



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

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.

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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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Paddy Sykes



Introduction

Greetings to all of you as we begin another year and face the many joys and challenges that will be part of what lies ahead for each one of us, our Church and the NCP.

For those who don't know me, I have been a member of the Executive of the NCP for three years and took over as Chairman from Jim Clarke on 1 January of this year. It will be my privilege to work with the other members of the NCP Committee and the NCP Executive, Sally and Christine – our star performers at the Belmont National Office, and the entire membership of our organisation. I am a priest from the Diocese of Wagga Wagga and I pastor at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, South Wagga. As I begin my term as Chairman, I want to identify some of the issues that are impacting on our organisation and our Church.

Membership

Membership is the lifeblood of our organisation. Not only is membership the source of revenue for the NCP, it provides a barometer of the health of our organisation.

Unfortunately we are failing to attract new members from the two emerging significant groups of clergy in the Australian Catholic Church: priests ordained overseas and the recently ordained priests from our national seminaries.

The NCP has been aware of this challenge for some time. What can we do? It is up to each member to encourage other priests and lay people to become members and associate members. You or your parish may like to consider sponsoring a non-member to introduce them to the benefits of the NCP. Encouraging membership is everyone's responsibility.

As NCP's way of reaching out to clergy in Australia, the Autumn edition of *The Swag* is sent to all clergy (NCP members and non-members) except to those who have specifically requested no mail from NCP, as well as a copy to each seminarian. *The Swag* is a good conversation starter with fellow clergy and a great way to stay connected.

Plenary Council 2020

The Catholic Church has been given a great gift in the Plenary Council 2020. Following on from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which impacted our church in so many significant ways, the Plenary 2020 was a way for ordinary Catholics and people of goodwill to voice their concerns about how our church is currently governed and what could be done to change some of the culture of our church for the better. I am aware that in many dioceses and parishes and other Catholic organisations, people have come together to listen to one another and formulate a response for the Council.

Again, it is up to all of us to contribute to this process so that we can have some chance of bringing about the necessary changes to our church. I encourage all priests to make their own submission. Ms Lana Turvey-Collins and Rev Noel Connolly SSC led us through the process at our Canberra Convention last September and that will form the basis of the NCP submission to the Plenary Council.

The President of the ACBC, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, proclaimed that for our church in Australia following the Royal Commission, "it can't be business as usual". We have until the 6 March 2019 to get our submissions to the Council facilitators.

NCP Conventions

Thank you to all who attended our Convention in Canberra last year. The feedback from the participants was that it was a very successful event that showcased some of the important issues that members wanted to have discussed. Our speakers gave very generously of their time and stimulated thought-provoking discussion and Ms Phil Billington did a great job in keeping us all on track as our facilitator.

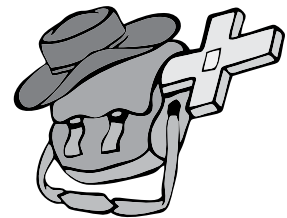
It has been the NCP custom to hold a Convention every two years and 2020 would ordinarily be the year of our next gathering, however, to mark the 50th anniversary – the Golden Jubilee –

since the first NCP Convention was held at Hunters Hill in 1971, the NCP Committee has decided that the next Convention will be in 2021. We are currently seeking volunteers to host this significant event, so if you think the NCP Members in your diocese would be willing to band together to organise the 2021 Convention, please let me or Sally at the NCP office know of your interest. The Belmont office has resources and guidelines to help you to host a Convention.

Conclusion

The NCP is a membership driven organisation. It gives voice to the concerns that Catholic priests working in Australia and others may have about our Church. I will use my Chairman's Message in *The Swag* to highlight some of those concerns as they come to my attention. I invite all of you to contribute articles to *The Swag* and if there are other issues that you would like me to address, please contact me by email: chairman@ncp.catholic.org.au. We should all be encouraged by Pope Francis as he calls the Church to subsidiarity – a greater involvement of the membership of the Body of Christ in determining what happens in our Church.

Shalom,
Paddy.



The Swag Winter Edition

**Closing date
for letters and articles
Monday 29 April 2019.**

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

**Articles:
700 words**

**Major Features:
1,400 words.**

Facing our demons



As we enter 2019, there is much to keep us on our toes. The current edition of *The Swag* offers space for reflecting on some key issues facing the church. The ever closer Plenary Council

2020 is a source of encouragement for many in the hope that voices sometimes smothered and suppressed might be heard. For others, there is a growing concern that the efforts, sometimes painful, to produce that voice will fall on deaf ears at a Council mired in power games for supremacy and doctrinal superiority played mainly by the elite of the church – mostly bishops but possibly with some carefully chosen lay people.

The fear is that Australian bishops will use the information collected as a benchmark for what they must teach the rest of us, rather than an opportunity for listening and engaging in an act of communal and collegial discernment as recommended by Pope Francis in his letter to the US bishops this January reprinted in this edition of *The Swag*.

The task ahead is to build bridges based on our communal inheritance of the gospel message, not in the factions that have

dragged us into a mire of self-referential naval gazing. As the Pope says in his letter, the only hope is in finding a way to be kinder to each other based on gospel values rather than doctrinal and ideological bickering.

How can we embrace this new world we live in boldly and courageously? The failure of credibility emblazoned upon the corporate brand of the church at this time has given us all a huge responsibility if we wish to continue to transmit the Jesus project.

People working hard on this include Australian Coalition for Catholic Church Reform (ACCCR) involving 12 Catholic renewal groups. They wrote a letter signed by 4,000 Catholics and had trouble even getting a reply. Although, with some prodding, eventually a small group of representatives got a meeting with Archbishop Mark Coleridge. Much of this material has appeared in past editions of *The Swag*, while in this edition another letter from the group penned by John Buggy addresses the question of religious freedom and yet another example of how bishops can divide in the name of ideology and dogma, rather than build bridges within and society.

Peter Wilkinson's series on the history of Plenary Councils continues in this edition with an article on the 1895 2nd Australian Plenary Council held in Sydney. Peter's

well researched articles give an essential historical perspective to assist in understanding the tradition and what we need to change to make this process effective.

Clergy sexual abuse and the failure in leadership in the past and still today is still very much an issue to reckon with. This edition includes commentary by John Scanlon on issues related to the abuse crisis and articles by Massimo Faggioli, Peter Day, Aengus Kavanagh and Eric Hodgens commenting on the way ahead. It must be based on new ways of thinking and not entrenched in clericalism, dogmatism, moralism and infighting.

This edition of *The Swag* also offers a couple of different takes on the clerical sexual abuse crisis. Forrest Chambers, a father of four from NZ Catholic Worker, asks the question of how we might better respond to sex offenders in our midst, while James Alison's second article challenges scapegoating gay priests for the problem.

A review of John Crothers new book, *The Clerical Club*, is in this edition. This book offers a way to explore the dangers of clericalism in a local setting written in a style that is simple and effective.

As we continue to try to face our demons in the church and the world, let's try to do it with confidence, intelligence and compassion. ☺

NCP MEMBERSHIPS 2019

"We are priests best when we are priests together."

Membership renewals for 2019 were mailed at the end of February and are due before Easter.

Perhaps you haven't been a member for some time – maybe you have never been a member ... 2019 is the time for you to come on board.

We warmly invite you to join us!

Why we belong to the NCP ...

Greg Barker, Forster-Tuncurry

We live in such a dynamic, ever changing and sometimes hostile world to faith and traditional religious practice, and for priests particularly, a world where we are becoming more and more isolated and at times cut off from support and the fraternity of brothers in Christ; our fellow priests.

The NCP and *The Swag* particularly has allowed me to know the encouragement and the comradery of my brother priests. The last NCP conference was my first but it was such a positive, life giving and enjoyable experience, it will be the first of many more.

The NCP provides a network of information around current issues and is fuel for a more active and joy filled ministry; to be slightly corny 'food for the journey' with 'brothers in arms'.

I have enjoyed my membership and look forward each season to *The Swag* arriving in the mail. I love listening to the wisdom of the priesthood lived in other places and seeing through the experiences of others what the Church is and can be.

Join the NCP and be part of this wonderful network!

Paddy Sykes, Wagga Wagga South

I became a member of the NCP in 1995 when I was ordained and have been part of the rollercoaster ever since.

I have enjoyed being part of the NCP for a number of reasons. The first is the biennial gathering of the NCP at the various conventions. Only working for the ADF as a Navy chaplain has held me back from attending all the conventions. The conventions are an opportunity for mutual support, listening to interesting/engaging/relevant speakers as well as seeing other parts of this great Southland of Australia we call home. I also enjoy reading *The Swag* which I find stimulating.

Being part of the NCP is a time to remember that you are part of the big picture - the Universal church in Australia.

I give thanks for the opportunity given to us by the NCP to gather and support each other as brother priests.

Mark Freeman, Launceston

To support and to be supported.

To encourage and to be encouraged by those with whom I share priestly life and ministry.

This is why I am a member of the National Council of Priests.

Boni Buahendri SVD

I joined the NCP in 2003 and became one of the NCP Executive in 2014. Besides reading *The Swag* Magazine, one other thing that I most enjoy as a member of the NCP, is attending the NCP Convention - which is held every 2 years, in many different places across the country.

This is the only place that the religious and diocesan/overseas and local priests can come together, sharing our stories. I really enjoy the times we share together at the convention, especially the stories of the senior priests in Australia. This experience helps me to get in touch with my own stories and struggles.

As a priest born in Indonesia, I encourage other newly arrived priests from overseas to join the NCP, the home to share our stories and be supported by other priests in Australia.

Brian Mathews, Coober Pedy

As a newly ordained priest I was encouraged to join NCP by Bill Wauchope, a loved senior priest of the Port Pirie Diocese (whom I often had to remind to send in his own membership!) and have been a member for the last 21 years.

It is a great way to stay in touch with the Australian church and presbyterate, through the Convention and *The Swag*.

NCP provides a communal voice, rather than my lone voice from the bush, for issues that relate to me and the ministry I am called to exercise. As a support to members, a bursary is offered each year to assist with the cost of undertaking further study to improve overall effectiveness in ministry.

**Do yourself a favour ... join the NCP
and keep connected.**

The unbearable lightness of post-institutional Christianity

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

Massimo Faggioli explains how 'Brand Catholicism' creates significant damage to the individual and to the community. Reprinted with permission from *La Croix International* 17 December 2018.

'The feeling of universality has always accompanied that of the unity of the church. There can be no true Christianity without it.'

The great French Dominican theologian Yves Congar used these words to begin his essay for *The Episcopacy and the Universal Church* (1962), one of the most important books published during the preparation period of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

It was one of the books that made Vatican II. Yet today it evokes in us a feeling of distance from the council. It was at a time, so different from our own, when the institutional dimension of the Church was not perceived as worse or even superfluous for Catholicism. It was a time when a certain amount of institutional loyalty was accepted as a requirement for being and remaining in communion with the universal church.

All institutions are currently going through a time of crisis. And the Church is no exception.

What is remarkable is that disenchantment with the Church is visible also in young members of new ecclesial movements and monastic orders with whom I have spoken over the past few years. Despite their commitment to a life of prayer and service in a Catholic community, their mindset is: "Jesus Christ yes, but about the Church ... I am less interested." Loyalty to their own community comes first, before any emotional, spiritual or intellectual investment in the Church in its universality.

This is a new stage in a development that began at the dawn of the 19th and 20th centuries: from the Church as an institution to the personal charisma – first of the papacy according to Ultramontanism, then to the new 'ecclesial movements' in the mid-20th century on the coattails of the post-Vatican I papacy. Now we have reached a new stage: brand Catholicism. We are witnessing what happens when we let a mere brand substitute for an institution – not only in politics but also in the Catholic Church.

This is the contemporary situation in which Christian discipleship is embedded, at least where consumer capitalism and its

technologies prevail. Various forms of contemporary Catholic dogmatism – or, better put, attempts to reduce Catholic identity to a single identity-marker or a brand – are capitulations to this inertia, even while claiming to resist the social changes that provoke it, according to Anthony Godzieba, professor of systematic theology at Villanova University.

Godzieba defined this 'brand Catholicism' in a keynote address at the 2014 convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

If there is to be any critique of contemporary culture by Catholic theology (I refuse to use the term 'culture war'), the issue is not liberal-vs.-conservative, pre-Vatican-II-vs.-post-Vatican-II, traditionalist-vs.-progressive, he said, The real point is to critique the eclipse of time and narrative that affects our experience of discipleship, and the temptation to detemporalize Christian faith.

This brand Catholicism identified by Godzieba is present in different religious and intellectual quarters of Catholicism in the Western hemisphere. It is the tendency to define one's Catholicism with a particular magazine or pope ('I am a JP2 priest' or 'I am a Benedict XVI priest'); to tether it to a certain theologian or leader of a theological movement; to identify with this or that liturgical movement.

What these brands really say is beside the point. It is not about the ideas but about the brand. This creates significant damage to the individual and to the community. The brand has a short life and tends to respond more easily to market logics than ecclesial ones. It does not create communion dynamics, but is competitive. It tends to become 'heretical' in the sense of idiosyncratic and divisive.

This is more visible in self-professed '(neo)-traditionalist' or 'anti-liberal' Catholic circles. But it is also true to some degree for self-identifying 'liberal' and 'progressive' Catholics. In an age of biopolitics and culture wars, intellectual independence from the ecclesiastical institution becomes sometimes independence from the tradition itself.

This impacts the struggle for the Church's future. There is clearly an asymmetry in the



way different Catholic brands relate to the institutional Church. Self-identifying 'conservatives' appear to care more for the institution itself. There is a certain clerical mentality and an inclination to see Catholicism more in juridical terms that are constitutive of that worldview. Many of today's seminarians come from this kind of post-liberal, anti-liberal and post-secular Catholicism.

At the other end of the spectrum, self-identifying 'liberal' Catholics tend to seek refuge in the 'Catholic imagination' and a post-institutional Catholicism. What they seem not to realize is that 'post-institutional' can be a dangerous prelude to the 'post-ecclesial'.

The so-called Catholic liberals will always be at a disadvantage in forging the future of the Church because anti-liberals, who are less anti-Church than them, will naturally have a greater command of the ecclesial levers of power. We can note the irony of an alliance between Steve Bannon and Cardinal Burke, but the choice of a canon lawyer as the 'ecclesiastical sponsor' of Bannon's base in Rome indicates that opponents of Pope Francis have long-term expectations concerning the kind of Catholic clergy and intelligentsia that will be in control of the institution in the next generation.

This is not just about the ongoing rift between different factions in the Catholic Church in the United States. It is about the sustainability of the Catholic communion. There is no universal communion in a Church dominated by ideological brands

– a brand that downgrades Catholicism to a narrow set of ‘settled doctrines’, on the one hand, and a brand that vaporizes the specificity of the Christian message and reduces it to Catholic social thought, on the other hand.

The Church does not need a return to juridicism and institutionalism. Scripture and tradition tell us that ‘charism’ and ‘structure’ are both necessary in the Church in a balance. But so-called liberal Catholicism must assess the adequacy of a certain anti-institutional or post-institutional mentality that became typical after the Second Vatican Council.

The Church of Vatican II embodied by Francis – characterized by mercy, synodality, a church for the poor – needs institutions. It also needs Catholics who are not afraid of the institutional dimension of the Church and that are willing and able to maintain and develop that vision of the Church.

Institutions keep things in extended time and in a shared experience. Liberal and progressive Catholics must take seriously what Anthony Godzieba calls ‘the disturbing eclipse of time and narrative in contemporary culture [where] the temporal duration necessary for discipleship’s

implications to unfold and be discerned is becoming literally inconceivable.’

The theological vision of Vatican II needs time and a narrative that cannot take place and have space without institutions. Otherwise, the dream of a post-institutional Catholicism could become a post-ecclesial and post-Church nightmare. And even worse, the genuine appeal of the ‘ecclesial’ and the ‘Church’ could end up – especially in the Western world – as the monopoly of the rising tide of anti-Vatican II Catholicism. ☪



Catholic culture wars

ERIC HODGENS



Eric Hodgens, Melbourne priest, looks at the development of the current divide in the Church around the ideology of sexuality and how it is embodied in the Australian Church.

A clash of cultures was graphically dramatized in 1968 when Paul VI

published *Humanae Vitae*. It was a major moment in a tumultuous year. Europe was split over the Vietnam War. Student riots paralysed Paris and alarmed a young theology professor in Tubingen, Joseph Ratzinger, into retreat to a fearful conservatism. The baby boomer generation was rejecting old certainties and exercising new freedoms, especially sexual, that alarmed their elders. Paul’s condemnation of contraception was accepted or rejected along the lines of this cultural divide.

The repercussions are still being felt 50 years later. And the focus of the debate is *sex*. Negativity on sex, which has dogged the Church in various ways from its earliest days, took centre stage again.

The papal voice has never had the same authority since *Humanae Vitae*. It was Paul VI’s seventh encyclical in four years– and his last. Ten more years without encyclicals.

Seeds of division were sewn in the Church during Vatican II. The open-up group won hands down at the council, but the stay-closed group bided its time. Paul could not cope with confrontation and shuttled between promoting the new and pacifying the stay-puts. This slowed, but did not stop, the reform.

The 1978 arrival of John Paul II reversed the flow. Restoration replaced the reform. This widened and consolidated the division. And, unlike Paul VI, he was a

warrior who would act on his opinions. *Culture warfare* had arrived within the Church.

Sexuality was one of JP II’s dominant preoccupations. He re-asserted opposition to contraception and began a six-year exposition of his *Theology of the Body* at his Wednesday audiences. This was an exercise in apologetics – an attempt at rational explanation for his position on human sexuality.

He set up structures for the battle. First, he established the Pontifical Commission for Marriage and the Family to promote his views in the public forum and in political institutions like the UN Conference for Environment and Development. Here, public policy on issues like family planning could be influenced.

Next, he established the Institute for Marriage and the Family as an apologetics institute to develop his ideas. It was to provide academic justification for papal sexual doctrine and to develop the philosophy of bioethics along papal policy lines. It was to produce tertiary qualified warriors to help hold the papal line in public debate – to protect “God’s truth” against secularism and relativism.

Apologetics influences public debate by using dialogue. But it risks slipping into ideological monologue. Ideology starts with the conclusion and promotes it with propaganda. JP II was no stranger to this practice having lived under Communist Russia – a master of propaganda.

Australia has had strong connections with the Pontifical Commission and the Institute. Cardinal Knox was Archbishop of Melbourne for seven years before being called to Rome to be Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship. But then, in 1991, John Paul II appointed him President of the Pontifical Commission for Marriage and the Family. He held that position till his death in 1993.

A Melbourne priest, Peter Elliott, spent some years on the staff of the Commission under the presidency of the shadowy and controversial (condoms don’t stop Aids) Cardinal Trujillo. Elliott was a friend of Cardinal George Pell. So, he had two patrons for promotion. Pell recalled him to Melbourne to head up a restoration of old style catechetics texts in schools. He later became auxiliary bishop.

George Pell, who was ideologically aligned with John Paul II, established a campus of the JP II Institute in Melbourne when he was archbishop. He appointed his protege Anthony Fisher, as its first director. Pell oversaw Fisher’s rise to Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Bishop of Paramatta and, now, Archbishop of Sydney. Fisher is still a champion of the ideology of the JP II Institute. Peter Elliott was his successor as Director of the Institute in Melbourne.

Another of Pell’s protégés, and, like Fisher, an ethicist, is Peter Comensoli. He has post-graduate degrees from St Andrews and Edinburgh universities. His path was like Fisher’s. First, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney then Bishop of Broken Bay and, now Archbishop of Melbourne.

While Archbishop of Sydney, Pell also fostered the development of Notre Dame University in Sydney. It has an Institute for Ethics and Society. It is aligned with the *Theology of the Body* corpus of ethics.

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One of its Visiting Scholars is John Haldane of St. Andrew's University, under whom Archbishop Comensoli studied. Tracey Rowland, formerly director of the JP II Institute in Melbourne, is now on its staff. Archbishop Comensoli's recently appointed Policy Advisor, Nigel Zimmerman, did his doctorate on JP II's Theology of the Body at Edinburgh University. He comes to Melbourne from being a lecturer at Notre Dame. He is on the seasonal faculty of the JP II Institute.

The JP II culture is disbursed world-wide. It focusses on a wide range of single issues. From a starting point of opposition to any form of sexual liberality, including contraception, it holds a conservative line in debates on bio-ethics. It sees same-sex attraction as "objectively disordered" to use the language of the Catholic Catechism. It holds its conservative positions passionately and argues them vigorously in public. Because it holds its policies as absolutes, it believes they should be state-enforced. It campaigned against same-sex marriage and dying with dignity.

Emboldened by decades of papal and episcopal backing, it claims to be defending the *teaching of the Church*. But that teaching is not received by many well-informed Catholics who disagree with, or have more nuanced views on, many of their moral stands. Catholicism is not a monolithic culture any more.

Pope Francis has brought a major change to the culture of the Church. Pastoral care is his top priority. He has changed the balance in the culture wars. Law and Order is still necessary, but must help, not hinder, pastoral care. The law is made for man, not man for the law. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is very quiet these days.

To implement this change he has set up a new dicastery (Vatican Department) of Laity, Family and Life. This has absorbed the Pontifical Commission for Marriage and the Family. To what extent this will temper the culture wars remains to be seen.

Meanwhile clerical sexual abuse and the disastrous handling of the problem by bishops has deauthorized them especially any on their views on sexual morality. This issue is rapidly growing bigger as state authorities publish numbers.

A consequence of this culture war is the loss of many Catholics. It is a pity if the Church alienates so many because of the intransigence of a few who have the final say. Yet that is the scenario as the JP II/Pell cohort stands kitted for a war which, at best, can only lead to Pyrrhic Victory. ☞

Second Australian Plenary Council, 17 November – 1 December 1895

PETER WILKINSON

This is the fifth in the series of articles by Peter Wilkinson looking at the particular provincial and plenary councils of the Catholic Church held in Australia between 1844 and 1937. It examines the 1895 Second Australian Plenary Council.

Between 1886 and 1895, eight particular councils were convened in English-speaking mission territories under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide ('Propaganda'): 3 provincial councils in both Canada and the US, and 1 plenary council in both Scotland and Australia.

Developments and demographic data for 1895

In 1887, following the 1885 1st Australasian Plenary Council, the Holy See established 2 new Australian ecclesiastical provinces, Brisbane and Adelaide; 3 new dioceses, Grafton, Wilcannia, and Port Augusta; 2 new vicariates apostolic, Kimberley and Queensland for Aborigines and renamed the Vicariate Apostolic of Queensland as Cooktown. In 1888 it renamed the Diocese of Port Victoria (NT) as Victoria and Palmerston, and elevated Hobart to an archdiocese. In 1895, Australia had 5 archdioceses, 13 dioceses, 3 vicariates apostolic and 1 abbacy *nullius*, organized within 4 ecclesiastical provinces (Table 1).

In the decade up to 1895 there had also been significant growth. Catholics increased from 540,000 to 695,351, constituting 20 per cent of the total European population, districts (not 'parishes') increased from 259 to 361, priests from 512 to 747 (including 178 religious), religious sisters from 1612 to 2836, religious brothers from 212 to 351, Catholic schools (primary and secondary) from 622 to 897, and students in Catholic schools from some 65,000 to 83,891. More than 1080 churches had been constructed – an average of 3 per district – and, on average, 1 priest ministered to 931 Catholics (1 to 1054 in 1885).

Council convocation and preparation

Following the 1885 Council, Cardinal Moran convened assemblies of all the Australian bishops in 1888 and 1890 and, on instructions from the Holy See in 1890, annual meetings of the metropolitan archbishops. After consulting them in 1894, Moran sought approval to convene a second Australasian plenary council and, in January 1895, received it from Pope Leo XIII, who also appointed Moran to preside

as apostolic delegate. However, to Moran's chagrin, Propaganda instructed him not to invite the New Zealand bishops, as the Holy See had determined that the Church in New Zealand was to be separate from the Church in Australia.

Moran wrote to all the Australian prelates and provincials of male clerical religious congregations, and all those required to attend by law or custom, and called them to assemble at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on 17 November 1895 for the 2nd Australian Plenary Council. He also invited each bishop to appoint a personal theologian for expert advice, and to have one priest from his diocese, elected by the priests of the diocese, to represent them at the Council.

Opening of Council

When those called to the Council gathered on 16 November 1895, there were 23 prelates present: 5 archbishops – Moran (Sydney), Carr (Melbourne), Murphy (Hobart), O'Reilly (Adelaide), and Dunne (Brisbane); 15 bishops – Murray (Maitland), Lanigan (Goulburn), Torreggiani (Armidale), Byrne (Bathurst), Dunne (Wilcannia), Doyle (Grafton), Higgins (Sydney auxiliary), Gallagher (Goulburn coadjutor), Moore (Ballarat), Corbett (Sale), Reville (Sandhurst auxiliary), Delaney (Hobart coadjutor), Gibney (Perth), Cani (Rockhampton) and Hutchinson (Cooktown); 1 abbot/bishop – Salvado (New Norcia); and 2 apostolic administrators (neither bishops) – James Maher (Port Augusta) and Anton Streele SJ (Victoria and Palmerston). Bishop Crane of Sandhurst was absent due to ill health and Ambrose Janny, superior (not a bishop) of the Trappist Mission at Beagle Bay (WA), was in France. Nineteen of the prelates had attended the 1885 Council. Also present were 35 diocesan priests and 14 religious priests: 2 Jesuits, 2 Marists, 2 Redemptorists, 2 Vincentians, and one Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Missionary of the Sacred Heart, and Passionist. All the priests were classed as 'theologians' with 14 having participated in the 1885 Council. All 72 Council participants were exclusively clerics: 23 with a deliberative vote, and 49 with a consultative vote.



Assembled bishops of Australia at the 1895 2nd Australian Plenary Council. Photo taken in the Aula Maxima of St Patrick's College, Manly, NSW. Source: MDHC Photo Collection, published in *Footprints*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 9 (October 1974)

At the prelates' meeting on 16 November, Moran announced that the Council procedures would be the same as those of the 1885 Plenary, and that Bishops Murray and Delaney would act as Council promoter and secretary. Bishops Murray, Lanigan, and Byrne were elected to the Bishops' Primary Committee, joining Moran (chair), the other 4 archbishops, and Delaney. This committee assigned all other Council members to one of four committees dealing with Faith, Discipline, Sacraments, and Education. After some discussion, the majority of bishops, with Moran, determined that Abbot Salvado, Vicar Apostolic Hutchinson, the auxiliary bishops, and the two priest apostolic administrators, would have a 'deliberative' vote.

Three public sessions in St Mary's Cathedral, with Pontifical Mass, were scheduled, and all other meetings – general (prelates and priests), private (prelates only) and committee – were to take place at St Patrick's College, Manly.

The Council opened with great solemnity on Sunday 17 November, with Cardinal Moran presiding. Bishop Gallagher gave the opening address, stating that the Council's aims were 'to maintain the revealed truth, to condemn heresy, to uphold the uniformity and sanctity of discipline, to relieve the poor and battle for the oppressed, to advance the cause of science and knowledge, and to elevate mankind'. They were somewhat different from Moran's: 'to strengthen discipline, increase virtue, honour the faith, defend the Church, and glorify God'.

Council agenda

In 1895, since the 1885 Council decrees were *de facto* canon law for Australia, the prelates agreed that they should remain the basis for all future legislation, but that new decrees could be added as necessary.

The first of these were contained in two new chapters on the further education of priests (4 decrees), and 'parish' missions (10 decrees) to be held every 5 years.

More decrees on the sacraments also emerged: Protestants could not be baptismal sponsors; divorce to be denounced: the separation of married spouses to require church judicial permission; clandestine marriages forbidden; marriage banns to apply to persons of other jurisdictions; the rubrics for Mass, chant and ceremonials to be uniform; regular confession to be promoted, especially for children; reserved sins were listed; and the Forty Hours Eucharistic devotion introduced.

Many of the new decrees related to the life and discipline of priests: the Union of Priests to be established in every diocese; priests to be very careful around women, particularly in the choice of housekeeper; where several priests lived together, one to be always on duty; financial reports to be mandatory; priests not to speak publicly about any person; church buildings not to be altered or debts incurred without the bishop's permission; the faithful to be notified of holy days, days of fast and abstinence, and indulgences; only Roman and Baltimore (US) rituals permitted; registers of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and the *status animarum* to be kept updated; only the *Maynooth Catechism* to be used; Requiem Mass to be recommended for funerals, but flowers (an abuse) discouraged; Catholic burial to be refused to those requesting cremation or attending a funeral in Masonic regalia; Catholic societies to be promoted, together with the Rosary; and young people warned about the dangers of certain dances. Also discussed were the *concurus* (test of fitness for parochial office), the rights of 'rectors' (parish priests), and priest's assignment when their diocese was divided. Dispensation from reciting the Divine Office when travelling was referred to the Holy See.

Priests with alcohol problems received significant attention, as alcoholism and excessive drinking was a major problem for many priests, especially those living in the outback with isolation and loneliness. The Council recommended the promotion of temperance societies in all seminaries (mainly Irish) sending priests to Australia, that a religious congregation be asked to establish a permanent rehabilitation house for alcoholic priests, and that each diocese establish a special fund to help treat these priests (Decrees 71-72).

Decrees were also added on Catholic education: parish priests were not to close a school without the bishop's permission; every diocese was to have a priest examiner of schools; parents who sent their children to non-Catholic schools were not to be refused absolution publicly; the US schoolbooks of Benziger Bros were commended; and the *pro rata* claim for a share of taxpayer funds was reaffirmed. There was also much discussion on teacher training.

On governance, there were discussions on having vicars general in every diocese (no decision), how to enforce plenary council decrees (no decision), and how to select new bishops for dioceses with less than 10 diocesan consultors and irremovable rectors (decided that all rectors and administrators who had served for 7 years could propose candidates). The bishops also decided to appoint an 'agent' to represent them in Rome and selected Dr Michael Verdon, the former rector of the Manly seminary. His brief was to seek a reduction in the number of Holy Days, and to promote the canonisation of Blessed Peter Chanel as proto-martyr of Oceania. The bishops also wanted guidance on their faculties to mitigate the obligations of fasting and abstinence.

For religious sisters, new legislation insisted they make a will before profession and observe the *clausura*.

Seminaries

Six years before the Council, Sydney's diocesan seminary, St Patrick's College, had opened at Manly for the 'exclusive education of aspirants to the ecclesiastical state'. It accepted candidates from 'all the dioceses of Australia' (*Prospectus*), and was the sole functioning seminary in Australia. Able to accommodate 80 students, it had an experienced teaching staff (8 priests and 2 laymen) under the presidency of Dr Michael Verdon, a former president of Clonliffe seminary in Dublin and vice-rector of the Irish College in Rome. By 1895 it had admitted 90 students and already seen four

Continued page 10

FEATURES

Table 1: Provinces of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide: demographic and ecclesiastical data, 1895

Colony	Total Population	Catholic Population	Diocese/ Abbacy/ Vicariate Apostolic	Year Est.	Districts – not parishes	Priests (Dioc./ Relig.)	Relig. Sisters	Relig. Brothers	Catholic Schools (Prim. & Sec.) ¹	Catholic Students
			Province of Sydney	1842						
NSW	1,255,503	147,300	Sydney (AD)	1842	65	111/61	777	149	147/59	20,407
		30,000	Maitland (D)	1847	17	36/7	158	7	33/16	3,416
		37,000	Goulburn (D)	1862	18	33/7	176	7	39/9	3,551
		21,323	Armidale (D)	1862	15	17/3	83	5	14/9	2,010
		27,000	Bathurst (D)	1865	17	28/5	200	11	43/17	3,572
		16,500	Grafton (D)	1887	12	14/-	58	0	11/8	1,080
		<u>16,000</u>	Wilcannia (D)	1887	<u>11</u>	<u>15/-</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>14/10</u>	<u>2,301</u>
		295,123			155	254/83	1,558	179	301/128	36,337
			Prov. of Melbourne	1874						
VIC	1,185,676	143,949	Melbourne (AD)	1847	44	84/34	459	49	109/36	18,243
		35,000	Ballarat (D)	1874	25	46/6	95	5	52/10	6,000
		25,000	Sandhurst (D)	1874	17	29/8	87	6	31/16	4,500
		<u>11,300</u>	Sale (D)	1887	<u>7</u>	<u>12/-</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8/2</u>	<u>570</u>
		215,249			93	171/48	653	60	200/64	29,313
TAS	154,895	25,800	Hobart (AD)	1842	18	26/-	59	-	24/4	2,200
			Prov. of Brisbane	1887						
QLD	443,064	60,000	Brisbane (AD)	1859	31	44/-	186	25	41/18	6,713
		25,000	Rockhampton (D)	1882	10	15/1	60	n/a ²	11/6	2,175
		3,500	Cooktown (VA)	1887	7	-/11	13	-	2/1	235
		<u>n/a</u>	QLD for Aborigines (VA)	1887	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-/-</u>	<u>-</u>
		89,000			48	59/12	259	25	54/25	9,123
			Prov. of Adelaide	1887						
SA	351,968	35,762	Adelaide (AD)	1842	24	32/10	207	18	30/15	3,785
		<u>11,156</u>	Port Augusta (D)	1887	<u>2</u>	<u>9/6</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>14/2</u>	<u>1,013</u>
		46,918			33	41/16	238	22	44/17	4,798
WA	100,515	23,000	Perth (D)	1845	14	18/4	69	4	19/9	2,000
		n/a	New Norcia (AN)	1867	Abbacy	-/6	-	48	2/-	100
		<u>n/a</u>	Kimberley (VA)	1887	Mission	<u>-/5</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>n/a²</u>	<u>n/a</u>
					14	18/15	69	59	21/9	2,100
NT	n/a	261	Victoria & Palmerston (D)	1847	n/a	-/4	-	6	1/-	20
Australia TOTAL	3,491,621³	695,351 (= 20% of total pop'n)	4 Provinces 18 Dioceses 3 Vicariates Apost. 1 Abbacy Nullius		361	569/ 178	2,836	351	645/252	83,891

Sources: ABS. Cat. No. 3105.0.65.001; Australasian Catholic Directory for 1896 (data is for 1895). Note: 1. Secondary schools include colleges for boys, boarding schools for girls, and superior day schools. 2. No return was submitted. 3. This is European population only. Aboriginal people were not counted in the Census. 5. The 1896 Directory listed only 7 of the 18 dioceses with 'diocesan consultors'.

of its 76 Australian-born candidates ordained.

The Council now supported and launched a new seminary in Kensington (NSW) to prepare missionary priests for overseas ministry in PNG and the Pacific Islands. It had been proposed by the French Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who had arrived in Sydney in 1885 to establish a supply base for their missions in New Britain (PNG). It would not compete with the Manly seminary.

The Council made no mention of the 1885 proposal to establish an Australian College at Rome, and softened the requirement to have a minor seminary.

New dioceses and selection of bishops

The Council agreed on the need for more dioceses and proposed two new ones for WA (Geraldton and Coolgardie), two for Queensland (Townsville and Maranoa or Warwick), two for Victoria (Benalla and Warrnambool), and one for Sydney. Also recommended were some boundary adjustments between the Diocese of Palmerston and Victoria (NT) and the Queensland dioceses – to bring them into conformity with the civil border – and the transfer of the Diocese of Grafton to Lismore.

When proposing the new dioceses, the bishops ignored Decree 25 of the 1885 Council, which required the metropolitan archbishop to convoke all consultors of the diocese from which the new diocese was to be formed, and selected the *terna* themselves. For the selection of the first bishop of Sale in 1887, however, the priests had voted.

Evangelization of the Aboriginal peoples

The 1885 Council's decrees and recommendations to promote and support the evangelization of the Australian Aborigines, especially in Queensland and Western Australia, had resulted in the Holy See establishing two new vicariates apostolic in 1887: Kimberly (WA) and Queensland for the Aborigines. However, despite Moran's constant reminders and Propaganda's encouragement, most of the bishops, with notable exceptions, took their missionary responsibility lightly, preferring to concentrate on the pastoral care of their largely Irish congregations and to leave the evangelization of the Aborigines to individual dedicated priests and bishops, or any religious congregation prepared to take on this difficult ministry. After 10 years, the special annual collection the 1885 Council had set up for Aboriginal missions had raised just £795.

Trappist Mission at Beagle Bay

During the 1880s, European pastoralists stole huge tracts of land from the Aboriginal peoples in the Kimberley, and Asian pearlers were exploiting the rich pearl-shell beds off the coast. The pearlers, while sheltering in the lay-up season, were also associating closely with the Aborigines and bringing much immorality. In 1886 the WA *Aborigines Protection Act* extended protection to mixed descendents and the 1889 WA *Constitution Act* required 1 per cent of the colony's income (or minimum £5000) to be spent on Aboriginal people.

Following the 1887 failure of Fr Duncan McNabb's mission in the Kimberley, Propaganda and Bishop Gibney of Perth succeeded in persuading a French Trappist monastery to establish a new mission among the Aborigines in the Kimberly on two large Aboriginal land reserves which the WA government had set aside on the Dampier Peninsula. Frs Ambrose Janny and Alphonse Tachon arrived in Perth in 1890, and by 1895 a Trappist community of 18 had established a mission at Beagle Bay. It was funded mainly by Propaganda and the Trappists in France (70%), by the WA government (20%), and donations (10%). Gibney, the driving force for the evangelization of the Kimberley Aborigines, persuaded the 1895 Council to entrust the Kimberly vicariate to the Trappists, but that they were hesitant to assume that responsibility.

Queensland Vicariate for Aborigines

After 18 years, the never-formerly-erected Vicariate Apostolic of Queensland for Aborigines had achieved little. It had no bishop and was without priests. Some Italian missionaries had worked there for a short time in 1884, but had failed and handed the vicariate to the Irish Augustinians. But as they were not interested in exclusive evangelization of the Aborigines, the 1885 Council had called for the vicariate to be entrusted to a congregation totally dedicated to the Aborigines, and nominated the Spanish Augustinians in the Philippines. But neither they nor any other congregation were prepared to take it on. The 1895 Council now delegated Moran to see if he could persuade the Jesuits or Marists to accept the Queensland vicariate with its exclusive Aboriginal focus.

Jesuit Mission in Northern Territory

When the Bishop of [Port] Victoria, Salvado, resigned in 1888, the Jesuit missionary priest, Anton Strele, was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the renamed Diocese of Victoria and

Palmerson, where the Jesuits had two missions with 15 missionaries. A third mission, Sacred Heart at Serpentine Lagoon, was added in 1889, but by late 1890 Strele's health had broken down and the mission was in financial crisis. In 1891 the three missions were amalgamated at New Uniya, but by 1892 the mission was bankrupt, the residents starving, and the missionaries desperate. Strele left Darwin, prepared a report on the mission, and presented it at the 1895 Council. He explained the strategic factors leading to the mission's establishment, and sought to have it continued.

Conclusion of the Council and Apostolic approval

The Council concluded on 1 December 1895 with a joint Pastoral Letter denouncing secularism, the inordinate desire for wealth, and the weakening of family ties, and advocated a closer following of Christ, good family life with prayer and temperance, Catholic education, and no mixed marriages.

The Council's *Acta et Decreta*, with 344 decrees, were forwarded to the Holy See and formally considered by the Propaganda cardinals on 14 and 20 December 1897. With only minor amendments, the cardinals recommended their approval. They did not, however, support the proposals for seven new dioceses, and recommended to Pope Leo XIII that only the Diocese of Geraldton be erected, with the Australian-born William Bernard Kelly as first bishop. Rather than suppress the Vicariate Apostolic of Kimberly, they recommended it be attached to the Geraldton diocese 'for the time being' until the Trappists had made their position clear. They also approved the new borders for the Queensland and NT dioceses.

Pope Leo XIII confirmed the decrees of the Council on 11 January 1898, and the official *recognitio* (approval) was confirmed on 22 January 1898, 26 months after the Council had closed. The published legislation had 20 appendices attached, including various Roman decrees, schedules, forms, prayers and rubrics.

Acknowledgment: In preparing this article many primary and secondary sources were consulted. However, special acknowledgment is given to the original research of Dr Ian B Waters in his unpublished doctoral thesis *Australian Conciliar Legislation prior to the 1917 Code of Canon Law: A Comparative Study with similar Conciliar Legislation in Great Britain, Ireland, and North America*, St Paul University, Ottawa, 1990. ☞

Mission rather than parish in Australian bush

MARY FARRELLY SM

Sr Mary Farrelly SM, who works in Central Western Queensland, speaks about inculturation and evangelisation in Australian rural areas.



After 13 years on the 'other side of the range' I've come to believe that ministry (evangelisation) to those living in rural and remote places such as central western Queensland, is better compared to a *mission* than to a parish. Many years ago I was struck by the story of the first Jesuits who went into China: how they inserted themselves into the culture. Such an approach contrasted with many other missionaries who in their zeal, rather than taking time to understand the local people, almost immediately began 'evangelising', preaching the christian message and denouncing the darkness of beliefs and superstitions held by their hearers. Rather than seeking out and building on any elements of truth such as Paul did when he spoke at the Areopagus (Acts 17: 22ff) they condemned what they found. I remember that in the latter part of the 1960's *inculturation* almost became a buzz word.

From my perspective over the last four or five years, although the pastors/priests ministering in the rural and remote areas with which I am familiar, don't approach the people in that way, often it seems to me that they fail to 'connect', to recognise the reality, the *shape* so to speak of the people's understanding and knowledge of church doctrine; their familiarity with church ritual, symbolism and church language is very limited. By contrast, homilies often seem to be generic, even learned speeches rather than being relevant to the little congregation who actually present the pastor with an opportunity to pass on the message of Jesus, to evangelise after the description of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* no.14: Ordinary pastoral ministry seeks to help believers to grow spiritually so that they can respond to God's love ever more fully in their lives.

Very few of the children whose families live on properties are close enough to a town to be able to attend the local school. Instead they learn by distance education. In any case, across the country which I cover, there are just three *catholic* schools. Some of the children will go away to boarding school for their secondary education. These will have the opportunity of living in a faith environment and learning about the catholic faith. However, not all catholic children go to a *catholic* boarding school. Criteria for selecting a school include cost, distance from home and location of other family members who may be able to visit and support the children given that they are hundreds of kilometres from home and their own families and in a classroom situation for the first time.

Country town church life has changed

It is not surprising that in most cases the primary school children whom I have encountered, know little of what I will call the *language* of the faith even when presenting for preparation for the Sacraments – much of which must be done via the telephone in a limited number of lessons. Following the celebration of her daughter's Confirmation and First Communion a mother commented to me recently on how different it had been for her growing up in a town, attending the local Catholic school during the week and then with her family going to Sunday Mass each weekend. Now married, she and her husband live an hour (mostly on dirt road) from the nearest town where there is no Catholic school and where Mass is only sometimes celebrated on a Sunday. So much depends on parents for the transmission of the faith whether or not *they* attended a Catholic school. In any case for the most part they themselves have received little if any further input because they are not attending church. They are good people. They want their children to receive the sacraments.

Ten of the thirteen towns which I visit have a catholic church. Five of the churches have the Blessed Sacrament reserved. Five of the churches have Sunday Mass at least twice a month. Three towns have Mass once a month. Two have Mass scheduled for every two months but in practice this would rarely be more than four or five times a year. One little town

hasn't had Mass for almost two years, maybe more. Most congregations are very small. Not everyone who could go to Mass does go. I would suggest that they have lost the habit, if they ever had it.

Mixed marriages are very common. That said I've been surprised and in admiration at the number of cases where the non-catholic mother is the one who supports and guides her child through the sacramental programme. I see great potential in this aspect of life in remote places. Ecumenism is further evident in the way that people will attend a service held on a property, regardless of their denomination. Often they are glad to come together as a community of neighbours when a pastor visits a property. I believe that we need to encourage this particularly when ministers of any christian denomination are in very limited supply and those who are available may be reluctant to go out of the church precinct to the people.

Challenging times in rural Australia

For those who live on properties (which they do not always own but frequently manage for the owner – sometimes one of the big pastoral companies) there is not the rhythm of a five or five and a half day week. This is especially so in years of drought which seem more common than good years. It is often a seven day week with ongoing need to distribute feed to stock (in the absence of pasture) and check waters which are spread over hundreds to thousands of acres and to attend to many other tasks which can't be fitted into a neat schedule. Such tasks may be as unpredictable as the need to attend to a pump which has broken down as stock cannot be left long without water and replacement parts are only available some hundred or more kilometres away.

Apart from family, the number of staff living on properties and employed to work has been greatly reduced over the years, for example as graziers have moved from sheep to cattle because of the 'dogs' (dingoes and hybrids). Often the only workers are the family members. Children have to learn young! Formal schooling sometimes has to fit around the property tasks which cannot wait, given that live animals are involved. The women usually have added roles including that of governess, property worker and book-keeper, which in itself is no small task. When it comes to specialist tasks such as crutching, shearing, lamb-marking or pregnancy-testing contract

workers are in short supply. Because many people have left agriculture, the tasks must be slotted in according to the availability of workers. Such arrangements can change with little notice and no room for negotiation.

I have often thought to myself that rather than trying unsuccessfully to get people into the church building we need to take church to the people, so to speak. I have been present at some very special celebrations on properties. They are what I call *God-moments* where people are open to hear God-messages! In rural and remote places the neighbours, living 20 – 100 or more kilometres away, depend on each other. They form little rural communities with each other rather than with the people who live in the ‘nearest’ country town and with whom they have limited interaction.

In the case of baptism for example, people living in rural and remote parts of western Queensland desire to celebrate baptism with their community: neighbours whether catholic or not, and with their family and friends who often need to travel hundreds of kilometres to be present. Celebrating the Sacrament outside of Mass is conducive to spending time in explaining the symbols and the significance of the ritual, its words and actions. It is permitted to celebrate baptism on a property. Not only does the home venue provide a welcoming environment for the unchurched; it is also an opportunity for some basic evangelising (Pope Francis’ description – E.G. no.14 – of the different groups to be evangelised). As with town dwellers usually the need/desire is for a weekend so that family and friends who have to return to work towards the coast some hundreds of kilometres away are able to do so. Unfortunately on weekends the priests are only available in church buildings and only once, or less, each month in some churches. There is little to no flexibility in terms of accommodating people out on the properties. So there is difficulty in arranging dates. While dependent on a priest as celebrant of this sacrament, some baptisms are being delayed and some are not even being requested.

Bridging the gap to meet spiritual needs

A gap exists today between many people and the church as it has developed over the last two millennia. In order to bridge this gap, I suggest that it will be necessary to take baby steps, so to speak, to begin with what is *essential* not with the refined established institution with its doctrine and ritual. Perhaps many will not be able to go beyond the essential and yet if they

embrace this, it would be world-changing because I believe Jesus’ message was that we are loved deeply, unconditionally and are called to love others in our turn. I am reminded of the butterfly emerging from its cocoon. It must go through the slow process: to help it by cutting the cocoon would not be to free it, but to prevent the process coming to its completion.

For such reasons as these I believe that the western pastoral ministry which developed from the aerial ministry of earlier times and in which I have spent almost thirteen years, is better compared to a *mission* than to a parish. Ministry in a mission-field differs from ministry in a parish setting. Expectations and assumptions are different. The reality as I have said is that often Catholics living in these rural and remote parts of our country do not have the habit of church-going. Given the constraints of their lifestyle, which involves production of food for the nation, there may be good reasons for this. They have limited knowledge and understanding of what we might describe as ‘the faith’ or the ‘practice of the faith’ as it has developed since the time of Jesus and the early church. We need to recognise the reality and look for other ways to nurture faith rather than trying in vain to get people into a church building. We need to take opportunities outside of the ‘structures’ to lead people, to accompany them in developing their relationship with Jesus. Go make disciples: first and foremost disciples of *Jesus!* Perhaps later they will become members of the church community.

The word, pre-catechesis comes to mind and also another image. Here in rural and remote parts of the country where people are longing for rain, they say any rain – rare as it has been – will be welcome. Yet they talk of good rain and bad rain. Good rain is grass-growing rain, gentle rain soaking into the parched country, deep enough and for long enough to reach roots and not be evaporated once the rain stops and the temperatures rise again. Bad rain is too much, too heavy, not soaking into the ground but running off and taking the soil with it. Bad rain is light rain, not enough rain which comes when temperatures have dropped and a small amount of grass remains; rain which blackens that precious grass, changing its chemical nature so that there is no nutritional value in it. So I believe with evangelising. Its style and content and delivery must be fashioned to the people in their particular context, with their limitations, at their level of faith and readiness. Inculturation, mission! ☪



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The big issues for the 2020 Plenary Council

JOHN SCANLON

John Scanlon discusses the relationship between governance, engagement with women in leadership and sexual abuse in the Church.



Our parish is one in which some parishioners have been making a concerted effort to develop submissions to the 2020 Plenary Council. As I had been involved in the Australian Conference of Catholic Laity held in Sydney in April 1976, I thought it might be instructive to revisit its proceedings to see whether the issues that emerged as major concerns at that time were still seen as important now.

The discussions at that conference were organised into the following nine topics, which are listed in the order in which they were presented rather than according to any suggested ranking of importance:

1. Communication, Consultation and Participation.
2. Ecumenism.
3. Christian Formation, Spirituality and Mission.
4. Church, Social and Economic Life.
5. The Role of Women in the Church.
6. Catholic Education and Catechetics.
7. Liturgy, Worship and the Sacraments.
8. Catholic Adult Education.
9. Christian Family Life.

On most of these topics the discussions nowadays have not changed much in direction or scope during the last forty-plus years. For example, we are still enmeshed in the problems that arise from running 'Catholic' schools that have significant numbers of non-Catholic students, many with non-believer parents, while many children of Catholic parents are in the

public school system. Similarly, the gap in understanding between bishops publically obsessed with pelvic theological issues, and laypeople who long ago decided that the views of bishops showed no understanding of real married life, is as large as ever. However I suggest there are two topics that have become relatively much more important since the 1970's, and deserve particular attention at the forthcoming Plenary Council.

Church Governance

Although the word 'governance' does not appear in the 1976 Conference report and was probably not even uttered, it does define a theme that ran through the discussions on Communication, Consultation and Participation. The main reason why this topic has become so much more important has to do with another phenomenon that was never written or spoken about at the 1976 Conference: clerical sexual abuse.

Forty years ago, lay people were saying that the then current church structures did not provide the place for lay activity and responsibility that the Second Vatican Council had decreed it should have. However the tone in which lay bodies addressed the clerical hierarchy on this issue was still one of somewhat submissive respect. Dialogue was requested, not demanded. We accepted as a fact of life that there were parish clergy and bishops who would not communicate with lay people except by preaching at them. Lay people in general did not contest the view that the hierarchy and the clerical caste had the right to run the show, and to make all the decisions that mattered. This was so even when the concerns related to administration of property, finances and the management of church employees — matters in which competence was to be found more often in laity than in clergy.

The hierarchy's failure to cope with the clerical sexual abuse crisis has changed all that. The damage to the immediate victims done by the perpetrators themselves has shattered thousands of lives. However the effects of the covering up of abuse, and of the crimes against civil law that the cover-ups led to, have had much more serious consequences. These crimes committed by members of the hierarchy

have destroyed the credibility of institutional church authority as a whole. People who claimed to act as pastors have turned out to be concerned only with the public reputation of the institution in which they held office, and the consequences for themselves and their fellow clerics.

The child abuse Royal Commission report has pointed out a number of respects in which the current models of diocesan and parish governance have failed, and made recommendations of alternatives that might be considered. Surely a major topic for the Plenary Council must be the search for a governance model in which lay people share authority with clergy as a matter of principle, rather than by concession and delegation from the clerical caste who claim to hold title by divine authority. The credibility of the Plenary Council itself would be much improved if it were to greatly increase the number of lay people attending and to give them a voice in decision making. Without this, lay people are likely to believe that the Council is nothing more than a stage play in which the bishops discuss, the bishops vote, and then the bishops release the report that they prepared before the Council met.

The Role of Women in the Church

The second topic that is much more discussed nowadays, in civil society as well as among Catholics, is the quest to achieve equality of the sexes. While the Christian clerical caste has been treating women as inferior beings ever since the Apostles refused to take them seriously, the gap between institutional church and civil community in their willingness to treat women as equal to men has never been larger, and it continues to grow with every year that passes.

Pope Francis, for whom this issue is a significant personal blind spot, has tried to side-track the issue by pushing the 'equal but different' line of argument. His argument, which was also used by other recent popes, is that women differ in their very nature from men in their thought processes and their emotional priorities. Hence they are complementary to men and can provide a set of viewpoints that are enriching because they are different. However the more this line of reasoning is pursued, the more obvious its essential hypocrisy becomes.

The flaw in the church argument is that this valuable, complementary input into the acts and decisions of the hierarchy cannot happen unless women are to be

found in something approaching equal numbers to men among the church's authority figures and decision makers. The distinctive contribution of women's thought counts for nothing if women's mouths are shut and clerical ears are deaf. So here is something for the 2020 Plenary Council to consider: either call for at least half (and not the lower half!) of all papal and diocesan curial positions to be filled by women, or continue to give the impression that, in the clerical view, women are created only to be breeding machines or arrangers of flowers on the altars.

Conclusion

Consideration of the different viewpoint that women would provide brings us back again to the clerical sexual abuse crisis. In many assessments of how the crisis could have been avoided, one finds a common claim that the number of abusers would have been greatly reduced, and covering up of abuse would have been virtually eliminated, if women had been responsible for vetting clergy and running dioceses. So the two big issues for the Council to consider are in fact strongly linked. The clerical model of governance has been a

failure because in the event of a conflict of interest between clergy and laity, such as that generated by the sexual abuse crisis, the clerical caste automatically looks after its own. A governance model in which clergy serve the rest of the People of God, rather than lording it over them, is needed not because it is more 'democratic', but because it is more just. And furthermore, the lay people involved in governance should contain at least a majority, and perhaps a preponderance, of women in order to compensate for the male mindset of the clergy. We wait in hope! ☺



Mercy and the lying game

JAMES ALISON

James Alison is a priest, theologian, lecturer, retreat giver and itinerant preacher who lives in Madrid, Spain. This is the second part of an article about homosexuality and the priesthood. Reprinted with permission from *The Tablet* August 11, 2018.

In case it is not obvious, I write neither as a journalist, a sociologist, nor an historian: from the outside of what I describe. I am a priest who aspires to be a theologian, one who is entirely complicit with the realities involved. I realised, over twenty years ago, that the only thing stronger than the systemic trap in which I found myself, as it tried to spit me out, was forgiveness. Every accusatory approach, every desire for vengeance, every culturally or politically convenient way of point-scoring, merely helps tighten the self-defensive knots of the system. Hence the title of my first book to deal with this issue: *Faith beyond Resentment*. I have tried since then to incarnate and to preach forgiveness long before its need has been recognised, aware that no apparently sacred earthly structure ('principality' or 'power' in St Paul's language) can withstand the recognition that it is based on a lie. It is forgiveness which opens up the truth of things by revealing contingency and mutability, things that can be let go, where only sacral fixity and necessity seem to reign.

I offer, then, a (maybe dangerously) abbreviated reading from mercy of some elements of how we got here. Think back to the late nineteenth century. You have the beginnings of the strong impulse to female equality which would soon change voting laws throughout the western world. You have the beginnings of psychology, and with it the talkability of things that had previously not been mentionable, as well as a growing recognition of the

objectivity of elements of human 'subjectivity'. You also had the coining of the term 'homosexual', shifting the definition of the person involved from the criminal to some sort of quasi clinical way-of-being. And you had, in different languages, a growing literary fiction exploring in ever less coded ways the lives and desires of people we would now describe as gay or lesbian. If you were born in the 1890's, laws against homosexuality, blackmail, violence and mysterious suicides would have been in the formative ether of your growing-up. It was still a world in which most professions would have been male-only for some decades to come, and an informal 'don't ask don't tell' about many indiscretions would have been standard.

A different universe emerges

Fast forward to someone born in Europe or North America in the 1990's. A different universe. Female equality dramatically closer, psycho-sexual realities being discussed openly with a growing expectation of honesty, being gay no longer either criminal or clinical, same-sex marriage on the horizon, and a plethora of literature, films, role models and so on enjoyed as much by straight as by gay people. Many problems still in many places, but how far from the world where the British Government could ensure the execution of Roger Casement by leaking the diaries where he named his lovers, thus shocking a great man's highly-placed supporters into shamed silence?



And what of clerical life over the same century? While the young men born in the 1890's might not, despite a growing literature, have had words or names for themselves, one thing was clear: in a brutal world, a mono-sexual clerical caste where no one questioned your unmarried status was the safest place to be. Not only because you would be physically and legally safer in a genuinely 'don't ask, don't tell' world. But also, and this is the part often forgotten, because if you wanted to be good, you may well have been horrified at the squalor, moral and otherwise, which seemed to be what your boyish love would turn into over time, with no models better than young comrades, dead in war. In a clergy in which the only teaching at the time was about *acts*, it was not only a safe space, but one in which, by avoiding those acts, you could aspire to goodness.

However as the century evolved, the world moved on at every level. With far fewer single-sex professions and associations, the traditional 'don't ask don't tell' of same-sex sociability was falling apart, women quickly picking up things about men that straight men don't perceive. Following the

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mass mobilisations of the first half of the century, many more young people became aware of others like themselves. Emboldened to talk publicly about their lives and feelings in the first person, they began to live relatively openly, with ever less police attention or employment discrimination. De-criminalisation advanced all over the western world. Primitive attempts to 'cure homosexuals' yielded to the scientific realisation that there is a relatively stable life-long orientation underlying 'being this way', and no pathology intrinsic to it. The science was firm by the 1950s, and has only been growing clearer since. Moreover, life-long models of decent living: coupled, single, with children were becoming available. In short, for gay and lesbian people at least, the social ether was unimarginably healthier.

Don't ask don't tell no longer working

Meanwhile, the clerical safe space with its comparatively soft, informal 'hypocrisy' was, by comparison, becoming an ever more unsafe space as safety grew around it. 'Don't ask, don't tell' is not particularly cruel when it is just the way things are for the whole of society. But when 'don't ask, don't tell' shifts into becoming an ever more explicit imposition on a small group in the midst of a growing ease with 'asking' and 'telling' around them, you are heading for an artificially constructed trap. Not least because those on the outside can see ever more clearly what those on the inside have to pretend isn't there. Think of the politically inspired imposition of an already socially moribund 'don't ask don't tell' on our militaries in the 1990's. The result was an increase in persecution, dismissals, fearfulness, vindictiveness, loss of talent, and power to the zealots.

However the biggest threat to the old safe space in which 'acts' were evil, and 'being' was not defined, came as science caught up with the evidence of people's lives: evidence that a same-sex orientation is a more or less stable, regularly occurring, non-pathological minority variant in the human condition. What must it have been like for a gay cleric of the generation of Paul VI? You have lived through the social and psychological changes of the century, and you rejoice, as Vatican II did, at all that was positive in the post-war years. And yet at the same time the previous world's 'underside' (identification with which you might have been at some level fleeing for decades, and for good moral reasons), was about to creep not only into the open, in the carnivalesque sense of Stonewall and

subsequent Pride movements, but into the soul as something that you just are.

It is no surprise that the first ever public use by the Roman Congregations of the word 'homosexual' is in some short paragraphs (*Persona Humana* 1975) whose main thrust is to insist that no understanding of 'being' should ever be allowed to justify 'acts'. Although the link was not fully explained in 1975, the underlying reason is clear: the maintenance of the evil of the 'acts' depends upon the status of 'being that way' as somehow negative or anomalous. For if the 'being' were a non-pathological minority variant, then of course, the 'acts' might in some circumstances be an appropriately human expression. By 1986 the rationale needed to be made more explicit, and so the 'homosexual tendency' had to be described as 'objectively disordered' in order to maintain the 'intrinsically evil' nature of the acts (*Homosexualitatis Problema* 1986). And with that description, an aprioristic deduction was made to trump any human scientific learning, and the once safe space became a definitional trap for any who had entered into it, and for all those entering into it henceforth.

Let me explain: Think of those coming into the seminary world between, say, 1960 and 1990. They will have been undergoing a shift in understanding from a world in which 'acts' were bad, and 'being' meant 'not like *them*', to a world in which 'being' meant 'actually quite like them, and so what?' and 'acts' being fairly banal. Given that some realise they are gay when pre-pubertal, and others not until middle-age, you can imagine that a significant number of young men, unsure of themselves, and formed, at least in part, by traditional attitudes placing them at risk of hell, join the seminary half-believing in their disordered being. Eventually they find others like themselves, and it may only be years after ordination that, through love or learning, they discover that there is nothing wrong with their 'being'.

If the discovery (that what their employer teaches them about themselves is wrong) be made early enough and they are bothered by it, they may leave. If the discovery occurs during their own personal and professional growing up as priests, they may realise that their commitments (i.e. to the discipline of celibacy or vows) are not valid. For such commitments were assumed while those making them were under the influence of a false teaching concerning themselves, a teaching imposed on them as if from God by their employer. So, loving the priesthood, they continue their work (some are too old to be able to

leave without penury) and may entertain discreet relationships in good conscience.

Thus you have the bizarre situation in which a teaching which, in context, originally helped genuinely pious gay men of yesteryear who wanted to live chastely (and I imagine that at least a couple of recent Holy Fathers were of this sort) has become converted by 'facts on the ground', and the theological attempt to resist them, into a trap. Those gay clerics who become relatively healthy through their experience with others like themselves in their ecclesial belonging (and that's not a few in every generation moving forward) learn discretely to ignore both a teaching based on a falsehood about who they are, and the formal commitments made while under the illusion of that false teaching, and it becomes functional for everyone to turn a blind eye. The same teaching is functional for those who are extremely unhealthy (it reinforces their refusal to accept who they are) and for opportunistic careerists, enabling these two latter types to become the most vociferous allies of the genuinely pious, but frightened, senior celibates in the maintenance of the appearance of the old world. Doesn't that look like much of the senior clergy from, say, 1965 to 2013?

Tangentially, I hope it also hints at why such a mutually deceptive gay-heavy world has been so useless at dealing with child abuse. 'Don't ask don't tell' can function as a way of genuine mercy among gay men who don't want to cast stones in a glass house where the assumption is of relationships which may be illicit according to house rules, but are neither illegal nor pathological. But it can also be used (and certainly has been) as a cover for blackmail by those who have genuinely illegal and pathological behaviour to hide. The combination of these two has led to an inability to distinguish, in practice, between 'naughty' gay men and 'criminal' paedophiles. The instinct not to want to know, especially if senior people are involved, is very strong, as the Chilean debacle has demonstrated.

Changing the situation

What is to be done, and what is quietly happening? In my view the first thing is for the laity to be encouraged in their fast growing majority acceptance of being gay as a normal part of life. This, despite fierce resistance from elements of the clerical closet. Pope Francis' reported conversation with Juan Carlos Cruz (a gay man abused in his youth by the Chilean priest, Fr Karadima) is a gem in this area: 'Look Juan Carlos, the pope loves you this way. God made you like this and he loves you'. This

remark led to much spluttering and explaining away from those who realise that the moment you say 'God made you like this' then the game is up as regards the 'intrinsic evil' of the acts.

Nevertheless, it is only when straightforward, and obviously true, Christian messaging like Francis' becomes normal among the laity themselves that honesty can become the norm among the clergy. Otherwise we will continue with the absurd and pharisaical current situation in which there is one rule for the clergy – doesn't matter what you do so long as you don't say so in public or challenge the teaching – and another for the laity, passed off as the teaching of the Church, and brutally enforced, for instance, among employees of Catholic schools, parish organists, softball coaches and the like.

Only when it is clear, as it is increasingly, that the laity are quite confident in the obviously true view that if you are this way, 'then learning to love appropriately is going to flow from, not despite, this' will it be possible to change, without scandal, the formal rules regarding the clergy. I bring this out since much was made of Francis' reported answer to the Italian Bishops when asked if they should admit gay men to the seminary: if you are in any doubt, no. This was read as Francis being against gay men.

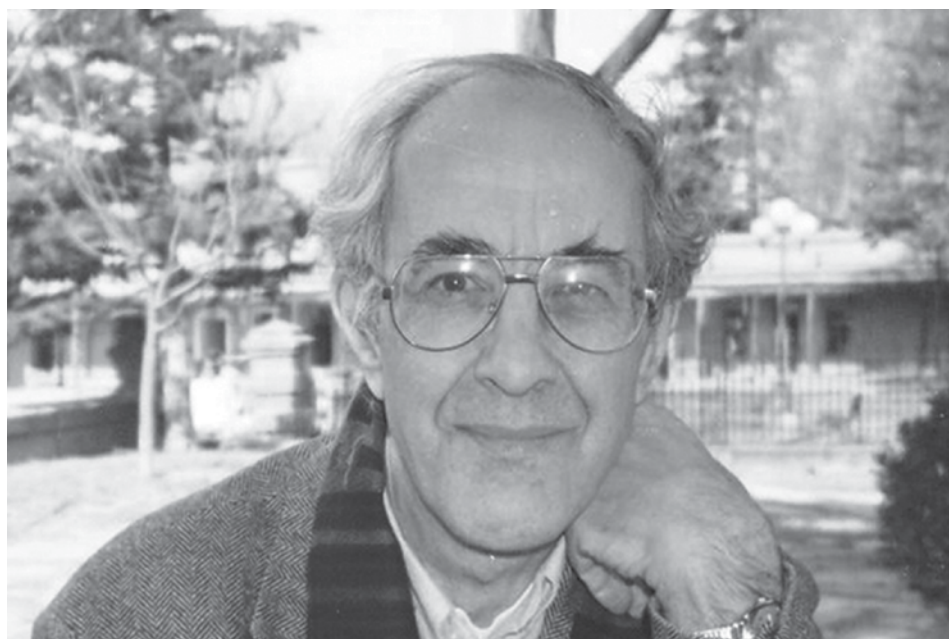
I read the remark differently: that of a wise and merciful man addressing a group of men, a significant proportion of whom are gay, and telling them, in effect, that only those among them who are capable of honesty in dealing with their future charges should induct people like themselves into the clergy. 'Are you yourself going to vacillate in standing up publicly for the honesty of the young man? If so, don't make his future dependent on your cowardice'.

It looks to me as though the Lord's mercy, already reaching lay people as relief and as joy, is beginning to pierce the clerical closet in the shape of a firm, but gently upheld, demand for penitential first-person truthfulness as we are painfully let go from the systemic trap. The alternative, as Francis surely knows, is to continue with liars inducting liars into a game, the closet forming and enforcing the closet. And all of us finding that the Lord's vineyard is very properly being taken away from us, its terrified tenants, and put into the hands of others, determined neither by sexual orientation, marital status or gender, who will produce its fruit. ☺

Today's seminaries need to be inclusive

MICHAEL HIGGINS

Michael W Higgins, distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, is a biographer of Thomas Merton and Jean Vanier and co-author with Kevin Burns of the forthcoming *Impressively Free: Henri Nouwen as a Model for a Reformed Priesthood*. He writes that radical change in the training of priests is needed to combat clericalism. Reproduced with permission of the Publisher, *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly*, 12 January 2019. www.thetablet.co.uk



Would someone like Fr Henri Nouwen (pictured) now be disinclined to enter the seminary? Pope Francis set out to usher in a new era of openness, but some of his recent remarks suggest he isn't going far enough – his thinking still seems fettered to the old ways.

Papa Bergoglio continues to surprise. But the "Pope of Surprises" might want to grant a few less interviews; they expose him in ways that heighten his vulnerability – in this his critics rejoice – and inspire his admirers: such uncalculated openness is rare in high clerical circles after all. But when the result is befuddlement, no one wins.

The publication by the Claretians of a book-length interview with Francis conducted by the order's director, Fr Fernando Prado, in his native Spanish and dealing among other things with the Pope's reflections on the priesthood and homosexuality, has generated a torrent of responses. Francis abominates the compromised ministry of those who live double lives, upholds the discipline of mandatory celibacy, and states that those with an "ingrained tendency" toward homoerotic affection "should not be accepted into the ministry or consecrated life".

Of course, those who treat their commitment to a celibate and chaste life in a cavalier manner, whether straight or gay, should be held to account. But this universal pastor who stunned the Catholic world when he said "Who am I to judge?" appears to do precisely that, judge. Hence, the befuddlement.

Were his strictures to be implemented someone like the influential spiritual writer Henri J.M. Nouwen would almost certainly be disinclined to enter the seminary – or perhaps forbidden from doing so if he was open about his sexuality.

What an impoverishment that would be not only for Catholics, but for countless others as well.

Nouwen was a gay priest who respected his vows, struggled with his sexuality in a searingly honest way, understood the anguish that accompanies loneliness, eschewed any ideological or advocacy role because he saw himself as a servant of Jesus and the Gospels with no pastoral agenda other than affirming the "belovedness" of all, and served as a listening post for thousands of people, irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation, on matters of the heart.

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Like Thomas Merton, the contemplative poet Francis celebrated in his address to the Joint Houses of Congress during his visit to the United States in 2015, Nouwen exercised a vital moral and prophetic role, fighting for an alignment of social activism with prayerful solitude, prioritising justice over canonical rigidity, seeking the spiritually-centered life of interior freedom over the scattered life of consumerist and utilitarian enslavement. He was a man of the Eucharist, a confessor of uncommon attentiveness, and a priest who internalised the call to non-judgment and mercy – the very qualities Francis underscores as the essence of priestly ministry.

And, yet, if he were to present himself tomorrow as a candidate for the priesthood or religious life it is likely that he would be discouraged, his presence in the seminary feared as a moral contagion. This desperately sad state of affairs undercuts Bergoglio's call for the presbyterate to be shorn of its isolating and destructive clericalism and its culture of careerism and entitlement.

How does one begin to change the process of educating future priests if at the same time you establish a hostile environment toward gay men? How do you usher in a new era of openness in formation when you stymie honesty, reduce intimacy to genital activity, and foster an atmosphere of guarded affection and sexual repression?

When Nouwen was a seminarian in the Netherlands in the 1950s he was a zealous one, happy with his confrères, surprised by the narrowness of the curriculum but by no means a dissenter. He accepted the conventions in place for his formation and, as his ordination and First Mass photographs reveal, took palpable delight in his priesthood, the realisation of a boyhood dream.

He never questioned the rightness of his choice. His calling defined him. But that calling underwent many permutations over the years as he matured in his ministry, and he lamented in retrospect the absence in his seminary years of being taught how to pray and how to be intimate.

Such intimacy, of course, is not erotic in the narrow sense, but experienced through relationships that embrace rather than flee affectivity. The celibate priesthood can be a vehicle for deepening one's capacity to love and receive love, or it can be a foreclosure of such human yearning out of fear. Sublimation is not the same as suppression; being vulnerable to others through the recognition of one's own vulnerability is not spiritual weakness but spiritual wisdom.

At a time when the Church is wracked by revelations of clerical molestation, sexual impropriety, rape and abuse, the calls to "clean up the mess" are gaining loud traction. Benedict XVI wanted to scour the filth but seemed incapable in the end of handling the curial apparatus and attendant challenges, in spite of having been a curial official for a quarter of a century. He did some things, the public sanctioning of the disgraced founder of the Legion of Christ principal among them, but scandal after scandal – as many venal as venereal – wore him down.

Enter: Jorge Mario Bergoglio. This prelate, unfamiliar with the ways of the Tiber, but recognised by the papal electors as an effective leader in the South American Church, took over with a mandate from his fellow cardinals to reform the Curia. But Francis had no intention of limiting reform of the Church to reform of the Vatican bureaucracy. Hence, growing episcopal discomfiture.

Francis knows that to effect genuine reform of the Church, to address the curse of clericalism, he must move beyond berating hierarchs for their spiritual hypocrisy and admonishing priests to be humble and not lord it over their parishioners.

He senses that the way the institution moulds its candidates must be fundamentally changed, but every indication so far, either in his decrees or in his homilies and interviews, suggest that his thinking remains fettered to the old ways, tinkering with the system rather than starting afresh with that freedom of the spirit he regularly celebrates.

John Cornwell, the papal biographer and Catholic commentator, in a provocative recent piece in *Vanity Fair* differentiates the Francis approach to ministry from the Benedict approach. The latter sees in the life and spirituality of French rural parson Jean-Maire Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, an exemplar for the priestly life, while the former is drawn to the radical simplicity of Il Poverello – and the Pope's namesake, to add spice to the recipe, was not a priest.

Cornwell contrasts Vianney, who "scourged himself at night until blood ran down the walls. He slept with a rock for a pillow and lived on cold boiled potatoes", with Francis of Assisi, "with his insistence on caring for the poor and living in harmony with all living creatures".

Both of the saints exhibit an exemplary humility and both lived a spiritual life of austerity that might strike right-thinking people of today as excessive, but the tenderness of Francis offers a more

appealing approach to ministry than the Curé's self-flagellating rigour.

But this kindness seems strangely held in reserve when it comes to the matter of sexual orientation – which in the Vatican's ongoing war with gender theory is itself a disputed category – and religious and ministerial life.

No matter how it is nuanced, Francis' words make ministry and consecrated life a cold place for homosexuals. If the ranks of the clergy – diocesan in particular – are to be spiritually recalibrated for a new time, if it is recognised that the process of formation is arcane, the writings and priestly life of Nouwen provide inspiration and genuinely fresh theological thinking.

Even a glimpse at his outpouring of spiritual handbooks or his thousands of letters to people seeking his spiritual and psychological counsel, or at the lasting impact he made on those – and they are in the hundreds of thousands – who have read him in translation, attended a retreat or workshop he directed, or were among his scores of devoted students at Notre Dame, Yale, Harvard, Boston College and Regis College, or the members of the L'Arche communities he lived and worked beside, will all attest to the fact that Nouwen was the quintessential priest. Presiding at the Eucharist, being Eucharist, was at the heart of his ministry.

If Francis wants to purge the Church of the clericalism and careerism he excoriates, then embracing the gifts of all who respond to their vocation with mature discernment is critical.

The rich hospitality mixed with mercy that is the pastoral signature of the Argentine Pope should also be at the heart of the revitalisation of the clergy. The Church cannot afford to lose a future Nouwen to the priesthood because of an unimaginative anthropology or a misguided perception of sexual maturity. ☪

*"We are priests best
when we are
priests together."*

Pope Francis on the sexual abuse crisis

Pope Francis wrote to the US Catholic Bishops on 1 January 2019. Francis calls for the spiritual practice of discernment, working together and the seeking of unity. Below is an abridged text.

The full text can be found here: <http://uscgb.org/about/leadership/holy-see/francis/>



... We know that, given the seriousness of the situation, no response or approach seems adequate; nonetheless, we as pastors must have the ability, and above all the wisdom, to speak a word born of heartfelt, prayerful and collective listening to the Word of God and to the pain of our people. A word born of the prayer of shepherds who, like Moses, fight and intercede for their people (cf. *Ex* 32:30-32).

... 'It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all' (*Mk* 10:43-45). With these words, Jesus intervenes and acknowledges the indignation felt by the disciples who heard James and John asking to sit at the right and left of the Master (cf. *Mk* 10:37). His words will help guide us in our shared reflection...

As the elderly Simeon had prophesied, difficult and critical moments can bring to light the deepest thoughts, tensions and contradictions present in the disciples individually and as a group (cf. *Lk* 2:35). No one can consider himself exempt from this; we are asked as a community to take care that at those times our decisions, choices, actions and intentions are not tainted by these inner conflicts and tensions, but are instead a response to the Lord who is life for the world. At times of great confusion and uncertainty, we need to be attentive and discerning, to free our hearts of compromises and false certainties, in order to hear what the Lord asks of us in the mission he has given us. Many actions can be helpful, good and necessary, and may even seem correct, but not all of them have the "flavours of the Gospel. To put it colloquially, we have to be careful that "the cure does not become worse than the disease". And this requires of us wisdom,

prayer, much listening and fraternal communion.

It cannot be like that with you

In recent years, the Church in the United States has been shaken by various scandals that have gravely affected its credibility. These have been times of turbulence in the lives of all those victims who suffered in their flesh the abuse of power and conscience and sexual abuse on the part of ordained ministers, male and female religious and lay faithful. But times of turbulence and suffering also for their families and for the entire People of God.

The Church's credibility has been seriously undercut and diminished by these sins and crimes, but even more by the efforts made to deny or conceal them. This has led to a growing sense of uncertainty, distrust and vulnerability among the faithful. As we know, the mentality that would cover things up, far from helping to resolve conflicts, enabled them to fester and cause even greater harm to the network of relationships that today we are called to heal and restore.

We know that the sins and crimes that were committed, and their repercussions on the ecclesial, social and cultural levels, have deeply affected the faithful. They have caused great perplexity, upset and confusion; and this can often serve as an excuse for some to discredit and call into question the selfless lives of all those many Christians who show an immense love for humanity inspired by the God who became man. Whenever the Gospel message proves inconvenient or disturbing, many voices are raised in an attempt to silence that message by pointing to the sins and inconsistencies of the members of the Church and, even more, of her pastors.

The hurt caused by these sins and crimes has also deeply affected the communion of bishops, and generated not the sort of healthy and necessary disagreements and tensions found in any living body, but rather division and dispersion (cf. *Mt* 26:31)...

... Loss of credibility calls for a specific approach, since it cannot be regained by issuing stern decrees or by simply creating new committees or improving flow charts, as if we were in charge of a department of

human resources. That kind of vision ends up reducing the mission of the bishop and that of the Church to a mere administrative or organizational function in the 'evangelization business'. Let us be clear: many of those things are necessary yet insufficient, since they cannot grasp and deal with reality in its complexity; ultimately, they risk reducing everything to an organizational problem.

The loss of credibility also raises painful questions about the way we relate to one another. Clearly, a living fabric has come undone, and we, like weavers, are called to repair it. This involves our ability, or inability, as a community to forge bonds and create spaces that are healthy, mature and respectful of the integrity and privacy of each person. It involves our ability to bring people together and to get them enthused and confident about a broad, shared project that is at once unassuming, solid, sober and transparent. This requires not only a new approach to management, but also a change in our mind-set (*metanoia*), our way of praying, our handling of power and money, our exercise of authority and our way of relating to one another and to the world around us. Changes in the Church are always aimed at encouraging a constant state of missionary and pastoral conversion capable of opening up new ecclesial paths ever more in keeping with the Gospel and, as such, respectful of human dignity. The programmatic aspect of our activity should be joined to a paradigmatic aspect that brings out its underlying spirit and meaning. The two are necessarily linked. Without this clear and decisive focus, everything we do risks being tainted by self-referentiality, self preservation and defensiveness, and thus doomed from the start. Our efforts may be well-structured and organized, but will lack evangelical power, for they will not help us to be a Church that bears credible witness, but instead 'a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal' (*1 Cor* 13:1).

In a word, a new ecclesial season needs bishops who can teach others how to discern God's presence in the history of his people, and not mere administrators. Ideas can be discussed but vital situations have to be discerned. Consequently, amid the upset and confusion experienced by our communities, our primary duty is to foster a shared spirit of discernment, rather than to seek the relative calm resulting from compromise or from a democratic vote where some emerge as 'winners' and others

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not. No! It is about finding a collegial and paternal way of embracing the present situation, one that, most importantly, can protect those in our care from losing hope and feeling spiritually abandoned. This will enable us to be fully immersed in reality, seeking to appreciate and hear it from within, without being held hostage to it.

We know that times of trial and tribulation can threaten our fraternal communion. Yet we also know that they can become times of grace sustaining our commitment to Christ and making it credible. This credibility will not be grounded in ourselves, our statements, our merits or our personal or collective good name. All these are signs of our attempt – nearly always subconscious – to justify ourselves on the basis of our own strengths and abilities (or of someone else's misfortune). Credibility will be the fruit of a united body that, while acknowledging its sinfulness and limitations, is at the same time capable of preaching the need for conversion. For we do not want to preach ourselves but rather Christ who died for us (cf. 2 Cor 4:5). We want to testify that at the darkest moments of our history the Lord makes himself present, opens new paths and anoints our faltering faith, our wavering hope and our tepid charity.

A personal and collective awareness of our limitations reminds us, as Saint John XXIII said, that 'it must not be imagined that authority knows no bounds' (*Pacem in Terris*, ed. Carlen, 47). It cannot be aloof in its discernment and in its efforts to pursue the common good. A faith and consciousness lacking reference to the community would be like a 'Kantian transcendental': it will end up proclaiming 'a God without Christ, a Christ without the Church, a Church without its people'. It will set up a false and dangerous opposition between personal and ecclesial life, between a God of pure love and the suffering flesh of Christ. Worse, it could risk turning God into an 'idol' for one particular group. Constant reference to universal communion, as also to the magisterium and age-old tradition of the Church, saves believers from absolutizing any one group, historical period or culture within the Church. Our catholicity is at stake also in our ability as pastors to learn how to listen to one another, to give and receive help from one another, to work together and to receive the enrichment that other churches can contribute to our following of Christ. The catholicity of the Church cannot be reduced merely to a question of doctrine or law; rather, it reminds us that we are not solitary pilgrims: 'If one member suffers, all suffer together' (1 Cor 12:26).

This collegial awareness of our being sinners in need of constant conversion, albeit deeply distressed and pained by all that that has happened, allows us to enter into affective communion with our people. It will liberate us from the quest of false, facile and futile forms of triumphalism that would defend spaces rather than initiate processes. It will keep us from turning to reassuring certainties that keep us from approaching and appreciating the extent and implications of what has happened. It will also aid in the search for suitable measures free of false premises or rigid formulations no longer capable of speaking to or stirring the hearts of men and women in our time.

Affective communion with the feelings of our people, with their disheartenment, urges us to exercise a collegial spiritual fatherhood that does not offer banal responses or act defensively, but instead seeks to learn – like the prophet Elijah amid his own troubles – to listen to the voice of the Lord. That voice is not to be found in the tempest or the earthquake, but in the calm born of acknowledging our hurt before the present situation and letting ourselves together be summoned anew by God's word (cf. 1 Kg 19:9-18).

This approach demands of us the decision to abandon a *modus operandi* of disparaging, discrediting, playing the victim or the scold in our relationships, and instead to make room for the gentle breeze that the Gospel alone can offer. Let us not forget that 'the collegial lack of a heartfelt and prayerful acknowledgment of our limitations prevents grace from working more effectively within us, for no room is left for bringing about the potential good that is part of a sincere and genuine journey of growth' (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 50). Let us try to break the vicious circle of recrimination, undercutting and discrediting, by avoiding gossip and slander in the pursuit of a path of prayerful and contrite acceptance of our limitations and sins, and the promotion of dialogue, discussion and discernment. This will dispose us to finding evangelical paths that can awaken and encourage the reconciliation and credibility that our people and our mission require of us. We will do this if we can stop projecting onto others our own confusion and discontent, which are obstacles to unity, and dare to come together, on our knees, before the Lord and let ourselves be challenged by his wounds, in which we will be able to see the wounds of the world. Jesus tells us: 'You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their

importance felt. It cannot be like that with you'.

Those who aspire to greatness must serve the needs of all

God's faithful people and the Church's mission continue to suffer greatly as a result of abuses of power and conscience and sexual abuse, and the poor way that they were handled, as well as the pain of seeing an episcopate lacking in unity and concentrated more on pointing fingers than on seeking paths of reconciliation. This situation forces us to look to what is essential and to rid ourselves of all that stands in the way of a clear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

... This attitude is not concerned with respect or success and garnering applause for our actions; instead, it requires that we as pastors really decide to be a seed that will grow whenever and however the Lord best determines. That decision will save us from falling into the trap of measuring the value of our efforts by the standards of functionalism and efficiency that govern the business world. The path to be taken is rather one of openness to the efficacy and transformative power of God's Kingdom, which, like a mustard seed, the smallest and most insignificant of seeds, becomes a tree in which the birds of the air make their nests (cf. Mt 13:32-33). Amid the tempest, we must never lose faith in the quiet, daily and effective power of the Holy Spirit at work in human hearts and in all of history.

Credibility is born of trust, and trust is born of sincere, daily, humble and generous service to all, but especially to those dearest to the Lord's heart (cf. Mt 25:31-46). It will be a service offered not out of concern with marketing or strategizing to reclaim lost prestige or to seek accolades, but rather – as I insisted in the recent Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate No 9* – because it belongs to 'the beating heart of the Gospel'. ...

Fraternally, Francis. ☩

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Archbishop Fisher's Christmas message disheartening

JOHN BUGGY

John Buggy, on behalf of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR), wrote an open letter to respond to Archbishop Fisher's Christmas homily and his comments on religious freedom. ACCCR comprises twelve separate member organisations representing thousands of Catholics who seek reform in our Church. Members include clergy, religious and lay people across Australia.



Dear Archbishop Fisher,

We write to you in response to your Christmas message which has received publicity beyond your Sydney Archdiocese. As we begin the year of 2019, Catholics in Australia look forward with both hope and scepticism to a Plenary Council of the whole Australian Catholic Church. There is hope that the scandals revealed by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will finally elicit long needed changes to areas of Church teaching and practice. There is hope that the many submissions to the Council's preparation made by ordinary Catholics will amplify this need for change. But there is also considerable scepticism arising from the fear that a hierarchy, so traditionally unresponsive to feedback, will evade the issues seen as critical to most of the faithful. We write this letter to you representing thousands of practising Catholics from twelve organizations across Australia who fear that most of the hierarchy of our Church is anxious to keep to 'business as usual'.

In this context it is very disheartening to read your Christmas message concerning threats to the Church using misleading exaggerations of the kind that discredits many politicians. Contrary to your claims, there are no 'moves to make the celebration of the sacrament of confession illegal, to defund church schools, to charge an Archbishop with discrimination for teaching about marriage, and to deny faith based institutions the right to choose what kind of community they will be'.

Those attempting to protect children from sexual abuse are introducing mandatory criminal reporting applying to all in society to ensure that known paedophiles do not remain at large, with very limited impact

on the seal of confession. You appear to forget that while Jesus spoke in such uncharacteristically strong language against those who scandalise children, we can only imagine what more he would have said about those who sexually abuse them and bring about such a tragic impact on their lives. We very much doubt that he would have called it 'bad behaviour', as you described it to the Royal Commission.

No political party is looking to 'defund Catholic schools'. Your statement implies the removal of all funding when it is the redistribution of funds that is the ongoing debate that may lead to a reduction in the amount for some Catholic schools.

You might also consider the values reflected in and the outcomes desired from the Catholic school system. The youth of today illustrate so often that they are influenced by democratic processes, gender equality, equal opportunity, and science and learning as opposed to unquestioned traditions. 'Secularism' is not an anti-religious ideology and it appears the above influences arise from the secularism that you often rail against without further explanation. We are not surprised if the youth coming through our schools do not see these values present in Church structures, teaching, and modelling by Church leaders as so many leave aside the practice of religion upon leaving school. The ever-dwindling numbers of Catholics who attend Mass regularly are unlikely to be bolstered while this continues.

Any legitimate institution can defend its right to employ people who support its values in the roles and activities that are associated with a particular position. That right does not extend to discriminating on the basis of gender, religion, or personal belief. If you think otherwise then you

should say so instead of claiming that legal rights that you now have will be taken away. Faith-based institutions, or any institution for that matter, do not have an unfettered 'right to choose what kind of community they will be' if they contravene the anti-discriminatory laws of our society. You should honestly state what you fear rather than make unsubstantiated assertions.

We respectfully request that you refrain from sweeping generalisations that appear to be an inappropriate attempt to elicit indignation and protect the power of the institution. The Church used to be the beacon that reflected morality to the world but in recent times in Australia it has been the State taking the initiative in enacting laws and practices that indicate what a just and equitable society requires.

The opportunity is now before us, as the Plenary Council 2020/21 approaches, to take a close look at the type of Church that we want it to be if it is to thrive and continue to have Christ-like influence into the future. We expect that you, as the leader of a major diocese, will take a significant role in listening and dialogue with the faithful particularly in this year of preparation for the Plenary Council.

We need to keep our community informed and request a response from you please regarding the basis on which you relied in making these statements that we have identified as misleading. ☹️



– BEQUESTS –

Have you considered leaving a bequest to NCP in your Will to help us continue working to support Australian priests?

Further information contact the NCP National Office.

The killing must stop

PETER MAHER

Peter Maher, retired Sydney Catholic priest, has worked in ministry with LGBT Catholics for over 25 years. He has seen the pain and depression many have experienced at the poor pastoral care and explanation of Church teaching. He argues that the practices that produce such outcomes must stop and we must return to the gospel and Catholic social teaching for guidance.

I awoke to Archbishop Comensoli's evidence to the Senate inquiry ahead of the Federal Government plans to strip schools of the right to expel LGBTIQ pupils reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The report said he 'suggested gay teachers would be more acceptable at religious schools if they lived far away from the school and their relationships were less visible.'

The report then quoted Archbishop Comensoli: *Someone [who] lives in one part of Melbourne up in the north, and they might be a maths teacher in a southern part of Melbourne – there's no connection in terms of relationships of location and so on. They've made it known privately to the principal that they're in a same-sex relationship, but the person themselves is quite willing to speak publicly and act publicly within the school context in accordance with the mission and identity – there would be no question asked there I don't think.*

I found this difficult enough given the disaster of the bishop's 'don't tell' strategy on clergy sex abuse that will plague us for generations, but it is blatantly untrue. I have worked with LGBTIQ Catholics for over 25 years and have heard many stories recounted by committed gay Catholics working in Catholic institutions sharing experiences that are the exact opposite. Few have been sacked but many are hounded out by threats of no possible advancement or fear of the consequences of being 'found out'.

Comensoli went on to say: *It's not just a matter of one's attribute – it's what one does with it that makes a difference, ... [It was] when it becomes an act of advocacy.* Frank FitzGerald, executive officer at Catholic Secondary Principals Australia said: *We're all very comfortable with the attribute situation – it's when it escalates into advocacy.*

Within minutes of this story breaking I had two emails, a phone call and, later that day, a long conversation with gay Catholics I advocate with for justice for LGBT people in the world and the church. They were heartbroken. They can be gay but not tell anyone, they can work for the church

in its many pastoral, health, educational and social welfare roles advocating for justice, compassion, inclusion and equity, but not for themselves when the discriminatory treatment and forced invisibility is precisely the injustice that motivates them, not just for themselves but for the many hurting LGBTIQ siblings they know, and indeed, for the dead ones they know.

They scream in frustration because they are motivated by the justice and social teachings they have learned through their Catholic upbringing. They don't understand how their leaders could ask them to advocate for justice for everyone but not their LGBTIQ siblings. They don't understand how their leaders could be so blind to this anomaly. They wonder what would have happened if Jesus had not advocated for all the marginalised – if he had picked and chosen based on his own prejudice and not listened to the Syrophenician woman when he was found to be selective. LGBT Catholics grew up on these stories and now they know how important it is to advocate for their LGBT siblings to stop the pain and damage. They are being told by their leaders not to advocate for those who are suffering, not oppose injustice and not to speak out when they know the oppression and denial that leads to social, emotional, spiritual and even literal death.

If you think this is overdramatising the situation, talk with a few LGBT Catholics. Ask them their story and listen to their passion for justice and human rights and then tell them not to be themselves in public and not to advocate for justice for their LGBT sisters and brothers.

The next day I saw the film *Boy Erased*. This film, based on the true story of Garrard Conley, is about a survivor of reparative conversion therapy in Arkansas about 20 years ago. I know the Catholic bishops do not support gay conversion therapy programs, but the lies and deception needed to be gay and Catholic recommended by Archbishop Comensoli in his submission to the Senate Inquiry, has many of the hallmarks shown in this film that destroy people's lives and hopes. One

boy commits suicide after being in the program. Everyone who works with LGBT Catholics will know that LGBT Catholics can name LGBT siblings who have suicided because they could not reconcile their God-given sexuality with their faith or who were so rejected by their Catholic families, youth groups or church guides, they either rejected themselves, their God, their church or their lives.

The killing is not just the suicides. It's the killing of the emotional and spiritual life of those rejected on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Many LGBT Catholics have been emotionally, psychologically and spiritually crushed by the treatment at the hands of their Catholic family members and poor institutional and pastoral responses. This can cause serious psychological and spiritual harm. Many leave the church as they can take no more.

Paul Harris, a Sydney gay Catholic, wrote a letter to Archbishop Comensoli (see box next to this article) to explain how hurtful his testimony had been. Comensoli has replied with an apology and an offer to meet with Paul who hopes it will be an opportunity to assist in a process of better understanding. This is an example of how the discriminated against minority must shoulder the responsibility to educate, and how tiring and depressing this becomes.

Meanwhile Archbishop Fisher reflected in *The National Catholic Register* after the Youth Synod that he was pleased to hear the young people speak but that bishops must not take on board their ideas because the only true teaching in the church comes from the bishops. He even opined that the final document was not magisterial because it didn't come from the bishops. Even though over two thirds of the bishops had voted for every one of its 167 paragraphs, it's not magisterial. Is Fisher saying that what lay people say is only valuable to the extent that it tells bishops what they need to teach laypeople?

This is particularly worrying in regard to the paragraph that got the highest number of dissenting votes which was the one on homosexuality. It was considered too weak by nearly a third of the bishops even after they had managed to take out the use of the preferred term people of different sexualities call themselves: LGBTI.

Archbishop Comensoli and his clerical think-a-likes might do well to listen to the people who know what it's like to be denigrated, harassed, bullied, hounded-

out, excluded, discriminated against and told to shut-up. Maybe they might reflect on the story of the Syrophoenician woman first so they might be open to learn something about the pain felt by LGBT Catholics who are committed to their faith. Maybe bishops could then become partners in transforming our church by advocacy with LGBT Catholics rather than making them the new lepers of a misguided ideology that bans advocacy by LGBT Catholics for justice and equality.

Why do I say this? I have worked with many Catholics who have tried to understand how to be gay and Catholic and I know their pain and discouragement at the lack of understanding from their church leaders. I know the damage done and I don't intend to stand by and watch and collude. These people are dying, sometimes literally, but more often inside. They are being denied their life-line – their humanity and their God. What makes it worse is that they know the Catholic church's social teaching and its stand against discrimination. The hypocrisy is breathtaking. But if it has been you who suffered because of it and at the hands of

those who taught you to believe in the Jesus of inclusion, it is heartbreaking and soul destroying. The killing must stop.

Dear Archbishop,

I have been a faith-filled Catholic all my 51 years of life. For 30 of those years I accepted amongst other things, that I am also gay. For all of this time I have persevered with my Catholic tradition despite many moments of doubt and feelings of rejection by the tribe to which I was baptised into.

Your words today I feel, have tipped me over the edge. You are telling me that I should hide away from the authentic person God created me to be. That would be, as Jesus often said, to live the life of a hypocrite.

Whilst on that point, Archbishop, I plead with you to stop saying one thing, such as *"Catholic schools don't care if teachers identify as gay"*, yet in the same breath saying that we must hide away.

Please come clean. Are gay and lesbian people welcome in the Catholic teaching profession?

By your comments, I'd say the answer is "NO". That is what I am hearing loud and clear with all this doublespeak.

If being who I am is an act of advocacy, then I am out. I've had enough. I cannot go on contributing to an institution that cannot see the *"log in its own eye"* (Mt7:3-5).

But no, I sincerely believe that one CAN be fully alive as a Christian AND fully alive as a same sex attracted human being. And I intend to remain so. *"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"* (Jn10:10). This I believe.

Archbishop, with all due respect, on this issue, I also believe, that you could be better informed.

Painfully and sincerely yours,

Paul Harris. ☪

NCP exists for you and because of you!

New Zealand Royal Commission into child abuse to include churches: victory or lame albatross?

MURRAY HEASLEY

Dr Murray Heasley, PhD (Otago University), is the spokesperson for the *Network of Survivors in Faith-based Institutions and Their Supporters in New Zealand*. The New Zealand Royal Commission into Historical Abuse of Children in State Care was announced in February 2018 and extended in November 2018 to include abuse within faith-based care institutions. Will this expansion be reason for celebration or will it be the most pyrrhic of victories?

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse had been in progress for 4 years before moves to have the New Zealand Government establish a similar inquiry became public. In February 2017 an open letter from the NZ Human Rights Commission calling for an inquiry and a public apology to those abused was published in the *New Zealand Herald*; five months later a similar request was made by then-Opposition Leader Jacinda Ardern to Prime Minister Bill English; and in August another call came from the United Nations.

In November 2017, two months after winning the general election, the new Labour-led coalition government promised to set up an inquiry within 100 days and, on 1 February 2018, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, with Internal Affairs

Minister Tracey Martin, officially announced a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care. Submissions were then invited from the public on the Inquiry's terms of reference.

From the outset the government wanted a restricted inquiry, looking only into the abuse that had occurred in State care, namely, orphanages and residential homes run by government agencies. Suggestions that it examine abuse in faith-based care would, according to Prime Minister Ardern, have a "diluting" effect, and Minister Martin rejected such a proposal as a "witch-hunt". Even the newly appointed chair of the Royal Commission, Sir Anand Satyanand, a Catholic of Indo-Fijian heritage and former Governor-General, opined that faith-based abuse was a mere "hinterland" of interest.



However, two months later, to the government's chagrin, Sir Anand recommended to Minister Martin that the Inquiry's terms of reference be expanded to include child sexual abuse in faith-based care, even though it would add two more years of investigation to the 2-year time frame initially envisaged. It was not the recommendation the government was seeking or expecting.

What scuttled the original draft terms of reference and made them untenable was the avalanche of 401 submissions sent to the Commission in April 2018: 129 called for an expanded inquiry to include abuse in faith-based care (only 5 opposed), and 93 called for the original limited time frame of 1950-1999 to be extended into

Continued page 24

the 21st century (just 6 opposed). Even the NZ Catholic Bishops' Conference said it was willing to participate in an expanded inquiry.

With notions of dilution, witch hunts and hinterland crushed by the weight of public opinion, Sir Anand had no option but to recommend an expanded inquiry, and the government, faced with massive public outrage if it did not comply, backed down after 6 months deliberation and announced the expanded inquiry in November 2018.

The Royal Commission's new terms of reference are expected to cost \$78.85 million over a four-year period, with a two-part sequential inquiry planned: the first examining abuse in State care only with an interim report in 2020; and the second focusing on abuse in faith-based care, including care provided by Catholic institutions. The Commission will begin hearing evidence early in 2019 and is scheduled to present its final report in January 2023.

The 5 Commissioners, including Sir Anand, are Justice Carol Shaw, an expert in restorative justice and human rights, Ali'imua Sandra Alofiava, a Samoan-New Zealand barrister and children's rights advocate, Paul Gibson, the former Disability Rights Commissioner, and Dr Anaru Erueti, an Auckland Law Department academic of Maori heritage.

After the initial flush of excitement, members of the Network of Survivors of Abuse in Faith Based Institutions and Their Supporters realised that it was not at all clear whether the inquiry could look beyond abuse in orphanages and children's homes. The majority of the victims/survivors the Network represented had been abused by Catholic priests and religious brothers in schools, churches and presbyteries, not in institutional care settings, and the terms of reference were so vague that large numbers of survivors could potentially be excluded from the Inquiry.

The Network immediately sought a categorical assurance from the Executive Director of the Royal Commission that all those who had been abused by Catholic priests and religious in non-care Catholic Church settings would be included in the Inquiry, but so far that assurance has not been given.

It was a bleak Christmas/New Year for those victims/survivors left twisting in the wind. The familiar chaffing of the rope around their throats continues to choke their decades-long hope for healing and redress.

But even if they are eventually included in the inquiry, what will it actually mean? Will they be able to give testimony in a protected and supported manner? Will their testimony be used by Counsel Assisting to forensically investigate those institutions whose officials sexually assaulted them and stole their childhoods? Will it be just another CLAS (Confidential Listening and Assistance Service) with no consequences for the offending institutions? Will there be just redress and compensation?

It has been interesting to watch the reaction of the Catholic bishops to the extension of the inquiry to include the Catholic Church. The April 2018 Bishops' Conference submission to the Royal Commission was a flaccid document, expressing no more than a 'willingness' to be involved. It made no proposal on which church settings should be included in the inquiry, no call for an extended time frame, and no advocacy for a just redress scheme. Yet, the bishops were only too happy to bathe in the after-glow of public and media approval of their willingness to be part of the inquiry, an approval that was ill-deserved.

In August 2018 the Network had asked the Catholic bishops to issue a far more powerful statement, insisting on the Catholic Church being investigated, asking for the time frame to be extended beyond the 1999, and for adequate redress and financial compensation. It was advised that such a statement would be forthcoming, but it never appeared.

With abuse in Catholic institutional care now included in the inquiry, the Catholic bishops have set up a new 7-person body called the Organising Group (Te Rōpū Tautoko) to interface with the Commission. Its members are Catherine Fyfe (Chair), a lay woman with expertise in human resources management, Bishop Charles Drennan of Palmerston North, Marist Fathers Provincial Fr David Kennerley, Marist Brothers Director Br David McDonald, Marist Sister Jane O'Carroll, Mercy Sister Katrina Fabish, and Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard of the Bishops' Conference Secretariat.

Bishop Drennan, Fr Kennerley and Br McDonald are well known to the Network and their positions are not reassuring. Bishop Drennan has been extremely critical of the Australian Bishops Conference's Truth, Justice and Healing Council and its CEO, Francis Sullivan, saying that this lay-dominated Council had been a hindrance to episcopal authority. Fr Kennerley, when asked to

meet with a survivor, referred him back to the very people he had complained about. Brother McDonald, a Māori, when asked by an *Otago Daily Times* journalist on 12 December 2018 about the brutal serial rape of a twelve-year old Māori boy by a fellow Marist Brother, replied, "No comment."

The Catholic Church's recent practice of dignifying bodies like the Organising Group with Māori titles does not change its essential nature. A more appropriate title would be Te Rōpū Whakatuapeka – the Concealment Group, for this is what it is. Sir Humphrey Appleby leapt from fiction into the corporeal world: *Minister: But surely the citizens of a democracy have a right to know? Sir Humphrey Appleby: No. They have a right to be ignorant. Knowledge only means complicity in guilt; ignorance has a certain dignity.*

Rather than the Royal Commission inspiring a new openness and transparency, the Catholic bishops have now weaponised it to justify silence. They have pulled up the drawbridge, filled the moat and disappeared behind the castle walls, refusing to speak except through PR spin doctors and apologists.

Nor has the Royal Commission fared much better. On 14 December 2018, Radio NZ reported on a breach of privacy when the Commission confused a member of the Network, Grant West, with Grant Mahy, and sent the details to the wrong Grant. Commission staff had apparently assumed there was only one man called Grant living in Australia, and when Radio NZ reporter Phil Pennington pursued the story in an interview agreed to by Mary-Jane Rendle, the Commission's communication person, she hung up on him mid-interview.

The feathers of the Toroa, the Royal Southern Albatross, are the motif of the Royal Commission. It is a bird that symbolises strength, endurance, and a return to roots. Its feathers provide refuge from the elements, but also the lifting of a burden, the incredible lightness of being. The circle form of the Toroa motif signifies life – the fusion of past, present and future.

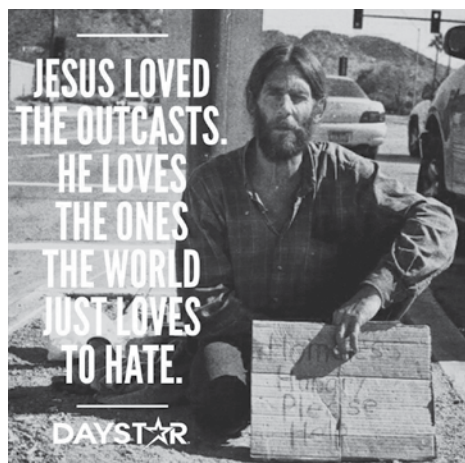
Unless great care is taken, the albatross might end up as it did in Coleridge's poem, with all hope dashed.

*And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!* ♪

Child sex offenders – today's untouchables

FORREST CHAMBERS

Forrest Chambers, a parent of four children, is a long-time member of the Catholic Worker community in New Zealand and a parishioner at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North. He asks the gospel question from the offender's side of child sexual abuse. Reprinted with permission: *The Common Good*, No 87, Advent 2018. This journal is available online free at www.catholicworker.org.nz. In the box at the end of this article is a comment on Denise Cullen's recent article in the *Courier Mail* on another approach to rehabilitation.



Back in the time of Jesus, lepers were absolutely shunned. They lived on the edge of town, often in the rubbish dumps ('Gehenna'/Hell). They were outcasts, untouchable, lest they defile the rest of Jewish society. They were shunned not merely because of illness, but also because they were deemed morally impure, living in a state of sin (either of their own, or inherited).

Today's 'lepers'/untouchables are child sex offenders. I recently attended a community meeting called in response to the Department of Corrections planning to house a child sex offender in our local suburb. After he served his sentence, Corrections were supporting him into accommodation back in the community.

A representative of the Sensible Sentencing Trust told the meeting that child sex offenders 'can never be rehabilitated'. He proposed that they be placed in housing on prison grounds, to keep them away from the rest of the community. In the meeting there was general agreement with his view. Those present at the meeting seemed to share a general abhorrence of child sex offenders.

It is, of course, a horrible crime, which can leave lasting damage on survivors. Yet, what is the abhorrence based on, and does it lead to yet more human suffering? The reoffending rate for child sex offenders is actually lower than for all other types of

offenders. Most express great shame and remorse when they face up to what they have done. Of course, not every sex offender is safe to release back into the community. Corrections/courts can apply restrictions when they perceive risk of re-offending. These decisions are based on in-depth assessment, not knee-jerk reactions and abhorrence.

The gut reaction is to keep sex offenders (like lepers in Jewish times) out of our communities, so we will all be safer (not defiled). However, the reality is that the vast majority of sex offences against children are committed not by the 'stranger', but by the stepfather, family member, or other trusted adult. We do what we can to be aware of its possibility, to keep our children as safe as possible. But we cannot live life suspecting everyone, which is why it is such a difficult and emotional issue. It is abhorrent because it is ultimately about power, trust and betrayal, and the potential sinfulness of everybody.

By shunning convicted sex offenders, we do not make ourselves safer, but merely inflict further suffering on those who have served their sentence. We also perpetuate the mistaken view that there are 'bad people' (them) and 'good people' (us).

Jesus' response to lepers was to heal them and welcome them back into the human family. Jesus' actions deeply shocked the Jews who had society neatly divided up into 'good' and 'bad'. His message: we are not separated from God (and society) because of our sin or our failings. In fact, paradoxically, it is those who acknowledge their brokenness, failings or 'sin' who are able to connect with God.

Like Jesus, we must speak up on behalf of sex offenders who would be sent to 'Gehenna' by popular prejudice. In truth, healing for a leper, as for a sex offender, is largely made up of being accepted back into society, made up, as it is, of imperfect people... like us. I spoke up at the meeting (a minority of one) saying that I did not

agree that they could 'never be rehabilitated', and that, as a father of four children, I did not oppose a convicted sex offender living back in the community. Whenever the discussion is heated, hateful and intolerant, we all need to speak up on behalf of the excluded.

Meanwhile, Denise Cullen, Brisbane based psychologist who works in prison and private practice, writes about keeping kids safer by community engagement rather than isolating offenders. (*Courier Mail*, Jan 14, 2019). She claims that with more isolation and a public offender's register is more dangerous to children. She claims that two decades of research and her own work has shown that sexual recidivism can be reduced by as much as 88% by using restorative justice principles. A program called Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) involves up to six community volunteers supporting a recently released child sex offender to get a job, find somewhere to live and engage in prosocial activities.

It was not received well at first being thought to be too soft, but Cullen states: *if you really want to create the sort of conditions that are most conducive to further offending, then isolation, shame, secrecy, media pressure and vigilantism is the perfect way to achieve it.* ☺



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The man with a broom

PETER DAY

Peter Day, Canberra priest, offered this homily at the funeral of Fr Tony Ruhan SJ on 3 January 2019. Tony who lived in Redfern for many years was a priest dedicated to the poor.



*We are the towel people,
Soothers, cleansers, healers
Of feet tired and sore and cut from the journey.*

*Christ's sent people,
Wiping away the dirt and blood and spittle
Of the world's hatred spewed onto the faces of
the weak.*

*On our knees before others –
And in homage to them,
for Christ is there. (Anonymous)*

'Who's that bloke sweeping the floor?' I asked a volunteer at St Canice's soup kitchen, Kings Cross. 'That's Tony Ruhan. He's a Jesuit priest – pretty bright fella too; got more degrees than you've had sandwiches.'

It was in 1997 when I first encountered this 'bright fella' with his broom – and I remember well that his sweeping was anything but perfunctory. This was a sacred action because manual work is good for the soul. This was a sacred action because to serve is to pay homage. For Tony, sweeping that floor was tantamount to praising God. No wonder his 'prodigal' dedication to such a menial task.

'For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily theological; [it is not] a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical [choice]. God, shows the poor *his first mercy*.' says Pope Francis. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198).

And this *first mercy* is well known to each of us:

- The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. (Luke 4:18)

- In so far as you did this to one of the least of these ... you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40)

- No, when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. (Luke 14:13)

Whatever one may feel about this dream that triages the marginalised as a priority, we should be careful not to patronise it as noble sentiment; or dismiss it as a niche aspiration for the specialised few – a kind of 'soup kitchen' social work.

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in 2006: 'Love for widows and orphans, for prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to the [Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel.' (*Deus Caritas Est*, p.36 no.22)

Who's that bloke sweeping the floor? That's Tony Ruhan: on his knees before others, for Christ is there.

'In order for Christ to increase, I must decrease,' so said John the Baptist. Tony took these words to heart.

A poor church for the poor, like any divinely inspired dream, invites us beyond what is familiar, what is safe, what is comfortable: this is a disturbing prospect, especially for a wealthy, well-meaning young man – and Church – looking to our Lord for some consolation, for an easier path.

But is not the response the same: *You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. (Luke 18:22)*

And who is it that calls us out and rattles our inner being, but Jesus the Christ who bent down at the foot of humanity to show us the way.

No wonder St Paul was moved to say: *Jesus, being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave. (Philippians 2:5-7).*

Jesus became poor.

His foot washing ways established the template for Christian leadership: to serve from a place of humility and vulnerability – a place that too many of us have been loath to visit ever since.

Who's that bloke sweeping the floor? That's Tony Ruhan: on his knees before others, for Christ is there.

'And some [Pharisees] came and said to [Jesus] 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth.' (Mark 12:14)

Tony, like the Teacher, had little regard for honorifics, or status, or personal achievement – he counted his own academic accomplishments as little more than 'straw'.

It must be said, though, that his grand intellect contrasted a childlike naivety when it came to assessing people and situations. This didn't always serve him well. The late Brother Andrew used love recounting the tale of being invited by Tony to share a drink in downtown Seoul. Upon arrival at what seemed a decent sort of pub, Tony ordered a couple of beers and then joined his guest at table. Soon after the beers arrived, Br Andrew turned and gently ventured: 'Tony, you do realise this is a brothel, don't you?'

He had no idea.

Who's that bloke sweeping the floor? That's Tony Ruhan: on his knees before others, for Christ is there.

When one is in love, one is drawn to those places in which the Beloved is to be found: *I want to be where my Beloved is. What's important to my Beloved is important to me. I'll leave everything behind for the sake of my Beloved.*

A church that professes Jesus to be its first love must hasten to the 'margins and befriend the poorest and learn from them'. (Jean Vanier).

This is our most natural habitat because it is His.

A church that professes Jesus' leadership as its cornerstone must humbly kneel at the foot of humanity and serve it.

This is our most natural disposition because it is His.

It wasn't pope Francis who first envisaged the church be a 'field hospital' serviced by disciples with 'bedpans' and towels; it was Jesus of Nazareth.

He is our North, our South, our East, our West.

Who's that bloke sweeping the floor? That's Tony Ruhan. He's a Jesuit Priest: The one who, in the name of Jesus the Christ, lived and died alongside the poor. ☪

Forgiveness in Eucharist and Reconciliation

FRANK O'DEA SSS

Frank O'Dea SSS has written an online book, *Eucharist the Basic Spirituality*, of which this is an abridged chapter. The book can be found at theeucharist.wordpress.com

What the Liturgy Teaches Us

The Council of Vatican II states: The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes this passage and adds: It (the liturgy) is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the people of God. (*Catechism*, St Paul Press, Homebush NSW, 1994, No.1074).

This number from the Catechism states very firmly that not only do we learn from the liturgy, but the liturgy is also the 'privileged place' for learning. What then do we learn from the liturgy about the Eucharist as a sacrament of reconciliation?

The prayer over the offerings for the ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time says: 'Trusting in your compassion, O Lord, we come eagerly with our offerings to your sacred altar, that, through the purifying action of your grace, *we may be cleansed by the very mysteries we serve.*'

In the 1982 translation of the missal there is a Mass for the Forgiveness of Sins. The Prayer over the gifts is: 'Grant us, merciful God, that, *receiving in this gift the forgiveness of sins*, we may be able by your grace to avoid sinning from now on and to serve you in sincerity of heart.'

The Prayer after Communion from the same Mass is: '*... by the gifts we have shared forgive us our sins.*'

Some of the prayers over the offerings and Prayers after Communion during Lent express this belief. For example, the Prayer over the Offerings for the second Sunday of Lent is, 'May this sacrifice . . . cleanse us of our faults . . .'

Prosper of Aquitaine (about 390-455) said, what we pray is what we believe. *But do we really believe what we pray?*

In the Mass we frequently ask for forgiveness: in the Penitential Rite, the Gloria, the Lord's Prayer, the Lamb of God. At the very heart of the Eucharist,

Jesus is quoted as saying at the Last Supper: ... this is the Chalice of my Blood ... It will be shed for you and for many *for the forgiveness of sins.*

Perhaps these words from Matthew's gospel were included in the Eucharistic Prayer by the early Church to remind us that when we celebrate the Eucharist with sincerity our sins are forgiven.

For Matthew, 'the forgiveness of sins' was a primary purpose of the Eucharist. (Eugene



LaVerdiere SSS, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, The Liturgical Press, 1996, p.66).

John Quinn SJ sums up the history of the use of the Eucharist as a sacrament of forgiveness in this way: *The doctrine of the remission of sins conferred by the Eucharist has had a long and varied history of use and neglect in the Church. Granted that the forgiveness of sins is not the chief object of the Eucharist . . . Christ made the forgiveness of sins an essential dimension of it.* (*Worship*, Vol. 42. No.5. 1968).

The Council of Trent in the sixteenth century made the following statement which sounds astonishing to our ears: '*... the holy Council teaches that this (Mass) is truly propitiatory and has this effect that if, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, we draw nigh to God, 'we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid'.* (Hebrews

4:16) For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence, and *pardons even the gravest crimes and sins.*' (Cited in W. Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments*, Twenty-Third Publications 1977, p.157. Emphasis mine).

At this time in history, our Church leaders strongly encourage the use of the one to one sacrament of reconciliation for the forgiveness of serious sin and we must respect this direction. The sacrament of reconciliation has its own unique qualities: it requires the penitent to articulate the sin and this helps to bring clarity to the offence and it gives the opportunity to receive some spiritual guidance from the priest.

However, it has always been the belief of the Church that the less serious sins (venial) do not require the sacrament of reconciliation but are forgiven by private prayer, by doing good deeds and, certainly, through full participation in the Eucharist. It seems to me there is a potential for the Eucharist here that is still to be fully realized, a treasure chest yet to be opened up.

'Penance is oriented to the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the sacrament of reconciliation par excellence.' (Frank O'Loughlin, *The Future of the Sacrament of Penance*, St Paul Publications, Strathfield NSW, 2007, p.185)

Shortcomings of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

A problem with the sacrament of reconciliation *as it is currently practiced* is that it rarely gets to the deep seated cause of our habitual sins. People come into 'the box' with a 'shopping list' of failings, the same shopping list they have been confessing for years. There is little change in their spiritual lives. 'I told lies six times', 'I yelled at my kids four times', 'I had indecent thoughts five times'. Why is there no change after years of going to confession and repeating the same sins?

Because there is no attempt to get to the root cause of why I tell lies or why I get angry. The tragic case of priests who commit paedophilia illustrates this very well. These men may have confessed their sins many times and promised not to sin again but they kept on doing it because they had not got to the root cause of the problem.

The Letter to the Hebrews talks of 'the sin that clings so closely' (Hebrews 12:1), the

Continued page 28

the swag



sin that we just cannot shake off. It may require an insight which can be gained through prayer or spiritual direction to find out why this sin seems to be so ingrained.

It may be the result of a childhood in which there was serious abuse or a relationship that went sour. If such is the case, then some healing prayer or counselling may be required. Abuses in the past can leave deep anger, resentment and frustration. Just to confess these failings which we may call sins does not get to the basic cause and they occur again and again.

All of us are born with a certain temperament which has its positives and its negatives. The introvert temperament lends itself to looking inward and is conducive to a more contemplative life. But the other side of the coin is that introverts may avoid assisting those in need.

Some are very quick in their reactions. This helps them to be always ready to assist the needy and to do this with good organizational skills. The negative side of this is they may also be quick to get angry and hurt others and to dominate.

Some tell lies because they need to cover up their lack of self-worth; some get angry because there is an unresolved hurt in their past. Some watch pornography because they have not matured sexually. These are sins that cling so closely they form part of our identity.

Selfishness the Original Sin?

Selfishness is a very important example of the sin that clings so closely. We may have inherited selfishness through our evolutionary background. An animal's first instinct is survival. As soon as a magpie sees a worm it snaps it up with its sharp beak and eats it –with no thought whatever for the unlucky worm.

There must be, in us as in other organisms, a genetic predisposition to act in self-serving ways, since such creatures as bacteria, plants, and 'lower' animals have no cultural mode of information transmission on which we can blame their selfish behavior, nor is there evidence that any such predisposition has recently been deleted from our genetic code. (Daryl P. Domning and Monica K. Hellwig, *Original Selfishness-Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution*, 2006, Ashgate Publishing, Hampshire UK, p.108).

Animals have been competing for food for hundreds of millions of years. Survival of the fittest is one of the key factors in evolution. Selfishness is necessary for survival and is passed on from generation to generation.

I like this light-hearted comment from Domning: 'Most of the time when the lion lies down with the lamb, only one of them gets up again.' (p.128)

As evolution continued, our nearest relatives, the monkeys and apes, followed the same genetic pattern. Humankind eventually appeared and the selfishness continues as each of us has experienced. 'Look after number one' is very dominant in our culture.

Selflessness for Humans

But with humans another dynamic comes into play. We have a degree of self-awareness which is less well developed or non-existent in other species, and we are conscious that other people also have a right to the available food.

It's generally only with humans that consideration for others becomes a factor. So now we have a tension between one's own instinct for survival and compassion for others – selfishness versus altruism.

Paul's analysis of this situation could not be more congruent with what modern evolutionary science reveals: 'My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members [read: in the biologically inherited sources of my behavior] another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members.' (Romans 7:22–23) (Domning and Hellwig p.152–3; the phrase in square brackets is in the original).

When we move away from a literal reading of scripture, these suggestions are quite compatible with the book of Genesis.

'In simplest terms it can be said that the Genesis 1–3 stories, like myths, fables and parables, present in a narrative stretched through a time-line what is in fact an interpretation of the human situation at any time, in any here and now. Adam is any one of us.' (Domning and Hellwig, p.96).

Jesus provides us with the archetypal model of selflessness. His life lived for others is the bench-mark. 'At the time he was betrayed and entered *willingly* into his passion ...' (Eucharistic Prayer II). We are called to follow this example to the best of our ability.

'What Jesus calls us to is nothing less than the subversion (or better, the conversion) of evolution itself.' (Domning and Hellwig, p.127)

The desire to preserve not only my own life but my own interests at all costs, even to denying justice to others, is a sin that clings so closely.

In my spiritual journey I need to become more and more aware of my innate tendency to see the world as revolving around me. I need a Copernican revolution in order to see others as the centre of my world. The constant reminders of Jesus' selflessness in the Eucharist are a valuable aid in this endeavour.

How the Eucharist Helps

The Eucharist helps us to do something with these sins that cling so closely. When the root cause of the sin is brought to the surface it can be presented to God along with the gifts of bread and wine to be transformed. This is a very valuable form of reconciliation – being reconciled to God for hurts of the past, addictions that are hard to break, negative parts of the temperament and evolutionary selfishness. When you consciously and deliberately surrender these matters to God at the presentation of gifts Sunday by Sunday or whenever you participate in Mass, slowly a reconciliation takes place in the very depths of your being.

It is Jesus' death and resurrection that has won forgiveness of our sins and reconciles us to God. This is *the* saving event for us.

'For I handed on to you what I in turn had received: that *Christ died for our sins* in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

In the Eucharist we remember this saving event, the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul puts this very succinctly when he says that Jesus was '...handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.' (Romans 4:25).

This remembering takes place at every Eucharist, immediately after the blessing of the bread and wine. In Eucharistic Prayer II we say 'Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the bread of life and the chalice of salvation.'

This remembering brings that saving event into the present moment. When this deep reconciliation takes place through this remembering, then we are 're-membered' into the Body of Christ, that is, we are once again authentic members of the assembly of the faithful.

This is one of the wonderful mysteries of the Mass. It enables us to be at the foot of the cross when Jesus died, and it enables us to be at the empty tomb to know the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the 'beloved disciple' did. He saw and he believed. (John 20:8).

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Rev Steve Casey, Geraldton, 16/12/1994
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Rev Stephen Kulathumkarott, Adelaide, 28/12/1994

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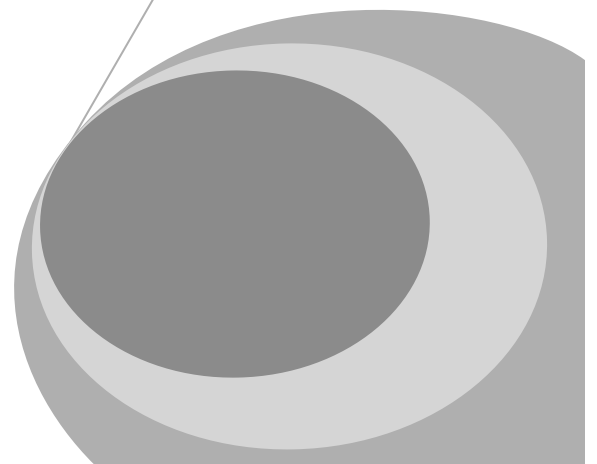
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Rev Mario Azrak OMI, 03/07/1999
Very Rev Jim McKeon, Broken Bay, 13/08/1999
Rev Andrew Grace, Wagga Wagga, 14/08/1999
Most Rev Michael Kennedy, Armidale, 14/08/1999
Rev Terry Horne, Maitland-Newcastle, 18/09/1999
Rev Luis Montano, Parramatta, 01/10/1999
Rev Ihor Holovko, Ukrainian, 10/10/1999
Rev Stephen Hamilton, Broken Bay, 26/11/1999
Rev Emmanuel Gyamfi, Townsville, 04/12/1999
Rev Gaetano Riolo SDB, 10/12/1999
Rev Dr Simon Wayte MGL, 10/12/1999
Rev Deacon John Taylor, Mait-New, 11/12/1999
Rev Deacon Lawrence Caelli, Mait-New, 11/12/1999
Rev Chien Nguyen, Perth, 17/12/1999
Rev Joseph Tran, Perth, 17/12/1999
Rev Wayne Bendotti, Bunbury, 20/12/1999

ORDAINED 10 YEARS

Rev Peter Porteous OSM, 12/01/2009
Rev Christian Saminal OSJ, 20/02/2009
Rev Christopher, Higgins, Sydney, 30/04/2009
Rev Andrew Benton, Sydney, 30/04/2009
Rev Julian Belich, Sydney, 30/04/2009

Rev James McCarthy, Sydney, 30/04/2009
Rev Paul Aguilar, Armidale, 26/05/2009
Rev Roel Llave, Armidale, 26/05/2009
Rev Jeronimo Castillo, Perth, 05/06/2009
Rev Andrew Lotton, Perth, 05/06/2009
Rev Bonaventure Echeta, Perth, 05/06/2009
Rev Jean-Noël Marie, Perth, 05/06/2009
Rev Meno Basti Devalagama Arachchige, OMI, 06/06/2009
Deacon Ralph Madigan, Cairns, 07/06/2009
Deacon Greg Kerr, Maitland-Newcastle, 02/07/2009
Deacon Peter Little, Mait-Newcastle, 03/07/2009
Rev Dishan Candappa, Melbourne, 04/07/2009
Deacon Vince Barclay, Can & Goulburn, 31/07/2009
Deacon Alban Hunt, Cairns, 23/08/2009
Rev Peter Hendriks MSC, 04/09/2009
Rev James McKay, Ballarat, 04/09/2009
Deacon Patrick Edwards, Adelaide, 12/09/2009
Deacon Nick Kerr, Adelaide, 12/09/2009
Rev Joseph Truong, Melbourne, 12/09/2009
Rev Cameron Forbes, Melbourne, 12/09/2009
Rev Stephen O'Shea, Armidale, 14/09/2009
Rev Gonzalo Garcia Duran MG, 03/10/2009
Deacon Leo Orreal, Military Ordinariate, 07/11/2009
Deacon Patrick Whale, Can & Goulburn, 04/12/2009
Deacon Anthony Hoban, Parramatta, 05/12/2009

**Ordination dates supplied to NCP
by individual clergy.**



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Validation

When you buy a weekly travel ticket, you pay your money at the time of purchase. Then each time you travel you ‘validate’ your ticket, that is, you make it operative for that day. Similarly, Jesus paid the price of our redemption once and once only when he died and rose again 2000 years ago.

When we participate actively in the Eucharist, then this redemptive act is ‘validated’ for us and we receive all the wonderful benefits of Jesus’ death and resurrection including reconciliation with God.

When we surrender to the Lord the sin that clings so closely during the Eucharist, Jesus’ saving event is activated for us at that moment. The grace of his death and resurrection works for us in the depths of our being.

However, we need to do this consciously, deliberately. It does not happen automatically as when you put your clothes into a washing machine, press a button, walk away and the machine does the job for you. Our full cooperation throughout the process is essential for the washing away of these deep-seated stains.

We surrender the problem to the Lord at every presentation of the bread and wine with the expectation that just as the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, so we are slowly transformed into a better likeness of the Risen One.

‘My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth *until Christ is formed in you.*’ (Galatians 4:19)

This reconciliation with God in the depths

of our being is one of the most important aspects of our spiritual journey. It may mean slogging through the deep mud of an abused childhood, feeling again the dirt of a painful relationship, but there is no way around the quagmire – you just have to go through it. Paradoxically, after wading through this mud you come out cleaner.

We must not adopt the mentality of ‘I can’t help it – it’s just part of my nature, it’s in my genes’. We do have free will but cleansing ourselves of these clinging sins requires a lot of inner work, perhaps over years.

The Eucharist is a powerful sacrament of reconciliation. Let’s take full advantage of the riches it offers. ☪

What kind of universe are we leaving to future generations?

KERRY CROWLEY

Kerry Crowley recently completed a sabbatical at An Tairseach, Ireland. He reflects on the experience. He can offer further information on An Tairseach : Kerry Crowley, Catholic Parish of Innisfail, QLD. E: innisfailpriest@gmail.com or M: 0419 716 627.



I’ve been in the practice of taking Sabbaticals over the years and it has been by ‘word of mouth’ that I have been served well in making good choices. It is in gratitude to Fr Daniel O’Leary that I have just participated in a Sabbatical in Ireland that I wish to share some reflections with other clergy.

Daniel suggested that I might find my interest in An Tairseach, a Sabbatical programme run by the Dominican Sisters out of their Farm and Ecology Centre at Wicklow, Ireland.

I have for some time had an interest in the environment and been aware of the rapid changes taking place in our climate with the effects of drought, floods, cyclones, bush fires and bleaching of the coral of the Great Barrier Reef. It is apparent to me that we can no longer deny the science of what is happening and what the causes are.

An Tairseach with the support of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, addresses all these issues and challenges us to face the question of sustainability and in conscience to

respond to the question: ‘what kind of Universe do we wish to leave for future generations?’

The programme marries the latest advancements in Science and Evolution with Religion, it is in the context of: an evolving Universe, an endangered Earth and the Christian tradition. Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin both pioneers in Ecology and Cosmology feature prominently in the presentations.

They include: Becoming familiar with our evolution over 14 billion years as discovered by contemporary science. Exploring its implications for understanding our place in the universe. Exploring the theological implications of this new Cosmology. Listening to the wisdom of the mystics. Reflecting on themes from the Celtic Tradition. Examining our images of God and critiquing our present world order and exploring possibilities for a sustainable lifestyle.

Participants are from all around the world and include Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests, Laity and Diocesan Priests.

Presenters are the tops in their respective fields.

An Tairseach is an Irish word for ‘threshold’, in truth I am at that stage now, willing to make the crossing, convinced that changes need to happen. ☪

Where are we, how did we get here and where to go from here?

GREG MOSES

Greg Moses, retired priest and academic of Cairns Diocese, analyses the current influences in society that have resulted in current political, economic and social trends. He asks what is the role of current Catholic social teaching, faith formation and Catholic schooling?

I was stimulated into asking these questions firstly in the course of a personal attempt to come to terms with the gay marriage debate in Australia in the latter half of 2017 and how the common sense of a whole nation has shifted or been shifted in the space of about ten years, on something so vital and central to human life and culture. Is this, and all the gender identity stuff that goes with it, the consequence of some kind of Neo-Marxist plot, or is it rather something coming out of the main line of a particular kind of Western culture? It could be both of course, but I came quickly to the conviction that it was certainly the latter.

This came in the context of a research project inspired by Louis Dupre and a lot of others on the construction of Modernity, which more or less concluded with a paper given in Bangalore in 2005 and published in 2006. I moved from academia Kensington and Banyo into parish on the Atherton Tablelands in my father's home country in 2006, retired to a gentle place (Nowra on the Shoalhaven River, a hundred miles south of Sydney, my mother's country) in mid 2017 and into a new possibility as a kind of freelance academic. What has been going on in my mostly hard working pastoral absence?

And then of course there is Trump, Brexit, populist movements on right and left all over the place, no longer business as usual, the very ground of modernity and the so-called 'modernisation' process seeming to shift under our feet. How to fit this in with the other, which I had come to interpret as more like a continuation of modernity into a more extreme form? But first to deal with the former. I will come back to the latter in the course of the Discussion below.

Under inspiration of some Belgian scholars such as the theologian Lieven Boeve and my one time supervisor the philosopher Herman De Dijn and then the Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (*Liquid Modernity*, Polity, 2000) accessed initially via Herman but then read for himself, and some Australian scholars (esp. Hugh Mackay), I came quickly to connect our present experience with what seems to be the latest stage of late

capitalism in the West. By this I mean, following my scholars, the progressive marketisation and consumerisation and individualisation of everything, including, it seems, gender and relationships and 'getting married', and the end of any vision for society and civilisation beyond the individual attainment of 'happiness' for anyone who can afford it, and other such ingredients of what seems very like Bauman and DeDijn's 'liquid modernity'. From birth people are told they can be what they want and do what they like, even make up their own value systems, put themselves together entirely as they want to with everything up for grabs, including it seems even whether they are boys or girls or something in between. This is one reason why there has been a doubling of depression among our young people since around 2011, the first generation to fully grow up in the new age (cf. Hugh Mackay) as well as an increasing rate of suicide in the general population, it is just too much. All this is then made much stronger by the technology, especially smart phones. If in so called primitive societies everything is decided, now we seem to have gone to the opposite extreme. People still need recognition, but now from their social media tribe, their Facebook group or whatever it is our culture is up to, and when they don't get it their life goes down the toilet.

According to Boeve and the others as well, marketisation, which of course is not unique to Europe, "has its place within the more all-embracing globalisation movement that is in turn connected to the so-called postmodern and post ideological climate. In an insidious manner, the logic of economics has taken the place of the 'master narratives' or the ideologies that have tended to inspire modern Europe up to the present..." (Lieven Boeve, "The Identity of a Catholic University in Post-Christian European Societies: Four Models", *Louvain Studies* 31 (2006), p. 239). Boeve also talks about detraditionalisation and pluralisation, with individualisation as following in the train of detraditionalisation, though not a necessary consequence thereof, being one form taken by detraditionalisation rather than the same as it. (See Lieven Boeve,

Theologie in Dialogue (Pelckman, Kalmthout, 2014), esp. pp. 53-56). The hope is that we can find a respected and enriching place in the midst of the plurality, an "open narrative" in dialogue with the rest of the plurality striving even to be something of a leaven and a light in accordance with our Christian calling. The trouble is that the various constituents of the plurality itself get to be construed, if we are not careful, inside an overarching individualistic consumerist logic, in danger of taking over the whole of culture, like spiritualities for some time, now also the plurality of cultures; and that our efforts and very existence get constrained, like every other particularity, by certain linguistic and legal potentially totalitarian ideological derivatives of this new master narrative.

If something like this diagnosis has some merit, then what the left wing of Labor and the Greens in Australia and much of the Democratic Party in the US for example and other old Centre Left parties will have done, without realising it, has been to buy comprehensively into the spirit of late capitalism. This would mean in the Australian context, the proper home for this kind of stuff is the so called moderate Liberal now ex prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, what is left of his section of the Liberal Party, his investment banker friends and Qantas executives, rather than Bill Shorten leader of the Labor Party or Richard Di Natale of the Greens. It has after all nothing to do with the betterment of the working class or the alleviation of poverty or anything whatsoever to do with the environment.

This is consistent with the fact of Labor and other Centre-Left parties across the Western world buying into market fundamentalism/economic rationalism, the so-called Neo-Liberal Consensus that came to us in Australia with Hawke and Keating. And even the Greens, who we find buying so readily into 'market based' solutions to global warming. This latter is happening in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis and now at a time when it is clear that market capitalism can no longer deliver increasing wages or reasonable energy or property prices. Lately, however, the Greens seem to be showing a bit of gumption, on breaking up the banks and on the Trans Pacific Partnership for example, combining in Parliament sometimes with the Katter Australia Party and Pauline Hanson, with both major parties on the other side!

It also fits with the fact that, as my Leuven professor friends Jan Van der Veken and Herman De Dijn have noted to me, everything changed in Belgium when the Liberals (by this stage well and truly neoliberal) took over. The Socialist parties went along with it all, striving to be thought 'progressive', but it was the Liberals who initiated it. And of course it was David Cameron who quite proudly introduced gay marriage into Britain. There is also the fact that a billionaire like George Soros, the very epitome of the triumph of the financial economy over the real economy, who made a lot of his money in speculation on the currency market, (itself no doubt the cause of a lot of misery), can also be one of the chief financiers of so called progressive movements all over the world. (Cf. Slavoj Zizek, *Living in the End Times*, Verso, London, 2011, pp. 291-292).

Finally, in the Australian context it even makes a little bit of sense of a recent by-election in the federal electorate of Wentworth in Sydney, as to how the majority of voters in Wentworth were said to be 'economically conservative and socially progressive'. We should start thinking of this togetherness as something perfectly natural rather than something surprising or paradoxical.

Old style Labor people like myself, meanwhile, have been left stranded on the old Left, like Jeremy Corbyn on economic matters, rather than Labor and the Greens moving further to the Left and leaving us stranded on the Right!

I came up with this supposed 'likely story' fairly quickly and then found some critique but also lots of confirmation in all kinds of places. The latter came notably in the work of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, who provides confirmation and some deepening almost in passing on the way to doing other things. To take just one quotation as a taste, on the two aspects of liberalism: *Traditionally, each basic form of liberalism necessarily appears as the opposite of the other: liberal multiculturalist advocates of tolerance as a rule resist economic liberalism and try to protect the vulnerable from unencumbered market forces while market liberals as a rule advocate conservative family values and so on. We thus get the double paradox of the traditionalist Rightist supporting the market economy while ferociously rejecting the culture and mores that economy engenders, and his counterpart, the multiculturalist Leftist, resisting the market (though less and less so, it is true, as Michea notices) while enthusiastically enforcing the ideology it engenders.* (*Living in the End Times*, Verso, London, 2011, p. 37).

He then goes on to explain how this threatens to manifest if left unchecked as a species of cultural totalitarianism, almost 'the ultimate totalitarian nightmare' (pp. 38-39), telling us not just who and what we can and can't be and do but what we can and can't think, let alone say.

While the manifestation of this present phase has been mostly in the last twenty years or so, more or less depending on the country in question, its roots go back further. From one of our Australian commentators Stan Grant: *The British prime minister Margaret Thatcher captured the essence of neoliberalism, when she said, 'economics are the method, the object is to change the soul.' Bourke's 'little platoons' – traditional communities, identities, time-honoured customs, crafts and trades that set our moral and social horizons – were swept aside. British philosopher John Gray says this 'permanent revolution' had the 'effect of destroying conservatism as a viable political project'. Gray has argued [in his book *Enlightenment's Wake*] that neoliberalism imperilled liberal civilisation itself and 'the inevitable failure of this utopia spawns illiberal political movements.* (From ABC Website, accessed 9/9/2018, *Which idea of conservatism will Prime Minister Scott Morrison embrace?*, by Matter of Fact host Stan Grant).

Whether what has happened in the way of a changing of the soul is anything Margaret Thatcher had in mind at the time is another question.

Eventually it, whatever it is, probably, indeed almost certainly, has roots in the construction of modernity itself, perhaps the last step for the moment of the increasing fragmentation intrinsic to the modern project. To cite Louis Dupre: *The unity of the integrated culture on which Western metaphysics once rested became fragmented into isolated spheres: nature, the meaning-giving mind, the inscrutable God. The transcendent component gradually withdrew from culture.... The fragmentation, it ought be noted, has not halted at the ultimate principles. Once the human subject became solely responsible for the constitution of meaning and value, tradition lost its former authority. Every group, if not each individual, eventually felt free to advance a cultural synthesis of its own, ransacking the tradition for spare parts.* (From *Metaphysics and Culture*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 1994 pp. 43-44).

Discussion

Of course, this is not the only 'likely story' doing the rounds. Another story thought by some to be more likely is that, while

contemporary 'identity politics' initially on the Left but then with a vengeance also from the Right (Trump, Brexit, populist parties all over the place) may be causally related to the dominance globally and in particular societies of neoliberal economics, it is related *by way of reaction or backlash*, rather than some kind extension thereof. Identity politics has much more ancient roots in something inherently human, in the drive for Recognition, as treated for example in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is just that the purely economic identity projected by neoliberalism has proven to be inadequate to satisfy this particular basic human need, particularly though not only for people who are being left behind or who think they are not doing as well as they could or should be or are not being treated fairly in the present system. The economic and identity-based drivers are in fact independent of each other, even if they can sometimes seamlessly fuse.

For this story see, for example, Bernard Keane, *The Mess We're In: How Our Politics Went To Hell And Dragged Us With It* (Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, Sydney, 2018) pp. 99-110, esp. pp. 104-106.). He is trying to understand the mess we are experiencing in the last three or four years. He does this in terms of the peaking in the same timeframe of three waves, neoliberalism, the hollowing-out of democratic politics, and the more recent but just as massively disruptive arrival of the Internet. His recommendation for a way forward is to try to follow the example of John Maynard Keynes in the 1930's, to save capitalism from itself, and thereby preserve the benefits it has yielded while limiting its tendency to greater exploitation, to do what is necessary to renew our confidence. This includes such themes as radical transparency, a significantly more progressive tax system, a bill of rights, more power for unions, more independent institutions...

Another rather more cynical logically possible story is that identity politics gives the Centre Left and the Left, Labor and the Greens in Australia or most of the Democratic Party in the US, something still to do in order to get or keep power, after they have conceded, thrown up the white flag, surrendered, sometimes even lead the way, in respect of the main game, in the Neo-Liberal Consensus! This, in effect, gives them a way to reestablish their own identity, to justify their continuing existence, having given up on what they used to stand for. The only trouble being that the Right can also play their own version of this identity game, often cultural identity but not forgetting the identity of

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groups feeling left out, and sometimes play it just as effectively.

A further just as cynical possibility espoused by some people is that neoliberalism itself is a “Big Con”. For example, Richard Denniss, “Dead Right: How Neoliberalism Ate Itself and What Comes Next”, in *Quarterly Essays* 70, 2018, pp.1-79. From p. 1: “Neoliberalism, the catch-all term for all things small government, has been the ideal cloak behind which to conceal enormous shifts in Australia’s wealth and culture. It has provided powerful people with the perfect language in which to dress up their self-interest as the national interest.” Also p. 60: “... it is clear from the outset that neoliberalism was a political project rather than an economic one. In essence, it allowed powerful groups in society to dress up their personal preferences as national goals.” His suggestions for change are rather similar to Keane’s: a charter of rights, a National Interest Commission replacing the Productivity Commission, a federal corruption watchdog, education in democracy, a sovereign wealth fund... (The Big Con language is on p. 18, the heading: “The Big Con – Neoliberalism As Economics”.)

I think the bottom line might be that the forces at work are bigger and deeper than neoliberalism. While neoliberalism might make matters better for some, worse for others, neoliberalism is itself a manifestation and product of the forces at work rather than being by itself the source of all our woes, or benefits. The dominance of neoliberal economics advances the detraditionalisation and individualisation already underway, which is made more intense by the Internet, thereby contributing to the liquification of values and the liquification and multiplication of potential markers of identity that we see nowadays. With marketisation the only remaining master narrative left and for people who don’t have anything else, there is nothing to stop this, which is why they all seem to think the same way and move almost in step with each other. The contention would be: it is not so much the identity projected by neoliberal economics but the culture and mores, the way of doing business, that people get used to in the economic substance of their lives, which gradually spreads to the rest of life and becomes a kind of new ‘common sense’. Certainly the search for identity is ancient and inherent to human life, and some of what goes on presently may be by way of backlash. What has changed, what is new, is the form this search takes and also its potential content, which has also

changed the nature of the identity power game, helping to explain its present rather confusing features.

I am finding the logic of our present situation very complex and difficult. It probably is objectively so. By way of suggestion possibly something like the following might work. The true backlash is Trump, Brexit, populist parties, supposedly Far Right but also Far Left with some overlap on some issues. The main line multicultural identity politics is an extension of the culture and mores of the economic side of life into the rest of life, aided by the detraditionalisation and individualisation also promoted by neoliberalism. The Centre Left and Left find this very useful politically, get into it with great gusto, for the sake of getting and keeping power. Of course lots of them truly believe it, perfectly natural, and on some things they may be right, this is just a tentative causal analysis. The moderate wing of the Liberal Party and e.g. the good people of Wentworth in Sydney meanwhile are just being consistent. Or something like this! The only thing I would speculatively add is that the backlash is infected by the new context. An example might be the fact of allegations of ‘fake news’ being made by both sides. Truth itself and the value attached to it, it seems, have also been ‘liquified’, one of the more subtle consequences, I think, of the lack of transcendence. To put it in Dupre language: if the human subject has become the sole determinant of meaning and value, then what is left is a competition between human subjects.

By way of summary and in order to bring this section to a close, I will conclude with something crude and simplistic. Since the advent of commercial television if not a lot earlier, segments of our population young and old, but starting with young children as soon as they start watching television or nowadays get their first iPad or smart phone, have been churned out as individualistic consumers of goods and services. This has spread potentially to the whole population rich and poor and with massively increasing intensity as time and technology have gone on. But there has also been a massive progressive increase in the kinds of ‘goods and services’ apparently on offer, until these have come to include almost the whole of human life.

Where to go from here: some reflections

Whether or not any of this is right, I think the main function of faith commitments and other more or less comprehensive allegiances including philosophies is to

stop people being just the plaything of external forces, one’s peer network, the latest marketing campaign, the shifting spirit of the times. This also should be the goal of Catholic education, the function of the Dialogue School and such, not so much to convert as to see that every student at least goes out not just a plaything of external forces, whatever they are, but with a more or less coherent mind and heart and spirit of their own, or as Dr. Fr. Thomas C. Mathew, Vice Chancellor, Christ (Deemed to be a University), put it in his inaugural address for Harmony 2019 Conference in Bangalore, “a harmonious, melodious, philosophy of life”. This I think is also the vocation of a philosopher in a university setting and in society at large, to try to get people to think deeply for themselves beyond the taken for granted, and not just to be products of the governing culture and civilisation.

Not that we shouldn’t truly listen to and dialogue also with the times in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches there as well. The second thing faith and other comprehensive allegiances do is give us a place, in Boeve’s preference “an open narrative”, from which to do this dialogue. We Christians in particular might remember the lesson from the French atheist Marcel Gauchet about modernity originating as a split within Christendom between clerics and laics and that we are all thus children of Christianity, states no less than church, atheists and agnostics no less than remaining believers. (See Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton N.J., 1997).

Also that according to our own Christian belief the Divine Sovereignty extends across the whole of creation, that Jesus is the Lord of all not just of believers and that the Spirit moves absolutely where and how it wills. This is one of the lessons to be learnt from the sexual abuse crisis. It may be some considerable time and take a lot of learning and change in structure and culture before we in Australia can be light and salt and leaven.

We should not, however, allow ourselves to be walked over: more than our own survival is at stake. What is going on in our society and culture is not all God’s work. The humanity being produced is considerably impoverished, disconnected from nature and from country and almost entirely without transcendence.

I am still strongly into Catholic social teaching, which I used to teach, and attracted to its latest form, the ‘integral ecology’ of Francis. For a long time now

Christianity means embracing the new

ERIC HODGENS

Eric Hodgens, Melbourne priest, explores what it might look like if we took seriously the biblical image of God doing a new thing in 2019.

I have also been into process relational philosophy and theology as a kind of default integrating worldview. I still find this helpful, and will work on this in the year to come. Among other things, they have truly received *Laudate Si* much better than most Catholics. It is however not enough by itself. It doesn't quite get the heart and spirit fired up or enable the necessary interconnections in concrete reality.

What I as an Australian am finding very helpful lately is to take really seriously the Aboriginal Gift (Eugene Stockton) in all its variety and locality, to join our 230 years of Anglo-Irish and multicultural human settlement to the 60,000 years of human settlement before that. I think we need to do this not just as individuals but as believing and worshipping Australian church, as local communities and as a nation, and as if the possibility of living a harmonious life in the country which claims us partly depended on it.

Though it is important how we receive it: not to appropriate it as a consumer product, let alone as an extension of our colonising stealing their soul and spirit having stolen their countries. This needs to be received as a gift which has been and is being given, to the extent to which it is being given, which I among others have found amazing and generous, with the appropriate acknowledgements and protocols, with a reversal of perspective putting the giver in the box seat.

Though maybe it will be mediated for most of us initially by people of our own who have been given and have received the gift (like Eugene Stockton or Frank Fletcher, or for someone coming from the Atherton Tablelands in north east Australia the Augustinian Rod Cameron). We need to take it into our heart, our liturgy and our lives, not just as something peripheral, exactly like John Paul II said in Alice Springs. Finally, we need to do this not as an alternative to doing justice, but as an intrinsic part of that, as one of the ways in which we express respect, beyond just some 'acknowledgement of country'.

We can try to do this much at least, to work towards a semblance of harmony in our person and communal lives, while we await and perhaps try to shape what is going to happen next in the economic substance of our lives and what might be the superstructural consequences of that.

☪

The theme of embracing the new comes to the fore as we celebrate Christmas and New Year. But, while *doing something new* is central to God's plan in Christ, it is also a *threat* to entrenched power.

We celebrate January 1st so vigorously because we hope for better things to come. It articulates our Christmas belief that there can be "news of great joy for all the people." But it only works if we take it on board. Things will change. So, must we. And that makes some people nervous. Christmas celebrates new life – and a new world order. But our Christian vision grows out of our Israelite ancestry which has always seen God as doing something new.

First, God creates. Then he intervenes through history to look after his people. *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not see it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.* (Isaiah 43:19)

That's how Isaiah hoped the future would be for his Israelite people, devastated by decades of exile in Babylon. Finally, they were going back home – to start a *new* life. The hard-hearted are suspicious of the new. Jesus confronted his opponents for their hardness of heart. No work was allowed on the sabbath. Strictly speaking, healing the man's withered arm was work. The scribes and pharisees had a self-righteous, strict approach to the law and didn't approve of Jesus' 'laxity'. Don't break the bounds.

Jesus' has the broader, human approach: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm?" Jesus looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." (Mark 3:5). Ezekiel has the answer: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)

For them the law was the law! But for Jesus the sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath. A law that helps and not hinders will be able to adjust to new human situations, and, therefore, to new cultures.

Christopher Columbus and James Cook controlled their anxieties, embraced the new and found the Americas and the Great South Land. Galileo and Newton embraced a new understanding of the world. Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu pioneered new ways of thinking that produced a new world order.

The luddites smashed the looms but got left behind. New knowledge leads to a transformed world. Christianity's early sacred authors are heavily into the new. Paul, the earliest writer, saw a world renewed in Christ. Therefore, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The last of the New Testament writers has the same vision". "The one on the throne says: 'Behold I make all things new'" (Rev 21:5) Embracing the new is, therefore, part of Christian DNA. But centuries at the guiding helm of Christendom has deadened that instinct in the halls of church power. Be safe. Maximise risk aversion. The fortress does indeed protect, but at the price of lost opportunity. The rule of law, though protective, can also oppress and deprive. And it will – if it is not constantly under review to keep up with new circumstances.

Factionalism and identity politics dominate the political scene. Renewables versus coal. Climate change is a fake. Lies are alternative facts. Family values. If you are not with us, you are against us. They reject new knowledge. Political parties are factionalised within. Spite wins at the expense of the common good. Narcissism's rule book says, "look after me and beggar the rest". Reaction is the name of the game. New social trends are dismissed. This is driving both left and right to extremes. The sensible middle, though the biggest group, is marginalized.

The church scene mirrors the political scene – as it always does. The most pastoral pope in centuries is vilified by his own. A powerful hierarchy, firmly set on its three foundations of dogmatism, moralism and clericalism, wants no erosion of its power. It sticks to its guns. For them any adjustment of the rules is the start of a slippery slope. Meanwhile Pope Francis thinks life is more complex, Circumstances change. Culture is in constant flux. A black letter approach to law falls short in the face of human complexities. The letter kills; the spirit gives life. Stick by your values but be flexible with applying them. And a bemused younger generation sees old men in peculiar gear talking largely to themselves. They just turn away. They live in a new world in which the old men are irrelevant. Christmas is nothing if not new. The authentic Christian sees a new world opening and turns joyfully to embrace it. That makes a happy New Year more likely.

☪



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From classical Christianity to quantum Christianity

PETER DAY

Peter Day, Canberra priest, looks at Christianity as an act of love rather than a discussion of doctrine.

Easter is both very predictable and inexhaustibly mysterious.

A question might help: What do the biblical characters Adam and Eve and the 17th century mathematician Sir Isaac Newton have in common? An apple changed their lives! And in the mathematician's case, for the better!

Newton's fruitful encounter took place in 1666. His first biographer, William Stukeley, recounted it thus: *After dinner, the weather being warm, we went into the garden and drank tea [sic], under the shade of some apple trees'... [H]e told me, he was just in the same situation, as when formerly, the notion of gravitation came into his mind. It was occasion'd by the fall of an apple, as he sat in contemplative mood. Why should that apple always descend perpendicularly to the ground, thought he to himself.*

Newton's imagination and genius laid the foundations for *classical physics* which dominated the scientific view of the physical universe until the twentieth century. In essence, classical physics posits a physical world of smooth, orderly, and predictable patterns – i.e. *deterministic*. This works well at the macroscopic level, but fails miserably at the microscopic: enter *quantum physics*. Nothing would be the same again.

The quantum world is one of unpredictability, randomness, and uncertainty – i.e. *undeterministic*: Nothing is static, everything is fluid; waves (e.g. light) and particles (e.g. electrons) are no longer 'preached' as mutually exclusive – i.e. a wave can exhibit particle-like properties and vice versa.

The quantum revolution has turned science, and its hitherto 'certainties', on its head. It continues to stop the great thinkers in their tracks, infusing them with a sense of awe and wonder, all the while exhorting them to leave the comfort of 'home', of what is familiar, and venture into the unknown – even into the unknowable.

Just think: 13.78 billion years ago our universe is thought to have begun as an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, infinitely dense, *something*. After its initial

appearance, it apparently inflated – the Big Bang – expanded and cooled, going from very, very small and very, very hot, to the size and temperature of our current universe. It continues to expand and cool to this day and we are inside of it: incredible creatures living on a unique planet, circling a beautiful star clustered together with several hundred billion other stars in a galaxy soaring through the cosmos – and all this out of nowhere, from nothing, for reasons unknown. (Online publication: *All about science* at <http://big-bang-theory.com/>).

Love is the way

Christianity too is ripe for its own 'quantum revolution', something the renowned Jesuit thinker Karl Rahner hinted at over three decades ago: *The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or cease to be anything at all.*

Rahner's prescience points to a deep and pervasive problem that needs to be addressed: the failure of institutional Christianity to nurture and embrace its mystical roots, to embrace this 'quantum' reality: *God is Love; and God-Is-Love longs to dwell within, to be in communion with 'me'*. The biblical word for love in this context is the Greek 'agape' – to will the good of another. It is the highest form of self-emptying love and is most powerfully manifest in the person of Jesus. He is what divine Love looks and behaves like. He is the 'evidence' of the existence of this transcendent, non-material God-is-Love reality.

Alas, what has emerged is a *classical Christianity* in which the liberating Truth of this God-is-love reality has been supplanted by Dogma and Moralism, by Institution and Clericalism, by Power and Pomp: a church pre-occupied with the outside of the cup (the 'macroscopic'), rather than the inside of the cup (the 'quantum'). Thus, the sign posts pointing to Christ have become our idols: we have worshipped and bowed down before the Well, instead of drinking its water.

It's as if Christians have been forced to enter into an arranged marriage: *we'll tell you who to love, how to love, where and*

when to love; but what about being afforded the freedom and space to fall in love – or not to?

Further, an increasingly well-educated and literate culture is asking questions that classical Christianity can no longer address or answer. This is especially problematic in the area of biblical interpretation – not to mention, sexual ethics – where the pervasive intellectual poverty of fundamentalists, along with the superficial musings of part-timers, is writ large in public discourse.

It is little wonder, then, that three of the high priests of modern militant atheism, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, neuroscientist Sam Harris, and theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss have had a field day mocking, denouncing and humiliating the whole Christian project as they delight in picking-off the low hanging fruit planted by Biblical literalists: *So, you Christians really believe that Jonah lived in the belly of a whale for three days; that Jesus walked on water; that the universe was created in 'six days'; that Noah built that ark; that homosexuals are doomed to hell... really?* As the old adage goes: text without context is pretext.

God and science

What we are left with, then, is a superficial binary: it's either science or God: you choose because it can't be both! Indeed, for Dawkins and company, what science cannot discover, humankind cannot know: science is the only way to truth.

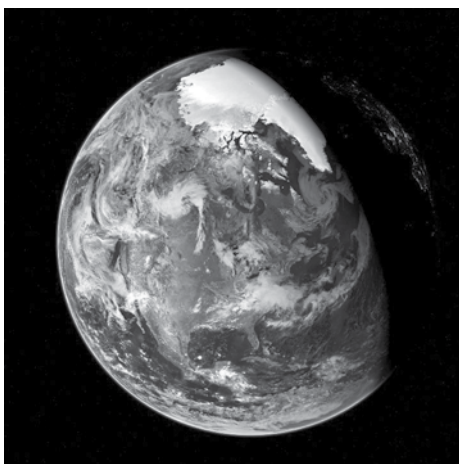
This is Scientism, the poster child of The Enlightenment mark II, and it is determined not only to replace religion, but to eliminate it from the face of the earth. Intoxicated by their intellectual acumen and certainty, these secular fundamentalists mischievously refuse to acknowledge Christianity's capacity to evolve, to nuance, to adapt; to re-consider. Instead, they wheel out on the world stage a caricature of ersatz Christianity, presenting it as the villain in their pantomime, all the while encouraging the audience to 'boo' and 'hiss' and 'snigger'.

And what a villain their adherents are invited to mock: an anti-intellectual-anti-science-Evangelical-fundamentalist wielding the Bible like an axe. This fraudulent distortion – and, yes, there's a lot of it about – is presented as the real deal: as the definitive manifestation of true Christianity.

Yet, any thinking Christian worth his or her salt knows that the Bible, like a library, contains all types of genres including

poetry, prose, history, metaphor, biography, parable; that the Bible is a collection of works composed within different historical contexts and across many centuries; that the Bible has aspects that transcend time and culture – e.g. the exhortation to forgive constantly, to will the good of your enemy and to love your neighbour as yourself; and aspects that are limited to a particular time and culture – e.g. the law of circumcision, the polygamy of the patriarchs, and the musings on wives and slaves in St Paul's Epistles.

Theology is poetry plus, not science minus, says an old Swedish proverb. Extrapolating from this, scripture scholars tell us that metaphor, parable, and myth are *the more* than literal meaning of language; they are not less than factual. Even Albert Einstein



when asked what he considered to be the most important aspect to his scientific pursuit, said: Imagination, above all imagination.

The Bible is not an immutable proof text handwritten by God, rather it is an inspired living text that, inter alia, documents the evolution of religious consciousness: a text compiled by fallible human-beings grappling beautifully, sometimes even unsatisfactorily with an ineffable Mystery. 'The Bible is,' as scripture scholar Raymond Brown has said, 'the literary objectification of a faith that is a response to revelation.'

Indeed, central to the case against Jesus was that he himself defied literalist interpretations of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). He ate with the wrong people, healed on the Sabbath, and challenged religious leaders who elevated mere human thinking to the realm of the divine. *In vain do they worship... teaching human precepts as doctrines. You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.* (Mark 7:7-8)

Jesus could see the 'more than literal

meaning' behind the inspired text. He opposed not only Holy Book fundamentalism, but the religious certainties codified in Holy Law and Dogma; and at great personal cost.

But whatever about the unseemliness that abounds in this space, it is clear that something has to give. We can no longer resume normal programming: *classical Christianity* and its three pillars – dogmatism, moralism, and clericalism – has been found wanting, and abjectly so.

Journey into the unknown

The task of quantum Christianity, then, is to take us beyond the surface, beyond what the eye can see; to set us free to leave 'home': that place of intellectual and spiritual comfort.

As Thomas Merton has said: *In order to be true to God and to ourselves we must break with the familiar, established and secure norms and go off into the unknown.*

'Christian conversion,' he says, 'is turning to a freedom based no longer on social approval... but on direct dependence on an invisible and inscrutable God, in pure faith.'

Thus, like those committed classical physicists who re-oriented their gaze after their intellectual order was turned upside down by exposure to the quantum realm; it is time for those of us committed to classical Christianity to gaze elsewhere: to venture into the dark night and explore the extraordinary, ineffable mystery that pervades the cosmos and humanity: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1).

This 'Word', this articulated 'Truth' became flesh. Spiritual author Richard Rohr puts it well, 'The eternal pattern of reality took on physicality – became human.'

Like the seemingly miraculous interchangeability of the wave and the particle, God and man are indistinguishable: spirit and flesh, 'heaven' and earth become as one.

What, then, of Rahner's Christian of the future? A story: *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.* (Matthew 11:25)

A friend spent many years ministering to homeless men in inner-city, Melbourne. One man, in particular, grabbed his attention, 'Johnny'. He was the quintessential hobo. He slept in bus

Continued page 40



shelters, carried his belongings in a shopping trolley, while his body was graffitied with street grime.

What stood out amidst the misery and emptiness of Johnny's dog-eat-dog world was his deep sense of respect for others; his warm, peaceful countenance.

This inner-beauty seemed so incongruous, so confounding to my friend. In the end, curiosity got the better of him, and he posed a simple, if clumsy question: Johnny, your life isn't exactly a bed of roses, so why are you so content; why are you so kind to others?

After a quiet, thoughtful pause, Johnny turned and said gently, knowingly: God is very fond of me. This child like *knowing* – as opposed to simply 'knowing about' – is the essence of Christianity: it is at once deeply rational, yet also unprovable. As Oxford Professor of Mathematics, John Lennox says, *My Christian faith consists not as a leap of faith into the unknown; it's an evidence-based commitment, otherwise I wouldn't be remotely interested in Christianity.*

Johnny's inner experience of divine affection ennobled him and shaped his interactions with others. Science has nothing to tell Johnny about this experience; nor does Johnny's experience have anything to tell science. To try and do so would be to participate in a discussion infused with category errors.

The essence of Christianity is not to prove the existence of God – that is a fool's errand; nor is it to prove Who or What created the universe. No, the essence of Christianity is to be ennobled by a Love, by a 'fondness' whose source is ineffable, unknowable: a Love that sets us free to manifest a self-emptying mercy and compassion.

And while this inscrutable reality cannot be investigated or proved by science, its effects can be readily seen and rationally experienced: just ask Johnny; not to mention the young Jewish carpenter. ☺



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RSCJ house in Redfern to close

DANNY GILBERT/PETER MAHER

Danny Gilbert, long-time supporter of St Vincent's Redfern, recalls the history and importance of the Gathering Place, a house on The Block in Redfern offering friendship and hospitality to Indigenous people for 32 years. This reflection was offered at a Mass at St Vincent's on 27 January 2019 to honour the gift of the religious women who lived there. Also included is Peter Maher's reflection on the closure of the house.



Kathleen and I and our children started attending mass at Redfern in 1983. Like so many people, we quickly bonded with Father Ted Kennedy and the St Vincent's mass community.

St Vincent's Redfern was a place of warm welcome, particularly for people seeking a socially and intellectually challenging church experience. Ted, with his fierce intelligence, his vast theological knowledge and his dedication and love for Aboriginal people, was an inspirational presence in the lives of Aboriginal people, in our own lives and for many in the Church and the broader community more generally. It was altogether an inspiring experience which, unfortunately, during that time and since, was not valued and nurtured by the Church hierarchy as it should have been. Indeed, it is a tragedy for the Church and for all of us that it failed to support and enlarge this charism.

It's understandable that when many people think about St Vincent's Redfern from the 1970's until Ted's retirement more than 15 years ago, Ted and Shirley Smith (Mum Shirl) get most of the attention. Towering figures that they were, the Redfern story is more than Ted and Shirley.

Not long after Ted and his fellow priests arrived next door, religious women and

men started arriving in significant numbers attracted to what was happening here in this Church and to support the Aboriginal community. No doubt I will leave some out, but I do want to mention these women and men from Orders such as the North Sydney Mercies, the Bathurst Mercies, the Ursulines, particularly of course Sister Dom, who is still with us, Sister Pat Durnan from the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the Little Sisters of Jesus, the Sisters of St Joseph, the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, the Marist Brothers, the De La Salle Brothers, the Presentation Sisters, still represented by Sheila, Mary McGowan from the Daughters of our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Kensington and, of course, the Sacred Heart Sisters from Rose Bay, the last of whom is Esme Herscovitch. And over the years many Priests supported the community in a variety of ways. These included men such as Frank Fletcher, Peter Maher, Frank Brennan, John Ford, Claude Mostowik, Ed Champion and many more.

Some of these people lived with other members of their congregations in houses around Redfern and others came and went over the years.

The Gathering Place

According to Pat Ormisher, the Gathering

Place name was suggested by Ali Golding, a senior Indigenous woman from the Block and a familiar presence in this Church for many years.

All of these people came to Redfern looking for a community life with the poor of Redfern. They were in search of a more human experience, free from the constraints and strictures of religious life and cutting themselves off almost entirely from a Church hierarchy that for so many of them represented the very antithesis of what they were looking for from religious life. They offered friendship and hospitality in their houses and, especially, in this Church and in the old convent next door, now the Aboriginal Medical Service. They did not seek to proselytise or tell poor people how to live their lives and they were completely and openly non-judgmental about how Aboriginal people and the poor connected with the Church or not. They welcomed the poor and dispossessed unconditionally and each of them would quickly say that the hospitality and friendship was always returned to them in larger measure.

And so it was with the Sacred Heart Sisters in Caroline Street. The Sacred Heart Nuns moved into Caroline Street in 1987 when Sister Pat Ormisher and Sister Marnie Kennedy established the quietly famous Gathering Place. Redfern and the Block were not like they are today. To many it may have seemed threatening and unsafe but these were brave and dedicated women, who would no longer educate the daughters of the rich and privileged, but who would sit at the feet of the poor.

First there was Marnie and Pat, Marnie moving to Erskineville after some time. Then there was the Presentation Sister, Margaret Masser. Marnie was followed by Pat's sister Dorothy Ormisher, also a Rose Bay nun, who lived in Caroline Street for several years prior to her death and, at or around that time, Mary McGowan became involved, living at the Gathering Place part time. Others involved included the St John of God brother, Michael Gravener, and his friend, Alan.

I came across an interview of Pat Ormisher's in March 2002 and it is worth quoting her. I think it represents the heart and soul of the Gathering Place: *We don't pretend to do much. We are very low key. One of the things we decided first was to not initiate any plan, like mission plan for example, we decided that was not what we were on about. We instead, if any of the people have an idea that they like, something they would like to do or they would like us to introduce them to an agency, we would*

certainly do that for them but the whole idea is to reverse the situation. Instead of suggesting things and organising things for them, to rather listen to, support and encourage what they want to do with their own lives and with themselves.

The sisters from the Gathering Place have maintained that very quiet and unassuming presence on the Block for the past 32 years and Esme has honoured it in every respect.

I do want to thank you Esme and everyone involved in the Gathering Place for your presence in Caroline Street and for your presence in this very important Church. You represent a part of the history of the Catholic Church in Redfern, which must never be overlooked, diminished or forgotten. The Gathering Place and its various occupants have been an inspiration to us all. We are indebted to you, Esme.

Peter Maher's Reflection

The Society of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ) began a house in Caroline Street in 1987 to provide a presence among Aboriginal people on The Block. Sr Marnie Kennedy and Sr Pat Ormisher began the ministry of presence there. This initiative produced a unique relationship with Redfern's Indigenous people.

Taking up the Cardijn method of 'see judge and act', an immersion model of catholic action, the sisters began The Gathering Place as a house of welcome. The sisters began living there and building relationships with those living on The Block and many Aboriginal people living there. This method of embodying the gospel was keenly supported by Fr Ted Kennedy and the Redfern parishioners.

For 32 years the house has been a place for welcome for Indigenous people and those many others seeking to engage with the inner city life and Indigenous Australians as a locus for understanding and interpreting the gospel. It has been a place where the gospel principle of learning by engaging in the local situation and reflecting on the experience could be practised.

The house in Caroline Street became a trusted place for Indigenous people to find a friendly face, to help for people grieving the death of loved ones and to support them in times of sickness and vulnerability. Key to the ministry was the mutuality of the immersion model.

Non-Indigenous Australians were welcome to talk, pray, mobilise and advocate with Indigenous people. This resulted in a shared experience of positive outcomes.

The house also became the centre of what was known as the street retreats. Along with a house run by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS) in Newtown, people came to live in the area for a time, often a week or more, becoming conscientised by meeting with Aboriginal people in their context, praying together, walking the streets of Redfern and the surrounding suburbs, reflecting on scripture and meeting with a spiritual director usually one of the RSCJ or SSS sisters.

Many priests, religious, seminarians, teachers, lay people and university students undertook various forms of immersion experience and retreats centred on the RSCJ house on The Block. Aboriginal people knew there was friendly space for them to meet, pray, grieve and plan strategies to make their lives better. They were always greeted with a gospel inspired process of empowerment facilitated with and by the Indigenous people themselves. The model used was always a collaborative model which resisted charity and colonialist approaches in favour of working together for justice and equality and to provide for people in time of need.

Other RSCJ sisters that lived in the house were Sr Dorothy Ormisher and Sr Esme Herscovitch (pictured with Pastor Bill Simon who ministered in Redfern). They worked alongside other religious women who also lived at the Gathering Place. Sr Mary McGowan (OLSH) was a long time member of the community and others were there for shorter times.

The ministry was always about engaging with existing Indigenous and Non-Indigenous organisations, in Redfern and beyond Redfern. This was done through building relationships with Indigenous people as neighbours and friends. Meanwhile Fr Ted Kennedy was making St Vincent's Catholic church a place that privileged Indigenous presence and he was building a community that understood the unique opportunity to live the gospel in a way that was a mutual learning experience alongside Indigenous people.

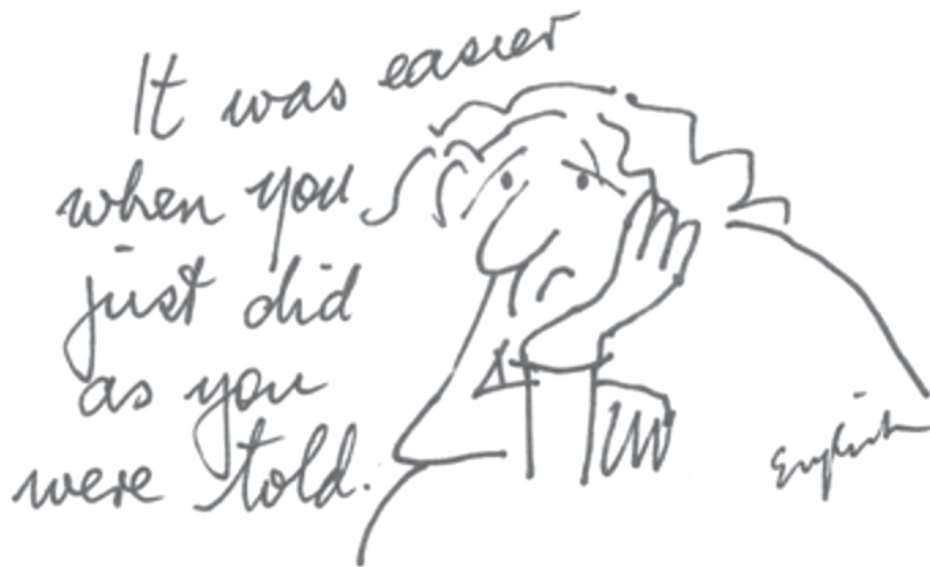
The RSCJ house on The Block will be missed. ☹️

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and because of you!**

Leadership in the Australian Catholic Church

AENGUS KAVANAGH FSP

Aengus Kavanagh FSP, Patrician Brother, Ryde, NSW writes on the state of leadership and governance in the Church. Cartoon by Graham English.



Influence of Leadership

It is probably true to say that leadership has been the object of more research, more literature, more scrutiny in the past fifty years than in the whole history of civilisation up to the 1960s. This is because of the universally held conviction that leadership is the single factor that contributes more than any other to the attainment of desired results by nations, organisations, businesses, and institutions.

Of necessity then this short article can only skim the surface of the vast reservoir of findings and, in particular, of understandings and practices which embed proven principles and values of effective leadership.

In a simple sense, any person who influences the thinking, and/or the actions, of others is exercising leadership. From this perspective leadership begets good outcomes, begets bad outcomes. Think of the impact on society of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot as against the impact of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, St Mother Teresa. Think of the Donald Trump effect as against the Angela Merkel effect. The differences reside in the hearts and souls of leaders. As is sometimes said: At core, leadership is the visible expression – the outpouring, of the kind of person you are. This, along with the clear enunciation of what you stand for are foundational pillars of authentic leadership, the kind of leadership that brings true followers.

Quaker author and speaker, Parker Palmer, gives an insight into the consequence this perspective: *A leader is someone with the power to project light or shadow on some part of the world and upon lives of the people who live there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or an ethos as shadowy as hell.* (Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, Ch. 5)

More than semantics

It is not uncommon to find the terms leadership, management or administration used synonymously. Even though there are distinctions between management and administration, their focus is mainly a functionary one and from here on management will be taken to include administration. Good management is an essential feature of effective organisations. The focus of management is mainly on 'things' – finance, property, buildings, maintenance, events, planning, documentation, duties, legal requirements and more from the same domain. The end results are mainly accountability, compliance and efficiency. The main motivation is the execution of duties that must be done in the interest of expectations and requirements.

Leadership in its truest sense is people-focused. The good leader has a vision for the organisation, and seeks to motivate and to inspire people towards a realisation of the vision. The good leader invests time and energy in building the capacity of

others to contribute positively towards the attainment of collaboratively developed goals. Leadership has to do with hearts and minds, gaining people's engagement in ventures not because they have to, but because they want to. Leaders develop commitment from intrinsic motivation.

There is an interdependence between management and leadership, sometimes referred to as two sides of the same coin. Good leaders intentionally seek to make management activities building blocks of leadership through sustaining, as much as possible, a humane approach.

Conventional wisdom contends that the world abounds with good managers whereas good leaders are far fewer. Immersion in management activities can be more straightforward and more rewarding. It can be more comforting too, even an escape, as it creates an impression of busyness and most of the outcomes are tangible.

Effective leadership is far more challenging, relying heavily as it does on the emotional intelligence of the leader, that source of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enables the building of trust, the strengthening of relationships and rapport. In our post, post-modern society the contention is that people will commit themselves more readily to visions, causes and projects when the motivation is intrinsic. This insight presents serious challenge to leadership at various levels in the church, a church where hitherto cultural Catholics practised their faith largely in a compliant/duty mode. U.S. theologian Elizabeth Johnson, issues a timely warning: *A person can no longer be a Christian simply out of social convention or inherited custom. Faith now requires a personal decision, the kind of decision that brings about a change of heart and sustains long-term commitment.* (*Abounding in Kindness*, Elizabeth Johnson, Orbis books 2nd printing 2018. p.33). This assertion aligns comfortably with the growing awareness that deepened discipleship of Jesus is the core factor in renewing and reforming parishes. A 'more of the same' decree-type of leadership does not bring about this kind of transformation.

The foregoing brief considerations apply to leadership and management generally, but the scenario painted lends itself easily to the functioning of a diocese or parish as a healthy human organisation. An obvious issue is the widening of the management umbrella in response to growing

bureaucracies and consequent increased pressure on already busy pastors. The irony is that most of the management agenda is not necessarily the preserve of the ordained and, under present circumstances, it is that agenda which diminishes the priest's ability to tend to matters closer to the core of his vocation and ministry. Food for thought and creative planning by 'authorities' here?

It is beyond time to lay to rest the oft-heard rationalisation: Ah but we are different, we do not work from a corporate model, we are a pastoral entity. This contrived dichotomy has been a barrier to the adoption contemporary leadership principles and practices which honour human dignity along with legitimate human aspirations, and are the norm in much of secular society.

In the 1970s the concept of servant leadership as apt for the corporate world emerged in writings of former member of the executive at U.S. giant telecommunications company AT&T, Robert Greenleaf said *A fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving of one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader (Servant Leadership, 1977)*. Forty years onward and we may still have a bit of catching-up to do, we especially as followers of the Jesus who washed his disciples' feet and invited us to do likewise. Like Jesus, it is moral authority that counts, not position authority. 'He taught as one who had authority, not as the scribes' (Mark 1:22). The scribes had position authority.

Possible Responses

Many factors impact on the quality of Catholic life generally but such life is more likely to flourish in dioceses and in parishes where there is good leadership. Given this well substantiated claim, why the apparent vacuum in the provision and promotion of a range of formal and differentiated programs in leadership development for clergy and pastoral workers? True, many clergy exercise good leadership in virtue of natural traits they possess but the faith life of the complex organisations that most parishes have become is too important to be left to chance. Rationalisations like 'we haven't got time for that' or 'our guys learn all that stuff in the seminary' are beyond naivety and are barriers to much needed reform.

If we are to truly recall the lost identity of our church, to throw off the shackles of an inwardly focussed, self-referential maintenance church, we need leaders. ...If the primary crisis of the church of our time is one of identity, then a second crisis is one of leadership.

Fr James Mallon in his book – Divine Renovation p.233, a book describing the dramatic transformation of St Benedict Parish, Halifax, Canada under the inspirational leadership of Fr Mallon. He now spends much of his time sharing his blueprint for parish renewal with clergy and pastoral workers throughout the Western World.

So, a starting point has to be a heightened consciousness that formal programs and experiences in leadership for clergy and parish pastoral workers are no longer an option, they are an imperative.

German 19th century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, made the statement which continues to ring true: 'Convince me of the WHY and I will live the what, the how, and the when'. Dioceses, deaneries, and parishes sharing this conviction will find ways, however small, to develop and nurture leadership among their front-line workers. There will be an intentional provision of 'purpose and tailor-made' programs and practical experiences to strengthen leadership capacity. Ideally, dioceses would take the front-running in this quest. Participation in postgraduate studies is not envisaged here. Rather, programs with potential for immediate application and focusing more on formation than on information. Acknowledging the time-burden of parish commitments, creative program design could provide a mixture of on-line components with occasional gatherings for conversation on issues arising as a necessary part of the formula.

Needs and circumstances will vary from place to place but following are possible elements of a leadership development framework that might find some common resonance in most settings. Leadership 101 would explore general principles of leadership; styles of leadership; shared examples of good leadership and bad leadership and leadership in the context of diocese and parish.

Leadership for vision and mission

There is a need for looking at the role of the leader in renewing the vision for the parish and examination of processes that invite and expand initiatives for the

ongoing re-culturing of the parish. We need to move from a compliance mindset to an attitude of commitment; from spectator to player mode; from collaboration to widely shared co-responsibility.

How can we call forth the giftedness among parishioners and channelling them to the service of the community agenda for leadership? An obvious challenge here is change. How to cope with change; how to manage it; how to lead it successfully? The internet is awash with resources here. One such resource that may be helpful is an 8 Step Change Model by John Kotter.

Leadership of Parish Team

What does successful parish renewal look like. Fr James Mallon, is non-too subtle in his assessment here: *The days of the Lone Ranger priest as a solitary paragon of strength are long gone. ...A leader without a parish leadership team to whom he is accountable, transparent and vulnerable is a fool and a disaster waiting to happen. (Divine Renovation p. 242)*. Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of parish teams as a practical response to the diminished number of clergy along with the increased complexity of parish management.

However, the composition and the scope of parish teams remains a bit 'rubbery' depending on context, circumstances and resources. A good team benefits its parish in several ways: it broadens the base of co-responsibility for the mission of the parish; it brings a variety of talents and perspectives to the service of the parish community; it elevates a job to a vocation for many; it models a faith commitment to collaboration setting a good example for other partnerships in ministry in the parish.

The realisation of these outcomes will be very dependent on the leadership of the pastor. Given this reality, serious questions must be raised in regard to the apparent lack of policies and structures in most dioceses for the development and ongoing support of parish teams.

A green shoot in parish re-vitalisation is the *Amazing Parish (AP)* movement in the USA. Committed Catholic and lay-man, Patrick Lencioni, is a co-founder of the movement. It so happens that Patrick Lencioni rates among the best-selling authors in the world on organisation development.

Over 5 million of his numerous books on this theme have sold. A primary focus of his writings is on attitudes and behaviours which impact on the effectiveness of teams.

Continued page 44

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In recent years he has been the keynote presenter at *Amazing Parish* annual conferences as well as at many other workshops where the audiences have been comprised mainly of Catholic parish teams.

A visit to the *Amazing Parish* website gives access to many Youtube presentations highlighting the church as a Healthy Human Organisation as one of the three foundational pillars of the AP movement. Patrick Lencioni is scheduled to speak at corporate gatherings at the Star Casino Conference Centre in Sydney, and in Melbourne, in March 2019. Individual tickets cost \$950 for a day! 2019 AP Conference is in Atlanta.

The composition and effectiveness of parish teams provide a good barometer of diocesan policies and of the leadership of the pastor.

Leadership for communion

Parishes are a coalition of communities representing a plurality of levels of believing, belonging, and functioning within the local Catholic church. This context evokes a need for leadership qualities in the pastor wishing to nurture healthy partnerships while honouring the diversity and the rights of all parties. Parish and parish schools feature prominently here.

There is the need to manage conflict and to respond to reasonable expectations in a pastoral manner. It is sad to learn occasionally of bickering and dysfunction within parishes called to be communities of hope and love.

Leadership for movement from maintenance to mission

In Matthew 18:12 we get an insight into the mind of Jesus where in response to his own question of what the man who owns one hundred sheep and one wanders off he says: 'Will he not leave the ninety nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?' What challenge does this parable hold for leadership in our church now where at least 85% of baptised Catholics seem to have wandered off?

The focus question posed for reflection and response in preparation for Plenary Council 2020 is what do you think God is asking of us in Australia now?

Surely he is asking of us to become intentional in efforts to broaden the umbrella of inclusion for those 'who have strayed' and to 'journey with them in exodus' in a 'field hospital model of church' as Pope Francis says. At present, almost all

of our pastoral resources are devoted to the care of the faithful remnant, a church of maintenance. How can the parish leader shift the balance from maintenance to mission? Not easy, but to paraphrase Nietzsche: where there is a will, there is a way. First there will be a need for education and formation including creative conversations about preliminary steps.

Of concern in recent times is the increasing number of non-church funerals for Catholics. Likewise, with over 70% of all weddings in Australia being conducted by civil celebrants there has been significant decline in the number of church marriages. In response to this trend, would it not make sense for each parish to have a number of certified and commissioned lay celebrants for funerals and weddings who could negotiate services for 'Catholics at heart', who while not wanting a Eucharist or church ceremony, would appreciate elements of the Catholic tradition to mark these important rituals?

Names and contacts for these ministers would be posted on the parish website. Likewise, acknowledging the reality that over 85% of all baptised Catholics no longer attend Mass, is it not worth a try to develop a range of other liturgies and prayer formats to mark special occasions in the lives of those who remain 'Catholic at heart'.

Many such options could be lay-led and could even be held in Catholic 'host-hub' homes in different parish locations. A target for a fresh packaging and fresh expressions of the Good News has to be the lost generations from the 15-50 age bracket, sadly missing in our congregations, and thus, the future of our church. It is too easy to ascribe all the reasons for their absence to 'them'.

Remember, the core mission of the church is to be the transforming presence of Jesus in the world, a mission of outward focus. The re-culturing of our church is in dire need of enlightened and courageous leadership. ☪

'The mark of true leadership is not telling people what to do, but being able to bring people with you, all heading together with a common goal. And for that, one needs to be able to relate to a whole range of people, in a relaxed and confident way'

Fr John Crothers, *The Clergy Club*, 2018, p.61. John Crothers is now retired from full-time parish ministry. From 2000 to 2016 he was Parish Priest, Peshurst/Peakhurst. Sydney.

Mission in the Post Vatican II world

BRIAN LUCAS

Fr Brian Lucas, National Director of Catholic Mission, discusses the evolving notion of mission in the wake of a modern martyr, John Chau.



The report in *The Guardian* (28 November 2018) of the death John Allen Chau, the 26 year old missionary killed by Sentinelese, began with a dramatic quote from his diary. 'Lord, is this island Satan's last stronghold where none have heard or even had the chance to hear your name?'

To our modern ears, relatively newly sensitised to the rights of indigenous people to their culture, and against a background of religious freedom, this approach to missionary work is quite foreign.

Yet there was a time when the image of the European missionary bringing 'the word' to those described as 'pagan' was presented as being heroic.

One can think, just to give one example, of the mission of St Peter Chanel and the Marists to the islands of Wallis and Futuna. Peter Chanel's efforts to instruct the people in the Christian faith initially bore little fruit. It was when the son of the chieftain sought baptism, persecution intensified and he was clubbed to death. His martyrdom provoked a real zeal for the faith leading to the whole Island of Futuna becoming and still remaining Catholic.

The Second Vatican Council Decree, *Ad Gentes*, on the mission activity of the church did not back away from Jesus' mandate to the disciples to go to all the nations: *In the present state of affairs, out of which there is arising a new situation for mankind, the Church, being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Matt. 5:13-14), is more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God (n.1).*

The Council recognised limitations of time and place, particularly relevant in the tragic circumstances of John Chau's death:

Circumstances are sometimes such that, for the time being, there is no possibility of expounding the Gospel directly and forthwith. Then, of course, missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy, with all patience, prudence and great confidence. Thus, they will prepare the way for the Lord and make Him somehow present (n.6).

One might add to the virtues of 'patience' and 'prudence' that of 'respect'.

Dr Ajay Saini is a researcher and writer who works with isolated indigenous communities, concluded his *Guardian* report with this comment: *The history of outsiders' relations with the indigenous people of the Andamans has a clear pattern – colonisation, exploitation and eventual extermination. If we are to learn anything from our past, it is that the Sentinelese should be left alone on North Sentinel Island.*

Mélinée Le Priol, writing in *La Croix* (27 November, 2018) quoted Etienne Lhermenault, president of the National Council of Evangelicals in France (CNEF), responding affirmatively to the question, Is it legitimate and justified for Christians to engage in evangelizing action despite the risks and dangers?: *If we believe that salvation is essential to humanity, then, all people need to hear the call. The extremities of the earth also need to be involved, particularly in 'unreached' territories.*

The alternative view was presented by Father François Glory, in the light of the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld: *The best definition of mission is undoubtedly that given by St Paul: announce Christ, without imposing a way of believing. A missionary must begin by emptying himself in order to adopt the life of those he goes to meet. Not the reverse!*

Trust in God's providence, and aware that the mystery of the salvation is beyond our grasp, will help us balance the legitimate rights of those who wish to be left alone, with the zeal to share what we believe with those who are searching for the fullness of life which is Christ's promise. ☪

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Women should head the Holy Office

With the Synod coming up, one of the issues that is bound to be discussed is the position of Women in the Church. So - the following reflection.

Sometimes we can become so accustomed to the Scriptures that we can miss the message they give. I think a good example is the role women played in being the first to witness and so safeguard our basic Story - the Paschal Mystery.

Let us look at the simple facts. It was the women who stood by Jesus as He died on the Cross. And it was to the same women (Mary Magdalen) that the risen Jesus first appeared. It was the women who witnessed Jesus' death, and it was the women who first witnessed the risen Jesus. And so our basic Story - the Paschal Mystery - was first entrusted to Women.

What does that mean for us today? No doubt that has yet to be further explored and developed. But we should bear in mind that since our Basic Story was first entrusted to women to tell, it is most appropriate, to say the least that they have a role in monitoring/safeguarding the way our Story is told today. For example, is there any reason why a properly qualified woman could not be in charge of the Holy Office? Just a thought.

Patrick O'Sullivan SJ *Kew Vic.*

How should we treat sex offenders?

I have been wondering about how priests and religious who have made mistakes in the past, resulting in charges, trials and in some cases incarceration, are being treated in the wake of the scandals that have engulfed religious and priests.

I am a religious brother and belong to a Congregation where some of our brothers have done horrendous things to children in the past and are now paying the price for their actions. Those brothers who have been through the court system emerge often shattered, shamed and with very low self esteem. They have paid the price of unjust, immoral and criminal behaviour, been punished by the Court system and society in general and struggle to regain some semblance of self-esteem once released into the community of brothers and the wider community.

At the same time, the Congregation has suffered enormously in reputation and those brothers who continue the ministry of brotherhood in the community feel

shamed and outraged by what has taken place in their name and which they now have to wear in the public arena.

I ask the question continuously, Why Us? Why has this generation of brothers been given the burden of carrying the mistakes others have made in the past? Why are we being asked to hand over millions of dollars in compensation to the victims of those atrocious crimes committed by our own in the past? I guess there will never be any satisfactory answers to those two questions. I will never know.

However I do know this. While we brothers condemn the mistakes made, we do not condemn our brothers who made them. If anything needs to be condemned it is the religious system that trained them and kept them infantile in their sexual development and demanded slave labour of them for many hours of every day, teaching, supervising, coaching and more.

Is it any wonder that things occurred that should not have occurred? If the system had held these men more gently, lovingly and respectfully, recognizing vulnerability and the need for social, emotional and sexual development for them along the way, things may have been different for them.

Be that as it may, when these brothers have suffered the punishments of the law and are continually monitored once released by the law enforcement agency, we accept them back into our communities and try to heal the pain and loss they have suffered. Yes, there are restrictions placed on them but in a caring and loving way as much as possible. Haven't they been punished enough? We do not try to have them thrown out of the brotherhood!

In recent times I have witnessed priests who have committed suicide as a result of allegations against them and I have been made aware that some priests who find themselves in similar predicaments as some of our brothers. They are not treated compassionately or with respect by those who have the authority over them. There are attempts to have them 'dismissed from the clerical state', their allowances are withdrawn to punish them, draconian supervision regimes are imposed and they are made to feel 'less than', outcast and contemptible.

Compassion, love and inclusion are the values I picked up along the way as I have tried to live my Christian life. Surely such would be paramount in the brotherhood of priests who profess such Christian values.

I wonder what we are trying to protect, or who we are trying to please, by treating our own as outcasts, sinners and 'lepers' as we

withdraw our brotherly compassionate support from those who need it most of all now at this stage of their lives. Sure they will be restricted from priestly duties and ministry. But to have them stripped of all their dignity and identity, what message are we giving to the world by doing this?

Let the police do their policing and do it efficiently and effectively. Let the community of believers welcome these brothers back into our midst with compassion and love. Is not this the Christian way?

Anthony E Hempenstall, Aspley, Qld.

Clerical dress and clericalism

Do you remember in Hamlet poor old Polonius gives some advice to his son Laertes: For the apparel oft proclaims the man.

The Royal Commission had lots to say about clericalism. The pages of *The Swag* have not been silent on the matter either. Is it possible that clerical apparel proclaims a clerical cleric?

If there is even a suggestion of truth in this I am curious if the upcoming Synod will ask Pope Francis to ban clerical dress in public for Australian Bishops and Priests as inimical to the role of a good and faithful servant of the people of God. Anyway, in the present climate it is really not a good look.

Harry Moore, Wyneden NSW



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Australia Day

Dozens of people have been honoured with Australia Day Awards for their outstanding contribution to the country through their work in the Church's various ministries.

Among the many recognised for their dedication to community were Catholic teachers, priests, religious women, health care workers and social service workers.

We especially congratulate:

- Bishop Emeritus Eugene Hurley AM
- Rev Kevin Bates SM OAM
- Rev Paul Pidcock SM OAM.

Australian Catholic reformers challenge bishops on diocesan synods

In a letter to Archbishop Coleridge on 25 January 2019, Peter Johnstone, the convenor of Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR), asked whether the bishop was responding to a suggestion made during the Royal Commission in February 2017 to have diocesan synods or assemblies.

Johnstone said in the letter that *the efficacy of the Plenary Council will be gravely prejudiced if diocesan bishops do not consult directly in their dioceses so that the contribution of diocesan bishops to the plenary council is truly informed by the sensus fidelium of their particular churches, a clear canonical responsibility.*

Coalition reform organisations have sought information from diocesan websites on progress with Plenary Council consultations. Generally, the level of diocesan information has been disappointing... websites are the 'go-to' source for most people these days, particularly but not only youth, Johnstone continued.

The letter asks on behalf of the twelve reform groups affiliated with ACCCR representing many hundreds of Catholics, to advise them on developments and opportunities for effective consultation leading towards Plenary Council 2020.

Australia Day vision



The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews released an agreed statement on the meaning of Australia Day on January 18, 2019.

Marking the 231st anniversary of the establishment of the colony of NSW and the way it led to the birth of modern Australia the statement said: *We are a blessed Nation of plenty. We have challenges, but we have faith that with goodwill and careful leadership we can address them and develop a society which embodies ideals of respect, responsibility and mutual concern.*

Affirming the multicultural and multifaith riches of Australia's reality, it specifically notes that 'we are continually enriched by the wisdom, knowledge and history of the First Peoples'.

Noting the confluence of the golden rule in all three Abrahamic faiths, it goes on to say: 'How wonderful it would be if Australia truly was a place in which no one suffered due to their ethnicity, culture, gender, skin colour, sexual orientation or faith!'

'We ask that Australia Day 2019 become the beginning of better listening, more compassion and genuine gratitude for all that has been provided to us' said the statement signed by the co-chairs, Ms Elizabeth Stone, Imam Dr Amin Hady, and Mr Jeremy Jones.

Overseas priests help address a shortage of Australian priests in the bush

Two Catholic priests from Ghana are facing a culture shock in their new jobs working in remote North West Queensland reported Tom Edwards for the ABC Nth Queensland on 19 December, 2018.

Father Daniel Djodjowu Mawuko and Father Emmanuel Gyamfi are members of a growing number of foreign priests working in remote areas of Australia.

Both men say they have had to be far more self-sufficient living in the Australian bush compared to their native Ghana.

'The challenge here is if you go to Africa, and Ghana specifically, every parish has a cook, every parish has people working there with the priest,' Father Daniel said. 'But you come here and you have to do everything. Cook your own food, wash your own things, you have to do everything.'

The priests must also endure long and solitary drives in the outback to reach their surrounding parishes.

Father Emmanuel said it was a big change from Ghana, where many parishes could be reached by car in a matter of minutes.



'It's killing to be honest with you. It's not easy. You're tired, [you've got] back pain,' he said.

Bishop of Townsville, Tim Harris, admitted they did expect a lot from overseas priests. 'Just imagine coming from a culture and a country where there's literally thousands of people at Mass, and they come here and they find six or seven at Mass,' he said, 'What would that do to anyone? They wonder to themselves where am I?'

'To ask a young man to take on the role of priest in the present environment, where the Church is changing herself, and factors in relation to scandals and other things that have struck the Church; it's not the greatest message to be putting out there,' he said.

Continued page 48

Bishop Tim said the diocese was also looking at using non-ordained 'lay leaders' to take the strain in parishes where priests were too busy or unavailable.

Despite the challenges they've faced, both Fr Emmanuel and Fr Daniel say they had been welcomed by their new communities.

Open letter to the US Catholic bishops: It's over

The National Catholic Reporter offered an open letter to US bishops on November 9, 2018, calling on them to end the deception. The letter said: 'From fable to sacred text, we know how this goes. The point is reached where all realize the king wears no clothes, the righteous accusers read the writing in the sand and fade away, the religious authorities receive the Master's most stinging rebukes. As a class of religious rulers, the loudest among you have become quite good at applying the law and claiming divine authority in marginalizing those who transgress the statutes. The prolonged abuse scandal would suggest, however, that you've not done very well taking stock of yourselves'.

The letter goes on to critique the way church authorities have mishandled this scandal from the very top down: 'The worst of it occurred during the pontificate of the hastily sainted John Paul II His idealized concept of heroic priesthood apparently left him incapable of hearing the truth from credible witnesses, including the few bishops who dared disturb that idealized world with troubling reports. He promoted to the end Marciel Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legion of Christ, and a persona who came to represent the worst of the abuse scandal. Maciel, an accomplished sycophant, kept scrutiny at bay with his ability to spread a lot of young priests and a lot of money around the Vatican'.

The letter then names numerous individual and groups who became complicit in the cover-up as they supported the hierarchy. George Weigel, Dr. Mary Ann Glendon, Fr. Richard John Neuhaus and the 'Catholic' League hid the challenging questions that had to be asked.

They then call for conversion and upheaval of the clergy culture and its power abuse, keeping things hidden to escape accountability in the name of protecting the church calling on bishops to ask themselves: *How did we and our brothers in the past, as leaders of this clerical culture, reach the point where we could rationalize turning our backs on children who had been sexually tortured by our priests to protect those*

priests and our culture? One of your brothers, Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich, has already laid out some appropriate steps. Bishops must 'cede authority,' he said, to allow for greater accountability to outside authority. He also said that 'privilege, power and protection of a clerical culture' have to be 'eradicated from the life of the church' or 'everything else is a sideshow.'

They then suggest the bishops attend their January meeting 'in mufti and leave all the trappings, the collars and black suits, all the silk and lace and pectoral crosses at home'.

Bishops urged to meet victims before sex abuse February summit



The Vatican has written to presidents of all bishops' conferences to advise them on preparation for the February 21-24 meeting to address sexual abuse in the church.

In a letter addressed to meeting participants, organisers wrote: 'We urge each episcopal conference president to reach out and visit with victim survivors of clergy sex abuse in your respective countries prior to the meeting in Rome, to learn first-hand the suffering that they have endured.'

'Such personal encounters are a concrete way of ensuring that victim survivors of clerical abuse are first and foremost in the minds of all at the February gathering,' who will thus be able to find ways of dealing with the issues 'in solidarity, humility and penitence' and 'to move forward in addressing the abuse crisis,' the letter said.

The first step must be acknowledging the truth of what has happened, the letter said.

The Vatican announced the names of

members of the committee in November 2018: Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago; Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India; Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, who is also assistant secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and Father Hans Zollner SJ, a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

The Vatican also noted that victims of clergy sexual abuse will be invited to Rome for the meeting. While the meeting is primarily to address the responsibility of bishops and thus will be for bishops first and foremost, the Vatican has invited laymen and women to promote a 'very free and fruitful exchange', the letter said.

Pope Francis' objectives in calling the meeting can also be gleaned from the three principal themes: responsibility, accountability and transparency.

Ecclesia Dei Commission suppressed

The Ecclesia Dei Commission was established by Pope John Paul II in 1988 to dialogue with the priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre after the archbishop broke communion by ordaining four bishops without the papal mandate.

Pope Francis published an apostolic letter in the form of a motu proprio (an executive decree) *about the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei* on January 19, 2019 placing the work of this Commission under a new unit in the Congregation of the Faith. He did so in recognition of the fact that the key issues to be resolved with the Lefebvrites are doctrinal, not liturgical.

This is a significant move not just because it indicates a new approach to the priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, but it continues the gradual approach to reform of the Curia by Pope Francis.



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Pope's Peace Day Message



Pope Francis issued a call for 'basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons' for the World Day of Peace on 1 January, 2019, reports *La Croix International*.

Politicians should stop scapegoating migrants and instead focus on the service of peace, Pope Francis said. 'Terror exerted over those who are most vulnerable contributes to the exile of entire populations who seek a place of peace,' he said. 'Political addresses that tend to blame every evil on migrants and to deprive the poor of hope are unacceptable.'

'One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace,' Pope Francis wrote. 'It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations.'

He warned that when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.

'The thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice,' the pope said.

He warned that political vices detract from the credibility of political life. 'These vices, which undermine the ideal of an authentic democracy, bring disgrace to public life and threaten social harmony.'

Vices include xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the environment, contempt for those forced into exile and corruption, he said.

War and 'the strategy of fear' are also contrary to politics at the service of peace, the pope added.

'Today more than ever, our societies need artisans of peace who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family,' Pope Francis said.

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Clericalism explored in an Australian context

The Clergy Club John Crothers, ATF Theology, Hindmarsh SA 2018. Reviewed by Fr Brian Lucas. The book is available directly from John Crothers for \$30 (including postage) by emailing him with your postal address at john.crothers@sydneycatholic.org or at Garratt Publishing and amazon.com.au

This reviewer started school with the author, our paths separated at high school and university, and came together in the seminary at St Columba's College. It would be fair to say much of the content of *The Clergy Club* has formed part of our conversation over many years. I recall the altar boy picnic (p 33) but not the primary school demythologisation of Genesis (p 84).

The issues raised in the book have been talked about formally and informally within 'the Club' for many years. What the author has done is draw them together around the central theme of clericalism. Borrowing from Archbishop Timothy Costelloe sdb (p 1), clericalism is 'an attitude of superiority or aloofness which conveys the impression that priests are better than others' and 'an expectation that priests should be treated with special deference'. The 'clergy club mentality' is the phrase used to describe this phenomenon.

The book sets out to define this mentality, its origins, how it is expressed and then, to conclude on a positive note, provides some suggestions how it can be transformed. The tone is consistently respectful and balanced, and the style is eminently readable.

It is written, the author explains (p 8), 'for the many members of the Catholic community who have become disappointed, disillusioned or angry with the Church, because of what they see as elitism or arrogance, on the part of the clergy'.

The book begins with some introductory remarks about the author and his 33 years of priestly ministry which has informed his experience. There is a qualification that no names are mentioned (p 5) as the author sees the problem as a structural or institutional one. This is true to a large extent but many of the anecdotes do relate to individual aberrations – being 'grumpy and rigid' (p 72) is not confined to the clergy.

The book is in six parts. The first three are questions. What is the Clergy Club? Where does the Clergy Club Mentality come from? How does the Clergy Club Mentality express itself? The fourth and fifth parts set up the criteria by which one should judge priestly ministry, drawing

respectively on the model of Jesus in the Scriptures and the writings of Pope Francis. The final part sets out eight proposals for a way forward.

Specific anecdotes illustrate the issues of principle and they are stories that will resonate with many people – the priest who will not baptise children of unmarried parents (p 72); the hurt caused by the mixed marriage 'next to the garbage bins' (p 67). Then there are the examples of the legalism of the Roman Curia who prohibited the priest extending the sign of peace to the congregation (p.77), imposed a translation of the Mass that is in many parts unintelligible with 'contrived and antiquated language' (p 79); prohibited the third rite of reconciliation (p 109) and excluded women from the ministries of acolyte and lector (p 50). The way in which the gluten free altar bread issue was managed is a specific case-study (p 53, p 97 – 102).

Other common signs of the clerical club include too much emphasis on pomp and ceremony (p 75); unwillingness to consult (p 65); lack of empathy (p 67) and the way clerical dress impacts on how the priest relates to the laity (p 39). As one would expect there is ample discussion of the discipline of clerical celibacy in the Western Church (p 523ff). The Pope's request for this to be an agenda item for the Synod on the Amazon is significant.

Woven throughout the text are references to the contemporary issue of child sexual abuse and the harm caused to victims and the apparent inaction of the hierarchy, but that issue is more complex with more nuances than the popular narrative suggests. The discussion on the seal of the confessional (p 89) refers to reporting or remaining silent but did not allude to the strategy of withholding absolution for the hypothetical serial paedophile penitent.

The author's vision of priestly ministry, and the main quality for it to be successful, is built on the role of the priest as leader (p 102). Critical to leadership is the ability to communicate. The challenges faced by priests coming from overseas relating to culture, language and accent are noted (p 93) and the author concludes that 'the attitude of the bishops seems to be that it doesn't really matter whether the parishioners can understand the priest or

not' (p 95). This generalisation may be somewhat over-stated, but the issue is real. As I write this review I am thinking of lunch I had the day before with two fine parishioners who have had five priests from overseas in their parish over recent years and were lamenting how they cannot get their teenagers to attend and how difficult is to understand the homilies.

The strongest part of the book is the well-documented material from Pope Francis and this builds on the previous part with a series of relevant scriptural images. The 'fifteen sicknesses of the Roman Curia' (p 127) would be a useful basis for a clergy reflection day.

The eight proposals are worth considering but, in this reviewer's opinion, one might have found some stronger suggestions than the sign of peace (n3 p 140) or housekeeping (n5 p 142) or operating on the parish accounts (n8 p 147). For example, seminary training needs to place more emphasis on the techniques of communication and especially quality preaching as well as understanding the dynamics of managing parish groups and being confident in using consultative bodies.

The removal of a 'them and us' mentality which feeds an unhealthy clerical culture might begin with a return to the basic understanding of the church as a community of people rather than a 'thing' that is protected by an elite who in turn are left alone by a complacent and passive laity. ☺

The Swag Winter Edition

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Catholic priesthood and the Word of God

Broken for you Jesus Christ, The Catholic Priesthood and The Word of God, Francis J. Moloney, Coventry Press. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Francis Moloney SDB, an internationally acclaimed scripture scholar and theologian, is Senior Professorial Fellow at the Catholic Theological College, Melbourne. He is well known for his writings on the gospels and especially his work on the Eucharist.

This small volume consists of three studies. The first looks at the gospel image of Jesus and explore the way each of the four gospels give us a unique insight into who Jesus is. The second is a very clear and concise paper on the development of priesthood in the christian story. Moloney begins by refuting any reference to the idea of priesthood as a cultic idea in the New Testament claiming it would be impossible for such an idea of priesthood to emerge when the destruction of the temple in 70AD put an end to the idea of a priestly class not just in Christianity but in Judaism as well.

Catholicism claims a priesthood based on the role of eucharistic leadership as drawn from the stories of Emmaus, the last supper and early community Eucharistic texts. Moloney argues that notions of priesthood based on these texts would emphasise reconciliation, unity, remembering and incorporating 'betrayers'. The priesthood that emerged as the church became more established emphasised the man set apart, with special dress, with power and privilege, governing and ruling over people's lives.

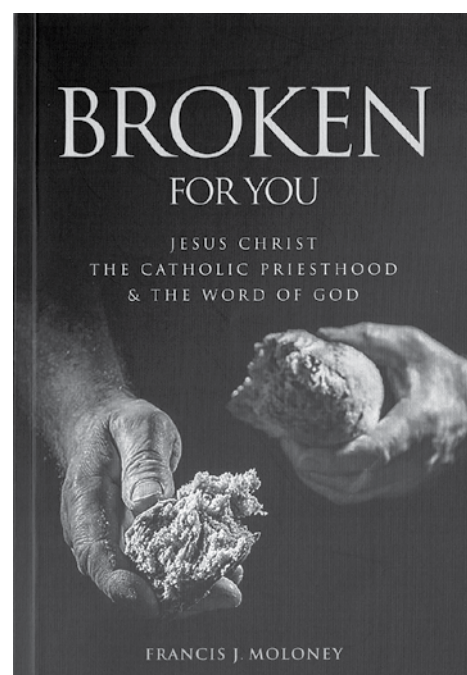
Moloney argues that any idea of priesthood based on the New Testament must reject any sense of a privileged class. The final section of the essay is a powerful rejection

of clericalism calling for a revision of priesthood that serves, protects the poor and marginalised and incorporates the excluded through a shared bread that feeds the hungry.

Moloney calls on priest and people to transform the clericalist class into a priesthood that rejects clerical power and its various forms of abuse. Towards the end, the essay quotes Pope Francis from his *Letter to the People of God* (August 21, 2018): *whenever we have tried to replace, or silence, or ignore, or reduce the People of God to small elites, we end up creating communities, projects, theological approaches, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately without lives. Clericalism leads to a division in the body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today.*

The final study looks at the Word of God as its use has been encouraged in the church over the last 130 years. Moloney highlights the importance of the Word quoting St Jerome: *when we approach the Mystery, if a crumb falls to the ground we are troubled. Yet when we are listening to the Word of God, and God's Word and Christ's flesh are being poured into our ears, we pay no heed.* The problem of our failure to appreciate the importance of scripture is recognised in the fourth century.

However it has been revived in earnest particularly with *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), *Dei Verbum* (1965) and the 1993 document on interpretation of scripture among others. The poverty of scriptural literacy at all levels of the Catholic church



today is not for lack of scholars encouraged by these documents or from failure to encourage modern scriptural study. Moloney claims there is a cultural bias of doctrine over scripture and a misuse of scripture to teach morals rather than inspire relationship. Many question Pope Francis' approach which Moloney claims challenges on this very ground. He quotes Francis from *Evangelii Gaudium* (147): *If a text is written to console, it should not be used to correct errors; if it was written as an exhortation, it should not be employed to teach doctrine; if it was written to teach something about God, it should not be used to expound various theological opinions; if it was written as a summons to praise or missionary outreach, let us not use it to talk about the latest news.*

If more homilies followed this approach, they would more likely nourish and inspire. This is a delightful little compendium of three important essays. ☺

Memories of Corpus Christi priests

Byways Memories from a Catholic Seminary, 2018, Alella Books. A collection of stories by those who studied at Corpus Christi College and took various roads after ordination. To order a copy go to: alellabooks.com/byways Reviewed by Peter Day.

On the third day there was a wedding at Corpus Christi College in Victoria. Jesus and 1480 men had been invited. When the wine gave out, a woman, who hadn't been invited, cried out to the heavens: 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' The woman said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone jars meant for

Catholic purification – the waters had been infused with an assortment of spices: neo-Thomism/scholasticism, dogma, sexual mores, do's and don'ts, and that most bitter of spices: ontological separateness; each stone jar could hold twenty or thirty gallons...

Byways is not an easy read because, in essence, it tells the story of a church that has run out of wine. And while the Good,

the Bad and the Ugly realities of Catholicism are laid bare – especially the "Bad" and the "Ugly", *Byways* is anything but a cynical, despairing tale. Its 40 contributors offer far-reaching, earnest, and profound insights: they are the musings of lovers, not haters.

Their story is also our story.

Corpus Christi Seminary, Werribee, Victoria was founded in 1923 by an Irish warrior bishop, Daniel Mannix: the quintessential servant – even victim? – of Rome's *Fortress Church* policy. This Roman

Continued page 52



backdrop, along with the cold, rigid puritanism inherent in Irish Catholicism, created an accommodating Petri dish for all sorts of pathologies: the attempted de-humanisation of young, naïve, and generally idealistic men in their prime, the eschewing of modernity, the exclusion of half the population, and the outbreak of that most destructive of “cancers”:

clericalism.
Further, the monastic-scholastic-Tridentine model that underpinned Corpus Christi favoured the development of the

intellectual and spiritual layers of the man at the expense of his human development. Little wonder, then, that psycho-sexual and social immaturity pervade the priestly caste. Little wonder, then, that it has all ended in tears.

But amidst the chaff, there is plenty of fine wheat, too. Between the front and back covers, separated by 350 plus pages of text – it’s long and, at times, repetitive – we get to shake the hands of hundreds of decent, generous, and deeply committed souls longing to make a difference; longing to

feed a thirsty world with wine that sates. And what a wonderfully broad, eclectic bunch they are, comprising men who had the courage of their convictions to pursue Christianity outside ordained ministry, and men who had the courage of their convictions to pursue Christianity within ordained ministry: lawyers, laborers, dads, misfits, theologians, nappy-changers, grandfathers, philosophers, farmers, foot-washers, teachers, social workers, agnostics, atheists, psychologists, doctors – and backyard cricketers, too!

And lest we fail to mention the estimable reformer, Charles Mayne SJ (Rector 1947-’58): *A man of unflinching integrity and decency*; a man ahead of his time who sought to open the hearts, minds – and windows of the church.

‘Our joy is our sorrow unmasked,’ so said Kahlil Gibran. The reminiscences of these men have, indeed, unmasked much of the sorrow that pervades Catholicism today. But their courage, fidelity, and commitment to truth, to the path of the Nazarene, are just some of the tears needed to wash away the sour taste of hyssop stick Catholicism; are some of the tears needed to re-fill those empty stone jars.

The joy of new wine awaits. ☪

Poetry that speaks

The Splash of Words – believing in Poetry, Mark Oakley, Canterbury Press 2016.
Reviewed by Tony Doherty.

This is one of the most remarkable books I read last year. A collection of twenty-nine poems lovingly chosen by an Anglican priest – poets such as Les Murray, Alice Walker, Seamus Heaney, Louis McNeice, Mary Oliver, Emily Dickinson to the ever challenging Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Apart from the richness of the poems, Oakley provides several pages of commentary which throws light on the meaning and background of each poem drawn from his own pastoral experience and reliable theology. For me, the author provides a brilliant window into their insights.

Poetry is a divisive word. If, like me, you have fallen asleep wrestling with the work of poets, here is a book to ‘interrupt your snoring’ and help you appreciate anew the genius of some of our most loved artists. And along the way have the chance to freshen tired homilies with the sparkling images and language you will find. I found a homily on every page.

Oakley claims: ‘Poetry is the person of faith’s native language’ – and metaphor the medium of much of the gospel message. Faith is most fully itself and most fully life-giving when it opens your eyes and uncovers for you a work larger than you thought. Often it is the vision of a poet that depths that work. When Jesus talks about the ‘kingdom’ he doesn’t say what it is, but rather what it is like – a mustard seed, a net thrown into the sea, a lost coin.

Our own prophet from the north coast (NSW), Les Murray comments: *Religions are poems. They concert our daylight and dreaming mind, our emotions, instinct, breath and native gesture into the only whole thinking: poetry.*

The author is the Chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral in London, a writer and a broadcaster and a lecturer in Religious Studies in Kings College.

In this book he explores the power of poetry to stir the settled ways of viewing our faith, break us away from the formulaic literacy of our ‘God language’ and even

shift our perceptions of what it means to believe in these confusing and demoralising times.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams says: ‘some writers have the gift of simply letting you know you can trust them...to open all kinds of doors’ into a more compassionate, more truthful understanding of our Christian tradition.

Take the poetry challenge this book offers. You won’t regret it. ☪

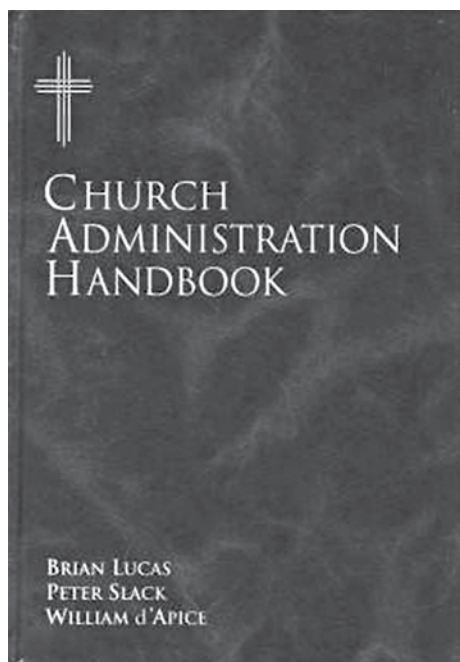
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The last word on church administration

Brian Lucas, Peter Slack and William d'Apice have updated their monumental *Church Administration Handbook* to take account of relevant changes over the last ten years, particularly in civil law relating to employment and charities. St Pauls Publications, 2018. Reviewed by John Scanlon.



The stated aim of the authors was to provide 'a source of simple information on how the canon law relates to civil law and how the various structures and processes of church administration work.' The intended users of the book include not only lay people and clergy directly responsible for administration of dioceses, parishes and social welfare institutions, but also

members of finance councils, seminarians and professional advisers to church bodies. The book certainly fulfils the stated aim and meets the information needs of the various classes of user in full measure.

The Introduction states that 'this is not a book that is meant to be read from cover to cover.' But the mark of a really good reference resource is that it seduces the user into reading more and more, for the sheer pleasure of gaining an understanding of areas of knowledge not previously encountered. This was certainly my experience with this book. One particularly valuable feature of the book is the inclusion of theological and historical reflections on the origins and natures of church structures, from the universal church through to the parish.

There are parts of the book where the structures being described sound like theoretical ideals rather than pieces of real life. A good example is this description of the hierarchical composition of the church: *It might be conceptualised as an inverted pyramid. The bottom, the curia of the Holy See serves episcopal conferences which in turn serve the dioceses. Diocesan administration is at the service of the parishes since it is in the parishes that most people find their place of worship, hear the Word of God and find*

pastoral care. I suspect many parish clergy, as well as the vast majority of laity, would greet this use of the word 'service' with a hollow laugh.

From my personal point of view as a layman, the most worrying aspect of the book is that it treats of church structures and responsibilities as they are – with all authority reserved to the clergy – and makes no admission of the possibility of an alternative model of governance. The closest it comes to a justification of the status quo is to say the following:

An understanding of administration within the church must begin with an appreciation of the relationships that are at the heart of church life: relationships within the Trinity, relationships of the baptised with the triune God, and relationships among the baptised themselves... The church and its fundamental structure are not merely human inventions. The church's structure and mission flow from the divine will. This is something of a theological sledge-hammer to bring against the proposition that the People of God in a parish might share decisions about parish budgets between clerical and lay members.

However, until the church hierarchy is dragged screaming and kicking into a more equitable model of governance, the *Church Administration Handbook* will remain the last word on the subject. Whether we agree or not with the model of governance it assumes, we should pay tribute to the learning, experience and sheer industry that the authors have brought to its writing. ☪

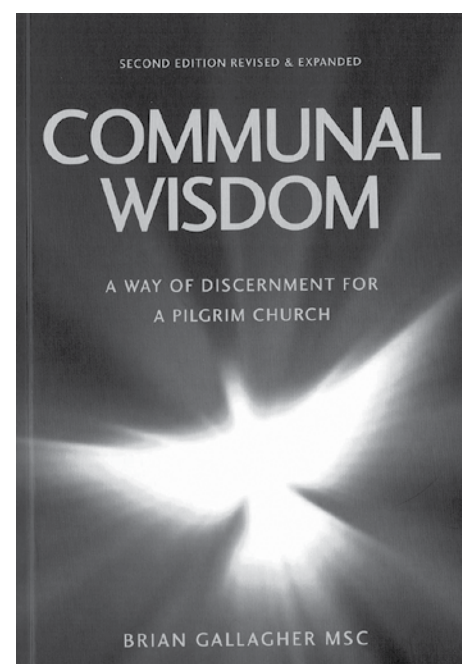


Many ways to discern group wisdom

Communal Wisdom, A way of discernment for a pilgrim church, Brian Gallagher MSC, Coventry Press 2018. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Pastoral Supervision, a facilitated safe space for people in pastoral ministry to learn by reflecting on their pastoral experience, has come into its own since the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made it a recommendation for all people in ministry. It has been my privilege to facilitate pastoral supervision for about 10 years and I have more recently been involved in training pastoral supervisors. This kind of supervision involves theological reflection as practitioners discern from their practice what has happened to them in the pastoral event they present and who they are as ministers. The work of discernment is central.

At a conference a couple of years ago, Jane Leach presented the Quaker practice of The Clearness Committee, a process which involves a very clear and timed number of steps that we were instructed to follow exactly. These include naming of the event to be discerned; specific times of silence strictly observed and a chance for each to say what they heard and how it touched them and their experience. I was a little surprised that such a simple process was so effective in clarifying thought and uncovering the wisdom born of the group process. Having had that experience, I was not surprised to see it recommended as a useful tool of group discernment in this book.



Continued page 54

REVIEWS

Gallagher's book is a second and expanded edition of the original book published in 2009. In his forward Denis Edwards reminds us that this book has been revised and published now as a support for the discernment processes that are essential to the Australian Catholic community discernment leading up to the Plenary Council 2020.

Gallagher explores the various approaches that might assist in developing effective group discernment on the way to

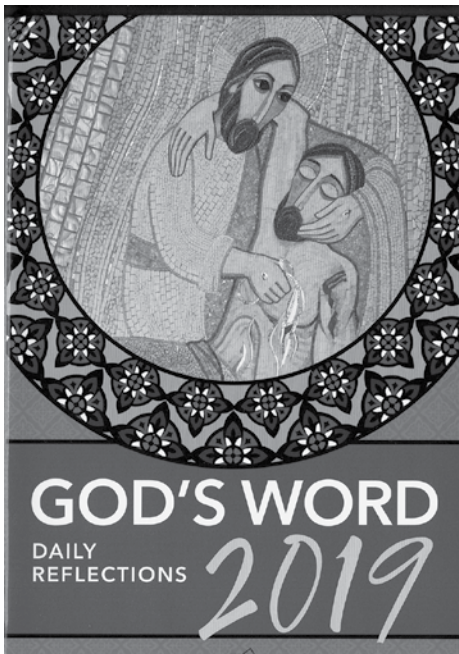
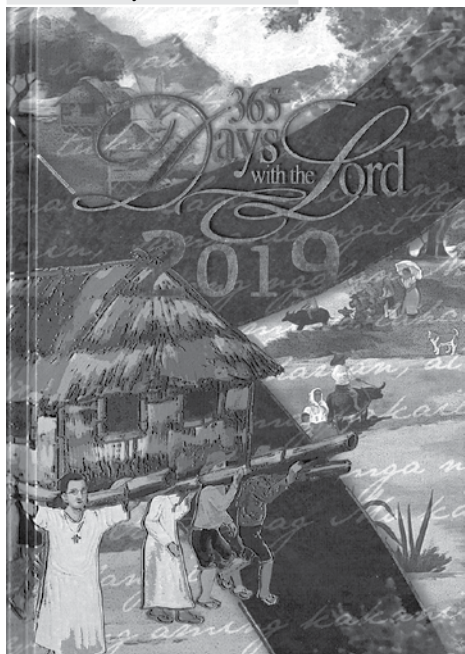
communal wisdom in service of the church and the spiritual life of the people involved in the process.

What is particularly refreshing in this volume is the use of diverse spiritual practices from the Catholic tradition and from many other traditions both Christian and from other faiths. Gallagher presumes to be able to draw on the strength of spiritual wisdom practices from all religious traditions.

The book is well referenced and researched but I got the feeling as I read through this very readable book that its real strength is the author's experience of using these methods of discernment in many group contexts. The authenticity of this book and its value for practitioners working with groups is its clarity of thought and the confidence it builds because it is written by one who knows from experience and who trusts in the wisdom born of the processes he recommends. ☪

Daily Reflections for 2019

God's Word Daily Reflections 2019, Editor Michael Goonan SSP, St Pauls, Australia and 365 Days with the Lord 2019, Editor: Apolinar A Caster Jr. SSP, St Pauls, Philippines. Books with the daily Mass readings for each day of the year and a short reflection. Reviewed by Peter Maher.



These two books are very similar in format with the full liturgical readings for every day of 2109 and a reflection based on the texts. The major difference is their context. One is designed

to accompany people on the journey of discernment in the year leading up to the Australian Plenary Council 2020 with each month having a different author for the reflections. The other is more a liturgical

diary for the St Paul Mass Association. It includes commemorations with special meaning for their 'Pauline family'.

Both books offer very brief commentary appropriate to each day and space for notes. I think either might be very helpful for those who prepare a short reflection or homily based on the daily readings of the lectionary.

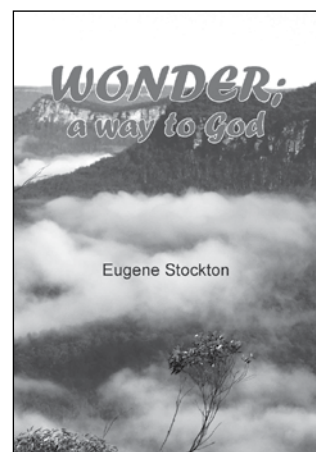
Both books have a series of authors who offer a short commentary on the biblical texts. Mostly these are very short without any reference to local context or events. This makes them equally valuable as thought starters for reflections the texts but equally limited in inspiring us to think about the relevance of these texts to our lives in the countries and contexts they represent. This is particularly disappointing in the Australian book because it seems a lost opportunity to offer individuals and groups a way to use the texts to ask the key questions of the Plenary Council around what God is doing in the Australian church and the Australian society today and what might we do as church to respond in a way that reflects the challenges presented in the gospel and other biblical texts of the liturgical calendar. ☪

WONDER: a way to God

Eugene Stockton, a priest of the Diocese of Parramatta, scripture scholar and archaeologist, has written an important contribution to spirituality in an Australian context, drawing on his work, particularly his research with Indigenous cultures and peoples.

His latest offering, *WONDER: a way to God*, takes its cue from *Dadirri*, an Aboriginal form of contemplation which goes out to the environment. Prompted by the Papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the wonders of the natural world, wonderment raises the mind and heart to God, reaching out

beyond creation to the Transcendent Other. The book offers first steps in cultivating contemplative prayer. It looks at the wonder of God in Godself and to our life in community. How might one dare to aspire to oneness in God? To order e: secretary@bmert.org or www.bmert.org cost \$20 plus postage and handling. ☪



Meeting God

Peter Malone MSC reviews *An Interview with God*, a film exploring religious and philosophical ideas about life.



The tone of the title indicates that this will be an earnest film. And it is.

Clearly, the themes will be religious. But there are many philosophical issues, especially about evil and free will. The screenplay touches on some biblical themes; the film has been produced by a Christian company, emphasising that the path to God is very much focused on the Judeo-Christian tradition and its culmination in the person of Jesus Christ.

Audiences who have an aversion to explicitly religious films will find their aversion reinforced. Audiences who are sympathetic to explicitly religious films will find a lot to interest them, to provoke them, although they might find the tone is rather didactic, at times preachy.

This said, there is a lot of questioning (on the part of the interviewer, of course, but also God being able to reverse the interview, making demands on the interviewer), which demands answers from the audience for their own integrity, authenticity of belief or non-belief.

A large part of the film consists of the interview, although there are storylines which come to the surface. And, which get the attention of God.

It should be said that God is played by the veteran actor, David Strathairn, a man of serious demeanour, intelligent and articulate, a credible incarnation for God in the contemporary world.

The interviewer is played by the Australian actor, Brenton Thwaites, eager to score an interview with God, an exclusive for his publication, ready to front up and asked the questions, but frequently thrown off balance when God returns the questions.

Thwaites plays journalist, Paul, who has been on an interview mission in Afghanistan and is seen initially returning on the plane with coffins of military draped in the American flag. He has experienced some of the trauma on the frontline, making him sympathetic to post-traumatic stress disorder, reaching out to help some of the soldiers who have returned home.

He is married, but immediately there is tension in the apartment. Interesting for the audience, the screenplay has been written in such a way that would lead the audience to lay the blame for potential breakup with Paul rather than his wife. It does not quite work out that way. The marriage situation surfaces throughout the film, Paul trying to contact his wife, she busy and not answering her phone, an intervention by his sister-in-law – and some challenging interventions by God.

But, the core of the screenplay consists of the three interview sessions. Paul, earnest, riding his bike around New York City, meets God first of all in a park, their sitting on park benches. Later, they will meet on the stage in an empty theatre. And, finally, in an office in a high-rise building.

The questions raised are those which are expected, which the audience themselves might raise were they to have an interview with God. Actually, God is more skilled at asking questions of Paul than Paul is of God. And, despite his concern about Paul and his life, God is able to keep his cool.

One of the features of the film is the range of clever lines, arresting religious quips, thoughtful aphorisms. Some audiences may find the interview sessions heavy and demanding. They might work better as an audiobook where attention is on the words and expressions rather than focusing on the characters and their reactions during the interviews. To that extent, many audiences might find there is too much talk for them to deal with.

Some examples: faith is not a goal, it's a process; concerning the question why bad things happen to good people, Paul notes that God could be considered a 'Cosmic Killjoy'; life is not an audition for the afterlife; most people only notice bad things when they happen to them; some people go through life feeling that they are judged every day by God.

There is an interesting discussion about the Ten Commandments, God noting that in the Gospels, Jesus quotes only six, those focusing on our dealings with our neighbours, not reiterating the commandments about God (and God adds there aren't many polytheists around these days). Ultimately, the challenge to Paul is not so much the theological nor the philosophical but to look at his own life, to look at the command of love, to see whether humans can overcome the bad things, planting of crops for food, psychological assistance for war veterans, marriages being saved. A final theme is forgiveness. ☺

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Returned to God

RUSSELL H HARDIMAN

03/03/1943 – 19/01/2019



Russell Hardiman was born in Leonora, WA – the third son of Agatha and Hugh Hardiman.

At age 15 Russell entered the St Charles Seminary, Guildford, WA in 1958 to complete his Leaving and Matriculation and then stayed on to commence his seminary training. In 1962 the Vicar General – Mons Cunningham advised of a bursary-place offered to a priest of the Bunbury Diocese at the College of Propaganda Fide in Rome. The rest is history, as Russell spent the next 5 years in Rome, studying and earning the first Doctorate in Sacred Liturgy for an Australian priest.

Russell elected to have his ordination – not in Rome with Pope Paul IV with his other classmates, but in Albany, WA in the hall on Centennial Oval and celebrated by (his diocesan) Bishop Goody with his uncle – Fr John Russell concelebrating.

Russell served in the parishes of Albany, Boyup Brook, Gnowangerup, Donnybrook and Waroona in country WA over a period of 30 years. Interspersed with his love of community and parish work, was a continuing learning and desire to pass on Vatican II teachings and specialised liturgy formation.

After working with Fr Lombardi and the Movement for a Better World in Rome in 1969, Russell enjoyed an academic career spanning 45 years with roles such as Lecturer in Liturgy and Sacraments at the Maranatha Institute for 14 years, Lecture tours with visiting overseas religious, President of the Australian Academy of Liturgy (1989-1993), Senior Lecturer in Liturgy in the College of Theology at the University of Notre Dame for 20 years, Dean of Studies at St Charles Seminary and concluding as Associate Professor in the College of Theology at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle until his retirement through ill-health in 2012.

He commenced writing *Pastoral Liturgy* in 1970 and that magazine is still being written today having been handed to UNDA. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for 20 years' service to Notre Dame in 2012.

Russell was a great sportsman (a single handicap golfer), pastor, traveller, author, teacher and friend to whoever he came in contact. He wrote six books including *From East to West You Gather a People* – being Catholic in Australia through an eight-generation family history.

Struck down with Guillian Barre Syndrome in 2007, he recovered and then was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease in 2012. He suffered the full extent of dementia in his final years at Margaret Hubery House until his death. His funeral mass at St Mary's Cathedral was attended by Archbishop Costello, Principal Celebrant Bishop Holohan, other WA Bishops, 65 priests of the Diocese of Bunbury and the Archdiocese of Perth and an estimated 400 strong congregation of family and friends. He was interred with his uncle Fr John Russell at Karrakatta Cemetery on the 29th January.

May he rest in peace.

JAMES MICHAEL HONNER

01/05/1936 – 16/01/2019



Jim Honner was born at Brentwood on Yorke Peninsula, SA. After early education at the local Primary School his secondary education was at the St Francis Xavier Seminary and then he went to St Patrick's College Manly.

Jim served as Assistant Priest at Mount Gambier, Salisbury, Thebarton and St Peters, and as Parish Priest at Taillem Bend, Penola, Greenacres, Victor Harbor and Blackwood. He was something of a history buff, with special interest in Scripture, the Holy Land and the Middle East. He spent nearly eight months travelling through there in 1974 and had an extensive library. His vast knowledge was reflected in his wonderful homilies. He went overseas again in 1980. While planning another trip in 2001 a medical test discovered a major heart problem leading to coronary bypass surgery, from which he was lucky to recover. However in 2005 he did spend three months at Tantur Institute in Jerusalem. He continued to minister at Blackwood until February 2011 when he retired to reside at Murphy Villa.

During 2018 his health deteriorated and he moved to full time care with Southern Cross Care at The Pines. It was here that he died peacefully on 10 January 2019. Concelebrated Requiem Mass was in St Peter Claver Church Dulwich. Although Jim insisted on having a simple Mass with no booklets, memorial cards or flowers, there was a good number of fellow priests, family, friends and former parishioners in attendance. His mortal remains were cremated to be placed with his parents in Minlaton.

May he rest in peace.

PAUL PITZEN

22/11/1939 – 20/10/2018



There is no doubt Father Paul Pitzen will be remembered as a pillar of strength for the Emmanuel Centre and the wider Perth community, for all his extraordinary works in championing the rights of the people, especially in the areas of disability.

Born on 22 November 1939 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA, Paul and his family, of which he was the 11th of 12 children, came from humble beginnings. His first jobs included making toilet seats and laundry baskets at a local factory and later on he worked as a preliminary bridge survey worker – all while juggling to complete his tertiary education.

In 1959 his desire for God grew, reading about the Servites after his mother shared brochures with him after one of her pilgrimages. He wasted no time, joining the Servite Seminary in California in 1960, where he stayed for three years before being transferred to Benburb,

County Tyrone, Northern Ireland in 1962 where he graduated with a Licentiate of Sacred Theology and a Diploma in Mariology. He then travelled to Rome to complete his studies from 1963 to 1967 and was ordained in Rome on 27 March 1967.

During his time in Rome, Paul was inspired to pick up several languages including Latin, Italian, Lithuanian and AUSLAN, (the sign language for the Deaf community in Australia).

Fulfilling his childhood dreams of living in Australia, Paul arrived on 27 October 1970. Paul experienced yet another life-changing moment during a Sabbatical in San Francisco when he noticed apparent discrimination towards people with disabilities and their families. It was then that he pledged to make a difference, making it his mission to break down the barriers for people with disabilities in all areas, whether in schools, parishes, or throughout the country.

Upon his return to Australia, Paul, who had been a science and religious education teacher at Servite College, was asked by then-Auxiliary Bishop Peter Quinn to become a part-time chaplain for the Catholic Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a role which required him to celebrate Mass once a month.

It was the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, and Paul together with his life-long collaborator Barbara Harris, opened the Emmanuel centre, a self-help centre for people with disability, their families and carers. The Catholic Ministry with Deaf and Hearing Impaired People, Catholic Association for Special Education support and the Catholic Mental Health Network also became connected with the Emmanuel Centre.

In 1996, Paul was incardinated into the Archdiocese of Perth by Emeritus Archbishop Barry Hickey. He continued to serve the community until his passing on 20 October.

May he now rest in peace.

RAYMOND ANTONY (TONY) RUHAN SJ

02/07/1928 – 23/12/2018



A very tall man, Tony Ruhan began Engineering at Sydney University before joining the Jesuits in Melbourne in 1947. During his formal training he completed a Bachelor of Science at Melbourne University and spent three years teaching at the fledgling Saint Ignatius' College in Adelaide. At the start of 1960 he was ordained in Sydney.

As a young priest Tony went to Rome to do a biennium in Philosophy at the Gregorian University. After Tertianship at St Andrea i Lavanttal, Karnten, in Austria, he undertook a PhD in the History of Ideas and Methods at the University of Chicago. Subsequently, his first enduring appointment was as a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby (1972-79).

They were volatile times. At one stage he found himself trying to keep warring factions apart. He was known to cause uproar at public meetings. Fellow Australian Jesuit Fr Ian Dillon intervened to save his life on one occasion. Tony also worked in nearby villages. It was his first experience of life on the frontiers, something that was to become a hallmark of his ministry.

His next experience of that was in South Korea, where he went in late 1980 to teach at Sogang University. After a couple of years he moved out of there to live with people being evicted by the government from their rooms.

He remained with them for the next 12 years, living in acute poverty in the face of rampant corruption. Then he headed for his third frontier, Kampala, Uganda, where, as part of JRS Eastern Africa, he tried to help Sudanese refugees (1994-96). For the most part he lived alone near the camps until UNHCR pulled workers out in the face of attacks from Idi Amin's rebels.

He found his final frontier back in Australia, where he spent the last 22 years of his life ministering to homeless people in inner Sydney, initially in the Jesuit parish at St Canice's, Kings Cross, where he would occupy himself with menial tasks in the soup kitchen.

With two doctorates Tony was admirably equipped for life as an academic, but he became disillusioned with that milieu in Seoul when it failed to address chronic injustice; so he withdrew from it to devote himself to people living on the margins.

He called it "playing a different game". He had scant regard for honorifics, status or personal achievement, regarding his own academic accomplishments as little more than straw.

He refused to allow them to separate him from the poor and needy. Courageous and challenging, he lived life radically, preferring to be in a simple inner city apartment rather than a comfortable community. His fierce intellect contrasted with an almost childlike naivety and honesty when it came to assessing people and situations. He was open to other religious traditions and indigenous cultures.

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord
and let perpetual light shine upon them forever.
May the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

NOEL JAMES TOBIN

29/12/1929 – 03/11/2018



Noel Tobin died peacefully in his sleep at Nazareth House Geraldton, his home since March 2017. Noel was born in Canowindra, NSW, the third of four children to Norman Tobin and Alma McCoskey and is survived by his brother, John. In 1946 Noel started his studies for priesthood, not for his home diocese where he was not welcomed, but with the help of his PP he was accepted by Bishop Gummer for Geraldton. He studied in Rome and was ordained with special dispensation, aged 22, in July 1951.

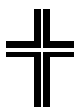
Noel was assistant priest at Geraldton until 1957, then he served the people of Leonora, Port Hedland, Mt Magnet, Exmouth as PP before Bishop Hickey asked him to put Geraldton on its financial feet as Administrator and Chancellor (1985-94) and it was here he set up the Catholic Development Fund.

He single handedly paid off the Exmouth parish debt, in an era when some priests were experimenting with becoming 'worker priests' ... at the altar on Sunday and at the office or factory Monday to Friday! If you flew into Exmouth, Noel refuelled your Cessna. If you escaped the heat at the pub, Noel was there tickling the ivories and across the street your kids would be entertained at the 'Tobin Movie Theatre' run by his helpers. If you decided to settle in Exmouth, Noel could be mowing your front lawn when he was not serving as Chaplain to the US military base up the road. All this as well as the editor for the *Cathedral Chronicle*, (1952-57) & *The Sower* from 1989 to 1994.

Noel spent 21 years of his retirement living independently in the northern Perth suburb of Beldon and supplied for many parishes, most regularly at St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Ballajura where he was affectionately known as 'Fr Buzzword' as he frequently summarised the Sunday Readings and his homily with a 'Buzzword'. He was also the Geraldton Diocese web-master, posting daily updates. Frequent funerals and chaplaincy to SACRI Bullsbrook also kept him busy. Always helpful to newly ordained priests, Noel never lost his sense of humour. He was kind to people seeking help, a generous host – a decent human being! Rest now in peace Noel.

JAMES VICTORY

08/07/1941 – 09/12/2018



Jim, a priest of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, was ordained to the priesthood at the Broken Hill Cathedral in 1965 and from then on was much loved in all parishes he served – Broken Hill, Forbes, Deniliquin, Balranald, Barham, Wentworth, Hillston, Hay and Moama.

After retiring to Albury in 2013, Jim continued to work as supply priest for the Wilcannia-Forbes, Wagga Wagga and Sandhurst Dioceses where he was welcomed with open arms, especially in Thurgoona Parish where he became very involved. At one stage Jim went to Norfolk Island so the people there could have Mass during an important festive time.

Jim had a great love of music played the piano, accordion and the violin by ear and he dabbled in other instruments like the flute. Jim was a great mentor to young priests and a support and friend to fellow priests. He would always put others before himself and was always such a loved family member.

Jim's love for his Diocese and its people is reflected in his comment, "It came upon us like an assault when +George and Co decided to shut the Diocese down. We all fought like hell to keep it as it was. Eventually, one born in Forbes, Columba Macbeth-Green, was appointed as bishop. According to church records in Forbes I had been his baptiser as a 'baby' priest...the Lord has been good to me and I offer Him my thanks."

It was good to see so many of the surrounding priests at Jim's Memorial Mass at Thurgoona and also to see quite a number of his classmates in the priesthood make the trip from Sydney and other parts of the state. The concelebrated Funeral Mass was held at Broken Hill a couple of days later. Jim will be dearly missed but his memory will continue to live on through each and every one of us.

Returned to the God, we hold them in prayer.

† John Dobson (Archdiocese of Brisbane)	18/12/2018
† Leo F Donnelly (Diocese of Lismore)	23/01/2019
† Allan Hart (Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle)	22/01/2019
† James Maloney CM (Vincentian Fathers)	23/11/2018
† William McKeown (Archdiocese of Brisbane)	12/12/2018
† Adrian Meaney MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)	06/02/2019
† James Phelan (Diocese of Parramatta)	27/12/2018
† Laurence Joseph Quinn (Diocese of Port Pirie)	30/01/2019

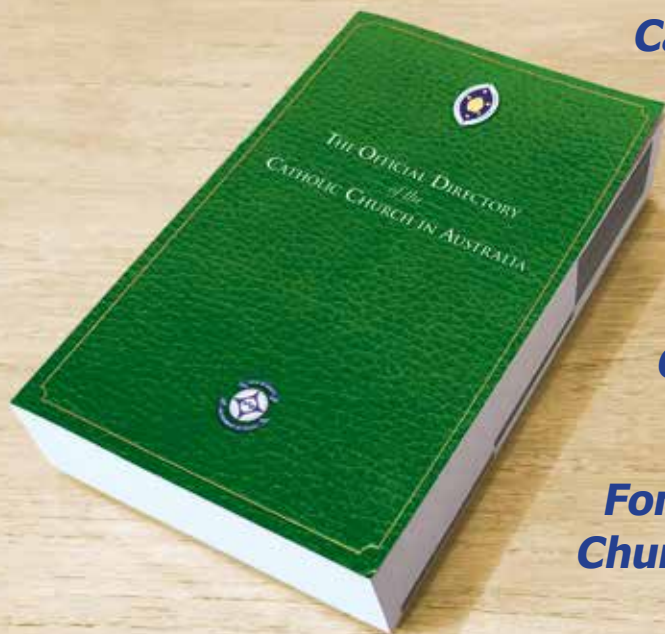
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The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Clergy (Bishops, Priests & Deacons) and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians) who join together to support each other in their ministry in the Church.

Founded in 1970 in the Spirit of Vatican II, the NCP is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing clergy in the public forum.

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

- To promote a spirit of fraternity among members and other clerics of the Catholic Church in Australia.
- To devise ways and means for members and others to better serve the people to whom they are called to minister.
- To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to promote the spirit of ecumenism and to establish ecumenical links.
- To effect a liaison with other national bodies of religious women and men and with national bodies of laity.
- To maintain contact with similar associations.
- To be a consultative body to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.