the daily prayer of the Church reinforces that belief.

I also think that this belief facilitates male violence towards women, and towards all other groups who are supposedly 'inferior' – racially, socially, culturally, religiously, nationally etc. Some males consider themselves to be superior even to most other males!

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So what do I do about it?

I try to stay aware of Paul VI's statement in the Introduction to the Divine Office: *Christian prayer is primarily the prayer of the entire Community of (her)mankind joined to Christ Himself.* I try to pray in solidarity with a very mixed bag: with perpetrators of violence and with their victims, I pray 'we' instead of 'I'.

Christ has overcome all divisions. There are no longer friends and foes. Our greatest foe is the violence that lies in the heart of us all; so I pray, in the Benedictus, for example, "A Saviour who would free us from our violence, from our own self-hating hands."

I try to remember that prayer is an attempt to communicate directly with God, though of course there is mediative prayer about God. However, when I encounter the style of prayer in the Office, I change it to the direct form of address. In the Benedictus, again, 'You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour, in the house of David your servant.' This gets rid of a lot of the male pronouns, as well.

I try to stay aware of the fact that God is love, and unconditional love at that. So 'Lord' becomes for me 'Sovereign Love', 'King' becomes 'Sovereign' so in that long canticle of praise from David, I pray 'With all your works, O Sovereign Love, we bless You, O Sovereign Love.'

It seems right to keep the title of Lord for Christ. 'Jesus is Lord' is one of our earliest creedal formulas.

What to do with 'Father'? Maybe we should stay with that too or adopt Jesus' own 'Abba'. In fact, I've opted for a composite word, 'Mather' in which I seek to honour the motherly as well as the fatherly love of God. When it comes to the Second Person of the blessed trinity I opt for 'Word' rather than 'Son'. So Glory be to the Mather and to the Word and to the Holy Spirit.

You are probably sick of reading what I think and do, but I feel pretty tentative about much of what I have written and would hate anyone to hear me saying that they should do the same. I'm most tentative about opting for different titles of the Most High God.

However, the changes I have opted for have made my prayer both more personal and more universal. And having to make these changes on the run keeps me focussed. It has worked for me. If it happens to work for any of my fellow readers of *The Swag* I will think that my decision to share this experience was not so silly after all. Finally, I'm very grateful to the two women for the comments they made. They have proved to be life-changing and life-giving. ☺

Defending Bishop Ron Mulkearns

PATRICK J FLANAGAN

Patrick Flanagan, priest in residence, Red Cliffs, Victoria talks about Bishop Mulkearns.



Some material in *The Swag*, influenced by media coverage that presumes ill of Ron Mulkearns, I want to defend.

First of all, to re-assure John Flynn SAC, Bishop Mulkearns was buried with his priests in the new Ballarat Cemetery. Some part of the Murdoch Press carried a headline 'Disgraced Bishop (which he wasn't) buried in common ground.' I understand that Peter Connors, in solidarity with Ron, wishes to be buried with his priests, too. There is actually only one spot left in the Ballarat Cathedral crypt. Some of you may not be aware that Rupert Murdoch became a Catholic in 1989 (a couple of brides back), and has purchased a prime position in the crypt of the new cathedral in Los Angeles in which to be buried. No common ground for that disgraceful non-Australian, who is trying to run our country and other countries.

Some years back, one January Monday, the Melbourne Herald Sun had on its front page a disgraceful article about our former bishop, written by some wet-behind-the-ears rookie reporter. He did manage to get Mulks right on one thing though. Exasperated, Mulks had said to him, 'Look, if I knew then what I know now, I would have acted very differently.'

There are two points that need to be made here. Both concern 'shifting Gerard Ridsdale from parish to parish.'

The first is did the bishop do this knowing

that Gerry would gather more victims with each appointment? While no doubt Mulks had some fear that Gerry might offend again, he did not know that he would so offend. We now know that compulsive paedophiles can never be trusted with children. But that was not known back in 1975 when Bishop Mulkearns was informed by a friend from school days, Detective Col Mooney, who was called, from his base in Bendigo, to Inglewood Victoria to hear complaints against Gerry. Col was not able to prosecute Gerry, because the Inglewood parents did not want Gerry charged. "He's a good priest," they said, "but he's got this thing about some of our children, and we would rather he were somewhere else," or words to that effect. Mulks sacked Gerry from Inglewood and carpeted him. You would think that, his sin so exposed, and himself so humiliated, Gerry would have woken up to himself. We *now* know that compulsive paedophiles haven't that sense of guilt or shame.

Incidentally, that was not the first time that Gerry had to front a bishop. Gerry's first appointment was to Ballarat itself, in 1961. Gerry revealed to the Royal Commission that Bishop O'Collins carpeted him over a complaint he received, and he removed him to Mildura, in those days near the end of the earth. It was a punishment, with a threat of greater punishment if he offended again. Incidentally, Bishop O'Collins was the one who kept moving Gerry

from parish to parish. But, as Fr Adrian McInerny told the Royal Commission, we were all shifted around like that, not just Gerry Ridsdale. If Mulks is to be condemned for shifting Gerry from place to place, even more so, should James Patrick O'Collins be condemned. Victims should be campaigning for his name to be removed, as ACU changed the name of Mulkearns Theatre at their Ballarat Campus to Mercy Theatre. But of course, in each case that is condemning them for not knowing what no one else knew either: that moving paedophiles just enables them to gather more victims.

The second matter is much more important. Bishop Mulkearns did not know about the long term psychological/emotional pain suffered by some victims of sexual abuse. In May last year, on a day when all our priests gather for a series of diocesan meetings, we were addressed by a psychiatrist for an hour in the afternoon about sexual abuse, and how the Royal Commission may be affecting us. I was able, privately, to ask her, 'How is it that we didn't know about the long-term suffering endured by some victims of sexual abuse?'

She replied, 'It is only in the last fifteen years or so that any serious study of it has been carried out.' It is terribly wrong for any of us to be condemning Ron Mulkearns, or Frank Little or Dan Mannix or JP O'Collins for not knowing back then what no one else knew either.

Now in regard to Mulks' dealings with Gerry Ridsdale. In brief, Mulks did his best to help Gerry overcome his problem. After withdrawing Gerry from Inglewood, he arranged for Gerry to have psychiatric counselling from Peter Evans OFM. Unfortunately, before this was complete, Peter (who gave great assistance to the Royal Commission a couple of months ago) left the Franciscans and the priesthood. Gerry was passed to Augustine Watson OFM. Augustine was not a trained psychiatrist but a counsellor, who used the logotherapy techniques taught by Victor Frankl. Augustine eventually gave Gerry a clean bill of health, and Mulks appointed him to Edenhope.

I was stationed in Edenhope for two and a quarter years, sometime after Gerry. I had got to know, in a vague way, about Gerry's offending in Inglewood, because my parish of Maryborough was next door to it, and Gerry's successor in Inglewood, Fr Leo McCormack RIP wasted no time in ringing me to announce, 'I know Gerry Ridsdale's trouble. It's little boys.' I never told that to anybody. Does that make me an accessory?

I mention it here because in Edenhope I had my ear to the ground, wondering whether Gerry had offended there. I never heard a word from anybody. In fact Gerry's offences there were widespread. I have since formed the conclusion that 1) None of the parents knew about Gerry's offending. If they had, I would have heard it from somebody. And 2) the kids used to talk to one another about Gerry, which was a good safety valve for them. They knew that Gerry was 'strange', not them.

Gerry was shifted from Edenhope to Mortlake; and there, thank God, things blew up. Mulks was slow in dealing with it; the first deputation of irate parents met with the VG. Fr Leo Fiscalini RIP, not with Mulks. But Mulks himself received a second deputation a few months later, and Gerry was removed from Mortlake. It was then that Mulks conceived the idea of finding Gerry a job in the Catholic Enquiry Centre. The Education Department sometimes put teachers who offended into their Correspondence School, thereby removing the children they dealt with away from harm's way. Such was Mulks purpose in the much-publicised-by-the-royal-commission moving of Gerry to the Catholic Enquiry Centre. But that doesn't deter the full-blown paedophile – remember that it is a psychiatric disorder – from finding fresh fields to conquer. Gerry offended greatly around the Sydney archdiocese, presumably making contact by supplying in parishes of a weekend.

Eventually Mulks became aware of this. He next sent Gerry to a place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that claimed to be able to cure priests of any malady. In fact, they had a considerable success rate in helping priests to put grog behind them. Gerry was there a long time, years rather than months. Eventually they were able to tell Mulks that Gerry was cured (which, we know now, would have been a world first). Mulks accordingly re-assigned Gerry within the Diocese of Ballarat. After a couple of years, he found out that Gerry was at it again. Next stop, and last for Gerry, was to St John of God's, Morrisset, NSW for further treatment. Eventually, with great resistance from Gerry initially, Mulks was able to get him to apply to Rome to be laicised. Gerry had to make the application. Mulks knew that if he had asked Rome to laicise Gerry, Rome would have knocked him back. And that's a whole other story.

Obviously, Mulks went to a lot of trouble to help Gerry. We can say now that he was wasting his time, because Gerry is suffering from an incurable disease, which does NOT make Gerry a monster, but does

mean that, though he live to be a hundred, he will never be safe around children.

We now know, that because of Mulks' efforts to save Gerry, there have been many victims who have suffered long-term emotional damage. But Mulks, like the rest of us, did not know that. Had he known, he would have sacked Gerry speedily.

There were many great things about Mulks. Even Mick Morwood did not note Mulks great courage. As Chair of the Bishop's Justice and Peace Commission he supported many stances that Bob Santamaria & Co. vigorously opposed, and that ensured that Mulks would never be promoted to be an Archbishop.

I am not trying to present him as a candidate for canonisation. He had his faults, like the rest of us. Back then we *thought* that there was a shortage of priests. In his endeavour to keep our numbers up, as he later told Mark Coleridge, 'I ordained a number of men about whom I had doubts, and in every case, I lived to regret it.' That caused suffering to priests and people.

But I strongly resent the scapegoating of Mulks that has meant it was impossible to have his Requiem in the Ballarat Cathedral. ☹



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You are loved, you are beauty

PETER DAY

Peter Day talks about a divided church and how we must face the current crisis with humility.

Australia's Christian churches are in crisis, on the brink of complete strategic irrelevance. It's not clear they recognise the mortal depth of their problems. (Greg Sheridan, *The Weekend Australian*, June 4-5, 2016)

The Church in Western countries is in decline. People have left in droves. People are staying away in droves. We are bereft of priests, religious leaders, and parishioners. We are haunted by the spectre of sexual abuse. We are immersed in a secular, post-Christian culture in which atheism, rather than belief, is the default position.

It feels like Good Friday; it feels like it's time to head-off to Emmaus to drown our sorrows and lament over what might have been ... but that's not the end of the story; just ask Cleopas and his friend.

We know well from pastoral experience, especially in the area of addictions, that it is only when we reach rock bottom – that place of powerlessness, despair and humiliation – that true and lasting change is possible. In acknowledging her inner demons and shame, the church, like the addict, is ripe for conversion. No more secrets. No more masks: “a time to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God.” (Mic 6:8) But there is nothing remotely sentimental about this. There is much at stake, and many will be hurt, friend and foe alike. Indeed, amidst the excitement and clamour for change, exemplified by the pontificate of Francis, there is also a deeply felt fear which is driving many to their respective ideological poles.

Those on the right are queueing-up to promulgate what they perceive to be immutable truths and traditions. Pope Francis speaks of the “temptation to hostile inflexibility,” which is “the temptation of the zealous, of the scrupulous, of the solicitous and of the so-called traditionalists and also of the intellectuals.”

Meanwhile, at the other pole reside those whose pursuit of truth, justice, and openness can tend towards a sort of misty-eyed sentimentalism oblivious to long term consequences and bereft of intellectual and spiritual rigour. Pope Francis speaks of the temptation to practice “a deceptive mercy (which) binds the wounds without first

curing them and treating them; that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots.” “This,” he says, “is the temptation of the ‘do-gooders’, of the fearful, and also of the so-called ‘progressives’ and ‘liberals.’”

The apostle Paul confronted similar divisions in the early church: For it has been reported to me ... there is quarreling among you. What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Peter,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Is Christ divided? (1 Cor 1:11-13)

Today he might very well say, “... there is quarreling among you. What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I belong to the traditionalists’, or ‘I belong to the progressives’, or ‘I belong to this pope, to this Cardinal’ ... Is Christ divided?”

In forging our collective way through this internecine conflict, it is worth pondering the following wise and timeless counsel of South American Archbishop, Helder Camara (1964): *Let no one be scandalised if I frequent those who are considered unworthy and sinful. Let no one be alarmed if I am seen with compromising and dangerous people, of the left or right, of establishment or opposition, with reformist or anti-reformist, revolutionary or anti-revolutionary, with those of good faith or bad. Let no one claim to bind me to a group, so that I should consider his friends to be absolutely everyone. Christ dies for all; I must exclude no one from fraternal dialogue.*

Whatever one's take or ideology, we are in the midst of a re-imagining, a re-awakening, led by the pope – and it can't come too soon; the crisis at hand demands nothing less. And while many like to sheet home the blame for the decline in the church to outside forces, particularly secularism and atheism; really, as alluded to above, it is the enemy within that continues to do most of the damage.

In his article, *Less people are going to church – whom to blame?*, Ronald Rolheiser draws on the insights of the eminent Jewish scholar, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who, over half a century ago, wrote in *God In Search of Man: It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It*

would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats... When faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain; when religion speaks only in the name of authority rather than the voice of compassion – its message becomes meaningless.

In the same article, Rolheiser turns to another astute thinker, Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, Marilynne Robinson: *The churches today are not radiating the immensity of God and the larger mystery of Christ. Rather, despite our good will, we are too much subordinating the mystery of Christ to tribalism, resentment, fear, and self-protection... The secular world isn't, per se, irreligious. Rather it sees our churches as self-absorbed, non-understanding, and non-empathetic to its desires, its wounds, and its needs.*

It seems that ever since Christ ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a slave’ (Phil 2:7), we have been determined to do anything but: “When I am strong, then I am strong,” you might say.

Let's face it, we don't *do vulnerable* well. Never have. Little wonder that Cleopas and his friend headed for Emmaus following the devastation of Calvary. Indeed, to this day, ‘Emmaus’ remains a seductive destination for those whose dreams are dashed: it's that party town, that drug, that mistress, whatever helps dull the pain and mask our vulnerability.

The remedy is what Karl Rahner called, “the devout Christian of the future.” Who “will either be a ‘mystic’, one who has ‘experienced’ something, or cease to be anything at all.”

Rahner's prescient words, written over three decades ago, along with the critiques of Rabbi Heschel and Marilynne Robinson, points to a deeper, pervasive problem that must be addressed: the failure of the church to nurture and embrace its contemplative and mystical roots.

Christian institutions bereft of a contemplative underpinning soon morph into unwieldy, self-absorbed bureaucracies in which power and self-aggrandisement take root.

Yet, as Jean Vanier says poignantly, “Far from being desirable, success and power prevent us from being truly ourselves. It

Selection of bishops – A survey of the faithful

PETER JOHNSTONE

Peter Johnstone, President, Catholics for Renewal Inc, offers a suggestion for a more inclusive model for the selection of bishops. Catholics for Renewal is launching a survey to provide a wide representation of people to suggest what they want in a bishop.

is only when we recognise our weakness [our poverty], when we seek help, that we become human. We are not called to be perfect; we are called to be humble.”

The institution is exhausted. It's pastors are exhausted. It's people are exhausted. We no longer have time for ourselves, let alone others – too busy, too noisy. It's as if we're running ahead of grace; gosh, running ahead of love.

We are listening to the wrong refrain: the one that tells us over and over that our value and worth are determined by what we *do*, rather than who we *are* – human doings instead of human beings.

As our Lord said to a busy Martha while her sister, Mary, 'wasted' time at his feet: "... You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Lk 10: 41-42)

Therefore, our dioceses, our parishes, our presbyteries, and our homes must become pools of Silence: places of encounter.

The vitality and centrality of this contemplative dimension is revealed by Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury 2002-12):

[Contemplation] is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

Simply, we are in desperate need of a contemplative church, of marketplace mystics: accessible men and women steeped in Silence – immersed in the Divine marinade that flavours all they do.

'Salty' people who "prefer a church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty from going out on the streets."

Such a church cannot strut; it knows better. Humbly it bends down at the foot of humanity rejoicing in the divine refrain: "You are loved, you are beauty." ☪



"Let the bishop be ordained after he has been chosen by all the people." (Hippolytus of Rome, The Apostolic Tradition, c 215 AD)

It is time to restore the role of the faithful in the selection of their bishops. We should match the practice of our faith with its values. For the first 1,200 years of Christianity, the laity and clergy chose their local bishop, and there have been varying methods of selection since, even involving a major role for civil governments.

Catholics for Renewal published an Open Letter to our bishops and to Pope Benedict XVI in 2011, which was signed by more than 8,000 Australian Catholics. The Open Letter sought, inter alia, "a return to a more accountable and consultative process for the appointment of bishops." The involvement of the faithful in the selection of bishops lapsed for reasons that do not reflect well on church governance and were documented by Dr Peter Wilkinson in the last two editions of *The Swag*.

As foreshadowed by Catholics for Renewal (*The Swag*, 'Selecting new bishops – a proposal involving the faithful', Winter, 2016, p9), we have now developed a survey

of the faithful to assist the Church's selection process. Initially, we are focussing on the Archdiocese of Melbourne and are writing to all parish priests in the archdiocese drawing their attention to the survey and its purpose in involving clergy and laity. We are seeking the support of priests and laity in publicising the survey as widely as possible in the archdiocese, and we will then extend the survey to other dioceses where new bishops are to be selected.

This year, nine new Australian diocesan bishops could be appointed including

a new archbishop of Melbourne. The faithful of these dioceses have a vital interest in this opportunity to provide inspiring leadership. The Catholic Church in Australia, as elsewhere, is experiencing an unprecedented loss of credibility with Mass attendance at an all-time low, 13.4% (2011) in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, with most of our young people rejecting their faith, shocked by the Church's cover-up of clerical child sexual abuse throughout the world and disillusioned by its failure to heed the people of God and the *sensus fidelium* (the 'sense of faith of the faithful'). Our Church needs committed leaders who understand these challenges and listen to the people of God as envisaged by Vatican II.

Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*) reinforced the role of the people of God and the *sensus fidelium*, teaching that:

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. (n.12)

Since the 2013 election of Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis, the hopes of Vatican II have been revived in the Church. Francis has made it abundantly clear that

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the swag



a centrepiece of his papacy is to have bishops function as authentic leaders. He wants them to be listeners, animators and accountable, in tune with their people and their needs.

Catholics for Renewal wants to encourage the expression of the views of the people of God on the needs of their diocese and the criteria for selecting the bishop to lead the diocese. What will the survey be asking? The Code of Canon Law (378 §1) requires that candidates for selection as bishop should be of good reputation, at least thirty-five years old, ordained as priest for at least five years, and possess qualifications or expertise in sacred scripture, theology, or canon law. The canon also requires that a candidate be outstanding in solid faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence, and human virtues, and be “*endowed with other qualities which make him suitable to fulfill the office in question*”.

The people of a diocese should be well-placed to advise on those ‘other qualities’, and the survey will be seeking views on a) the needs of the particular Diocese/ Archdiocese, and b) the main attributes or qualities that the faithful are looking for in their local bishop.

We are setting up a survey instrument on our website (www.catholicsforrenewal.org) to enable people to identify the primary needs of their dioceses and to name the personal and leadership qualities they are looking for in their local bishop. Full confidentiality for individual respondents is assured. We are asking for names and contact details to ensure legitimacy, but we will not release any information that identifies individuals.

As mentioned in the last edition of *The Swag*, the Nuncio declined to meet with Catholics for Renewal to discuss our proposed survey. However, the Nuncio later wrote suggesting we put our proposal to the Congregation for Bishops in the Holy See as a matter ‘under their competence’. We have written to the Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, and the Nuncio has forwarded our correspondence in the diplomatic bag. We will be providing the results of the survey to both the Nuncio and the Congregation.

Catholics for Renewal is seeking the support of all parish priests in promoting the involvement of the faithful in this significant contribution to the quality of Church leadership. ☪

In Baptism we rise with Him to life

JOHN FLYNN SAC

John Flynn SAC, Riverton WA, offers his homily for the 10th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C – *How are we called to new life?*



Yesterday I was a concelebrant at a funeral Mass for a young mother of three pre-school aged children. A long battle with cancer came to an end over a week ago. I was the celebrant for the committal service which took place at the Karrakatta crematorium. There was an exceptionally large number of people in attendance and the funeral had a distinctly Hungarian flavour to it.

How similar to the life of that young mother could have been the lives of the two young men who figure in the readings from the Book of Kings and the Gospel in today’s Mass. They had died, like that young mother, at a very young age, at a stage when their lives, like hers, was very far from being complete. Each of them is a son of a widow. The widow in the Old Testament story blames Elijah for her son’s death – that through him God is punishing her for her past sins. Elijah, however, takes the lifeless body of her son, spreads himself over the body and beseeches God in prayer to use his initiative and bring the youth back to life. Elijah’s prayer is answered, the boy comes to life and the faith of the bereaved mother is restored and her trust in Elijah is established.

In the gospel, the bereaved mother says nothing as the body of her son is being carried away for burial, but Jesus, we are told, felt sorry for her. At his own initiative and without demanding faith, Jesus himself

brings the youth back to life by issuing a command: “Young man, I tell you, get up!”

Present in the words and action of Jesus is the power of God. Both young men from the moment of being raised to life were able to get on with their lives and bring them to completion. We do not, of course, know how they did this nor do we know whether the son of the widow of Nain, raised to life by Jesus, ever became a disciple of Jesus. What we can say for certain, however, is that both these men did eventually die and die a death that was irreversible.

As we reflect on these stories there is something in them with which we can all identify, namely dying and being raised to life, though, at this point of our existence, we identify, not in a physical way but in a spiritual way. Our being able to identify with their dying and being raised to life lies in our baptism. As St. Paul, who tells us something about his own conversion in the second reading today, has taught so emphatically, we who have been baptised, in our baptism underwent a death, we died with Christ by going into the tomb with him and the death we underwent was a death to sin, to our unspiritual selves.

As is said in a funeral service when the body is sprinkled with Holy Water: ‘In the waters of baptism you died with Christ’. But, simultaneously in our baptism, we were raised to life by Christ by being given

a new life, as the same sprinkling goes on to state: 'and you rose with him to new lie' and this life is the life of the Holy Spirit who is the gift of the Father to us through Christ. In a way we now live with two life principles, our own human, natural life, and the divine supernatural life of the Holy Spirit, but our human life we can also say is permeated and impregnated with the life of the Holy Spirit giving it all sorts of new capabilities.

We are acutely aware, though, that we can cause the life of the Spirit in us to die and we do that by sinning in a grave and serious way. We are also aware that the gift of divine life in us, lost through grave sin, can be restored in the sacrament of Reconciliation where, having repented, expressed sorrow and confessed with a firm purpose of amendment, forgiveness

through the Holy Spirit is received and spiritual healing and re-generation is granted.

In our human spiritual frailty and vulnerability how important it is for us never to let die the virtue of hope, hope of God's unfailing and ever available mercy, the mercy Pope Francis invites us to focus our attention on and practice during this year of mercy. Whilst the life of the Spirit we have received in baptism in itself can never die because it is divine life itself, our natural, physical life certainly will die. Our death is inevitable and it is one thing in life we can be absolutely certain about.

Despite this certitude, as Christians, we do not despair or become morbid at the thought of dying. For we live with Christian hope, a hope that enables us to

look forward with joyful expectation to a life of indescribable joy beyond death. This is the hope that eases and alleviates the sharp pain of grief and sense of loss that comes with the death of a loved one. This is a hope which, if alive and present in them, surely has eased and will continue to ease the pain of grief and loss experienced by the husband, family and friends of that young mother, needed so much by them, but taken from them just too soon.

The comfort and consolation of that hope is affirmed by St. Peter when he writes: 'You did not see Jesus, yet you love him and you are filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described because you believe and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is the salvation of your souls'. ❧



The good steward

PAUL O'DONNELL

In an article entitled *Religious Cultural Patrimony*, published in the Autumn Edition of the *National Trust Magazine*, Rev Dr Paul O'Donnell has highlighted the importance of caring for the the goods of religious heritage buildings, contents and records – especially in circumstances of change. Paul, who writes this article, is a member (Aust) ICOMOS, a consultant with NSW Environment and Heritage and is a specialist consultant and lecturer in the conservation of religious cultural heritage. He is Principal of *Care for Cultural Patrimony*. See culturalpatrimony.com

Religion and its symbols form a substantial component of society's wider heritage expression and many recent Church documents highlight the Catholic perspective on such expressions as an important record of faith. In particular, the documents of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church highlight the responsibly and opportunities for local clergy, as the custodians and interpreters of the Catholic story, located in particular places.

Very often, the spirit that has forged communities – expressed in tangible goods – is a local monument to the best expressions of true humanism. Its better appreciation not only informs the Church's self understanding, but can inspire interfaith and societal action. Put simply, the Catholic sensitivity on these things, is that the future is most often shaped from a sound understanding of and care for the heirlooms of the believing community.

Unfortunately, in the Australian context, conservation professionals and statutory authorities tend to view the religious record negatively. Sudden amalgamations, closures and dispersals often highlight gaps in forward planning and professional

credibility. In the media, the common portrayal is a battle of local politics, personalities and ownership. Regrettably, each scrape points to a policy vacuum, leaving the impression of an approach that is arbitrary and mediocre. In common sensibility there is an intuitive disquiet about the loss of the public past. And there are often genuine ethical questions about wider stakeholder interests; donations, significant memorials, past government schemes and operational relief, as well as about the appropriate decommissioning of a sacred place.

Often however, the custodians of sacred places are uncertain about their nature, meaning, and content, or about opportunities and constraints in its conservation. In response to this, a number of organisations and academic programs have emerged at international level in recent years, with the aim of identifying trends and outcomes, exploring funding options and establishing principles and practices to address the management of religious cultural losses. There are some common recommendations and insights emerging from these initiatives.

The most important practical recommendation is that ethical



management begins with inventory; a step made easier by modern technology. Surprisingly, many parishes and institutions do not clearly know what they have, and how it is to be valued or conserved. And this is even an insurance and security problem. In Australia there are many examples of rare and historical items which remain undocumented and relatively unknown. Making an inventory is a way of noting and thereby conserving elements important to community narrative. In times of closure or amalgamation this record becomes critical. It can even help emerging parishes that struggle to find the very items that have elsewhere been destroyed or dispersed.

An important insight is that, until recently, few saw that religious cultural heritage would also form a powerful touchstone for intercultural dialogue, in both a humanist and religious sense. Mutually valued beauty however has a capacity to disarm. It bridges diverse eras, cultures, groups and generations. Its better conservation and imaginative interpretation is becoming

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Tarrawarra Abbey is a contemplative, monastic community of the Cistercian Order situated outside Melbourne in the Yarra Valley.

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imperative in a world where religious cultural identity has assumed greater importance. In this it is most often the clergy who are uniquely placed to explain that the power of religious symbolism is not merely decorative. Showcasing our religious heirlooms can be a gift to wider society for understanding, enjoyment and community memory. For religious place is not only about the famous and the grand; it proclaims the importance of the local and the ordinary. Here in Australia, even in quite remote communities, it often

provides an aura of transcendence and a doorway to a wider cultural world. For the stuff of religious traditions is essentially the stuff of human life; highly significant traces of local narrative.

The full National Trust article is available at: https://issuu.com/nationaltrustnsw/docs/nt_mag_autumn_2016_issu

The picture accompanying this article is a richly symbolic mosaic at St Mary's Cathedral Lady Chapel Perth WA. ☪

Pontifical Missionary Union – What is it?

BRIAN LUCAS

Fr Brian Lucas, National Director, Catholic Mission, reports on Pope Francis' call to look at the meaning of mission as much more than fundraising. Mission is also about mutual and intercultural exchange in the spirit of the founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union.



The Pontifical Missionary Union is perhaps the least well known of the four Pontifical Missionary Societies. The other three are the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Society of Missionary Childhood and the Society of St Peter the Apostle.

This year marks the centenary of the foundation of the Pontifical Missionary Union. During the June 2016 assembly in Rome of the Superior Council of the Pontifical Missionary Societies more than 100 National Directors from around the world made a pilgrimage from Rome to Aversa to the tomb of Blessed Paolo Manna.

Father Paolo Manna left Italy in 1895 for the mission of Toungoo in eastern Burma. He remained there until 1907 when illness forced him to return to Italy.

Through writing and preaching he then dedicated all his energy for the next forty years to fostering missionary zeal among the clergy and the faithful. He dreamed of an organisation that would help him to share the spiritual graces he had received through his work in bringing the Good News of Christ to others.

Fr Manna wanted to encourage those already engaged in the work of the Church to support the work of the Missions – and perhaps to become missionaries themselves. In 1916, with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, he founded the Missionary Union of the Clergy to raise enthusiasm among priests for Missions, to promote knowledge of the Missions and to encourage prayer for them.

Today the Union has spread throughout the world and the membership includes

seminarians, religious and laity. In Australia, its aims are achieved through Catholic Mission's mission formation activities, not only for priests but also lay leaders, parishioners, school students and anyone with a heart for mission: to "go to all nations and proclaim the Good News".

Recently appointed PMU Secretary General, Fr Fabrizio Meroni, announced to the National Directors a proposed review of the PMU. He said: "the process of rethinking PMU as such cannot be fast and hurried because we are talking about a hundred year-old society whose charismatic inspiration may have exhausted its current modes of implementation but could maintain its validity in the field of formation and missionary animation of young and old churches".

In his address to the Assembly, Pope Francis reinforced the message that the work of PMS is not just about fundraising.

Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Missionary Societies, the mission makes the Church and maintains her faithful to the salvific will of God. Therefore, although it is important that you are concerned with the collection and distribution of the economic aid that you diligently administer in favour of so many Churches and needy Christians, a service for which I thank you, I exhort you not to limit yourselves to this aspect. In this Holy Year of Mercy, may the missionary ardour that consumed Blessed Paolo Manna, and from which the Pontifical Missionary Union flowed, continue still today to burn, to impassion, to renew, to rethink and to reform the service that this Work is called to offer the whole Church. Your Union must not be the same next year as this year; it must change in this direction, it must be converted to this missionary passion.

This repeats what Pope Francis said the previous year: "Please, be careful not to fall into the temptation of becoming an NGO, an office of distribution of ordinary and extraordinary aid. Money is of help – we know it! – but it can also become the ruin of the Mission."

Catholic Mission appreciates your support for the monetary collections but is also very available to assist with programmes of missionary formation. We have the resources to facilitate formation programmes for lay leaders so that they can integrate their secular skills with a sense of the mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. ☪

Connecting children's sacraments to parish life

GERARD STOYLES

Many parents have a commitment to their children receiving the Sacraments of Initiation but little or no experience of the Sunday worshipping community. Gerard Stoyles, Wollongong priest, looks at some considerations for the reception of First Eucharist and Confirmation during the primary school experience.

This article focuses on the Sacraments of Initiation following Baptism, namely First Eucharist and Confirmation. The time frame of interest is pre-adolescence, or the primary school years. This article also raises the question of families' participation in their parish prior to and following the reception of these sacraments.

The demographic and geographic picture of our parishes is broad and disparate. Differences exist between inner and outer city parishes, high and low socio economic parishes, rural versus city parishes and so on. Cultural and ethnic identities bring with them particular flavours of parish life, as also do median age differences between parish communities. These differences and others must be taken into account when attempting to understand the nature of any parish, and the active participation of people in parish life.

Relevant to the preparation for and reception of Sacraments of Initiation in primary school is the question of family participation in the parish within which these sacraments are received, respecting the many "shapes" that describe what being a family presently means. While taking into account the variables existing between parish environments and structures, there appears to be a common occurrence of large numbers of children being presented for either First Eucharist or Confirmation, or both. However, the families of these children appear to lack regular and active participation in their parish, whatever frequency this participation might be.

In a paper presented to the *Word in Life Symposium (1999)*, Patricia Malone rsj (*Journal of Religious Education*, 47(3), pp. 2-8) provided a concise and probing overview of diocesan sacramental programmes in existence at that time. Malone described an effective sacramental programme as being one that took into account the social, cultural, and religious contexts of those who participated in it, including children, parents and their families. Malone, at that time, further described the disconnect between *presumed* active participation of families in the

Church and the *reality* of this participation. She stated that while a majority of parents and others in the Church saw themselves as being aligned spiritually with God, creation, and each other, they did not see this alignment as occurring within the Church. In addition, parents appeared to see the Baptism of their children as signifying the end rather than the beginning of the child's initiation journey into the Church community. Malone identified this disconnect as being a serious issue for the Church of that era.

Seventeen years have elapsed between Malone's presentation and our present time. To what extent, if any, has the situation of practice in the Church by parents and families changed since then? To what extent has it improved or deteriorated? From a necessarily brief web-based perusal of diocesan and parish sacramental preparation material, it would seem that readiness to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation relies primarily on the knowledge and understanding of theological/sacramental principles. Any reference to how these principles might be understood, formed, and practised in the social and cultural milieus of parents' and children's lives appears to be either separated from, lacking augmentation, or ranked below this knowledge and understanding. The current emphasis of sacramental programmes on being parish and family based is a major step forward in seeking to help parents and children transform theological principles into daily experiences. However, the language in which preparation is embedded seems to presume that parents and children possess the necessary vocabulary to understand the concepts that this language represents. In those cases where there is little or no participation in the parish community by families, apart from sacramental preparation, it is unlikely that the vocabulary needed to make sense of and apply theological sacramental principles to life will be readily accessible to them. For example, one programme, designed for children's comprehension refers to the Eucharist being "consumed" after receiving it at communion time.

Continued page 28

the swag



Dioceses and parishes have invested much effort and thought into discovering the optimal way to prepare young children for the reception of First Eucharist and Confirmation. The difficulties in achieving this task are many, among which three difficulties immediately stand out. First, there is the question of whether parents and children are regularly attending Mass in their parishes – at the very least – and how to approach this issue where attendance is not happening. Second, the developmental age span of children between Baptism and Eucharist, and between Eucharist and Confirmation, gradually moves the child from pre-conceptual through to conceptual thought. Even at the conceptual thinking stage (10 years or so to adolescence), thinking is still concrete, and so there is the challenge of presenting abstract concepts such as the Eucharistic Real Presence to a concrete thinking mind. Third, where parents believe that their children “must” receive sacraments of initiation, or in instances where they feel pressured into presenting their children, the possibility for antagonism at having to fulfil certain requirements for readiness is likely to increase. I recall speaking to two child Confirmation candidates and their parents after Mass. I asked both boys what being confirmed meant to them. They echoed: “We only have to go to Mass for another three Sundays”. This response greatly embarrassed their parents but seemed to make complete sense to the boys.

I am interested in undertaking research into why Catholic parents who have very limited or no contact with their parish apart from Easter, Christmas and family sacramental occasions, present their primary school aged children for the Sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation. Even more so, why do these parents faithfully follow through with the preparation programme and yet lack ongoing practice following reception of the Sacrament? It is possible that such research has been, or is presently being undertaken, though I am not aware of this happening. The research that I am considering would not comprise frequencies of attendance versus non-attendance and the like. Rather, I would be interested in three broad areas. First, what theological principles, specifically the theology of Eucharist and Confirmation, need to be known and understood by parents and children who are presented for these sacraments? An in-depth exploration of the relevance of

sacred scripture, mystagoga, incarnation theology, anthropology, developmental psychology, and pastoral theology would direct this exploration. Through individual interviews with parents, the second phase of this research would seek to understand the extent to which parents both grasp the knowledge of these principles and understand their meaning, while further applying this meaning in their lives. That is, to what extent do parents both see the relevance of these principles and manage to live them out in a way that enriches their lives and relationships, especially their relationship with God? The third and final stage of the research would be to structure a survey (both online and hard copy) from parents’ individual stories. The survey would then be presented to as large a sample of parents as possible. It is



hoped that an overview of parents’ beliefs, feelings and attitudes across various social, cultural, ethnic, and parish domains would subsequently emerge.

I consider this research to be important for a number of reasons. First, parents are entrusted with the task of being the first educators in faith of their children. To accomplish this task, parents need a firm foundation of knowledge and experience about their religious beliefs and faith journey so that they might pass on this knowledge and experience to their children. Second, parents need to feel both confident and competent in carrying out this task. I often wonder if parents see Catholic schools and State school catechesis as the means of carrying out this responsibility for them because they do not feel sufficiently confident or competent to do so themselves. Third, tapping into the experiences, beliefs and attitudes of parents will inform the way in which sacramental preparation of children is designed and presented.

There is a final benefit of this research that I wish to put forward. To my way of thinking, it would be disconcerting for priests and their co-workers who prepare children for First Eucharist and Confirmation to have many children enrolled for these sacraments and yet only recognise a few of them as being active in the parish. It would be equally difficult to remain open to the possibility that parents and families would continue in their practice after reception of the sacrament yet also disheartening to realise that this was not the case.

Finally, if I am correct in stating that the large numbers of children presented for First Eucharist and Confirmation are not representative of those who are practising their faith in the parish, then there will necessarily be a cascading effect of this occurrence. It is likely that current parents have had little to no contact with the Church, and further that their parents and even the parents of *their* parents have also been in this situation. If so, then the foundation of knowledge and faith as baptised members of the Church will be sorely wanting. As each generation passes in this way, our parish communities will necessarily become smaller in size and older in age. This is a sobering thought, as are its consequences.

I would be most interested in comments and suggestions relevant to what I have written in this article. I can be contacted by email: gerardstoyles@gmail.com and/or phone: 0419 012 690. ☺

The Swag Summer Edition

Closing date for letters
and articles Monday
31 October 2016.

Please email submissions
for consideration to:
editor@theswag.org.au

Articles – 700 words
Major Features – 1,400 words.

Chain saws and the holy

RICHARD WHITE

Richard White offers a reflection on the 'holy' in an ordinary winter in the country.

It's not been easy, living in the country. My wife and I moved to Cootamundra four years ago. I did the right thing early in the piece; I went to a local general store and bought R M Williams jeans, Redback boots and an Akubra. Things were looking good until Winter came.

Today (end of June) the temperature is hovering about six degrees, an improvement on minus two. We have a wood fire, the fuel supply is and has been a constant concern. My initial instrument of 'collection' was a wood splitter.

Doug, the elderly man who sold us the house, assured me the splitter-gift was 'indestructible', constructed as it was with a traditional splitter head welded on to a length of water pipe. I broke it within three months. Then, my first chain saw lasted almost twelve months before it too went to God.

In the next three years, I broke two more wood splitters, one with a fibreglass handle, the other with a traditional wood handle. The new chain saw lasted two years before it began to fall apart; its successor had a less than glorious career.

Enough of these bargains from Mitre 10, I got serious and bought a brand new Stihl, Master-something-or-other. Things did not begin promisingly; I had trouble starting it. Doug 2 (almost as common a name around here as Bruce) the engineer-retailer, assured me it would be OK if I did such-and-such, which I think I did. But, let me leave Doug 2, for a moment and get to the second part of this article's title, the Holy.

For years I have had a number of book titles that I've admired; sometimes even borrowed or bought, glanced at, but never read. High on this list was Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, from which I probably met terms like 'numinous' and '*mysterium fascinans et tremendum*'. Blow me down if I didn't come across the Pelican paperback, a book sale of a deceased estate, published in 1959, with the bookseller sticker intact, Ashwoods, 376 Pitt St, price, 30 cents! A treasure and a bargain (it was going for \$1 this time) all in one!

I have about fifty pages to go, a loving read, slow and absorbing. I keep pondering, *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*. That's about all I can say, really, about the Holy. I know the minute I begin either

to describe this experience of pondering or the implications of encountering the Mysterium, I am in danger.

There's a hymn we used to sing, in English, 'Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand ...' Good advice. There were two Scripture references that still haunt my more reflective moments: 'Our God is a consuming fire' and 'It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God'.

The danger I experience when I think I have something to say, is that it might sound like I know something about the Holy and the Mysterium. I may be fascinated and awe-struck, but I am more like a man 'of unclean lips who lives among a people of unclean lips.'

So, in reading the latest edition of *The Swag* and the references to George Pell, John Walshe and Ron Mulkearns, all of whom I've met and knew a bit, I felt the heat of that fire and the terror that Francis Thompson described so well. It's there too in the opening stanza of Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'Wreck of the Deutschland'.

*Thou mastering me
God! Giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea;
Lord of living and dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me,
fastened me flesh,
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.*

Because, when it's all said and done, it's all about the Holy, and the fear that the Holy might 'touch me afresh'. At least that's what I think, which brings me back to Doug 2.

This precision German instrument was 'metagrobballised'! Revving the throttle with the chain brake on can do this; it says so in the manual, which I had read and promptly forgotten. What a stupid, and expensive, thing to do! Yet another broken piece of machinery and equipment to add to my collection.

Doug 2 was solicitous, not censorious. 'I'm sorry I'm going to ruin your week', he said before revealing the unfixable damage, not covered by the warranty. There was no hint, no question of how or why I had stuffed up.

When I mumbled something about a second hand chain saw, Doug 2 paused and remembered his deceased father's 101 (I still have no knowledge of what a '101' is); he could clean it up, drain and service the fuel system, give me something for the good bits of the Stihl, and I might get through the Winter enwooded, as Hopkins might say.

What's the connection between chain saws and the Holy or *mysterium fascinans et tremendum* and the pain and the shame of lives impacted by sexual abuse? I don't know but I cannot get away from those last few lines quoted above:

*Thou has bound bones and veins in me,
fastened me flesh,
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.*

☞

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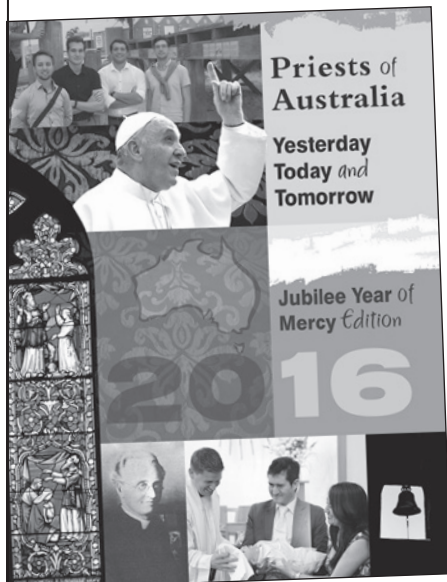
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Turning words into lasting change

Thanks to another excellent book review in *The Swag* (written by Peter Maher, Summer 2015) I have recently finished reading "A Still and Quiet Conscience: the archbishop who challenged a pope, a president, and a church" by John A. McCoy. The name Ray Hunthausen, Archbishop of Seattle (1975-1991), but not his exploits, stirred in my memory from reports in *The Tablet* some decades ago.

Hunthausen was a conservative in the best sense of the word. He stuck by church teaching and also stuck by Vatican II. His ministry, including to LGBTI Catholics and whose approach to paedophilia has been described as pioneering, was undone, all but wiped out after his ministry came to an early end. A small group of unchristian Catholics and a vipers nest in the Curia fed off each other and suited perfectly the centralised control era of the JP2/Ratzinger/Benedict XVI years. McCoy tells a story very similar to the more recent one of Bishop Bill Morris in our own Australian diocese of Toowoomba.

Can we expect more and better from the current pope? Can we look forward to a more Gospel centred Church, to bishops like Hunthausen and Morris? I can only offer a muted maybe. Francis says so many right things but is his softly, softly approach to reforming the curia (a blight on the Church for all of my life) enough to turn words into lasting change? After all, it took only one pope, with the aid of curial cardinals, to all but obliterate Vatican II. Or should Francis deal with the Curia as Jesus did with the money changers in the temple, kick them all out, and do it now, in order to develop a completely new structure of Church governance that wields no ungodly power?

Does the Church have to shrink to the size of a gathering in an upper room before it can bloom again and credibly spread the word of God?

Margaret Callinan, *Balwyn VIC*

Vatican II Church

The article by Werner G Jeanrond in the latest *Swag* articulates Christ's vision for the Church: 2 or 3 gathered to explore, celebrate and disperse the Good News.

Rose Marie Crowe, *Mordialloc, VIC*

Remembering Bishop Mulkearns

On 11th April, members of our Catholic community remembered Bishop Ronald Mulkearns. There was a gathering for his funeral in Ballarat. There were also gatherings for prayer and reflection in other parts of the Ballarat diocese. In all these gatherings, there were mixed emotions.

We were painfully aware of the criticisms of Bishop Mulkearns for his failings. At the same time, we recalled the good he did. His friends expressed sadness that the good had generally been forgotten. As one of those friends wrote in the *Ballarat Courier*: "He is not famous for the many things he did well; only for the one thing he did badly".

His family remembered a devoted brother and uncle. His friends recalled a shy man who liked to share quiet times. A number of people spoke to me of his kindness. And this was not only people from the diocese of Ballarat. I received an email from a priest in Peru who recalled with gratitude the kindness Bishop Mulkearns showed when he visited a local parish there in the 1980s. He wrote: "I only ever met Bishop Ronald once, and that was in the 80s when he came to Lima and visited our parish. Many years back, but I never forgot his kindness to us."

Some recalled the contribution Bishop Mulkearns made to fostering social welfare services in our region, services that grew into what is now Centacare Ballarat. Others remembered how he promoted opportunities for people to study at university level. Others again spoke of his dedication to putting into practice the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, in liturgy, for example, and in encouraging the role of lay people in the Church. He was also involved in bringing the Ministry to Priests program to Australia.

As people look back on Bishop Mulkearns' era, there are grounds for bitter lament at the crimes that were committed on his watch. And yet, there are also grounds for gratitude among those who recall the good that he did.

May he rest in peace.

Paul Bird CSsR, *Bishop of Ballarat*



ACCRAF – Australian Catholic Clergy Remuneration Assistance Fund

At the NCP General Meeting the following priests were elected to the ACCRAF Committee.

- Greg Trythall, Chairman and Treasurer
- Mark Franklin, Representing the Contributing Dioceses.
- Matt Digges, Representing the Recipient Dioceses.

We thank Greg, Mark and Matt for agreeing to take on these roles in addition to their parish and diocesan work.

Special thanks to the retiring Chairman and Treasurer, John Swann for the energy and commitment he poured into ACCRAF over so many years.



New Papal Commission to study women's diaconate

Pope Francis has announced the establishment of a new Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women. The Holy Father is understood to have made the decision after “intense prayer and mature reflection” reported Megan Cornwell in *The Tablet* (2 August, 2016)

In May, while addressing 900 leaders of female religious congregations, the Pope expressed an intention to “establish an official commission that could study the question” of the diaconate of women, “especially with regard to the first ages of the Church”, Cornwell noted. Phoebe (mosaic pictured) was a deaconess in the early church.

During the question and answer session at the Plenary Assembly of Superiors General in Rome, the sisters told Francis that women had served as deacons in the early Church and asked: “Why not construct an official commission that might study the question?” “I am in agreement,” Francis replied, “I will look to do something”.

A key question for the commission to study is the role of female deacons – known as deaconesses – in early Christianity. In 2002 a Vatican commission ruled that deaconesses were not the same as deacons but left it up to the Church to decide to bring back this female ministry.

One member of the new commission, Dr Zagano, said “I am honoured that the Holy Father has included me among the scholars who will study anew the question of restoring women to the diaconate in the Catholic Churches. ... The most recent study document on the question of restoring women to the diaconate states that the decision is up to the ‘ministry

of discernment that the Lord has left his Church’. My hope is that the results of the study will be a decision that will enable to Church to speak more forcefully to the world about the dignity and place of women.”

Pope calls for a new humanity at World Youth Day

At Campus Misericordiae, outside Krakow, on July 31, 2016, Pope Francis called young people to reject the fear and shame of what people think and how society seduces them, and to embrace love and action for justice. He reminded them not to be ‘couch potatoes’, but to actively engage in creating a world shaped by compassion and inclusion. He called on the youth to take courage as seen in the story of Zacchaeus which was the gospel of the Mass.

‘After his small stature and the paralysis of shame, there was a *third* obstacle that Zacchaeus had to face, the *grumbling of the crowd*’, said the Pope according to *Vatican Radio* (31 July, 2016).

‘People will try to block you, to make you think that God is distant, rigid and insensitive, good to the good and bad to the bad. Instead, our heavenly Father “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Mt 5:45). He demands of us real courage’, he said.



‘People may laugh at you because you believe in the gentle and unassuming power of mercy. But do not be afraid. Think of the motto of these days: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt 5:7). People may judge you to be dreamers, because you believe in a new humanity, one that rejects hatred between peoples, one that refuses to see borders as barriers and can cherish its own traditions without being self-centred or small-minded. Don’t be discouraged: with a smile and open arms, you proclaim hope and you are a blessing for our one human family, which here you represent so beautifully!’ Pope Francis preached.

‘Jesus looks beyond the faults and sees the person. He does not halt before bygone evil, but sees future good. His gaze remains constant, even when it is not met; it seeks the way of unity and communion. In no

case does it halt at appearances, but looks to the heart. With this gaze of Jesus, you can help bring about another humanity, without looking for acknowledgement but seeking goodness for its own sake, content to maintain a pure heart and to fight peaceably for honesty and justice’, the Pope said.

The Cardijn Community International (CCI)



The 2015 Conference, originally to be held in December was washed out by torrential floods. We assembled at Joe Beach Mamallapuram, Kancheepuram District some 40 kms south of Chennai on 5 May 2016, Frank Marriott reports. Delegates arrived from Zambia, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Mauritius, France, Italy and India. The original Australian contingent of 13 was reduced to two delegates – Sr Judith Foster the current National Chaplain to the YCW and Kevin Vaughan from Cardijn Community Australia. I was an invited guest.

The theme *Cardijn Today: Inequality, Ecology & Diversity*. At the first session CCI launched their Publication *Bringing the good news to the poor – the Cardijn Way*. I was privileged to receive the first copy from Bishop Neethinathan, Bishop of Chengalpattu. The Bishop rather startled the assembly in his address by emotionally announcing that in his time as Bishop of the Diocese that “inequality is the order of the day. Inequality is here to stay, Things are very bad, people don’t respect justice – they just don’t care.”

YCW is alive in 90 countries and 10 movements have taken to the Cardijn methodology. The famed “see, judge, act” and consequent spirituality arises out of Cardijn’s ability to remind us all of our baptismal dignity and what we can accomplish with God.

The cause for Cardijn's Canonisation has begun in Belgium. 2017 is the 50th anniversary of his death and the 60th anniversary of the famed 1957 Rome Pilgrimage by thousands of Young Christian Workers. CCI is working on a proposal to have a 2017 Pilgrimage from Laeken, near Brussels, the home town of Cardijn, to Rome beginning on Saturday, August 19, and concluding in Rome hopefully at a Mass with Pope Francis on Sunday, August 27. It could be a wonderful reunion for former YCW'S. More information will be published as it comes to hand or contact me via email: francis.marriott@outlook.com

Pope approves statutes for Pontifical Council for Laity, Family and Life

A new dicastery is to be launched, the new Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Family and Life, on September 1 according to a report in *Global Pulse Magazine*, June 6, 2016.

The new dicastery will merge the existing Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. It will have competence in areas concerning the promotion of life and the apostolate of the lay faithful, for the pastoral care of the family and for the protection and support of human life.

Its work will be divided into three sections: for the lay faithful, for the family, and for life, each one guided by an under-secretary.

The section for the lay faithful will have the task of promoting the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world.

It will also promote studies to contribute to the doctrinal examination of themes and issues regarding the lay faithful. It will also encourage the presence of laity in advisory organs of church governance.



The section for the family will promote family pastoral ministry, protect its dignity and well-being based on the sacrament of marriage, and will promote its rights and responsibility in the Church and in civil society.

The section for life will support and coordinate activities to encourage responsible procreation and the protection of human life from conception to natural end.

It will promote and encourage groups helping women and families to welcome and protect life and prevent recourse to abortion as well as support programmes for women who have terminated a pregnancy, reported *Global Pulse Magazine*.

Theologian Critics of *Amoris Laetitia* revealed

The list of 45 academics who signed a letter criticizing Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation is dominated by North Americans and Europeans, with only one female signatory reported *National Catholic Reporter* on July 26, 2016.

The signatories to the letter addressed to Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals, and to 218 individual cardinals and patriarchs, include professors at diocesan seminaries, a member of a pontifical academy, and the head of the church's ecclesiastical structure in Afghanistan.



Prominent signatories include historian, Professor Robert de Mattei of the European University of Rome and Dominican Fr Aidan Nichols OP, formerly John Paul II lecturer in Roman Catholic Theology at Oxford University.

The only female signatory is an Australian, Dr. Anna M. Silvas, an adjunct research fellow at the University of New England, New South Wales.

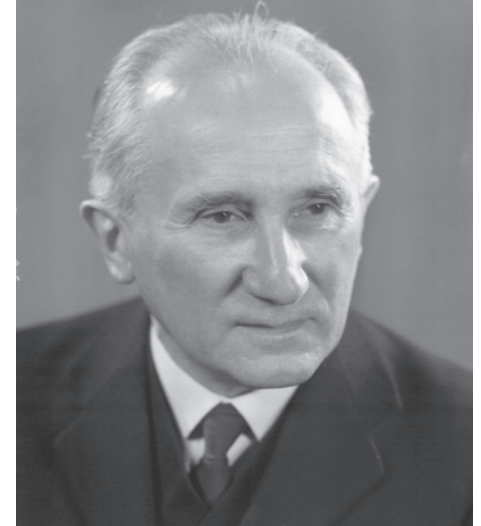
There is only one signatory from Asia and none from Latin America according to the report.

Vatican II philosopher to be beatified

The Italian-born German philosopher, Romano Guardini, is regarded as a precursor of Vatican II. The process for his beatification has begun according to a report in *Global Pulse Magazine* (20/07/2016).

He is regarded as a precursor of Vatican II and one of the most influential Catholic thinkers of the 20th century.

Following his ordination in 1910, he worked in a parish for several years and, in 1915, he completed a doctorate on the work of St Bonaventure. In 1923 he was appointed to a chair in the philosophy of religion at the University of Berlin.



He was regarded as a liturgical pioneer and, in 1945, was appointed professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tübingen. Guardini is thought to have influenced the thinking of Pope Francis. He was a peritus at Vatican II and died in 1968.

Pope Francis: Catholic Church should apologize to gay people and others it has marginalized

Pope Francis says gays, and all the other people the church has marginalized, such as the poor and the exploited, deserve an apology, reported the *Los Angeles Times* June 26, 2016.

Francis was asked Sunday en route home from Armenia if he agreed with one of his top advisors, German Cardinal Reinhard Marx, who told a conference in Dublin in the days after the deadly Orlando gay club attack that the church owes an apology to gays for having marginalized them.

Francis responded with a variation of his famous "Who am I to judge?" comment and a repetition of church teaching that gays must not be discriminated against but treated with respect.

"We must accompany them," Francis said.

"I think the church must not only apologize to a gay person it offended, but we must apologize to the poor, to women who have been exploited, to children forced into labour, apologize for having

blessed so many weapons” and for having failed to accompany families who faced divorces or experienced other problems.



Francis uttered his “Who am I to judge?” comment during his first airborne news conference in 2013, signalling a new era of acceptance and welcome for gays in the church. Francis followed up by meeting with gay and transgender faithful, and most significantly, by responding to claims that he met with anti-gay marriage campaigner Kim Davis during his U.S. visit. He said the only personal meeting he held in Washington was with his gay former student and his partner.

Despite such overtures, however, many gay Catholics are still waiting for progress after a two-year consultation of the church on family issues failed to chart concrete, new pastoral avenues for them, reported the *Los Angeles Times*.

Remarried, divorced and LGBTI couples must live chastely

“Under new guidelines for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, people living together outside of marriage, and same-sex couples are eligible for Communion only if they “refrain from sexual intimacy,” *Crux* reports 5/7/16.

Philadelphia’s Archbishop Charles Chaput OFM Cap also said they cannot hold positions of responsibility in a parish or perform liturgical functions.



Chaput said in the pastoral guidelines to implement *Amoris Laetitia* that “the unintended appearance of an endorsement of divorce and civil remarriage” must be avoided.

The same applies to LGBTIQ couples. Couples living together outside of marriage should either be encouraged to separate, if they’re incapable or unwilling to be married, or to prepare themselves for marriage while refraining from sex in the meantime.

The document also calls for compassion and understanding for those who fall short, saying that “especially in a culture that is already deeply confused about complex matters of marriage and sexuality, a person may not be fully culpable for acting against the truth.”

Jesuit Winemaker receives Order of Australia



Br John May, winemaker emeritus at the Jesuits’ Sevenhill Cellars in the Clare Valley, was admitted as a member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2016 in recognition of his significant service to winemaking, through contributions to professional associations to regional tourism and to the Catholic Church in Australia, *The Catholic Leader* reported (5/7/16).

Although he grew up a teetotaler, when Br John was appointed to Sevenhill’s winery in 1963 he developed a taste for fine wine that helped the winery produce a line of medal winners over the years.

The flagship red wine, Inigo celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of St Ignatius, was planted by Br John.

Br John’s first vintage at Sevenhill in 1963 came soon after he arrived from Melbourne as a young Jesuit Brother to work as an assistant to the then winemaker Br John Hanlon. When Br John Hanlon died suddenly in 1972, Br John May became head winemaker.

In addition to his work at Sevenhill, Br John contributed to the community in many ways, including chairing Clare Valley Tourism Association and as a member of the Clare Valley Winemakers’ Association, Clare Region Winegrape Growers’ Association, and Vine Improvement and Landcare organisations.

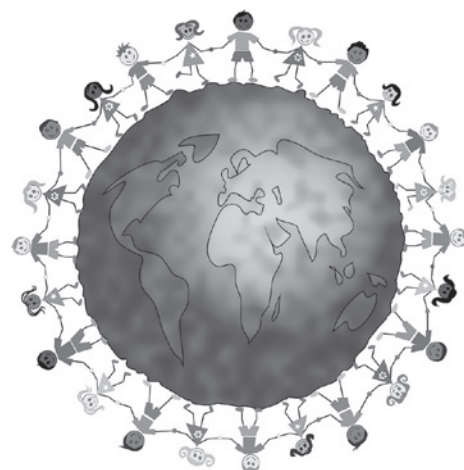
Br John retired from winemaking in early 2003, with his stellar career distinguished by the emergence of Sevenhill’s reputation for quality table wines, the growth of its cellar door and visitor recognition of Sevenhill as an important location of religious and heritage character.

“Along the way, I have received wonderful support from many people and I hope that I have been able to contribute in the same way.”

Catholic peace activists see conflict in priests serving in military

The military chaplaincy is overwhelmingly popular within the ranks of the U.S. armed forces, but some Catholic peace advocates see a theological conflict with regard to priests serving as commissioned officers according to Chaz Muth of *The Pilot* (Boston Archdiocese newspaper) on June 30, 2016.

Melkite Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy of Brockton sees a conflict of interest for a priest to serve in, and be paid by, any branch of the armed forces, which sanctions the killing of other humans in combat situations.



Father McCarthy is a co-founder of the Catholic peace organization Pax Christi USA, along with Catholic icon Dorothy Day, whose popularity diminished among the Catholic elite when she protested U.S. involvement in World War II. Day, who also co-founded the Catholic Worker

Movement, became a vehement opponent of nuclear weapons and remained so until her death in 1980.

Father McCarthy doesn't have a problem with priests providing pastoral care to soldiers, airmen, sailors, Marines or members of the Coast Guard, according to the report.

"The military chaplaincy is a major spiritual and moral problem in the church," he said. "The big untruth of Christianity: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, evangelicals ... is that one can move logically from the teaching of Jesus to participating in the activities of war; killing, maiming, murder, deceit, etc. It can't be done." Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services in Washington vigorously defended the role of the military chaplain. Having a chaplain embedded within the military gives the Catholic Church access to the people who make life and death decisions involving wartime combat, he said.

"My primary vocation, even before being ordained, has been to call the churches back to following what is there in the Gospel, Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies," Father McCarthy said. "The church exists to save souls. Nothing is more important than that" it was reported.

Pope Francis calls for renewal of cloistered nuns

In an Apostolic Constitution, *Vultum Dei Quaerere* (Seek the Face of God), the Pope says he wants cloistered nuns to reflect on 12 aspects of religious life including formation, prayer, and the impact of digital communications, reports *The Tablet* on July 22, 2016.

Calling for female contemplatives to change their constitutions is likely to be a huge undertaking given there are hundreds of thousands of contemplative nuns across the world but the Pope says he is doing so in order to take into account the "changed social and cultural situation."

The Pope calls on communities to have a stronger prayer life, lamenting that "many simply feel no need to pray" while stressing the importance of formation as not simply taking place at the beginning of a nun's contemplative life but something which is "never ending."

Francis urges communities against thinking in terms of "numbers and efficiency," warning that recruiting candidates from across the world to ensure the survival of a monastery should be "absolutely avoided", reports *The Tablet*.

Orthodox Council reiterate their commitment to dialogue

The General Council of the Orthodox Churches concluded in June with a declaration reiterating its commitment to dialogue with other Christians, *The Tablet* reported on June 27, 2016. (General session pictured)

This was the most hotly debated issue during the closed-door conference, *The Tablet* says.

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church also condemned the "morbid religiosity" of the violence committed by fundamentalists of various religions, called for peace in the Middle East, warned against the negative consequences of scientific progress and said "the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes."



"The key priority of the Council was to proclaim the unity of the Orthodox Church," the message said. "The existing unity needs to be strengthened and to bear new fruits."

The declaration also proposed further councils "to be convened every seven or ten years."

The Council was attended by 165 hierarchs instead of the 290 originally anticipated.

The Francis era has not been all sweetness and light

There are a number of issues on which Pope Francis has not been strong enough including the sexual abuse of minors and the inability or unwillingness to hold bishops to greater accountability in mishandling abuse cases involving their priests writes Robert Mickens in *Global Pulse Magazine* on May 4, 2016.

Francis has also failed to advance the role and amplify the voice of women in the Church, despite having pledged several times that he hoped to do so.

And he has been slow in reforming the Roman Curia or in appointing new personnel to the major offices of this,

the Church's central bureaucracy. And some of the few key appointments he has made, such as putting the conservative African Cardinal Robert Sarah at the head of the Congregation for Divine Worship, are nothing less than baffling.

Francis has put a greater emphasis on those who don't often, if ever, even darken the door of a church, says Mickens.

Cardinal Sarah 'ad orientem' rejected by Pope Francis

Cardinal Robert Sarah, the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, has asked priests to begin celebrating Mass ad orientem, that is, facing east rather than towards the congregation reported the *Catholic Herald* on July 5, 2016.

Speaking at the Sacra Liturgia conference in London, Sarah said: "It is very important that we return as soon as possible to a common orientation, of priests and the faithful turned together in the same direction – eastwards or at least towards the apse – to the Lord who comes".

Soon after, Cardinal Nichols of Westminster diocese wrote to his priests to advise them to ignore the call of the Vatican official.

On July 9 Cardinal Sarah was in Pope Francis' office working out with Vatican spokesman Lombardi, what became in effect a retraction.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, issued a statement on July 11 indicating the Pope Francis met with Cardinal Sarah on July 9 to indicate no liturgical directives will begin in Advent reported the *Catholic Herald*.

"Cardinal Sarah is always rightly concerned with the dignity of the celebration of Mass, that it might adequately express an attachment of respect and adoration for the eucharistic mystery," Fr Lombardi's statement said.



"Some of his phrasing has been badly interpreted, as if he had announced new, different indications from those now given in liturgical norms and the words of the

popes on celebration toward the people and the ordinary rite of the Mass,” the spokesman added.

He recalled that the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which “remains fully in force,” indicated that the altar should be built away from the wall so “that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible.”

The statement also reminded people that when Pope Francis visited the offices of the congregation for divine worship, “he expressly recalled that the ‘ordinary’ form of the celebration of Mass is that foreseen by the missal promulgated by Paul VI,” and that the extraordinary form permitted by Benedict XVI “should not take the place of that ‘ordinary’ form.”

Fr Lombardi also said it would be better “to avoid the use of the expression ‘reform

of the reform,’ referring to the liturgy, given that it’s sometimes the sources of misunderstandings.”

Irish priest numbers plummet

The number of diocesan priests in Ireland has plummeted by more than 500 in just 10 years, according to the latest official statistics, according to *Global Pulse Magazine*, May 3, 2016

The most significant fall off was between the years 2013 and 2014, when the number of priests dropped by 120 in the 12-month period, the paper says. Vatican figures show that while there were 3,141 diocesan priests in Ireland in 2004, that figure had dropped by 514 to just 2,627 in 2014, the latest year for which statistics are available.

However, since about a quarter of these

priests are thought to be retired, the real figure for diocesan priests still actively working is probably closer to 1,900.

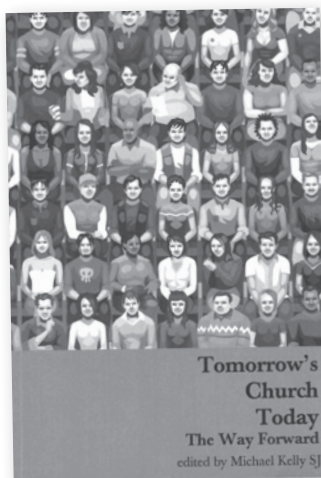
The figures are published in the latest *Annuario Statisticum*, the statistical yearbook of the Church. While death and a lack of vocations are the primary contributing factors to the fall in the number of diocesan clergy, a significant number of priests have also left the priesthood over the same period.

Between 2004 and 2014, 83 priests left the priesthood permanently, the new statistics show. This number amounts to 16% of the decline in the number of priests. The Vatican lists such departures as “defections” and this does not include priests taking a break from ministry, or those who have retired from active ministry, *Global Pulse Magazine* says. ☪

REVIEWS

Church Governance needs a radical overhaul

***Tomorrow's Church Today*, edited by Michael Kelly SJ, brings together insightful commentary on current thinking in Catholic discourse from some of the most respected national and international voices on the theology and practice of the post Vatican II Church. ATF Press, 2016, 102 pages. Reviewed by Peter Maher.**



way of implementing Vatican II in our time. It is no longer the 60's. Francis is saying Vatican II theology needs to be grounded in the hopes and griefs of 2016, not 1960.

In *Tomorrow's Church Today*, edited by Australian Michael Kelly SJ and launched at the NCP Melbourne convention on July 28, Faggioli's chapter outlines the shifts in global governance of the church that Francis is actively pursuing. The first is to collegiality and synodality. These are not the same. Collegiality has come to mean the way the pope and bishops work together to implement policy and spirit, mostly practised in the years since the council as a way of pushing the pope's agenda. But Vatican II saw collegiality working with synodality – somehow embracing and engaging with the local churches. However, Francis is asking how this principle might be embodied in the 21st century. How can it be a model for discerning the wisdom of the people of God – including non-clerics.

Another ecclesiological shift with Francis is about embodying the principles of institution and communion. These forces look different in the world today than they did in the surer days of the 60's. How will they be embodied in a church struggling for credibility and engagement?

Faggioli also explores changes in the landscape of ministry and inclusion at the margins and how these might be shaping the Catholic Church with the leadership and ecclesiology of Francis.

The rest of the book includes chapters by prominent Australians, Geraldine Doogue from the ABC, retired bishops Geoff Robinson and Bill Morris, Jesuit Anthony Campbell; and the American journalist based in Rome, Bob Mickens. It might sound like a collection of the likely suspects of those with a certain critique of the post Vatican II church, but it turns out that this book offers an extraordinarily rich and diverse analysis, critique and commentary on the 21st century Catholic Church as it is embodied in the real world.

It is delightful to read what motivates these writers; what challenges and scandalises them and what their dreams are for the church of the future. It is interesting to read about their joys and hopes, their griefs and fears of a more fragile church tossed in a more dangerous sea and overburdened by a governance broadly unchanged in almost 1700 years having been formed by Constantine in the 4th century.

It is a new era these writers argue and while never underestimating the enormity of the task, they hold this book together with one theme – they largely see the current leadership of Pope Francis and his ecclesiology as a move in the right direction and a sign of hope for the present. What happens next will be crucial for the future of the church of course. ☪

The NCP Convention in Melbourne in the last week of July had, as its main speaker, Massimo Faggioli. He spoke with great passion on the implementation of the theology of Vatican II which is moving into a second phase under the leadership of Pope Francis.

Faggioli made the point that Francis is not a bumbling grandfather fostering an inclusive agenda, or worse, seduced by the ‘left’ to support the failed Vatican II agenda. Faggioli suggests Francis is developing a serious theology of responding to Vatican II, not as a looking back, but as a thoughtful and deliberate

Making sacred texts accessible

Christopher Gleeson SJ reviews a book that brings scriptures to light in an imaginative way. *Letters to Nevie – Learning From the Scriptures*, Gerald O'Collins, St. Paul's Publishing, 2016, 184 pages.

By any measure Gerald O'Collins has been a prolific author in his life as a world-class theologian. In what one believes is his 66th published book, we see the consummate teacher writing a series of beautifully crafted letters to his teenage grandniece, Nevie. Worried when she went off to boarding school that “she might be lonely”, Gerald decided to send her a letter “every week or two” – developing biblical themes from Genesis to the Gospel of John – in the hope that she would become happily familiar with the Bible and “find in Jesus ‘the way, the truth, and the life.’” (John 14:6)

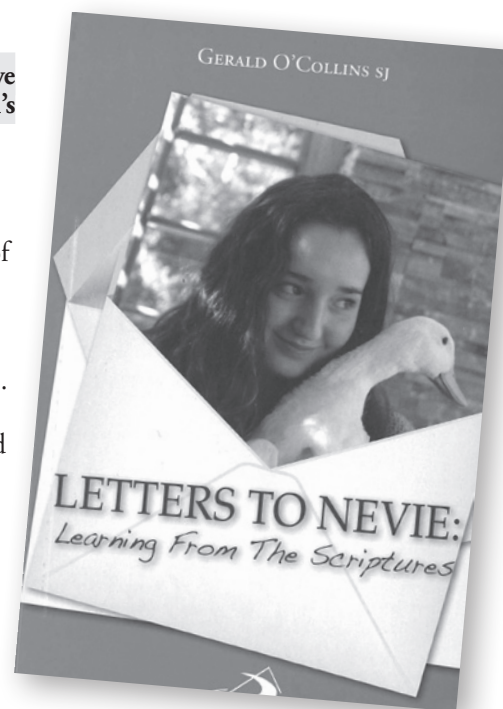
I can hear people asking themselves the question: how can a high flying grand uncle theologian expect to ease the potential loneliness of his grandniece at boarding school by writing to her about the scriptures? Well, it is clear from the book that they have a very close relationship. Nevie, Gerald writes, “has always been a very special person for me.” Both share a love of writing. In the very interesting postscripts appended to each chapter, Gerald shares some of his day-to-day experiences with Nevie, thereby connecting himself more closely to her and anchoring his scriptural reflections in the realities of everyday life. Indeed, he even talks about meeting the vigorous Brexit advocate and Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

While the author intends that the book be written for “adult readers with youthful minds”, there is a simplicity and clarity about the writing that helps him achieve this goal. It has a charming ring about it and is a joy to read. As someone relatively familiar with the scriptures, I was delighted to discover many new perspectives on material I have journeyed with over the years. Although the Old or first Testament is given less coverage in the book, there is still a wealth of helpful ideas elaborated for us: In Genesis 3 we are reminded of the importance of accountability and the old axiom that actions have consequences; Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel is a parable about the richness of difference. From an unlikely source left of centre, the author writes about the story of Balaam in Numbers to show that “everyone is an insider” for God. “Balaam reminds us that

people, whom we are inclined to dismiss as outsiders, may have some important even special, message for us.” The stories of Moses and Joshua recall for us one of the key strands of Ignatian spirituality – the need to be grateful and treasure our many blessings. “Nevie, we can't be too grateful”. Bringing together Moses and Jean Vanier, Gerald talks about the paralysis of fear and the importance of remembering God's constant company with us throughout life. “Nevie, a wise old slogan says; ‘If there seems to be no way out, let God in.’” In that beautiful chapter 54 from the prophet Isaiah, God is revealed as “the mysterious stranger and tender lover”, while the Book of Jonah is a prime example of how “God's word is very powerful and can change the lives of a whole crowd of people.”

When Gerald O'Collins transitions gently to cover the New Testament for Nevie, there are many more pearls of wisdom shared with her and us his readers. In writing about the Our Father, Gerald offers a new thought (new at least for me): “Forgiving others is always hard. Have you ever noticed, Nevie, that the word ‘forgive’ is a longer, stronger form of the word ‘give’? Giving can be easy... but for-giving is always hard.” As he works his way through the four Gospels, the author continues to provide helpful images of Jesus: his vulnerability in Matthew 8; his role in a different musical key within the Trinity in chapter 11; his identity in chapter 16 and, like Peter, “we find our deepest and lasting identity in our relationship of love with Jesus” – a relationship we re-affirm each time we participate in celebrating the Eucharist. “Yes, Nevie, we believe *in* Jesus; he is the object of our faith. But we also believe *like* Jesus.” Concerning that difficult parable about the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew, chapter 20), Gerald talks about the ‘large-mindedness’ of God, the God of constant surprises.

The Gospel of Mark holds further beautiful pictures of Jesus for us. Gerald's treatment of the ‘touch of Jesus’ reminded me of Ron Rolheiser's description of the Eucharist as ‘the touch of God’ and Joan Chittister's words that “we become those who have



touched us.” In posing the often-asked question “Is Christianity for losers”, the author responds: “Christianity is not for losers, but for those who are not afraid to be losers.”

In treating Luke's Gospel, Gerald remarks about the great missionary chapter 4 that the people of Nazareth “can't share the largeness of mind that Jesus shows.” Luke continues to “set the bar very high” with Jesus' challenge in chapter 6: “Be merciful as your Father is merciful.” Well known gospel characters Martha and Mary, Zacchaeus and the Prodigal Son are all pictured in a fresh light, and Gerald's concluding remarks about what the Eucharist *does for us* are very helpful for teachers and students alike.

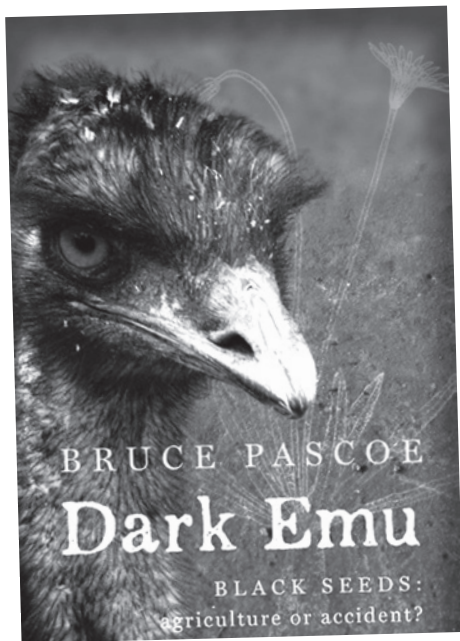
Finally, the Gospel of John enables us to hear the voice of Jesus in a different tone. With Jesus, “losing means finding”, but he calls us all ‘friends’. “His words make us his friends. Each of us can take great comfort from the thought, Jesus has called me his friend.” That beautiful chapter 21 in John is given special treatment with the focus on love as the question Jesus asks of Peter and all of us. Those who love see with their hearts.

I believe preachers, teachers, and students alike will find this little book very helpful in its refreshing approach to the scriptures. I recommend it highly as a delight to read.



Aboriginal peoples more than hunter-gatherers

Dark Emu: Black seeds, Bruce Pascoe, Magabala Books, 2015, 176 pages. Written by a Bunurong man, the pages reveal the truth about the sophisticated farming methods of Australia's first nations in deep contrast to the commonly held view. Reviewed by Joe Castley.



This remarkable book deserved the honour awarded to it when it won the 2016 NSW Premier's Literary Award. Basing its argument on impeccable sources, the writings of distinguished early Australian explorers, it gives a picture of

the Aboriginal culture these men encountered that is very different from the one that most of us have come to accept – that of the primitive hunter gatherer.

Like Bill Gammage's 2012 book, *The Greatest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia*, it is a book that revolutionises our awareness of their cultures.

Bruce Pascoe is a Bunurong man born in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond. He is a member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative of southern Victoria and has been the director of the Australian Studies Project for the Commonwealth Schools Commission. He has had a varied career as a teacher, farmer, fisherman, barman, fencing contractor, lecturer, Aboriginal language researcher, archaeological site worker and editor. He is the author of many books, including *Fog a Dox*, which won the Prime Ministers Literary Award for Young Australian Fiction in 2013.

The bibliography for *Dark Emu* is most impressive.

The most striking things that the explorers witness to are systems of food production and land management that it has particularly suited a dispossessing

nation, with its doctrine of *terra nullius*, to suppress the knowledge of. These explorers saw domesticated plants, sowing, harvesting, irrigation and, perhaps most telling, the grinding of seeds into flour and the preservation of both seed and flour in secure storage. They saw sophisticated systems of fish farming and harvesting.

Pascoe reminds his reader of the respect Aboriginal culture deserves by pointing again to the fact that Aboriginal rock art is the oldest in the world. He goes so far as to claim that Aboriginal people were the first people in the world to make bread, 15,000 years in advance of the Egyptians. He does not, actually show how long ago the Aborigines made bread, but he does show that they were making it at the time the explorers encountered them.

As for hunter-gatherers, Pascoe accepts that Aboriginal populations moved about a good deal, but he claims that the evidence shows a good deal more sedentary living than has been recognised.

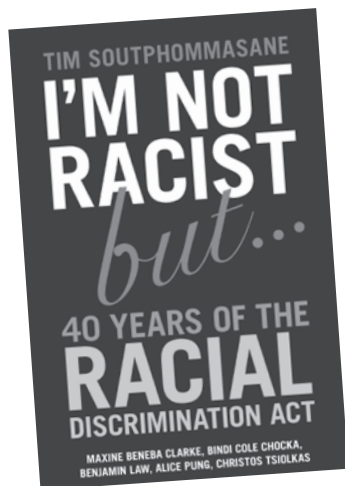
And beyond the fact that Aboriginal peoples had farmed and managed the land they loved, the testimony of the explorers also points to a sophisticated social organisation and to a democracy that worked to maintain peace across the continent.

When I was teaching at St Ignatius College, Riverview I spoke to school



Tracing Australia's Racial Discrimination Act

Published to coincide with the Act's 40th anniversary, this book gives an account of the history of racism, the limits of free speech, the dimensions of bigotry and the role of legislation in our society's response to discrimination. *I'm not racist but ... 40 years of the Racial Discrimination Act*, NewSouth Publishing, 2015, 256 pages by Tim Soutphommasane with contributions by Maxine Beneba Clarke, Bindi Cole Chocka, Benjamin Law, Alice Pung and Christos Tsiolkas. Reviewed by Bill Byrne.



This book, written by Tim Soutphommasane, Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, was released to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act. It gives a good summary of the workings of the Act, includes a copy of the Act and its educational and conciliation aspects. Tim claims that the effectiveness of these provisions has contributed to the small number of legal actions under the Act.

Tim has written Chapters on race and racism in Australia and traces the Act's

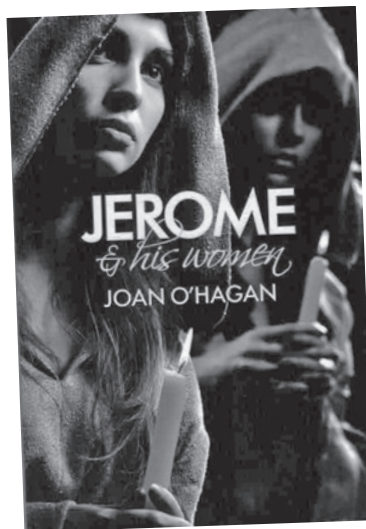
difficult birth from Lionel Murphy's first attempts to pilot it through a recalcitrant Senate to Kep Enderby's eventual success (despite some amendments) in 1975.

I couldn't help noticing that John Howard opposed it all through with claims that there is no racism in Australia and that there was no need for it. This was at the time that Charlie Perkins was leading the freedom ride which showed the depth of discrimination in country NSW.

The Bill was seen by Gough Whitlam as part of the international struggle for human rights. Al Grasby, a former minister for Immigration, was appointed as first Race Discrimination Commissioner. Grasby was the first person to use the word Multicultural when talking about Australia's diverse population.

A woman's view of St Jerome

In an historical novel published shortly after her death, an Australian novelist and biographer has grappled with the task of understanding St Jerome and explaining his relationships with a group of extraordinary noblewomen in late fourth century Rome. *Jerome and his Women*, by Joan O'Hagan; Black Quill Press, 2015. Reviewed by John Scanlon.



In the course of his life of over seventy years, Jerome lived in Rome for two relatively brief periods; as a student in his late teens, and then, in his later thirties, as a secretary to the Pope from mid-382 to early 385. His first stay gave him experiences that he would have shared with many sons of wealthy parents from the provinces (Dalmatia, in modern day Croatia, in his case) and from the Roman heartland. Certainly he got to know a number of men who were prominent in Roman society when he returned nearly twenty years later. Joan O'Hagan suggests that like many young men from that stratum of society, he could have kept a concubine. That would provide one possible cause for the disgust for sexual relations that he exhibited in later life.

Jerome's second stay in Rome is the period covered by O'Hagan's main narrative. The book begins with Jerome, having arrived in Rome after years in Antioch and Constantinople and a penitential five years as a monastic in the Syrian Desert, being engaged as secretary by Pope Damasus. The Pope saw in Jerome a person uniquely qualified by his knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew to undertake the task of producing an authoritative Latin translation of the 73 books that Damasus had decreed to make up the canonical Bible. The Vulgate Bible that Jerome finally produced would have been enough to earn him an imperishable place in the history of the Church if he had never written anything else.

In fact he wrote much else, and in particular many polemics. O'Hagan

joins with many a church historian in depicting Jerome as an arrogant, intolerant and highly competitive character in his dealings with leading clerics and laymen in papal and imperial court circles. However Jerome's behaviour towards a small circle of Roman noblewomen is presented as completely different from his attitudes to the men he dealt with. O'Hagan's depictions of these women are heart-warming and credible; the aged widow Marcella, the younger widow Paula and her eldest daughter Blesilla are the most vivid characters in the book. Some of the reasons for Jerome's interest in them are obvious; they were deeply religious, generous with their riches, highly intelligent and well educated. Their experiences of marriage were not happy and combined with their religious fervour to produce a leaning to an ascetic lifestyle and a belief in the moral superiority of virginity.

However there was something more. For Jerome, any other learned and intelligent man in either clerical or lay society was a potential rival for preferment or public reputation, and therefore a potential enemy. But any woman, however learned, was incapable of being a competitor to Jerome in those societies, purely and simply because she was a woman. Hence they did not trigger his defensive-aggressive reactions. Instead they offered him warm respect and an apparent acknowledgment of his superiority, and when his enemies finally ejected him from Rome following the death of Damasus, they provided material support. Finally Paula and her daughter Eustochium went with Jerome to the Holy Land, where Paula used her money to build male and female monasteries in Bethlehem in which the three of them spent the rest of their lives.

The novel is not faultless, and would have been more convincing without the fictional character that Joan O'Hagan introduced into the story as Jerome's scribe. However she has performed a valuable service in presenting an aspect of Jerome that a woman would be more likely to realise, and that makes this flawed genius more understandable as a human being. And as well, she has given us the wonderful story of St Paula of Rome, patron saint of widows. That story alone is enough to recommend this book. ☺

assemblies about a 1994 document that the NSW Department of Community Services had contracted the then Gungahlin Jindibah centre at Southern Cross University to produce: *Learning from the Past*. It was a chilling account of the cruelties inflicted on Aboriginal families and communities as 'welfare' officers systematically took their children from them. It shocked the boys deeply to learn of this. I pointed out to them that they were the first generation of non-Aboriginal Australians to know the truth.

I wish I could also have given them Pascoe's account of the achievements and the dignity of the culture that the explorers found, and to have made them aware of the respect that these peoples deserve and have always deserved.

Pascoe frees us from one misconception – that the Aboriginal peoples were just hunter-gatherers. We need to tackle the more serious misconception – that the chaotic lives of fringe dwellers is the true measure of what Aboriginal people are. The cruel way we have practised colonisation has damaged this fine people. We must not blame the victim.

No one to whom I have recommended this book has failed to be deeply affected by it. ☺

Tim's book traces the many attempts to water down aspects of the Racial Discrimination Act including the recent "freedom of speech" attacks.

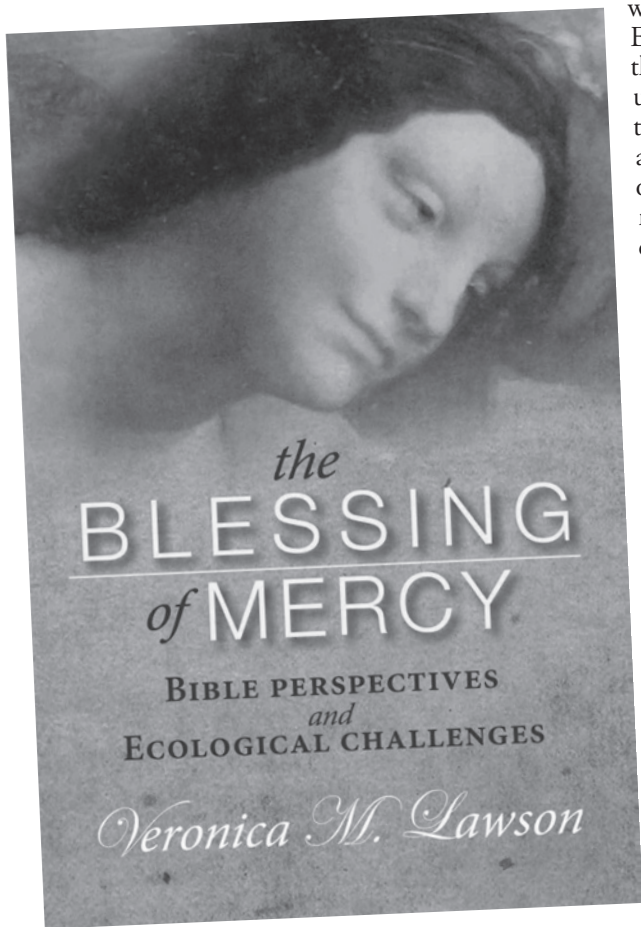
The book has a good time line of the progress from the White Australia policy to today's more liberal attitude to people from other countries and races, although Tim never says the battle against racism is over.

Interspersed through the text are extracts from statements from other writers from various backgrounds and countries giving their experience of racism in Australia.

There is an intriguing section on "putting yourself in another person's shoes" and one on bigotry and its limits. All in all a very useful book. ☺

The Blessing of Mercy

Veronica Lawson, *The Blessing of Mercy: Biblical Perspectives and Ecological Challenges*, Morning Star Publications, 2015, pp 86. This book marries the Year of Mercy with the sustainability of the planet. Reviewed by Kevin Burke.



writes that “the pain of the Earth informs a contemporary theology of mercy and impels us to action, since mercy in the biblical tradition is always action-oriented. The distress of our planet invites us to live mercy and to view Earth’s diverse elements as potential agents of the blessing of mercy.”

She too, was inspired by Francis’ brilliant encyclical “Laudato Si” which identifies Earth as “among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (pg 2). She concludes that “Our Planetary home, the home of all Earth beings, is crying out for the healing that comes from compassion and mercy”.

In her first chapter, “The Blessing of Mercy in the Hebrew Scriptures”, she clearly nominates five ways that it expresses mercy; three are liberation/compassion, pity and graciousness, but she focuses on steadfast love/ loving kindness (“hesed”) and womb compassion

(“rehem”). Numerically, “hesed” leads the way, being mentioned in thirty four of the thirty nine books, especially the Psalms and prophetic literature. Psalm 106 with its repetitive refrain – “God’s steadfast love endures forever” – is magnificent. Suggesting forgiveness and faithfulness, womb compassion is God’s mercy – filled way of being in the Earth community and is at the heart of all loving human relationships. Some passages refer to several aspects of mercy e.g. Exodus 34/6, where “God is praised as merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”.

Moving into the Christian Scriptures, Veronica takes up four Greek words, generally meaning pity, compassion, sympathy and grace. The second of these “splanchna”, compassion strikes me as the most powerful; it’s a deeply felt response in the depths of one’s being as Jesus experienced in healing the man with leprosy in Mark 1/40-42 and it’s what moved the Good Samaritan to be a good neighbour in Luke 10/33. Veronica

explores this parable with great insight, suggesting that “the present ecological crisis calls us to new ways of being neighbour” and that “we need to think cosmically as well as globally and to act globally as well as locally”. Veronica describes Luke’s gospel as “a wellspring of mercy”.

In her song of praise in Luke 1/46-55, Mary announces that God’s mercy is for all those who respect God. Veronica encourages us to compose our own Magnificat prayer as did Sr. Rhonda Bast: “My innermost being sings with joy when I see the wonders of creation – the vastness of the ocean, its moods and power, the earth and all the creatures that live and give praise to the loving God who holds all in gracious care. When I see the stars I cannot count and space I cannot comprehend, or walk barefoot upon the earth and feel the ancient mystery of its forming, I weep with my God for the pain that is ever before me, the loneliness and destruction humankind inflicts in careless ignorance or uncaring seeking of power and domination. I believe and hope in the enduring love of God who will not abandon what God has made and found good.” Brilliant, isn’t it, I couldn’t keep away from it.

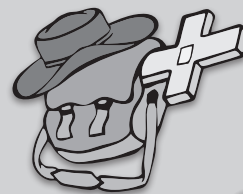
In her afterword Veronica lands a grand finale, quoting from Pope Francis’ Easter 2013 “Urbi & Orbi Message”: “Let us be renewed by God’s mercy...and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish”; another inspiring reflection.

I hope I’ve given you such a taste that you’ll want to enjoy the nourishment of Veronica’s fascinating book. ☺

The way I see it, Pope Francis’ favourite word is mercy; and not just because he’s declared 2016 as the Year of Mercy. We know that English words and concepts don’t come easily to him and when people query as to why Francis is so keen on the idea of mercy I suggest to them that the word comparison may reflect more accurately what he’s on about.

I’ve read, re-read, reflected upon and prayed over an inspiring and enlightening book by Australian Mercy Sister Veronica Lawson, *The Blessing of Mercy: Biblical Perspectives and Ecological Challenges*. In just over seventy pages she takes us on an exciting adventure as she explores the blessing of mercy in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. It’s full of so many gems that all I can do is to give you a taste in the hope that you read it and prayerfully reflect upon it.

In her introduction Veronica proudly recalls the tradition of Sisters of Mercy and their founder Catherine McAuley. Veronica



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The annual subscription fee (\$25.00 inc GST) will help us maintain this site and continue to provide a platform for thought provoking articles, not only for Australian clergy, but for the wider Church.

Uncoupling colonial truths & colonial myths

Finding Eliza. Power and Colonial Storytelling. Larissa Behrendt, 2016. The University of Queensland Press, 228 pages. Exploring works as diverse as Robinson Crusoe and Coonardoo, Behrendt looks at the stereotypes embedded in these accounts, including the assumption of cannibalism and the myth of the noble savage and in Australia, terra nullius. Reviewed by Anne Byrne.

Larissa Behrendt is an Aboriginal barrister and academic, who completed her Doctorate at Harvard University. She is Professor of Indigenous Research and Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has written several books of fiction but also a number of non-fiction publications particularly in the area of Indigenous Land Rights.

Her book, 'Finding Eliza' has been described as a 'Vital Indigenous Perspective on Colonial Storytelling'.

Larissa examines the myths and exaggeration surrounding the story of Eliza Fraser, a passenger and the wife of the captain of the Stirling Castle, which was wrecked off the East Coast of Australia in 1836. Eventually Eliza, her husband and the surviving crew members landed on an island, home of the Butchulla people, which was later named after her – Fraser Island.

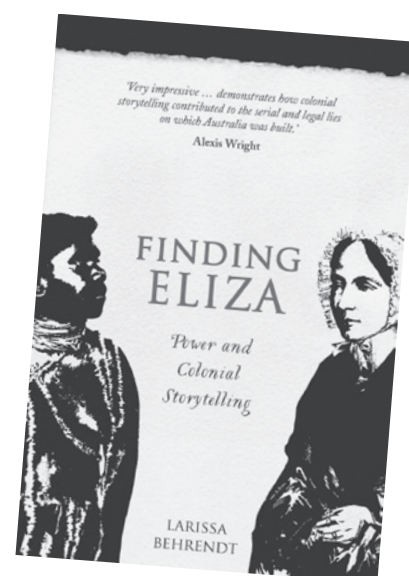
Members of the crew eventually alerted people on the mainland and, after about

seven weeks living with and being cared for by the Butchulla, Eliza and crew members were rescued. Her husband, who was in very poor health, had died on the island.

Eliza returned to England, where, to support herself and children, she told of her adventure in appeals for money. Eliza and her story became increasingly well-known – a 19th Century 'Celebrity Speaker', but at the same time her description of her experience became increasingly inaccurate and exaggerated.

Behrendt's research shows how the myths in Eliza's story reflect so many of the contemporary accounts of the white colonisers supporting the concept of Terra Nullius, the biggest myth of all. Alongside this Aboriginal people were portrayed as savage nomads, probably cannibals, with no system of laws or social organisation, who needed to be civilised by the white invaders.

The research behind the book discovers a number of colonial settler accounts



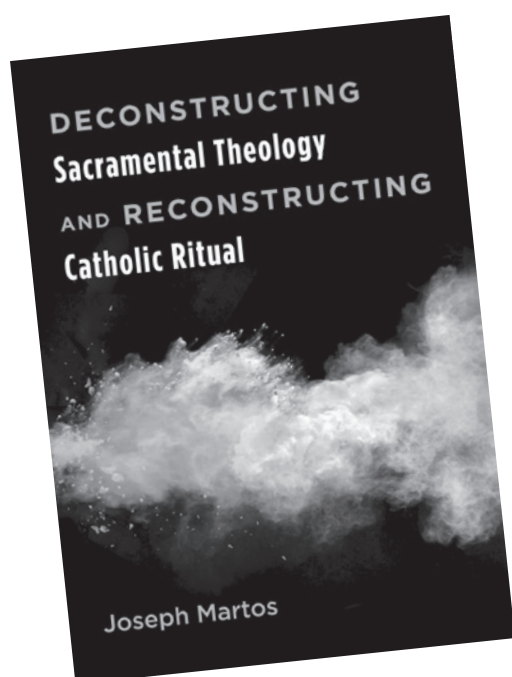
which tell a different story, but also a number of more recent writers, including Patrick White, who were taken in by Eliza's tale of her 'mistreatment' by the Butchulla.

'Finding Eliza' is an important addition to a growing body of research and literature which, to quote Alexis Wright, 'Demonstrates how colonial storytelling contributed to the serial and legal lies on which Australia was built.'

I found it an interesting and informative read. ☺

Martos deconstructs sacramental theology

Deconstructing Sacramental Theology and Reconstructing Catholic Ritual, Martos, J., Resource Publications 2015, 326 pages. Reviewed by Eric Hodgens.



Liturgy and sacraments are at the heart of Catholic life and central to the ministry of the priest. Yet they are the source of trouble and anxiety because of the regulations that surround their celebration. Many regulations defy common sense and are more honoured in the breach than the observance.

The last fifty years have seen endless fights over the Mass, marriage, confession, baptism and confirmation. And the priest forever idea looks a little tattered since so many have left after ordination.

The source of all this is a sacramental theology which seems non-negotiable even in the face of pastoral necessity and changing circumstances.

Twenty five years ago Joseph Martos wrote "Doors to the Sacred" showing that the Seven Sacraments had a history of development – always in response to the contemporary culture. Jesus had not

thought them all up at the Last Supper. A little history is very liberating.

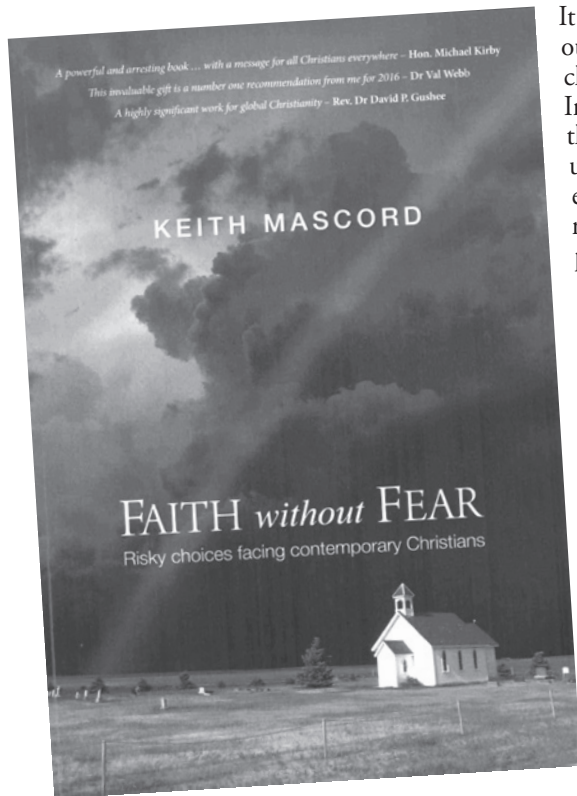
Martos now offers us *Deconstructing Sacramental Theology and Reconstructing Catholic Ritual*. The theology itself has a history. Sacraments start off as ritual celebrations, practices develop to meet changing circumstances, the theology rationalises the practice and – it becomes law. The next adaptation to changing circumstances meets obstruction because of the law. Catch 22!

This theology development is well researched – but tedious. Someone told him so after reading a draft. So, he added a final section called "A Summary of the Argument" This section is brilliant. Read it first and then read the rest for reassurance or forget it.

Martos's insights will leave you liberated and relieved if you are an empathetic pastor but disturbed if you are a fundamentalist. ☺

Doubt may serve faith better than certainty

Faith without Fear, Risky choices facing contemporary Christians, Mascord, K. 2016
Morning Star Publishing. 260 pages. Reviewed by Peter Maher.



It is not that uncommon to see in ourselves or others this kind of radical change in perspective and practice. In some ways Mascord's book is about this kind of radical transformation in understanding and perspective he experiences in his life. Mascord is a retired Anglican priest who taught philosophy and pastoral theology at Moore College, Sydney. The book reads like a biography of a man transitioning from Sydney Anglican fundamentalism to a modern historical and contextual biblical criticism.

But it is much more than a personal story. Mascord is an academic. In fact the lengthy opening chapters discussing biblical literalism, inerrancy and pseudepigraphy (questioning the authorship of the text) is a little dry precisely because it is a very good historical and broad analysis of the history of these movements. However the book hots up significantly when Mascord begins to look at the

implications of literalism in the church today and explores alternatives.

Mascord begins by looking at the causalities of fundamentalism. Mascord argues that when biblical literalism trumps gospel love many are hurt. He shows how the marginalised become victims to this ideology especially women and LGBTIQ people. He also notes that church leaders, church organisations and parishioners are also diminished and/or silenced by a slavish unreflective use of scripture. Worse still, scripture treated this way, becomes a tool of oppression to those who don't match the dominant norm or who are treated as traitors for their unorthodox views.

Then the book turns to the question of constructing a more honest approach to scripture where truth and beauty are in the service of overcoming discrimination and exclusion. To be honest means to be engaged in the real lives of people where God resides in an incarnational religion like Christianity. The text is read in the social/cultural/historical context. Mascord spends much time exploring how the biblical texts that exclude women from ministry and serve to discriminate against LGBTIQ people may have alternative interpretations if read with an open mind

and an eye on the bigger purpose of scripture which is to promote love and hope.

This process is about change. But to change one has to accept that what was previously held as true is now no longer held as true. This raises the sticky question of not only can such 'truths' change but how can they change. Mascord deals bravely with both these. While risking the critique of relativism and subjectivism, he does mount a good argument for both.

He recalls a story of an academic who had consistently argued the hard line until his son revealed he was gay. This was a conversion moment for this academic. Mascord reminds us that the revelation of God comes in many ways and then interpretation of scripture without the stories of people's real lives may leave us unloving. Worse still it may deny people hope, the very reason for scripture and religion. And if this costs us something, we should not be surprised. Jesus never resiled from love and beauty in order to maintain position, power or status. Indeed he resolutely chose the opposite path to the humiliation of the cross.

This book is not without flaws. Mascord sometimes seems to overreach his point. But it certainly gives us food for thought. Faith is not about holding onto certainty irrespective of who it hurts, as Chittister would say. Faith is fearlessly embracing the mystery where we stand in a historical reality in which we Christians believe God has a very keen and current interest. Mascord's book offers a good space to think about this. ☞

Tom Roberts, editor of the National Catholic Reporter, recently published a biography of Joan Chittister, Benedictine Sister of Erie, Pennsylvania, called *Her Journey from Certainty to Faith*. In it he recalls a story of a traumatised youth brought up by her mother who became a nun to escape the trauma of an abusive father. Chittister was a courageous young woman but did not begin as the outspoken feminine voice of contemporary spirituality we now know her to be.

Chittister, deeply immersed in Benedictine tradition found, through her life experiences in this rather strict religious Order, a voice for the marginalised and became more and more transformed, not be the 'outside world' so much as the deepest tradition of her Benedictine roots. The story is about a person who begins with Catholic certainty and develops into a profound and broad spirituality that 'crosses boundaries' as Roberts says. Chittister changes, but not lightly, and crosses boundaries because the gospel demands it. Faith is being open to the new and unexpected. Faith is being open to the existential reality and being able to admit answers are sometimes not available, or indeed helpful.

The Swag Summer Edition

Closing date for letters and articles Monday 31 October 2016.

Please email submissions for consideration to: editor@theswag.org.au

Articles – 700 words

Major Features – 1,400 words.

Conscious of the Church at the movies

Peter Malone MSC looks at two movies, *Sing Street* and *The Embrace of the Serpent* and asks how they reflect the scandals that the Catholic Church is experiencing right now.

Being a Catholic reviewer means being very conscious about the presence of the Catholic Church in a film, how it is being presented, for or against. Being a Catholic in the audience these days means being very conscious about the presence of the Catholic Church in the film, self-conscious about one's reaction to the presentation and one's own stances about the Church, clergy, crises...

A bit of synchronicity. Going to see the preview of *Sing Street*, an Irish film about an adolescent band in Dublin in 1985, meant a sudden and unexpected reaction to a minor character, an Irish Christian Brother. It was soon very clear that the writer-director, John Carney, remembered many aspects of his schooling in those days that he did not like, as well as a very dim view of the Brother Principal who becomes a target of his dislike to some humiliating disciplinary situations. And the boy wreaking some revenge by photocopying masks for everyone to wear at the school dance as he sang is insulting and derogatory composition.

The next day was a seminar led by Ronald Rolheiser OMI on *how to be Jesus' disciples in an age of scandal and shame*. It was a most illuminating seminar, plenty of ideas, plenty of exciting scriptural references, plenty of challenge. And one of the big features of his talks was his emphasis on sexual abuse in the church being "our" problem, not a problem of the bishops, of the authorities... We had to identify fully with this being our situation and find positive and creative ways of responding, with empathy, with compassion, with justice.

Non-Christian friends who watched the preview of *Sing Street* enjoyed it thoroughly, the kids, their music, the band, their making music videos, a very positive experience. They barely noticed the Brother or they took it for granted that he would be severe and sadistic. One point that will Ronald Rolheiser was making was that as Catholics, severely wounded in our Achilles' heel of sexuality should not evade or avoid these issues. Much as we might feel uncomfortable about such presentations on screen, we have to accept the realities. He used the North American idiom "eating it" or, as we would have used the idiom, this is a reality we have to swallow.

Over the last 20 years, looking at so many dramas on sexual abuse in the church, it seems that these films are something of a necessary and provocative "examination of conscience" about us in this church.

And, as if this synchronicity was not enough, the next film to see was a Colombian film, *The Embrace of the Serpent*. It intercut two ethnographical voyages, one of a German in 1909 along the Amazon, another by a visitor from America 30 years later, the same guide, a native shaman, working with both men.

It was clear that this was a critique of European colonialism, of oppression of tribes, of exploitation by enslavement by the robber barons, criticism that we can give assent to. Then, suddenly, the travellers arrive at a Catholic mission, a friar in charge who has a group of boys, robed, secluded, forbidden to talk their own languages because they were pagan, even whipping a boy for discipline. Here we are again, the Church's severe past, opposed to local cultures, communicating the anger of God rather than mercy. And, as if this was not enough, 30 years later the travellers arrive at the same mission, no missionaries, just the boys growing up in the settlement, tonsured and robed, turned into a cult, one a self-proclaimed Messiah, quoting Latin gibberish, using Eucharistic symbols in a bizarre way to assert his authority, Catholicism gone mad.

For those who go to see *Sing Street*, it is a musical entertainment, a bit of Irish nostalgia with bitterness – with the sad Catholic subplot. For those who go to see *The Embrace of the Serpent*, an extraordinary cinematic experience of symbolism, of the challenge to rationalism, of a journey into meaning – with the disturbing Catholic subplot.

And the moral of this story: not only as Catholics do we swallow this, we have to be challenged, reflect, and find ways of making amends as well as contributing to a healthy future for the church and society.




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Returned to the Father

VINCENT BATCHELOR SSC

24/09/1920 – 28/05/2016

✠ Vincent Batchelor, of the Society of St Columban, died at the Box Hill Hospital, aged 95 years. Vincent was originally from Cohuna, one of five boys and four girls. Three of the boys were ordained priests. John joined the Jesuits, William, the Diocese of Sandhurst, and Vin, the Columbans. Two of Vin's sisters, Jessie and Mary, became OLSH Sisters and worked in places like the Philippines, the Sudan and Darwin. After ordination in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, in 1944, Vin returned to Australia and worked in parishes in Melbourne and also in Christchurch, New Zealand. He was chaplain to Asian Students in Sydney for some years and was on the formation staff for the Columbans. Finally in 1967 he received an appointment to Fiji where he happily worked in various parishes and positions for 40 years. A very committed priest and Columban missionary.

May Vin rest in peace.

BERNARD MICHAEL (MICK) FITZPATRICK

04/10/1932 – 28/06/2016



A respectful silence fell over the Clergy Conference as the assembly received the news of the death of Bernard Michael 'Mick' Fitzpatrick PE, who died yesterday, 28 June 2016, at St John of God Hospital, Geelong, surrounded by the prayers of the Church entrusting him to the God he served with such fidelity and devotion. Mick was aged 83 years and served as a priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne for 57 years.

Mick, one of nine children, was hewn from the rocks of Maldon and formed in the Catholic faith of the Fitzpatrick family. Of the eight children that reached adulthood, two became diocesan priests, two Sisters of Mercy and one a Marist Brother. Mick was educated at the local state school and then at Assumption College, Kilmore.

Ordained a priest at St Mary's Church, Castlemaine on 27 July 1958, Mick served as Chaplain to the Orphanages in Geelong and Assistant Priest of Geelong and Camberwell parishes before being appointed Director of Vocations. He held various Archdiocesan appointments and was the inaugural Director of the Ministry to Priests program. He was appointed Parish Priest of Belmont and spent time as Administrator at Macleod Parish before moving back to Geelong as Parish Priest of Geelong West and then Associate Pastor of the Pastoral Cluster which includes the Parish of Geelong West. Mick was appointed Pastor Emeritus in 2015.

He was a thoroughly Christian man whose love of Jesus was evident in his preaching, pastoral care and accompaniment of others in search of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Pope John Paul in an address to priests said, "We need heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who have shared in the full joys and sorrows of our day but who at the same time are contemplatives in love with God." In Mick we had such a herald.

Mick loved the Scriptures, the Prayer of the Church and the Eucharist. When he presided over the Eucharist he did so with warmth and wit but always with the challenge to live the Gospel imperative in a way that linked faith and life together.

Among the presbyterate Mick will be remembered for his accompaniment of men discerning their vocation and his support of his brother priests who found in him a fellow pilgrim of wise counsel and a generous friend. While Mick never formally 'retired', he will always be remembered with love and gratitude across the parishes of the Archdiocese and, in particular, the Pastoral Cluster.

Vale Mick- a man who loved God, people and a good joke. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

PAUL KIERCE MSSP

20/07/2016

✠ Paul Kierce MSSP, who was in his 42nd year of profession and 38th year of his missionary priesthood died peacefully at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Parkville.

Paul was born in Melbourne and worked in immigration and customs before tasting religious life with the Cistercians at Tarrawarra. After meeting members of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul during a visit to Malta in 1970, he entered formation in there in 1972. Paul made his first profession in 1974 and perpetual vows in 1977. He studied both in Malta and Rome and was ordained in Malta on the 9th July 1978 before returning to Rome to finish his studies.

Paul's first assignment was as Master of Novices in Gozo, Malta, 1980-1981, after which he returned to Australia, ministering in St Bernadette's Parish before taking on the care of the Parish of Victoria Park in Perth from 1983 to 1985. In 1986 he joined the MSSP mission in Pakistan where he taught Moral Theology and Church History at the Seminary in Karachi. At the Bishop's request he also ministered in Murree.

Paul returned to Australia in 1989 and from the Parkville community ministered in the parish of Brunswick West for 24 years. He was also involved with Hospital Chaplaincy most recently with the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Despite the diagnosis of bowel cancer, Paul ministered the best he could including the Christian brothers, Parkville and Rosary Home, Keilor Downs until a week before his death.

During the past two and half years journeying with cancer, Paul was a witness of humility and trust in the Lord. He will be fondly remembered as a quiet gentleman by all who knew him and whose lives were touched by him.

May he rest in Peace.

ROSS ANTHONY MCKENNEY

16/05/2016

✠ Following his ordination to the priesthood on 24 August 1974, Ross served a summer appointment at Castlemaine (1975), Assistant Priest at St Bede's, North Balwyn (1975-1978) and Murrumbidgee (1978). In 1978 he undertook a Master of Church Administration at Catholic University of America. Upon his return he was appointed to the Tribunal, residing as priest in residence at Preston (1979-1987). In 1987 he briefly served as Administrator of St Patrick's, Mentone, later being appointed Assistant Priest to Mt Waverley. In 1989 he was appointed Parish Priest of Oakleigh East, Templestowe (1998), Burwood (2002) and Elsternwick in 2006 until his retirement due to illness in 2015. Ross retired to Justin Villa and then transferred to Villa Maria Catholic Homes in Bundoora.

Throughout his priesthood, Ross was able to bring his many gifts to the service of the Church. His knowledge in civil law and canon law allowed him to use both disciplines in addressing the pastoral concerns of individuals and the application of judicial process. As a priest appointed to special duties, he was able to dedicate himself to the many tasks required of him, but he appreciated the deep connection with parishioners which he formed whether as a priest in residence or on appointment.

Sadly, in recent years and in particular the last few months, Ross endured a period of suffering. This was not easy for him. His loss of physical independence did not mean his intellectual capacity was diminished and so he slowly abandoned his trust into the hands of God. A few days before his death he said, "To have been a priest has been the greatest gift...I have nothing to fear."

We give thanks for the priestly service, dedication and fidelity of Fr Ross McKenney, for 41 years of faithful service as a priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Now that his suffering is over, we pray that he may rest in peace and rise in glory.

May he rest in peace.

JAMES (JIM) NESTOR

15/10/26 – 22/02/16

✠ Mgr James Nestor, who was born in County Galway, Ireland, died peacefully in Perth just shy of his 90th birthday.

✠ Excelling academically from an early age, he gained entry to the national seminary at Maynooth, before a T.B diagnosis changed the course of his life. He had to leave the seminary, but after convalescing for several years he was able to resume his studies towards Ordination at All Hallows, hoping to be assigned to a warmer clime. Originally sponsored for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, his visa application to the U.S was denied and instead he was sent to the Archdiocese of Perth.

Before very long Archbishop Prendiville asked Jim to do a teacher training course at the University of W.A. From there on he was to make his mark in the field of Catholic education, first as Archdiocesan Director, then later on steering a course through the "State aid" crisis to establish the Catholic Education Commission of W.A.

Jim was awarded an M.B.E in 1975 and the pontifical medal 'Pro Ecclesia Pontifice' in 2009. Though a man of keen intellect (a great devotee of Karl Rahner) and quiet diplomacy, he was known for his prayerful and humble lifestyle. For many decades he enjoyed the monthly fraternity of "Jesus Caritas". And he became a great Australian, with a love for the bush and an irrational devotion to 'Aussie Rules' and the West Coast Eagles.

Jim, may you rest in peace and in that great 'mystery' that you so pondered in this life.

KEITH SHEPHERD SM

24/12/1923 – 02/07/2016



Keith was born in Bowral to Leo and Alice (nee Dwyer). He was educated at St Theresa's, Lakemba for primary and at the Christian Brothers Colleges, Strathfield (three years) and Waverley (two years) for secondary. After leaving school Keith worked in the bank for a number of years. In 1941 he enlisted in the Army, transferring to the Air Force in 1942. He remained there until 1946 when he came back to civilian life and recommenced work in the bank.

In 1950 Keith entered the Society of Mary and did his novitiate at Armidale (NSW). He was professed on 2 Feb 1951 and moved to Toongabbie (NSW) for his seminary studies. He was ordained at St Patrick's, Church Hill, on 4 Jan 1957.

Keith's first appointment was to the new Chanel College at Geelong where he was both bursar and teacher. For the first twenty years of his priestly life Keith was to fill the role of bursar in three colleges and at the seminary at Toongabbie. He was at Geelong (five years), Toongabbie (four years), Lismore (four years), Burnie (one year), and back again to Woodlawn (five years).

In 1979 Keith was appointed assistant priest at Hunters Hill. After two years he moved to St Patrick's, Church Hill, where he worked for eight years, and was acting parish priest in 1987 following the sudden death on the incumbent, Fr Peter Guiren. In 1989 he moved as superior to the Maryvale Community at Hunters Hill and in 1992 to Hunters Hill presbytery where he helped out when needed in the parish and was available to take on supplies elsewhere. For many years Keith was the mainstay for priests in the Lismore diocese, using him for supply work while they took a break. In places like Port Macquarie and especially Wauchope, Keith was so regular that locals regarded him as belonging to their parish.

In 2012 he retired to the Maryvale/Montbel Community at Hunters Hill, and in 2015 transferred to St Catherine's aged care at Eastwood (NSW).

Rest now in peace Keith.

Returned to the Father but no obit received. We hold them in prayer.

† Brian Healy MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart).....	14/05/2016
† Brian Bailey (Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle).....	17/06/2016
† John Hennessy SAC (Pallotine Fathers).....	18/06/2016
† John F Walsh (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	20/06/2016
† Dominic Ceresoli CS (Scalabrinian Missionaries).....	20/06/2016
† Peter Cronin (Archdiocese of Adelaide).....	28/06/2016
† Nevio Capra CS (Scalabrinian Missionaries).....	05/07/2016
† Ruben Nadalich SSP (Society of St Paul).....	18/07/2016
† Kevin Spillane (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	16/07/2016
† Peter Robinson MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart).....	09/08/2016

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The Swag Summer Edition

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