

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 (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Clergy (Bishops, Priests and Deacons) and Associate Members (Lay, Religious and 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 Swag* is published quarterly (March, June, September & December) by the National Council of Priests of Australia as a service to Catholic clergy of Australia, and through them to the Church and the wider community.

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The views expressed in *The Swag* are not necessarily those of the NCP executive, the editors or NCP staff.

## James Clarke



### “Everything old is new again!”

Greetings brothers and sisters.

Three years ago, I handed the baton of the role of Chairman to Paddy Sykes and now the baton has turned into a “boomerang”... look out Ian.

It is a privilege to be asked to take on the role of Chairman once again. I take this opportunity to thank Paddy for his service to NCP as a member of the Executive for the past six years and as Chairman for the past three. Paddy has guided our organisation through these COVID-19 years with pastoral wisdom and insight. Our 50th anniversary convention was

postponed during this time and we are hoping and praying that we will be able to hold our next convention in 2023.

2022 brings changes to the composition of the Executive. As well as my own “elevation” to the position of Chairman, we have two new members on the executive – John Conway from the Archdiocese of Brisbane and Bill Burt SVD, a member of the Congregation of the Divine Word. I thank our outgoing committee members, Brian Matthews and Lenin Thenamirtham, for their generosity of service to the NCP.

We are acutely aware that the past two years have been financially challenging for so many, and with this in mind, we have not increased our membership fees for 2022.

I encourage all our members to talk about NCP with those around you who are either newly ordained, recently arrived in Australia, or who just don't know about NCP's good work. NCP is an aging organisation and it is up to each one of us to reach out and invite others to join.

There is a real sense of fatigue and world weariness amongst our membership and *The Swag* readership. COVID-19 has affected us all in so many ways. The people in our parishes have been denied access to the Eucharist, and to worship and liturgical gatherings. Family life, parish life and work

life, have all been severely disrupted. However, we continue to live our lives in joyful hope that our situation will continue to improve.

Our Church is in the process of renewal and reform. We are still reverberating from the aftershocks of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse. Our European brethren are undergoing their own cathartic experience. Cardinal Reinhardt Marx is calling for a review of obligatory celibacy as a prerequisite for priesthood to alleviate the shortage of clergy in the universal church. Our own bishops have stated that, “it cannot be business as usual” and we hope and pray that they will seize the initiative and implement the overdue reforms which will revitalise our church. This as we know, is what the Plenary Council is supposed to do, and with great anticipation we await the conclusions.

Let us pray that 2022 will be a year which will bring continued hope to our Church, to our organisation, to our people and to ourselves.

*Yours in His Priesthood,*  
James Clarke ☩

## NCP MEMBERSHIP DUE 17 MARCH

**Before you begin your St Patrick's Day celebrations,  
please make sure your 2022 NCP Membership  
is in the mail!**



## A theology of surprise needed

Pope Francis famously announced that the current time is not an era of change but a change of era. He is suggesting that a new way of thinking and acting is necessary for responding adequately to the current reality. Thus, whether talking with clergy, laity, women, refugees or LGBTI people, he is constant in his call for dialogue, inclusion, compassionate pastoral care, a halt to clericalism and a simpler humbler prayer and life practice.



Some in the reform movements wonder why Francis is not quite as consistent in a call for change in governance or doctrine. There must be improvements in transparency, accountability, inclusion and integrity in governance and further development of doctrine as theologians dialogue with scientists, professionals, experts and anthropologists.

Francis, however, believes the key to church reform in this change of era is returning to the basics of listening and acting in justice and love to the cry of the poor, silenced, marginalised or erased. Francis seems to be advocating for a more authentic pastoral practice and greater liturgical relevance.

For Francis this seems to be the first step in restoring the credibility of the church amongst its own and then in civil society. If we return to the gospel and the Jesus method of evangelisation, we can then more effectively engage with deeper governance and doctrinal change.

Both tasks are essential for the future of

the church and whether one must precede the other or they can both happen together is a matter of opinion. The Pope has placed his hope in synodality.

Synodality seems to hinge on two things. It is a process and a practice. Synodality, we are told, is a process of listening and dialogue. However, it is also a practice of discernment, compassionate pastoral care and good ritual. Listening and dialogue can be little more than a talk fest and, at worst, becomes an unsafe space for the marginalised and minority groups. The claim to listening that is not accompanied by a genuine search for a new way ahead that creatively responds to the challenges of our time seems to be a failure of synodality.

The synodal process must be more than recording of diverse views especially if the process for decisions and proposals is in the hands of those in power. This usually results in business as usual, not a new way ahead.

The discernment process must begin and stay with the experience of the person in their life situations. The practices that accompany the listening and dialogue process begin with discernment but it must be done in a Jesus way.

The Cardijn method of see judge and act is essential to a deep listening, a competent dialogue and a compassionate and just course of action. This means all involved need to carefully listen to the experience of those normally excluded or silenced, study the biblical, social and theological perspectives and discern action in favour of the experience of the erased and silenced. Just as the Syrophenician woman became Jesus' teacher, the outsider and excluded stories inform the process of dialogue, reflection and action.

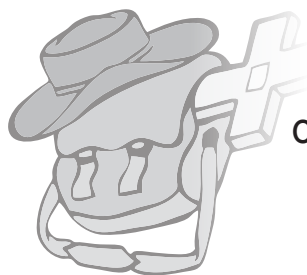
Synodality must relate to practice. Pope Francis speaks powerfully that pastoral care

begins with listening to the story of person seeking love and justice. Reform of pastoral care is not a result of synodality, it is a constitutive element of synodality. Without effective listening and accompaniment of the poor and marginalised, there can be no effective synodality. This requires another principle of Francis that asks for a preference of patient listening and understanding over the teaching doctrine. This approach could restore some confidence in the capacity to offer competent pastoral care and create a safe space for deep dialogue.

The synodal process must include a practice that promotes healing. Discussion and taking decisions on proposals will, if anything, promote further hurt and division. An essential healing methodology in the Christian tradition has been ritual. We believe that ritual and the liturgy are the source and summit of christian life.

This will require a reform of the way we celebrate. It is not the missal itself that leaves many Catholics uninspired at Mass, it is the way it is used. Can we find ways in the official liturgy as well as other rituals to nourish and inspire? Ritual can heal in ways discussion never will. We need liturgies that respond to the change of era and involve all the baptised. While this is a challenge, unless we find ways to respect the theology of baptism where we believe all the baptised share equally in the gift of the Holy Spirit and find ways to express this in the liturgy and ritual, we crush the chance for synodality to take shape and become the method for moving forward and promoting healing.

Synodality will depend on our ability to be flexible, spontaneous, willing to try new things and open to surprise. A theological challenge facing theologians of synodality might be to develop a theology of surprise.



## The Swag Winter Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 18 April 2022.

Please email submissions for consideration  
to: [editor@theswag.org.au](mailto:editor@theswag.org.au)

Normal Articles: 700 words | Major Features: 1,400 words.



## NCP new committee profiles



### BILL BURT SVD

Bill Burt is a Divine Word Missionary. Originally from Sydney, he was ordained a priest in 1973. Subsequently he did parish work in Flores, Indonesia.

He has held administrative positions in the Society of the Divine Word in Australia, been involved in youth work in New Zealand, formation work in Melbourne and Indonesia, and was for a time parish priest of Sacred Heart Parish, Preston.

He is currently living at the SVD formation house, Dorish Maru College, in Melbourne, where he has a support role. He has previously served as an NCP Committee member.

### JOHN CONWAY



I was born in 1956 in Ipswich Qld, the eldest of six children. My parents were Mick and Clare Conway. I was educated by the Christian Brothers at St Edmund's College in Ipswich.

Leaving school in 1972, I worked for some 10 years in the QLD State Public Service before heading off to St Paul's National Seminary in Sydney in 1985. I was ordained in 1990 by Archbishop Francis Rush and was first appointed to St Paul's Parish at Woodridge in Logan City.

I then spent three years at Infant Saviour Parish at Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast, before returning as parish priest to St Paul's in Woodridge. I was then appointed as Parish administrator of Gatton and Laidley and Rosewood Parishes where I spent the next 10 years of my life, before being appointed parish priest of Holy Cross Parish at Redcliffe.

In 2017, Archbishop Coleridge then appointed me as parish priest of St Bernardine's Parish at Regents Park in Logan City. I have been here for the past five years and continue to work with the local communities in building the Church in the local area.

I have been asked to participate in the NCP Executive at this time, and as I have been involved with this NCP for the past 30 years as a member, I am happy to do so. I bring with me the 30 or so years of pastoral experience that I have learned through the parishes in which I have worked and through the people of those parishes who have formed me in ministry as they have worked with me in building the Church in the local areas. ☺

## The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia

Sally and Chris are currently working on the 2022-2023 edition of *The Official Directory* – the official and historical record of the Catholic Church in Australia which NCP publishes on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as a service to the Church.

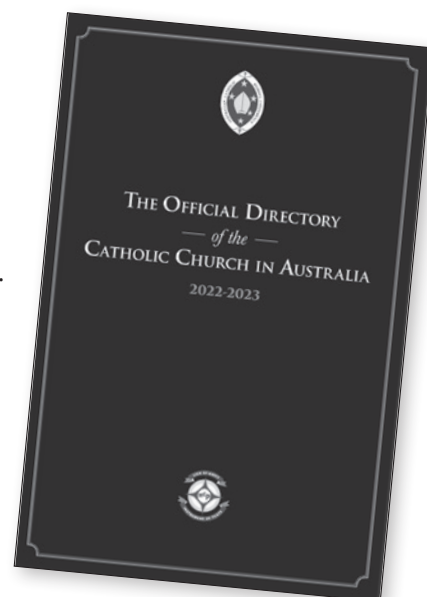
The Directory, a 1 July publication, gives the rich picture of the Australian Church, listing all ACBC Committees and Secretariats; Diocesan information – parishes, schools and organisations, as well as Religious Orders and Catholic Organisations.

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# Back to the start for the Catholic Plenary Council

TERRY FEWTRELL

Terry Fewtrell is a Canberra writer and is active in Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn.



For all the hope invested in the first Assembly of the Australian Catholic Church's Plenary Council, the reality is that the process is virtually back where it started. The challenge now will be to ensure that it moves to the next stage without the scheming and manipulation witnessed previously. Based on past performance, however, the prospects are not encouraging.

Almost three years ago, the Catholic community in 17,500 submissions made it abundantly clear that significant change was needed for the church to be relevant in Australian society. From that point on, the process between the submissions and the recent Assembly was characterised by seemingly deliberate attempts to wash away much of the input that raised difficult issues or called for major change.

This has been detailed and documented along the way by Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn and other lay groups, in thorough analyses of public documents and outcomes. The record included the stacking of Discernment Groups, a failure to develop coherent threads of theological or ecclesiological thinking from stage to stage, the seemingly circular treatment of issues that seemed intended to confuse rather than illuminate, and blatant attempts to minimise key issues (such as the treatment of women and clericalism) and to brush other matters off the table altogether.

## The *Instrumentum Laboris* confusing

Even the precursor of the agenda, *Instrumentum Laboris* (the statement of work), that ought to have been a key facilitative document, served only to confuse. It detailed arguments for change and reasons to resist change but revealed

little insight to identify the really significant issues. The resulting agenda looked as if it was designed to confound rather than facilitate consideration of the real issues. It seemed to be the best that could be done to point to issues of significance, while appeasing an influential rump determined to minimise change.

These analyses leading into the Assembly, despite being on the public record were never challenged or rebutted. The experience of the First Assembly serves only to reinforce their accuracy. Neither the formal six agenda items, nor the accompanying 16 sets of questions, facilitated the best use of the limited time available for discussion. It was as if the struggle among the bishops, between those open to reforms and defenders of the status quo, was an unresolvable puzzle that was passed to the Assembly, in the form of an anodyne agenda.

President of the Bishops Conference, Mark Coleridge, responded to the agenda concerns in the week prior to the Assembly, stating that 'everything was on the table'. Reform minded members of the Assembly did their best to raise areas of major concern to the Catholic community. But this was a case of flagging issues by whatever tenuous links were available. Hardly a fair or productive approach to serious decision making.

## Problems with process

A common observation to emerge from the Assembly was the rush to finalise items resulting from an inadequate meeting plan that did not allow sufficient time for proper consideration of important themes or obtaining clarity on outcomes.

So now this melange of views goes to a drafting committee working with a group of experts (Periti) under the guidance of a steering committee, to prepare a set of draft resolutions for the next Assembly in July 2022. Various descriptions are being used for this part of the process. The official communique refers to it as 'a time of prayer, reflection, maturation and development'. Others refer to 'fermentation' and the 'opportunity to consult with the wider church'. Some among the Periti speak of their role being to 'help mould the outcomes of Assembly One into meaningful proposals'.

There is much subjectivity in these words, and it is not clear who will be doing all of these things: the full Plenary Council

membership, the drafting or steering committees, or the bishops – singularly or severally? Procedurally there seems no process for representative delegates from the members to be involved in these steps. Clearly this is a major flaw that good faith would suggest should be corrected. The alternative is understandable suspicion and doubt.

The imprecision as to how many outcomes there were (somehow a figure of 40 has emerged without any obvious provenance) and what the nature of those outcomes are, bodes ill for real transparency. It is not just members of the Assembly who have a keen interest in these matters. All interested 'active and assertive' Catholics who have invested in this process are entitled to have visibility into these processes.

## Transparency and accountability

It is clearly not acceptable that the drafting and steering committees, which will be critical in this next stage, contain no representatives empowered by the First Assembly and no apparent mechanism for iterative feedback. Transparency and accountability are therefore at grave risk. Sadly, this is particularly worrying, given the record of manipulation obvious in the journey from submissions to the First Assembly.

Part of the challenge, or the legacy, of the First Assembly was the impression gained that 'discernment' in many cases effectively involved renegotiation of what was proclaimed at Vatican II. A good example is Diocesan Pastoral Councils (DPC), which the Vatican Council specifically identified as a basic building block of local churches, but which are still resisted by most Australian bishops, given that the vast bulk of dioceses do not have one.

Interestingly there is growing evidence that the bishops are starting to realise that digging-in on this matter has little future. Prior to the Assembly they quietly commissioned a scanning report on the status and experience of DPCs in Australia, and there are reports of tentative steps in some of the 'hold-out' dioceses. There is also the suggestion that they are seeking a model that would stress the 'advisory' role of such entities rather than, as envisaged in the Vatican II documents, a genuine forum of the local bishop and the People of God. This only serves to highlight that the Plenary risks being more a plaything or device than authentically synodal. It will be interesting to see if a resolution on DPCs emerges that is 'moulded' to conform with

the bishops' preferred approach.

Some Assembly members, not limited to bishops, seem to reject outright or are very uncomfortable with a church that endeavours to give expression to the Vatican II vision of a pilgrim community of the People of God. This reflects the attitudes of many bishops who have spent the last 20+ years downplaying the importance of Vatican II.

It would not be too far short of the mark to say that, in words and deeds a fair number of them brought to the Plenary Council a theology and ecclesiology that is more pre-Vatican II. This would seem to correlate with Archbishop Coleridge's admission pre-Assembly One, that a number of his brother bishops were 'nervous' about the PC. 'Fearful' comes to mind as a more accurate descriptor.

So, if we are back to the start, there is one aspect that ought to be different. Unlike the post-submission stage, when the bishops and the planning team had complete discretion and no public scrutiny, on this occasion they are accountable to the 280 members of the formal Plenary assemblies. Certainly, that is a reasonable expectation of members and the wider Catholic community.

Transparent and accountable governance is not just a legitimate issue for consideration by the Plenary, it should characterise the operations of the Council itself. If synodality is to be the *modus operandi* going forward, it now become the self-imposed test of good faith and must be evident in the processes leading to Assembly Two and beyond.

This is not about democratic control, rather it is about honesty and fair dealing, something on which the church does not have a trustworthy record. It would be a curious and perverse outcome if the Holy Spirit was invoked to defend outcomes from the Plenary that lacked essential honesty and openness. ☪



**2022 NCP  
Membership  
Due 17 March**

## Seven for boys, six for girls

JOHN CROTHERS

**John Crothers, Sydney priest, looks at the participation of women in ministry in the church.**



A bishop was once speaking to a group of children at the local primary school. He wanted to find out what they knew about the Church, so he began with the question, 'How many sacraments are there?' After a short pause, one young girl put her hand up and replied, 'Seven for boys, and six for girls.'

The story highlights an issue that simply won't go away for the Church, no matter how much the hierarchy try to ignore it – women's full participation in ministry, including ordained ministry.

The very fact that a sacrament of the Church is being conferred on the basis of gender should, in itself, ring alarm bells, particularly for the clergy. Do priests and bishops really believe that women should not have the same opportunities in life as men? It appears so.

The recent history of women's participation in Church life, particularly with regard to ministry, is worthy of note. The steps have been small, but significant.

### Women gradually included at the altar

In the late 1980s the ministry of Altar Server was still restricted to boys, although some parishes, both in Australia and overseas, were ignoring the ruling and welcoming girls to the ministry. Even in Rome in the early 1990s some priests were allowing girls to serve in their parishes. The writing was on the wall. In July 1992 Pope John Paul formally confirmed that the ministry of Altar Server would no longer be restricted to boys.

In March 2013, soon after he took office, Pope Francis celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper at a prison in Velletri, a short distance south of Rome. At that Mass he washed the feet of a number of women. It was the first time, certainly in living memory, that a pope had done so.

Traditionally it was always twelve men who had their feet washed, on the basis that Jesus had washed the feet of the twelve apostles.

In doing what he did, Francis was making an important point. He was not role-playing what Jesus did. He was taking the message of Jesus' actions, a message of service, and applying it in a more appropriate and inclusive way in today's world.

In January 2016 Pope Francis officially confirmed by Papal Decree that women could participate in the Holy Thursday foot washing ceremony. But there was more work to be done.

The exclusion of women from the ministry of Acolyte was another glaring anomaly. While some parishes were again pushing the boundaries, bishops seemed to be particularly strict in enforcing the rule on male-only acolytes. But once again Pope Francis intervened, and in January 2021 he changed the wording of canon 230 to allow women to be formally instituted in both the ministries of Acolyte and Lector.

The move was significant because it marked the end of women's exclusion from any lay ministry in the Church. The only ministries from which women are now excluded are the ordained ministries of Deacon, Priest and Bishop. And the diaconate is the first one being addressed.

### Ordination and women

Here again, Pope Francis is taking the initiative. In 2020 he set up a Commission to study the possibility of women deacons in the Catholic Church. A similar Commission had studied the question in 2016 with the findings being described as 'inconclusive.' That didn't satisfy Francis. He wanted to try again.

Despite these initiatives, Pope Francis is certainly no feminist. Some of his comments on women have been patronising and embarrassing. His reference to women theologians being 'the strawberry on the cake' is often quoted. So too, is his use of terms like 'spinster' and women who are 'no longer fertile' to describe communities that are not flourishing. It's not surprising that he hasn't moved on the question of women priests. He's a product of his era and his clerical culture. And yet he is still open to women's greater participation in the life of the Church. That's his gift.

*Continued page 8*

# THE TABLET

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Unfortunately, that openness is not being mirrored by the hierarchy here in Australia. Rarely do you hear a bishop even suggest, let alone argue, that women should have greater participation in the life of the Church.

When I bring the subject up with bishops at an individual level, I usually get a response like, 'There are more important issues to deal with.' It may indeed be the case that for bishops, the role of women in the Church is not a pressing matter, but for women, it can be a crucial issue. Many women have left the Church because they no longer feel comfortable in a community with such male-dominated leadership.

One noticeable example of the Australian bishops' indifference to women's issues is the way they have responded to the change in the acolyte ruling. Their silence has been deafening. In my archdiocese, I am not aware of any attempt to publicise the change, or to encourage priests to let their parishioners know that women are now welcome in the ministry. I can't speak for other dioceses, but I would be surprised if the situation wasn't similar elsewhere.

But surely the most glaring example of the bishops' unwillingness to listen to the voice of women is in the formulation of the agenda for the Plenary Council.

In July 2019 the final report on 'Phase 1: Listening and Dialogue' was published. It's a comprehensive summary of the 17,500 submissions, involving over 200,000 participants. One of the strongest themes running through the document is that of greater participation of women in the Church at all levels, including ordained ministry.

I can understand that the bishops would have been rattled when they saw the summary of the submissions. It was not what they wanted to hear. But the Plenary Council was supposed to be about listening. Instead, the bishops manipulated the agenda to silence the voices of women, as well as those advocating on their behalf, and, worse still, argued that the agenda is representative of the aspirations of the Australian Catholic community. It was disingenuous, to say the least.

### **Stain on the church in Australia**

John Warhurst AO, one of the members of the Plenary Council, describes the omission of questions on gender and sexuality from the agenda as 'a stain on the church in Australia.' And it is. That stain will not be removed until the bishops acknowledge that the Plenary Council agenda is the bishops' agenda, not the people's agenda.

There also needs to be recognition that the call for a more comprehensive role for women in the Church is a legitimate request, deserving of respect and response.

The official Church arguments against women's full participation in the life of the Church are based on both Scripture and Tradition. Scripturally the argument is that Jesus was male, and the twelve apostles were male, and so the clergy, who act 'in the person of Christ,' also have to be male. In this article, time prevents me from pursuing the theological ramifications of the question; suffice to say that in 1976 the Pontifical Biblical Commission concluded unanimously that there is nothing in the New Testament that prohibits the accession of women to the presbyterate.

The other argument is that because the Church has never ordained women, that in itself, becomes a reason to continue the tradition. It's a wobbly argument by any standards. If that were the case, the Church would still be justifying slavery as an acceptable part of the social order, a s it did for at least fifteen centuries.

But whatever the arguments, the trend is there and it appears irreversible. As the years go on, it will become harder and harder for the hierarchy to exclude women from full participation in the Church. Young people in particular find the Church's position on women completely foreign to their inclusive world view, and that situation will only be exacerbated with each generation.

And apart from anything else, the political reality is that governments will become less and less inclined to allow religious groups to treat women differently to men, solely on the grounds of gender.

One way or another, it will happen. Whether it's in fifty years' time or a hundred years' time, the day will come for the Church when gender is no longer a reason for excluding people from the sacraments. It will be seven for boys, and seven for girls. No one will be asking the question, 'Should women be priests?' It will be a natural part of the Church's life. The only question still being asked will be, 'Why did it take us so long?' ☺

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

# The price of resisting *Gaudium et Spes*

MICHAEL LEAHY

**Michael Leahy, retired philosopher of education and politics, maintains a keen interest in the renewal and reform of the Catholic Church.**

More than 50 years after the closure of Vatican II the Catholic church in Australia and worldwide finds itself in crisis: falling participation in its life – particularly amongst the young, dramatic fall-off in numbers of priests and religious, and in new vocations; clerical child sexual abuse scandals still being exposed throughout the world; a consequent loss of credibility, status and even respect in societies everywhere.

In 2013, the elder statesman of Italian theologians, Carlo Molari, alerted us to the major reason for this failure to engage both its own members and the outside world (evangelise), namely, the church's resistance to the mandate of Vatican II's pastoral Constitution on the Church Today (*Gaudium et Spes* [GS]).

In GS 5, the Council expressed that mandate thus: Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence, there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis.

The institutional church's resistance to this mandate is apparently due to the fear that open acknowledgment of this change in its former stance on the theory of evolution might lead people to think that all teachings from the past may be subject to similar revision.

## Evolution requires radical reimagining

However, failure to fully embrace this evolutionary paradigm and apply it to the church's tradition has led to a widening gap between, on the one hand, the world view commonly held by believers and unbelievers, and, on the other, the view in terms of which the faith is officially expressed.

According to the dynamic paradigm, the evolutionary process is not limited, as Pius XII thought, to the cosmological process, nor even to the combination of the cosmological and biological processes. Rather it extends to human history as well. God's creative work is one of bringing the universe, and humankind within it, to its destiny which for humankind is eternal communion with the Trinity. History is thus the process by which that communion



is joined, and humans cooperate with God to bring the world to that destiny.

The static perspective, however, concedes only as much evolution as is necessary to avoid fundamentalism in the face of science. Its defenders feel compelled to leave room for God to intervene in natural events, and in human affairs through such things as miracles, and in the conferring of 'supernatural' life through the grace of the sacraments. Prayer is still presented as a plea to God to make such interventions on our behalf. When, despite our prayers, droughts continue, our sick loved ones die or other evils persist, these events stand as significant anomalies to our faith in an all powerful and all loving God. Catechetical and liturgical expressions of the faith in terms of this static paradigm have an increasingly hollow ring for generations educated in the cosmic and biological theories of evolution.

## God's presence in the new paradigm

Within the dynamic paradigm, theological anthropology also is transformed. No longer is human nature defined by the legacy of Original Sin – in short by its past – but by its divinely powered attraction to the future. Evil is recognised as an unavoidable feature of the imperfection of the creation's evolving state. At the human level, evil becomes the human choice to reject the divine invitation to future perfection. Individuals can, however, thwart the evolutionary process in their own regard by freely choosing to reject God's invitation into the future.

Moreover, human nature is not fixed and unchanging, as it is on the static paradigm. The human person is engaged in a continuing – if not always conscious – dialogue with God who offers the means of growing into the fullness of life revealed and made possible by Christ.

That growth is achieved – or missed out on

– by the human response to God's call revealed in the events of history – the history of the individual and of the communities of which s/he is member, and the world of which they are a part. The growth in our understanding of personhood has led us to increasing recognition of the dignity of the individual, and of groups of individuals like workers and women, for example. On the dynamic paradigm the case for extending that growth to greater recognition of the dignity of children and of rainbow community members is compelling.

On the dynamic paradigm, morality cannot be reduced to a set of laws that are supposedly fixed in an unchanging nature. Like all other problems in human history, moral problems have to be solved by human ingenuity without divine intervention. Revelation presents love, as expressed on the cross, as the defining feature of Christian life but it does not present a blueprint for solving the moral problems of every age and culture.

*Gaudium et Spes*' mandate implies the suppression of the static paradigm's conception of doctrine and discipline. On the static paradigm, doctrines are verbal statements of truths revealed by God, authoritatively interpreted by the hierarchy, acceptance of which is the condition of salvation. These truths constitute the so called 'deposit of faith', and are thus fixed and unchanging except for possible further discernment of their content, and improvements in their expression.

## The personal encounter with Christ in the living Word

On the dynamic paradigm, salvation depends on the human encounter with, and response to, Christ's death and resurrection. That event is encountered principally in the word of God preached by the believing community, and recognised and responded to as such through the guidance of the Spirit, Christ's continuing presence in history. The function of doctrine on this paradigm is thus to bear witness to the experience of this encounter by previous generations of believers, and so to guide the present generation in its search for Christ in the signs of its times. Salvation comes from believers' encounter with Christ, not from adherence to any doctrinal formulas, especially those composed by earlier generations. To reduce the 'Apostolic Tradition' to these formulas as the static paradigm does, is, on the dynamic paradigm, a serious distortion of that notion.

*Continued page 10*

The Apostolic Tradition is rather the living witness of successive believing communities to their experience of the risen Christ in history. The human verbal formulas in which successive generations have tried to give feeble expression to that experience guide that experience but do not take its place. Members of a sporting team can know all the slogans defining the team's tradition by heart, but they will not be true participants in that tradition until and unless they experience the expression of those slogans in the life of the team.

Furthermore, the life of any community will die if its tradition is unable to adapt to the signs of the times. On the dynamic paradigm, the recognition of the dignity of women is a sign of the times. The mere fact that Christ did not ordain women, or that the church has not done so since, is not sufficient reason for banning their ordination now. The enhanced understanding of the dignity of women would rather require the elimination of such discrimination against them. On this paradigm, as the times evolve the response to them must change accordingly.

### Disciplines are not doctrines

The sad fact is that the static paradigm has given some disciplines the status of doctrines, the ban on the ordination of women being one of them. Another example is the denial of participation in governance to the laity. The basis for this denial is the doctrine that authority in the church is reserved to the hierarchy. But in fact the history of the church shows that its hierarchical structure developed as it became part of the administrative/political structure of the Roman empire. Administrative and even doctrinal authority in the early church was much more charismatic in character with no clear distinction made between a supposedly 'ordained' hierarchy and the laity. What purports to be a doctrine is thus unmasked as a discipline, and as such is contingent and reformable.

If the Apostolic Tradition is threatened by the proceedings of the current Australian Plenary Council, the source of that threat is the pressure on the Plenary Council to persist in resisting GS's mandate to reinterpret the church's message and practices in the light of the evolutionary paradigm. A choice to persist in the static paradigm – or some cosmetically altered version of it – would be a choice of continued blindness to the signs of the times, and of further decay of the institutional church. ☪

## Where to now with religious discrimination?

FRANK BRENNAN

**Fr Frank Brennan SJ, the Rector of Newman College, Melbourne, explores the Religious Discrimination Bill currently in parliament.**

On Thursday 25 November 2021, three Bills were introduced to the House of Representatives: the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021, the Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021, and the Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Collectively, these bills constitute the Morrison Government's response to the Ruddock Religious Freedom Review provided to government in May 2018.

None of the bills deals with the enrolment of children in religious schools which blew up as an issue during the 2018 Wentworth by-election. That awaits the tweaking of the Sex Discrimination Act which is not due until the Australian Law Reform Commission reports to government sometime in the next year or two.

In his second reading speech introducing the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021, Prime Minister Scott Morrison told Parliament: 'Nothing in this bill – I stress: nothing – allows for any form of discrimination against a student on the basis of sexuality or gender identity. You won't find anything of that nature in this bill. Such discrimination has no place in our education system.' Given that both sides of our Parliament accept without reservation that such discrimination has no place in any school, religious or not, it is outrageous that our Parliament has not clarified this matter three years on, and that we will have to await yet another federal election before the matter is legislated obliging educators not to discriminate against a child on the basis of sexuality or gender identity.

Those few religious zealots who would want to retain the power to exclude a child on the basis of sexuality or gender identity from a school in receipt of government funding need to accept that their world view can no longer be justified in Australia as an appropriate exercise of religious freedom. In 1983, the High Court of Australia delivered a definitive judgment on the limits of religious freedom in which Justices Mason and Brennan said: '[T]he area of legal immunity marked out by the concept of religion cannot extend to all conduct in which a person may engage in giving effect to his faith in the

supernatural. The freedom to act in accordance with one's religious beliefs is not as inviolate as the freedom to believe, for general laws to preserve and protect society are not defeated by a plea of religious obligation to breach them. Religious conviction is not a solvent of legal obligation.'

### Employment of Catholic teachers

The bills introduced last week do deal with the issue of the employment of teachers in religious schools. A religious educational institution will be able to publish and implement an employment policy giving preference, in good faith, to teachers and other staff who hold or engage in the school's particular religious belief or activity. Mr Morrison told Parliament: 'The bill recognises that religious schools must be free to uphold the tenets of their faith and the ethos that makes their school a community. It is recognition of the sacrifices parents make to educate their children in accordance with their values and beliefs and the choices they have made for their children's education.'

As many schools have said throughout this process, "faith is caught not taught". It's worth recalling that the UN Declaration of Human Rights states: 'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.' The bill protects the fundamental right for religious schools to hire religious staff to maintain their religious ethos in accordance with a publicly available policy. This part of the Morrison government's proposal would allow the Commonwealth to override a state law which does not provide this religious freedom.

A showdown is pending with Victoria which is legislating to allow a very limited freedom to show preference for teachers subscribing to the school's religious ethos only if conformity with the doctrines, beliefs or principles of the school's religion is 'an inherent requirement of the position'. The discrimination must be 'reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances'. The Commonwealth has put Victoria on notice that the Victorian law will be a 'prescribed law' to be overridden by the new Commonwealth law.

When introducing its new law, the Andrews government falsely claimed that ‘there are similar laws in Tasmania which have existed for over a decade’.

The Tasmanian law is very different. It not only permits discrimination for a ‘genuine occupational qualification’ but also ‘in order to enable, or better enable, the educational institution to be conducted in accordance’ with its religious ‘tenets, beliefs, teachings, principles or practices’. The Commonwealth has no intention of declaring the Tasmanian law a ‘prescribed law’. If the Andrews government were wanting to avoid a showdown with Canberra they could legislate as they promised, along the same lines as the Tasmanian law.

**Implications of the new laws**

The Andrews government’s fudging of the shortfall in its new law became apparent when government member John Kennedy, a long time Catholic school principal, told the Victorian Parliament after having received extensive briefings on the law:

‘I think we just need to understand that the legislation is in one sense bigger than what could be seen by some as a circumscribed “inherent requirement”, because – in my view, anyway, and my experience – such an inherent requirement incorporates a variety of commodities, including incidental requirements and a critical mass as applied to selecting, promoting and terminating teaching and non-teaching staff.

So, for example, I think it could be true that this does not apply to the gardener or the office staff – but it may very well apply to the office staff. It may be argued that the office staff have quite a connection with the local established church and so on and so forth.

‘I believe, in the material I received from the framers and so on of the bill, that it makes clear that in fact the provision allowing a religious individual to discriminate on the grounds of a broad range of protected attributes is still there. I think it is important to recognise that that critical mass can mean that whilst the first and foremost thing should be to have a qualified teacher of physics, it does not follow that there has to be a Catholic physics teacher, for example.

But it might mean that there should be a critical mass of teachers, for example, who are adherents of the Catholic faith, and obviously so. So I do not see that the legislation goes against that.’

If the Victorian law is unamended in the

upper house, presumably John Kennedy and others in the Andrews government could have no objection to the new Commonwealth law making it abundantly clear that Kennedy’s genuine and considered understanding of the religious liberty is accorded to the administrators of religious schools in Victoria.

Archbishop Peter Comensoli, the Archbishop of Melbourne, has had the carriage of this matter for the Australian Catholic Bishops.

Backing the Commonwealth provisions that would protect the ability of religious organisations to hire people who share their faith and values, he has said: ‘We want the freedom to hire people for the sake of our mission, just like other non-faith-based organisations. The value of religious organisations to people of faith and wider society is in their religious mission and their ability to embody and pursue that religious mission.

Operating religious organisations, such as religious schools, according to their mission includes recognising their ability to hire staff who want to teach and model the vision of the school.’ We can still accord dignity and equality to all while permitting religious schools to adopt hiring policies different from state schools so as to maintain the distinctive ethos of religious schools.

**Passing the new laws**

There is no way that the Morrison bills will pass through the Senate until they have first been subjected to detailed scrutiny by a parliamentary committee. I still can’t see that happening before the 2022 federal election. The only way it could occur before the election would be if the bills were to enjoy support from the Labor Opposition.

I am left wondering why we need to wait for the law reform commission to report on kids in school. Why not deal with students, teachers, and staff at the same time?

Morrison was right when he told the Parliament on Thursday: ‘[T]he faith of any religion, as well as no religion, shouldn’t override the rights of others in a free society. That means we rightly have a secular democracy and government, but that does not afford secular humanism the status of a state religion’. Getting the balance right, we religious citizens need to recall the High Court’s injunction that ‘religious conviction is not a solvent of legal obligation.’



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# Simplicity contemplation service

PETER DAY

**Peter Day, Canberra priest, explores the division in the Church and some steps towards healing and moving forward.**



*O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1)*

Eleven years ago a dozen Crab Apple trees were planted on the front lawn of my apartment complex. They would, in time, provide an attractive canopy for passers-by to admire, along with a generously stocked pantry for bees and Honeyeaters.

Alas, well into what should be their prime, there is no “canopy to admire”, and the “pantry” is all but empty. Instead of fully blossoming, seven meter tall trees; there stands inert, underdeveloped twig-like structures with barely two meters separating top to bottom.

What went wrong? The diagnosis, according to a local horticulturalist, is quite simple: “When the trees were planted, there wasn’t enough space provided between the base of the seedlings and the surrounding grass. Thus, their respective root systems have been competing for nutrients – and the Crab Apples have lost!”

Well, that was twelve months ago. Now, thanks to some restorative treatment, chiefly the provision of that sorely needed space, the failing ‘twigs’ have been transformed: a canopy is slowly but surely emerging, while bees and Honeyeaters are hovering expectantly.

*O, how my soul longs for space: that Banquet of requited Love where the Divine and the Beloved hover expectantly in a dance of mutual Delight and Wonder.*

## The Master

In the Jewish month of nisan (March-April) 30 A.D., a young itinerant tradesman commenced a fateful four day

pilgrimage from Nazareth to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Feast of Passover. Among other things, Yeshua, son of Myriam and Yūsuf, would offer a bold diagnosis concerning two other competing ‘root systems’: God and ‘Caesar’.

Yeshua entered the Holy City a vulnerable, powerless man astride a humble, lumbering donkey to announce a reign of peace and justice for all. His action was a sort of satire: a mockery of the triumphal processions the Romans practiced when taking possession of conquered cities astride magnificent horses adorned with the symbols of imperial power. (see Jose Pagola, *Jesus: An Historical Approximation*, p. 340)

In Jerusalem that day, upwards of 100,000 pilgrims had gathered to celebrate, and feast, and pray, and sacrifice – all under the watchful eye of the Roman occupiers wary of the heightened emotion that, in the past, had led to dissent and revolt.

The Temple itself was also teeming, but not just with pilgrims: according to the historian Flavius Josephus, the priests and other temple personnel added up to some 20,000 people.

Thus, amidst the display of genuine piety, fidelity, and spiritual purity, Yeshua was also confronted by a sort of industrial-commercial temple complex in which God’s name was carried in vain by those seeking status and wealth and power: ‘Caesar’. The tables of the money changers exemplified this: the turning of a ‘house of prayer into a den of thieves’.

Yeshua was disgusted: one root system encroaching upon another – undermining it, corrupting it. By overturning the tables, Yeshua was making space for the sacred; distancing it from the profane. Reminding the faithful of the rich soil in which they were planted; taking them back to their roots, to what sates and makes for blossoming:

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. (Deut 6:4-6)*

## An observation

It might not be drawing too long-a-bow to

say that in 2021, the Catholic Church is confronting a similar dilemma and challenge – that is, the industrialisation cum corruption of its own root system, and how to go about treating it?

There is much at stake. Amid the clamour for change, exemplified by the pontificate of Francis, and our own Plenary Council, there is also, and understandably, a deeply felt fear which is driving many to their respective ideological poles – and their so called factional leaders.

Those on the right are queueing-up to promulgate what they perceive to be immutable truths and traditions: timeless certainties hermetically sealed within the infallible ramparts of an all-powerful church. Pope Francis calls this the “temptation to hostile inflexibility,” which is “the temptation of the zealous, of the scrupulous, of the solicitous and of the so-called traditionalists and also of the intellectuals.”

While at the other pole reside those whose pursuit of truth, justice, and openness can tend towards a sort of misty-eyed sentimentalism cum humanism; a feel good immediacy oblivious to long term consequences and bereft of intellectual and spiritual rigour. Pope Francis speaks of the temptation to practice “a deceptive mercy which binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them; that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots.” “This,” he says, “is the temptation of the ‘do-gooders’, of the fearful, and also of the so-called ‘progressives’ and ‘liberals.’”

The apostle Paul confronted similar divisions in the early church where people gravitated towards different factions and personalities:

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

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

Whatever one’s take or ideology, and whether we like it or not, we are in the midst of a re-imagining, a re-awakening championed by the Holy Spirit – and it can’t come too soon. The crisis at hand demands nothing less than the upturning

of tables: a time to dismount from the magnificent horse and join the Master atop the donkey, so to speak.

“The devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic’, one who has ‘experienced’ something, or cease to be anything at all,” said Karl Rahner over three decades ago.

Rahner’s prescience points to one of the seminal challenges facing not only the Plenary Council, but every Catholic: how to re-vitalise and nurture our rich contemplative/mystical roots?

The vitality and centrality of this contemplative dimension is powerfully expressed by Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury 2002-12): *Contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.*

Christian institutions bereft of this contemplative essence eventually morph into unwieldy, self-absorbed, risk averse bureaucracies devoid of adventure and taste – baptising mediocrity and commissioning it to preach to the nations: *You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.* (Mt 5:13)

Adventure and creativity are the hallmarks of a free, non-beholden, and contemplative spirit. Such a spirit has no concern for appearances, no taste for spiritual excitements, or for big projects and personal vanities. It has no inclination to make speeches to justify its own apparent uselessness, or to assert itself as “something” in the eyes of others.

It is a lover of sobriety and obscurity. Gosh, such a spirit is even quite content to be considered an idiot – and such ‘idiocy’ (divine madness) has a long and noble tradition. (see Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, p. 108-9)

*As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.* (2 Sam 6:16)

*I am glad to be a fool for the sake of Christ.* (1 Cor 4)

*Then he went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.”* (Mk 3:20-22)

In Eastern Christianity its holy madmen are referred to as *yuródivvy* – the Syrian monk Saint Simeon Salos (6th C.) is generally considered the first of such; while in the West, our most recognisable “holy fool” is St Francis of Assisi.

Institutions by nature don’t tend to suffer such fools; they tend, rather, to expel them, or dispatch them into the back blocks... or crucify them!

Now, more than ever, our Crab Apple tree church needs an injection of “divine madness” to help disentangle her from the ever encroaching, and choking presence of mediocrity – and all that comes with it: control, bigness, red-tape, fear, comfort, spiritual power.

A contemplative church (diocese, parish, and disciple) does not need to be systematic, or controlling about anything, even about apparent madness. It is content with the wisdom and providence of God, more often than not revealed through the “foolishness” of the saints.

### A personal grappling

*To come to savour all,  
Seek to find savour in nothing;  
To come to possess all,  
Seek possession in nothing;  
To come to be all,  
Seek in all to be nothing...  
To come to what you know not,  
You must go by a way where you know not.* (John of the Cross)

In pondering the life of that ‘holy fool astride the donkey’, I continue to be intrigued by his itinerant nature, by the fact that he spent the vast bulk of his time in small, unassuming locales amongst ‘small’, unassuming peoples; that he didn’t belong to a priestly caste, or enjoy the securities inherent in institutional ties and comforts – “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” (Matt 8:20)

To walk in emptiness with blind trust is the way of contemplation, is the Way of Christ. But do I have the faith and the courage to be content to be “unseen”, to be a “fool for Christ” – that is, to dissolve

anonymously into the Divine marinade as if a tiny grain of sand into the great ocean?

This being “unseen”, this being “anonymous” should not be mistaken, though, for timid diffidence, or a sort of sweet humility. After all, while each grain of sand is of itself seemingly insignificant and dispensable, it is – in communion with all the other tiny grains of sand – also the beach; also the ocean floor!

St Therese of Liseux’s “little way” is instructive. For her, “littleness” is perspective: before God we are radically poor; before Him we are as a tiny grain of sand.

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me...* (Ps 139)

This poverty, this powerlessness, this utter dependence creates space for grace, for Divine in-filling, ensuring that whatever we do draws others to God and not to ourselves.

As for anonymity: *When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* (Mt 6:3-4)

### What remains, then, is a threefold challenge:

- 1.Simplicity:** the daily removal of obstacles and attachments that hinder Love’s longing and thriving. *God lives where we let Him in. When we let God in, we realise how trivial we are, and how important everyone else is. He must increase, but I must decrease.* (John 3:30)
- 2.Contemplation:** that space of required Love where the Divine and the Beloved share a dance of mutual Delight and Wonder – the more space, the more room for The Guest. Listen! *I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.* (Rev 3:20)
- 3.Service:** Love’s overwhelming longing to go out. *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them.* (Is 58:6-7)

Today, Lord, we start again. ☺

# Bitterness in the face of adversity, even in the Church

ROBERT MICKENS

Robert Mickens, *La Croix International* editor, reports on the message Pope Francis offered at the Mass for the bishops and cardinals who died in the past year, celebrated at St Peter's Basilica on November 4, 2021. Pope Francis speaks on facing life's difficulties and problems. Reprinted with permission (*La Croix International*, Nov 5, 2021).



Altar of the Chair in the apse of the massive basilica.

But his focus was on other types of viruses of a more spiritual nature that can afflict even the so-called teachers of the faith – and, indeed, all of us – when faced with “life’s difficulties and problems”, especially “the last and greatest” – death.

### Waiting in silence with trusting patience

The Jesuit pope, who will be 85 next month, mentioned a few of them – irritability, despondency, impatience, sadness, aggressivity, excessive complaining, loss of hope in God and, of course, bitterness. “In the face of life’s difficulties and problems, it is difficult to have patience and remain calm. We become irritated and despondency often sets in,” he said.

“Thus, we can be strongly tempted by pessimism and resignation, to see everything as dark, to become accustomed to mistrustful and complaining tones,” Francis continued. But he said the remedy to these ills is patient endurance. “A long inner transformation is necessary which, through the crucible of suffering, leads us to learn how to wait in silence, that is, with trusting patience, with a meek soul,” he said.

But often it’s not until we hit rock bottom and all hope is gone that God brings us to a decisive “turning point”, the pope said. “This turning point does not come about because the problems have disappeared. No. But because the crisis has become a mysterious occasion for inner purification...

It is a paschal experience, a painful passage that opens us to life; it’s a sort of spiritual

birthing that, in the darkness, brings us again into the light,” the pope said.

### Our bitter response to adversity in the Church

Francis was not speaking only about illness, old age and death. He was talking about “adversity” of all kinds. He, and all of us, face adversity in our own lives and in the life of our community. One very disturbing bit of adversity in our large, diverse, and worldwide Catholic family right now is how fractured and bitterly divided we are.

And our response to that has been a growing manifestation of impatience and aggressivity towards our sisters and brothers in the faith. It’s often displayed in bitter tones on social media, for instance.

Even some of our “fathers” – priests, bishops and cardinals – seem to be gripped with bitterness. Bitterness towards the pope or those oppose him. Bitterness at the fact that too much is changing in the Church or that too little is. Bitterness towards fellow believers that are too traditional or not traditional enough.

And the list goes on... This only compounds the adversity in our Church and makes one wonder who would want to be part of such a group of bickering, factious people.

“Let us ask for the grace to look at adversity with different eyes,” Pope Francis said at the Mass for deceased cardinals and bishops. “Let us ask for the strength to be able to live with it in the meek and trusting silence that waits for the salvation of the Lord, without complaining, without grumbling, without being saddened,” he said.

“Now more than ever it is useless to shout, to stir up noise, to become bitter,” the pope said. And he offered a better way to respond. “What’s needed is for each of us to bear witness with our lives to our faith, which is a docile and hopeful waiting”. ☪

There is nothing sadder than to see someone die as a bitter old man – or woman, for that matter. When Pope Francis made that observation, one could have easily surmised he had mainly men in mind, specifically Catholic bishops.

“It’s terrible to arrive at old age with a bitter heart, with a disappointed heart, with a heart that is critical of new things,” the pope said on Nov 4 in St. Peter’s Basilica while concelebrating the Eucharist with cardinals resident in Rome and bishops based at the Vatican.

The occasion was the annual Mass in suffrage for their confreres in the Church hierarchy who had died in the course of the year.

In fact, 17 cardinals and 174 other bishops passed “from this world to the next” during the past 12 months. “Some of them died as a result of COVID-19, in difficult situations that compounded their suffering,” Francis noted, speaking from an ambo near the



**NCP MEMBERSHIPS 2022**

*“We are priests best when we are priests together.”*

Membership renewals for 2022 were mailed in January and are due 17 March.

# Lingering lovingly longer

KEVIN BURKE

Fr Kevin Burke, retired Melbourne priest reflects on a creative retirement experience.



Into my third year of retirement, I'm feeling refreshed and energized and I'm having some fascinating experiences.

I just evaded Victoria's fourth lockdown as I escaped to Magnetic Island at the end of May last year.

As the months rolled on, the constant advice from lockdown-weary Melbournians was "don't rush back" so I delayed my return until the end of October. I took Richard Rohr's 2019 book *The Universal Christ* with me as a spiritual companion for my morning meditation. I know I'm a slow learner, but can you believe that I got stuck on Rohr's eight-page introduction for a full six months?

He says that throughout the book he includes some key ideas for us to linger longer until 'The Word becomes Flesh' for us. I never reached the lofty heights of being so focused that it engaged 'my body, heart, awareness of the physical world' and my 'core connection with a larger field.' I did very often linger lovingly with his profound insights, not because of his prompts, but because I was intrinsically drawn to do so. Normally my restless, impatient spirit would drive me to push on quickly but that wouldn't have done justice to the depths of the profound statements I was reflecting upon.

For context, Rohr starts out describing how English mystic Caryl Houselander had a transformative vision on a packed London underground train when 'quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as in a wonderful picture, Christ in them all.' I spent maybe two months prayerfully reflecting on her one-and-a-half-page description; here are a few gems:

- *I had long been haunted by the Russian conception of the humiliated Christ, the lame Christ, limping through Russia, begging His bread; the Christ Who all*

*through the ages might return to the earth and come even to sinners to win their compassion by His need.*

- She experiences the reverence we must have for a sinner urging us to *comfort Christ who is suffering in Him*" including 'sinners' whose souls seem to be dead because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ.
- *Christ is everywhere, in Him every kind of life has a meaning, and has an influence on every other kind of life.*
- She explains that those *who come closest to sinners and brings them healing... is the contemplative in her cell... in whom Christ fasts and prays for them or it may be a charwoman in whom Christ makes himself a servant again.*

I spent all those weeks slowly taking in the profound depths and fascinating insights of Houselander. I was so inspired and overwhelmed that I could remember key passages word for word so that when I was exercising or walking to the beach, I enjoyed recalling these passages and letting it sink deeper into my psyche.

For the rest of the chapter, Rohr plumbs the depths of the description of her extraordinary vision.

Here are a few samples that made a powerful impression on me:

- 'The revelation of the Risen Christ is ubiquitous and eternal'
- *When the Western church separated from the East in the Great Schism of 1054, we gradually lost the profound understanding of how God has been liberating and loving all that is. Rohr says we need "a reclamation project"... to reopen that ancient door of faith with a key... Christ, whom he suggests is "the transcendent within of everything in the universe, the immense spaciousness of all true love; an infinite horizon that pulls us from within and pulls us forward too; another name for everything – in its fullness.*
- I've read about the "Lectio Divina" over the years but could never nail it down until I came across Rohr's writing of 'lingering and going to the depths of a text' and staying with (in) the mystery. His key statement was that *contemplation*

*is waiting patiently for the gaps to be filled in and does not insist on quick closure or easy answers.*

- *Once we know that the entire physical world around us, all of creation, is both the hiding place and the revelation place for God, this world becomes home, safe, enchanted, offering grace to all who look deeply. I call that kind of deep and calm seeing contemplation.*
- 'Truly enlightened people see oneness because they look out from oneness.'
- *A cosmic notion of the Christ... includes everyone and everything and allows Jesus Christ to finally be a God figure worthy of the entire universe.*

Spending months reflecting upon and probing the depths of these profound insights helped to ingrain within me a DADIRRI – a habit of deep listening and quiet still awareness. Whenever I read anything of a spiritual nature now, instead of pushing on impatiently to get the full picture, I'm comfortable taking my time in a calm and peaceful way.

I trust that you might now appreciate how I spent a full 6 months being inspired, fascinated and challenged by less than 8 pages of Rohr's prophetic reflections. I'm overwhelmed by the expansive breadth of his vision and the depths of his profound reflections. ☺

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# Synodality: let's try this one more time

GEORGE WILSON SJ

George Wilson SJ, a retired ecclesialogist who lives in Baltimore, Maryland (USA), looks at what needs to change if we are to embrace synodality. Reprinted with permission (*La Croix International*, Nov. 9, 2021).



There is still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding over the term ‘synodality’, which was actually coined by the present pope

The word ‘synodality’ continues to recur regularly in Catholic circles. It is a word that didn’t even exist a mere few years ago. It was coined by Pope Francis, to express... what? That question is the focus of much commentary.

My contribution to the conversation is based on years spent facilitating several synods and many other similar Church gatherings.

Of course, no dictionary will help us. The word is too new. As yet, synodality has no definition. We have to use linguistic clues to tease out just what Francis is trying to communicate by coining it.

Definition will have to await an experience of this new kind of reality. We will only learn what possibilities it contains, as well as its limits, by actual participation in it. Definition implies naming boundaries. They will be discovered through trial and error – in the same way canonical synods came to be defined over the centuries.

Linguistic usage offers a starting point. When we tack a suffix like *ity* onto an adjective like *synodal*, we are usually indicating that the reality we are pointing to bears some resemblance to a canonical synod. On the other hand, it means that the mere convening of a synod does not guarantee that there will be synodality.

Otherwise Francis would not have been

compelled to coin the new term. That leaves us with a further task: to try to search out what characteristics make synodality like a synod, and what makes it point to something other than a synod.

## Like a synod

At a minimum we know that development of this new phenomenon will be something positive, something to be desired. Otherwise the pope would not be touting it so frequently. That implies, further, that Francis is expressing his belief that achieving synodality is needed if our Church is to respond effectively to our contemporary world.

In his effort to describe something that cannot as yet be defined, Francis uses an image. Synodality suggests a ‘walking with.’ That image contains two components. It is not describing a static reality: there is change going on; movement from one state to another. Something new is being birthed. And it involves more than one person. You can’t model synodality by yourself. It is a ‘between’ phenomenon.

Achieving synodality will require new behaviours on the part of its participants.

## Synodality involves structural change

The most evident feature of a synod is its composition. Who is invited to participate and who is not. Synods are composed of bishops and the ordained clergy, whether those of a diocese or of a nation or the universal Church.

One of the features that make the experience of synodality different from that of a synod

is the make-up of its participants. Francis clearly desires that the Church’s response to a rapidly changing world will be in the hands of a broader spectrum of believers than the episcopacy alone.

At the core of his reform is his conviction that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are poured out on the whole church. At that level, distinction based on ordination becomes irrelevant. That is the same conviction that Paul VI expressed in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* 47 years ago when he shifted the focus from the power of teachers to that of witnesses. He called all believers to witness to Christ by their living of the Gospel.

Synodality characterizes a gathering that actively engages all Catholics at that level.

## Something more: transformation of fundamental attitudes

Much of the commentary describing what is new in the synodality envisioned by Francis focuses on a change in structure: participation, and responsibility for decisions, will involve more than the ordained. No matter what other features may eventually emerge as synodality becomes normative, the participant base will include laity and clergy. It will be based on the shared experience of the baptized, not simply the limited perspectives of the ordained. The goal is shared responsibility.

But expanding the participant base of future synods, as earth-shaking as that would be, does not seem to encompass the full transformation Francis is seeking. Structures are inert, like empty wineskins. All depends on how they are used, and what is poured into them. And that depends on the quality of interaction on the part of their participants.

Appointment to membership does not of itself guarantee shared empowerment.

## Hopes raised, then dashed

Examples of structural revision that promised revolutionary change but turned out to be stillborn are easily found. Groups of people previously excluded from membership on various types of boards are finally admitted. Think women, or people of colour.

Expectations of equal inclusion are raised. Then the new members discover to their disappointment that they remain powerless in spite of their appointment. They learn that they are simply tokens created to burnish the reputation of the institution. They are listed on the group’s roster but they remain powerless.

All depends on whose voice is listened to and taken seriously, and in spite of their appointment their voice is screened out.

**Reactionary patterns are maintained by all**

At this point it would be easy to fall into the trap of pinning all responsibility for the failure of structures to achieve the empowerment they promised on those presently in power: the ‘old boys club.’ Actually, experience reveals that new members can, quite unconsciously, contribute to their own impotence. The following personal experience makes the point:

I once facilitated the training of a newly established diocesan pastoral council. The new body was composed of an equal number of priests, lay Church ministers, and lay parishioners.

The bishop was deeply committed to sharing responsibility. There was much anticipation in the air. After a period of group formation the council was called to decide future diocesan policy on a matter affecting every parish.

The pros and contras of all options had been discussed thoroughly. It was time to test the waters. I called individual members to state publicly where they stood on the question. They expressed a range of responses: highly supportive of one or other option; troubled but ready to trust a clear consensus; broadly satisfied by the way the views of each member had been respected.

Finally, I came to a quiet gentleman who said, “I just want to know and to do what the bishop wants. . . .” The disappointment of the other members showed on every face. Where had the fellow been?

I tell the story, not to cast blame on the man, but to make the point that cultural patterns— whether the exclusionary ones of the past or the empowering one hoped for from the adoption of new structures— are co-created by the interaction of all the players.

By his use of the term synodality, Francis seems to be pointing beyond structural change to the adoption of a new mentality, a spirituality that celebrates and actively promotes equal participation and empowerment. That will take an uprooting of long-standing cultural expectations, on the part of lay participants as well as their bishops.

It is clear from the frequency with which Francis excoriates the evil of clericalism that he hopes the cultivation of a synodal spirituality will end that aberration of the Gospel.

**Cultural scripts**

Only a few short years ago both the ordained and their lay members came onto the stage with their respective scripts written for them by preceding generations. The laity’s script read “Father knows best” or “Pray for me, Father; you have a direct line to God.” That of the ordained was “We know Scripture and theology; the laity know only their eighth grade catechism” or “We’re the

protectors of their faith; we have to watch over them.”

The content of the challenge presented by the development of a synodal spirituality, will be different for each group. Bishops will be challenged to learn and practice a new way of listening as lay members describe, not merely their beliefs or theology but the way they actually experience life in today’s Church. And that will inevitably include the laity’s honest perceptions of clerical behaviour.

Listening at that level requires a new form of vulnerability. And confession. Newly empowered lay members will have to unlearn scripts developed across the years when they allowed accepted practice to reduce them to being passive recipients of whatever the clerics decided was good for them.

To move from passive membership to actively assuming responsibility involves taking the risks of speaking up. The experience can be lonely. Both will be called to embrace the new experience of mutual trust.

**Conclusion**

The culture that divided the Church into the teachers and the taught took centuries to develop; it will not be replaced overnight with one that values equally the experience of every member. The process will be gradual, and costly for all. It’s called shared responsibility, after all. ☪



**Catholic funerals during COVID**

ELEANOR FLYNN & CLAIRE RENKIN

**Dr Eleanor Flynn and Dr Claire Renkin, Yarra Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne, report on the experience of funeral celebrants during COVID-19.**

What innovations did Catholic priests make in the conduct of funerals during COVID-19? Between July and November 2020 we undertook a research project to discover the experiences of ministers and priests about the funerals they had conducted during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Melbourne. We interviewed forty-eight funeral providers from Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This article focuses on the reflections of fifteen Melbourne Catholic priests. Most of the priests were diocesan, with a few from religious orders. Almost all had at least

twenty years’ experience as presbyters and most were Australian-born. The following overview highlights the dominant themes that emerged.

Overwhelmingly respondents stressed the importance of providing support and comfort to the bereaved by listening carefully and meeting people in the lived reality of their situation. Often this required working with the family to create a liturgy that respected both the deceased and the grieving family and friends. This might mean gently suggesting that even though their mother was a daily communicant, a requiem mass where no



one came to communion might no longer be optimal, especially because of government imposed time constraints for church services.

Early in the lockdown, closure of churches forced services to be held in funeral providers’ chapels or entirely at the graveside. Several commented that they conducted requiem masses, complete with incense, in these chapels in spite of some ambiguity about whether this was allowed. A limit of ten participants sometimes stimulated a more creative, less formal

*Continued page 18*

## FEATURES

liturgical use of space. Celebrants discussed standing beside the coffin with the bereaved sitting around the coffin. Many respondents keenly felt the restrictions on physical touching. The inability to touch profoundly impacted expressions of support and sympathy.

The respondent priests discerned both advantages and disadvantages in the restricted numbers. Many commented that in normal times there would have been hundreds at the funeral. Previously large gatherings offered emotional and physical support to the bereaved.

However, smaller numbers allowed those who would normally not have participated to do a reading, contribute to a eulogy or demonstrate emotion. Several mentioned the difficulty families had in choosing those to attend, others described families who included a long term parishioner friend. Respondents spoke of managing the tensions between the communal and family grieving.

Everyone commented on the lack of wakes.

These gatherings after the funeral were seen to provide both emotional and physical support to grieving families, particularly allowing the opportunity to share stories of the deceased over food and drink which assisted in lowering any stress that the formal liturgy had unleashed.

Many interviewees commented that without the wake mourners were left to return to their own homes with an abruptness that one described as 'brutal'. Mourners were deprived of a vital first step on the path of healing.

Because government restrictions limited the ability of priests to offer pastoral visits after a funeral, many priests intensified ways of connecting with the bereaved. These included regular phone calls from the priest or a member of the parish team and/or inserting a photo of the deceased and a copy of the eulogy into the parish newsletter. Nearly all priests found it distressing not to be with the dying in hospitals or aged care. Even so, families expressed their gratitude for the blessing

or anointing a priest gave, even if this occurred over a phone or through a screen.

When discussing the future, everyone considered that streaming of services would continue. Most expressed less certainty about what parishes would look like in the future. How will parishes adapt to ministering to (older) parishioners who increasingly rely on a virtual connection to their parish?

We hope that our brief snapshot has created a window into some of the challenges that face those ministering to the dying, the deceased and the bereaved in Covid 19 and the ways they overcome them. Repeatedly priests spoke of being privileged to share one of the most difficult times in a person's life. Many of the interviewees singled out funerals as a vital area of mission and foresaw possibilities to reconnect with those who seek a renewed faith community.

We wish to thank Rev Fr Max Vodola for providing a list of possible contributors and of course the priests who responded so generously with their time and insights. ☪



## Creative approaches to communal forgiveness ritual

PATRICK FLANAGAN

**Fr Pat Flanagan, Maryborough, Victoria, recalls how he created communal forgiveness Masses when the popular general absolution Sacrament of Penance was banned.**

This is a liturgical reminiscence. I have a clear picture that the implementation of Vatican II was going very well until 1968. There was plenty of turmoil, but no one was leaving. But then Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. It is said that Cardinal Ottaviani, playing upon Pope Paul's fears, warned him that, if he backtracked on Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* which condemned all artificial forms of birth control as intrinsically evil, he would destroy his own authority.

If that was true, it was very ironic, because Paul VI's encyclical, which upheld the teaching of his predecessor, saw Catholics refusing to accept his ruling. This showed itself almost immediately in people's abandoning private Confession. Catholics who had been going to Confession once a week began not going to Confession at all.

Bishops in France decided to keep the Sacrament of Penance alive by reviving the celebrations of Penance with General Absolution proved to be quite appealing. They were a creative solution to the

problem that had arisen because of many Catholics' conscientious rejection of *Humanae Vitae*. Consequently, when the revision of the ritual for the Sacrament of Penance called for by Vatican II was published, it included the Rite of General Absolution. Here in Australia, the bishops held back on mandating the New Ritual until the people had been given a proper understanding of it.

In due course, though, the New Ritual was introduced into our parishes, and General Absolution proved to be very popular. The Communal Celebration of the Sacrament during Advent and Lent produced packed houses.

But then along came Pope John Paul II who thought that all Catholics should be as tough as Polish Catholics; and he set out to restrict General Absolution so that it would be only for soldiers about to be slaughtered. While many bishops had seen for themselves the good results of the Third Rite, as General Absolution had come to be known, it's pretty hard to buck the big boss, and so General Absolution was surrounded with restrictions and caveats.



### Forgiveness Masses

There were different approaches to 'What to replace it with.' In my own case, I introduced Forgiveness Masses, one during Lent, the other during Advent, each of them as part of the main Sunday celebration. I always made it very clear that we were not celebrating the Sacrament of Penance. We were simply, by prayer and ritual, asking God to forgive us. Would God forgive us? I could only quote Jesus, 'Ask and you shall receive.'

I devised a different ritual action for each of these Forgiveness Masses. For the Lenten Mass the parishioners were invited to come forward and place their hands on the Book of the Gospels, each of us reminding ourselves that this is what we are pledged to live by. So that parishioners would not feel constrained to do this

quickly, we had several books, each held forth by altar servers.

The Advent Ritual, in the parish of Red Cliffs where I was for sixteen years, was on the Feast of Christ the King. Vinnies would place near the front of the sanctuary a small unadorned tree on which there were a number of tags. Each tag had written on it anonymously a child who would be in need this coming Christmas (eg. Boy 8YO, Girl 13YO). Parishioners were asked to take a tag. If I took a tag saying Boy 14YO, I thereby undertook to buy a present that I would be happy to give to my own son 14YO, if I had one.

We held our Forgiveness Mass on the 2nd or 3rd Sunday of Advent. This was also the end of year Mass for our Catholic Primary school. Each Sunday leading towards this I encouraged the parishioners to reflect back over the year and to make a list of their sins.

When we came to our Forgiveness Mass, we had a large decorated Christmas Tree in the sanctuary. We also had an urn. When we came to the ritual action and the midpoint of our prayers for forgiveness, parishioners were asked to come forward, to place their list of the sins in the urn, and to hand the present they had bought for a

child who would be in need to one of the altar servers to place at the tree. Parishioners always responded well to the Vinnies' request. No child in need was left without a present.

During Communion altar servers would set fire to the bits of paper in the urn. Before the end of Mass we turned on the decorative lights and blessed the Christmas Tree.

So that was one priest's approach to keeping alive the happy experience of the Communal Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. ☺



## Reaching out to those who don't come to church

BARRY LAMB SM

**Br Barry Lamb SM, a Marist Brother living in the parish of St Pius X, Heidelberg West, Melbourne, is a retired teacher and lecturer at Australian Catholic University.**

For some years the parish of St Pius X in Heidelberg West, Melbourne, has taken an initiative to contact and encourage those parishioners who rarely, if ever, come to church.

This account of the initiative may be of interest to readers of *The Swag*, as well as considering an offer to use all of the materials already prepared in their parishes if they would like to replicate the project, or something similar to it.

Along with the parish priest, Father Wayne Edwards, I prepare – and with some help of parishioners, deliver to homes – a quarterly *newsletter of encouragement* from the parish.

The idea is to reach out to ALL registered as belonging to the parish whether they attend church or not. The newsletter, called *All Aboard*, is not available at the church, but is personally delivered to each residence by knocking on the door and handing it over personally; and if the parishioner is not in, a "Sorry I missed you" note is clipped to it, and it is slid under the door.

The title *All Aboard* refers to us all being on the barque of Peter together, and the newsletter masthead features a galleon. The sub-heading of the masthead reads: "A quarterly Newsletter of encouragement for all Catholics in the Parish of S. Pius X, Heidelberg West."

All parishioners are treated alike. However, the main inspiration is to reach out specially with words of encouragement to those

parishioners who do not regularly attend church.

The newsletter, in full colour, is an A3 sheet folded; so it is 4 x A4 pages. Contents include stories, snippets of Catholic history and culture, poems, cartoons, extracts from scripture, reflections, short prayers, short lives of saints or inspiring people, religious art, etc. The emphasis is on encouraging all to continue living good lives of generosity, honesty, prayer etc. A centrally important aim is to be in direct touch with those who belong to the parish but who rarely come to church, and otherwise would have little or no connection to the church, much less feel any encouragement from the church. So rather than them coming to church, the church is going to them!

The Summer 2021-22 edition is Number 28, marking seven years of home delivery.

While I do the bulk of the deliveries with the aid of an electrical tricycle, I do have a couple of parishioners who do the deliveries to those close to their homes. I read of a parish where a similar newsletter drop was carried out by a number of what they called "parish posties." Each newsletter is placed in an A4 size envelope and the full names of all the family members, including children and babies, are written on the outside.

Prior to printing, the text is discussed with Father Wayne, the parish priest, to include any suggestions or corrections or alterations and to try to eliminate typos.

I would like to commend the idea to readers of *The Swag* and make an offer to parishes to use all the contents of all 28 editions. I have prepared another twelve on the computer, so the offer is for 10 years of material if delivered four times a year. All the issues are on computer file and could easily be altered to suit local situations. A different name and masthead could easily be created.

When recipients are in, they invariably accept the newsletter with a smile, sometimes with a remark such as, "I was wondering when you were going to come," and there is the occasional invitation to a cup of tea. One parishioner is always very fulsome in her praise, mentioning how pleased she is to get the newsletter, commending me on the work put into its preparation and wishing me God's blessing. Several say how they enjoy it. In the seven years there have been, I think, four rejections; one in the form of a gruff: *I don'ta wanta nothing!*

However, there is not a flood of messages of commendation and appreciation. I think it is rare that people generally go to the trouble of writing in appreciation of anything. But I also have the philosophy that even if the *All Aboard* is accepted courteously and then set aside and never opened, there is still enormous benefit. There is the reminder every three months that someone from the church actually calls in and makes contact in a warm and kindly way ... with a tiny gift of well-wishing and encouragement. ☺

You can view the current edition *All Aboard* here: <https://tinyurl.com/wt7scv52> If you would like further information email: [barrylamb@hotmail.com](mailto:barrylamb@hotmail.com)

# He came like a whisper

POPE FRANCIS

On Christmas Day 2021, Pope Francis delivered his *Urbi et Orbi* address and blessing from the central balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square. The following is an edited text. The full text can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/ks972xw7>



The Word of God ... became flesh and came to dwell among us. He came like a whisper, like the murmur of a gentle breeze, to fill with wonder the heart of every man and woman who is open to this mystery.

The Word became flesh in order to dialogue with us. God does not desire to carry on a monologue, but a dialogue. For God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is dialogue, an eternal and infinite communion of love and life.

By the coming of Jesus, the Person of the Word made flesh, into our world, God showed us the way of encounter and dialogue. Indeed, he made that way incarnate in himself, so that we might know it and follow it, in trust and hope.

## Relationship and dialogue

Sisters and brothers, "what would our world be like without the patient dialogue of the many generous persons who keep families and communities together?" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 198). In this time of pandemic, we have come to realize this more and more. Our capacity for social relationships is sorely tried; there is a growing tendency to withdraw, to do it all by ourselves, to stop making an effort to encounter others and do things together. On the international level too, there is the risk of avoiding dialogue, the risk that this complex crisis will lead to taking shortcuts rather than setting out on the longer paths of dialogue...

Indeed, even as the message of the birth of the Saviour, the source of true peace,

resounds in our hearts and in the whole world, we continue to witness a great number of conflicts, crises and disagreements. These never seem to end; by now we hardly even notice them. We have become so used to them that immense tragedies are now being passed over in silence; we risk not hearing the cry of pain and distress of so many of our brothers and sisters.

Let us think of the people of Syria, who for more than a decade have experienced a war that has resulted in many victims and an untold number of displaced persons. Let us look to Iraq, which still struggles to recover from a lengthy conflict. Let us listen to the cry of children arising from Yemen, where an enormous tragedy, overlooked by everyone, has silently gone on for years, causing deaths every day.

Let us recall, too, the continuing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians that drag on without a resolution, with ever more serious social and political consequences. Nor should we forget Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth, which is experiencing hardship also from the economic repercussions of the pandemic, preventing pilgrims from visiting the Holy Land and adversely affecting the life of the people. Let us think of Lebanon, which is undergoing an unprecedented crisis, accompanied by very troubling economic and social conditions.

## A sign of hope

Yet, in the heart of the night, look! The sign of hope! Today, "the Love that

moves the sun and the other stars" (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 145), as Dante says, became flesh. He came in human form, he shared in our plight and he broke down the wall of our indifference. In the cold of the night, he stretches out his tiny arms towards us: he is in need of everything, yet he comes to give us everything. Let us ask him for the strength to be open to dialogue. On this festive day, let us implore him to stir up in the hearts of everyone a yearning for reconciliation and fraternity. Let us now turn to him in prayer.

Baby Jesus, grant peace and concord to the Middle East and the whole world. Sustain all those who provide humanitarian aid to peoples forced to flee from their homelands; comfort the Afghan people, who for more than forty years have been sorely tested by conflicts that have driven many to leave the country.

King of all peoples, help political authorities bring peace to societies roiled by tension and conflict. Sustain the people of Myanmar, where intolerance and violence not infrequently target the Christian community and its places of worship, clouding the peaceful countenance of that people.

Be a source of light and support for all those who believe in and strive, despite all obstacles, to advance encounter and dialogue. In Ukraine, prevent fresh outbreaks of a long-festered conflict.

Prince of Peace, help Ethiopia to find once again the path of reconciliation and peace through a forthright encounter that places the needs of the people above all else. Listen to the plea of those living in the Sahel region, who experience the violence of international terrorism. Turn your gaze to the peoples of the countries of North Africa, tormented by divisions, unemployment and economic inequality. Alleviate the pain of our many brothers and sisters who suffer from internal conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan.

Grant that, through dialogue, mutual respect and recognition of the rights and cultural values of every human being, the values of solidarity, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence may prevail in the hearts of the peoples of the Americas.

## Christmas hopes for the world

Son of God, comfort the victims of violence against women, which has increased in this time of pandemic. Offer hope to young children and adolescents suffering from bullying and abuse. Show

consolation and warmth to the elderly, especially those who feel most alone. Give serenity and unity to families, the first educators of their children and the basis of the fabric of society.

God-with-us, grant health to the infirm and inspire all men and women of good will to seek the best ways possible to overcome the current health crisis and its effects. Open hearts to ensure that necessary medical care – and vaccines in particular – are provided to those peoples who need them most. Repay those who generously devote themselves to caring for family members, the sick and the most vulnerable in our midst.

Child of Bethlehem, grant that the many military and civilian prisoners of war and recent conflicts, and all those imprisoned for political reasons, may soon return home. Do not leave us indifferent before the tragic situation of migrants, displaced persons and refugees. Their eyes beg us not to look the other way, ignoring our common humanity, but instead to make their stories our own and to be mindful of their plight.

Eternal Word become flesh, make us attentive to our common home, which is suffering from the carelessness with which we so often treat it. Inspire political leaders to reach effective agreements, so that future generations can live in an environment respectful of life.

Dear brothers and sisters, amid all the many problems of our time, hope prevails, “for to us a child is born” (Is 9:6). He is the word of God, who became an infant, capable only of crying, and in need of help for everything. He wished to learn how to speak, like every other child, so that we might learn to listen to God, our Father, to listen to one another and to dialogue as brothers and sisters.

O Christ, born for our sake, teach us to walk beside you on the paths of peace.

Happy Christmas to all! ☺

**NCP exists for you  
and because of you!**

## A synod for the world

JENNY SINCLAIR

**Jenny Sinclair is founder director of *Together for the Common Good*. This article was written with the help of Phil McCarthy, former CEO of Caritas Social Action Network. The article, first published in *The Tablet* on Jan 1, 2022, explores the hope that the Synod offers if we reach out beyond Catholic boarders. Reproduced with permission of the Publisher, *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly*: <http://www.thetablet.co.uk>**



Some Catholics fear that the synodal process will lead to change in the Church; some fear that the synodal process will leave everything in the Church just the same. But the fundamental purpose of the synod is not to change the Church. It is to prepare the Church to save the world

Just under two years ago, Pope Francis announced that the next General Synod – the gathering of bishops from around the world in Rome that normally takes place every two years – would focus on synodality itself. The themes would be communion, participation and mission, and for the first time in the history of the Church it would invite all 1.37 billion Catholics to take part in a two-year process of listening and discernment.

A legacy of the Second Vatican Council, the aim of this “journeying together” – the literal meaning of “synodality” – is to bring Catholics closer to the mission of Jesus. In this “way of being Church”, the whole People of God comes closer together on the journey of bringing alive the Kingdom of God on Earth. It has been described as the largest and most ambitious listening exercise in the history of humanity.

Some Catholics, including some who have written to *The Tablet*, have responded more in fear than in hope: fear of change, or fear of no change. Others are trying to use the process to push a particular agenda; some see it as a cynical exercise in ecclesial politics; some dismiss it as a colossal waste of time. Can Catholics overcome this confusion and rise to the opportunity? I suggest that by reading the political and cultural signs of the times we can understand the fundamental purpose of this Synod. It

is nothing less than God’s way of preparing the Church to save the world.

### Reaching out beyond Catholic boarders

I have been a Catholic for over half my life, and my vocation has drawn me into listening and learning across the Christian traditions. My typical week includes conversations with friends from Pentecostal, Evangelical, Free Church, Catholic, Anglican, prophetic, charismatic and church planting backgrounds as well as the Religious orders. I cherish my Jewish friends for their unique witness, and I learn from my non-religious friends and contacts of all faiths and none, in civil society, business and politics. I listen across the political spectrum and across class and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

This listening and learning does not dilute my tradition. On the contrary, it reveals a clearer sense of the calling of the Church, and the opportunities that the Synod presents. My personal journey has taught me that Catholic social thought (CST) can help us read the signs of the times. Inspired by the Gospel and informed by the learned experience of the Church in every nation over a hundred and thirty years, it is rooted in centuries of tradition and natural law. It helps us understand how political and philosophical ideas and policies affect the human person, and to recognise when social systems and cultural values are dehumanising. CST helps us to be politically literate in alignment with our faith, to avoid mission-drift and the corrosive influence of modernism and post-modernism. It is sometimes called the theology of the Holy Spirit in practice. It can help us discern our way through the Synod process.

### Addressing society’s fragmentation

Seven years ago Pope Francis said, “We are living not through an era of change, but a change of era.” He was not alone in recognising an unravelling, marked by a breakdown in trust, polarisation, social fragmentation and symptoms of distress, including rises in loneliness, addiction, self-harm, depression and nihilism. Most

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of these signs of dark times have accelerated since the start of the pandemic but they were not caused by it: they are part of a decades-long trend. A radical individualism and hyper-liberalism, on the left and the right, has driven the commodification of human beings and an over-reliance on technocratic solutions to human problems. This era has deeper roots still, beginning with the Enlightenment, which despite its many benefits, resulted in a turning away from God. It led to a profound loss of the sense of the transcendent nature of the human person. The dire consequences of this loss were inevitable.

Whether it is human trafficking or zero hours contracts, the medicalisation of sadness or dating apps, the elevation of academic qualifications over vocational work or the promotion of mobility over community – the combination of the dominance of capital and the technocratic paradigm has had catastrophic effects on our institutional and social relationships and our sense of belonging. The family, community and our sense of place have all been undermined, there is a crisis of purpose and alienation, particularly among the young. The social and economic damage takes visible form in the degradation and abandonment of whole communities.

This era has affected the churches too. Many have become inward looking, falling out of relationship with people, becoming marginalised; some have been infected by secular modern and post-modern philosophies or distracted by the culture wars. Many churches do not know who they are and no longer understand their civic vocation. Clerical sexual abuse scandals and the pandemic have accelerated this trajectory of decline.

### Countering dehumanising realities

We, the Church, the people of God, have a unique vocation to counter these dehumanising trends, but we are not well prepared. We are held back, by a lack of awareness of what's going on, by exhaustion from managerial solutions such as parish reorganisations or unrealistic financial projections, and, crucially, by flawed and inadequate formation as Christian disciples.

And yet God is at work; the profound changes under way are God's way of purifying and renewing the Church to be fit for the task ahead. We are in a time of deep spiritual malaise, but this era, which has been so hostile to humanity, is unravelling. We are on the cusp of change and the Church needs to be ready to respond. All my conversations and encounters tell me that our country needs a Church which

is a gateway to the Holy Spirit, and which understands and takes its place in society.

It is vital that we understand what the Synod that is now underway is about – and what it is not about. The Synod is not about saving the Church. It is about saving the world. If we don't understand that this is its purpose, then it will become inward-looking, and we will fail the world. Pope Francis emphasises that the Synod involves “discernment of the times in which we are living, in solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of all humanity” in order to deliver the Church's mission in a de-sacralised world. Quoting from the Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium*, he described its task as “proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God”.

### Walking together means developing



### relational power

In journeying together we invite the Holy Spirit to work through us, the people of God, in everyday life, at all levels and across all societies. For this reason Francis has written that the Synod “is not a parliament or an opinion poll” – it should not be confused with the General Synod of the Church of England. Rather, in our hearts, in every diocese in every nation, this “walking together” is about nothing less than revitalising our vocation. Each of us is called to a distinctively Christian role, according to our gifts and abilities, in the social and spiritual renewal of our country.

CST shows us that there are three kinds of power: money power, state power and relational power, the power that human beings build together. The churches must help to generate relational power, in order to resist the dehumanising tendencies of money and state power. Relational power should be at the heart of the new formation that the Church needs. Only the renewal of local relationships can lead to the emergence of a new politics of grace. And only that will bring forth a new settlement for the common good.

The individualism of the modern world is an obstacle to grace. Too many Christians are stuck in a consumerist model: go to church, get something, and go home again. All too often, Christian life lacks the fellowship of mutual love and support. One woman told me she had been struggling with terrible debt for two years. She had gone to Mass every week but hadn't told a soul about her troubles. Why didn't that parish have a culture where she was known, where she could be real, loved and supported?

To develop relational power, we need to become a relational Church. That requires reframing our conception of “church” as more than a local institution, more than a place of worship. It is to conceive of church as a community of faithful people committed to a place, outward-facing to the world, living in loving friendship with others in the neighbourhood, and with a commitment to building local relationships – personal and institutional. The need for these relationships is especially great in places that have been abandoned: politically, economically and spiritually.

### Welcoming diversity and trust

To be in relationship with our neighbours, we must be at home together. But the declining Church has fallen out of relationship with large parts of the population. In particular, too much of the Church in Britain, like too much of our politics, has suffered from middle class dominance. When we welcome diversity, we must include class. Otherwise we will draw the wrong conclusions. When we hear Pope Francis call for a “poor Church for and of the poor”, we must remember that “the poor” means not only the destitute but also working class communities, which include many ethnicities and political opinions. Francis is right to insist that the Church needs to be evangelized by the poor. To be receptive to that evangelizing, middle class Catholics need to be open to building the common good with people from different educational and socio-economic backgrounds, and resist temptations to dominate the space.

### Mission to the world

If we are to make a positive contribution to the Synod process, we need to treat it as more than an internal Church matter. It must be seen as a new way of being “Church”, to make way for the Kingdom of God, to be the embodiment of love in a desecrated world. The institution of the Church is there to serve the *Missio Dei* – it is not an end in itself. An instrumentalised and agenda-driven Synod will fail. But one

approached with humility, grace and an openness to the Holy Spirit could transform the world.

This is not about winning an argument. We must listen to voices across the Church and stop being tribal. Everyone, even those we dislike and fundamentally disagree with, has a part to play. We, the people of God, need to trust each other, whether we are lay, Religious or ordained. There is a need to restore trust not only between laity and bishops, and between laity and clergy, but between clergy too. This is difficult in the context of decline and in the wake of abuse scandals and their coverups, but it is essential if we are to have “an ear [to] listen to what the Spirit is saying” (Revelation 2:29).

We must listen to other Christian traditions with openness and respect. We must learn from those of other faiths and from our non-religious neighbours: God speaks and acts through all kinds of people. If we are anchored in Christ, this will enrich, not weaken our tradition.

The Archdiocese of Liverpool has already completed its initial synodal process. In

launching its new pastoral plan, Archbishop Malcolm McMahon declared, “We are not going to be able to return to business as usual and we should put our trust in what God is doing.” He shared his sense that “the only thing we know about the future is that it won’t be the same as it is now ... if we walk with each other in the name of the Lord then he is walking with us too: there may be a strange warming of our hearts as that happens. I really think these are exciting times – I’d go as far as to say that this is the most important day in the life of the Church this millennium. We need to become the Church that God is calling us to be.”

Fundamental to becoming “communities of place” are core practices of prayer and discipleship. Many of us may be unfamiliar with what being in relationship with the Holy Spirit is like. The “cell” group can be the key to this. It is often in small, faithful groups that the Spirit transforms, where people journey together, engage deeply with Scripture and talk honestly about what really matters.

## The Spirit of transformation

If the synodal process is to fulfil its purpose, we must be open to transformation, both personally and collectively. Each parish needs to discern its identity as a people rooted in place, in relationship with its neighbours and with God. To resist the dehumanising tendencies that have so damaged our life together, our posture must always be to assert our transcendent nature as embodied human beings, and to be open to the reality of the Trinity: surrendering to the primacy of God, welcoming the help of the Holy Spirit, accepting the grace of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ into our lives.

Pope Francis has warned, “If the Spirit is not present, there will be no Synod.” So we should always be attentively listening. We can ask every day, “Lord, what do you want of us?” If we can’t walk together on this road, the Church will continue to decline and fail to live out its vocation.

A synodal process at such a time as this is not just an ecclesial exercise. It is a call to renew the world. ☪



## Original sin rethought

KEVIN TRESTON

**Kevin Treston BA (Hons) MA (Hons) MEd PhD is a Member of the Association of Practical Theology Oceania. He discusses why the doctrine of original sin needs to be reviewed, or reformulated, or even discarded in its current form of expression.**

### Introduction

The reality of sin in the world is a mystery within the context of beliefs about the presence of a loving God in creation and the nature of the human person. According to Genesis, a person is made in God’s image and likeness: *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:27). So why is there sin and evil in the world?

The theological doctrine of Original Sin is trying to name the moral flaw that is inherent in the human condition. We may call it the ‘shadow’ to use Jungian typology or if we venture into science, the ‘chaos theory’ or ‘principle of indeterminacy’ might capture the essence of understanding the mysterious element in human nature that moves people towards self-destructive behaviour. The reality of ‘Original Sin’ is a common theme in the narratives in literature and movies. The concept of what Christians call ‘Original Sin’ is similar to

the experience of moral degeneration as taught in Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism.

Sin should not be viewed as a breakdown from a state of primordial innocence through the mythos describing the disobedience of Adam and Eve but rather a perversion of what it means to be a fully human person. Sin has both personal and communal dimensions. Sin is a movement away from God’s gracious love. Sin is disequilibrium and alienation from the core of our being, God. The pervading presence of sin in the world reflects the fragmentation of human’s relationship with a loving God and our communal relationships. Communal sin erodes the implementation of the common good. Communal sin also diminishes the wellbeing of the integrity of creation.

The doctrine of original sin as developed and defined by the church was an attempt to explain the mystery of the origins of sin, how sin is manifest in the world and how sin is transmitted from generation to

generation. Early Christians sought answers to such questions as, ‘If God is good, where does sin come from?’ ‘Why is there suffering in the world?’ ‘Why do we need Christ’s redemptive mission to save us?’ The doctrine of original sin seemed to offer answers to this dilemma of reconciling the mystery of sin within beliefs about the goodness of God in creation and the mission of Christ to lead us to union with the Father.

A relevant Christology must also include a contemporary understanding of sin. The transforming mission of Jesus assumes the reality of sin. The central theme in the teachings of Jesus was the reign of God, a vision of what could be integral to the ‘wholeness’ of God’s presence in creation. The dominance of the atonement theme in Christology is now under close scrutiny in theological circles. The doctrine of original sin was trying to express the mysterious reality of human moral flaws which reside within us, we who are created in God’s image and likeness and yet prone to evil as well as good.

The official teaching of the church since the 5th century on original sin no longer has credibility in contemporary evolutionary consciousness and the science of religion.

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## FEATURES

It is time for the church to face up to the hard questions about how the doctrine has been historically defined and also be open to critique the historical rationale for such teachings and the story of its formulation. After acknowledging the story of the historical development of how the doctrine of original sin was formulated, the church must then courageously move to modify or even discard such teachings, at least in its current form. To fail to engage in this enterprise strains the credibility of believers.

The other option for the teaching church when doctrines lose their relevance in contemporary consciousness is for the historical formulation to be relegated to its rich theological heritage. History has many instances of this happening with theological positions. For example, teachings about 'outside the church there is no salvation' now belong to a past era of such teachings.

### Literalism and myth in formulating doctrine

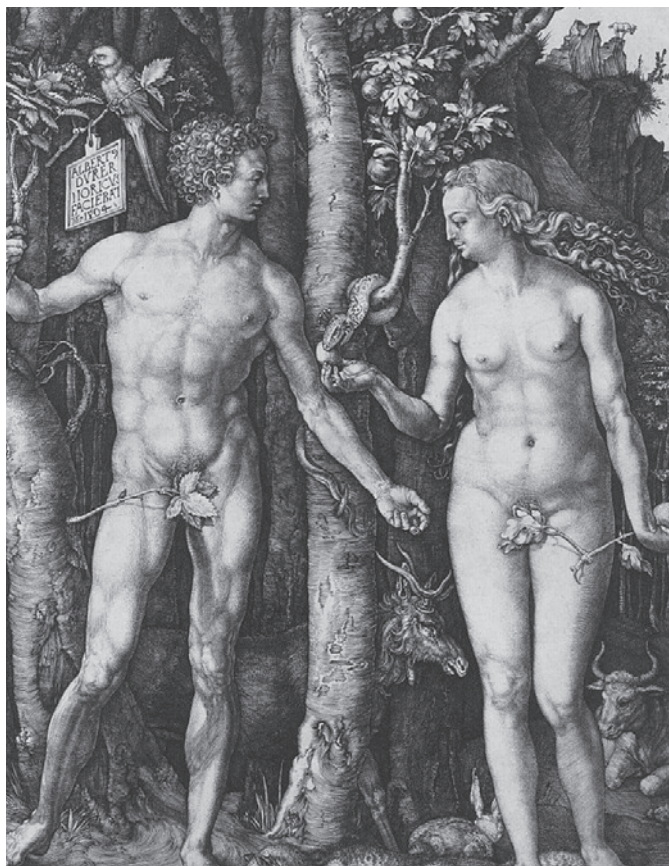
A problem with the formulation of the doctrine was confusing a symbolic or mythical expression about the origins of sin (*mythos*) in Genesis 3 with a pragmatic word definition (*logos*) of sin. The process of defining the doctrine of original sin was fraught with difficulties once the symbolic nature and mystery of sin were articulated in a *logos* or pragmatic mode. Once the sacred myth about sin as *mythos* became a doctrinal formulation (*logos*) the teaching church became entangled in a doctrinal web of issues such as, how sin is inherited and transmitted, baptism as necessary for salvation, the nature of human beings, Immaculate Conception, limbo, the mission of Jesus as the Christ and so on.

There is a deep religious truth about the reality of individual and communal sin embedded in the doctrine as currently stated but its truth is obscured by the actual wording of the official teaching of original sin. Surely no one would deny the prevalence of evil and disorder in the human condition – just watch the nightly news on TV and look around us to the mayhem of racism, domestic violence, injustice and war!

In religious teachings, when *mythos* becomes *logos* or literalism, religious truth is lost. The bane of literalism has been, and still is, a major impediment in communicating the

gospel and teachings of the church. When the sacred myth about the mystery of evil in humanity was subverted into a literalist mode as the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine as tenable became untenable in its literal expression as is evident in the exposition below.

The doctrine of original sin, defined by the Council of Orange (529), was repeated in many Christian creeds and confessions of faith eg Lutheran: Augsburg, 1530; Roman Catholic, Council of Trent 1563-64;



Reformed: Second Helvetic Confession 1566; Westminster Confession 1646; Anglican: Thirty Nine Articles, 1563; Methodism: Articles of Religion 1784. The Reformers, especially Calvin, saw the 'sin' of Adam and Eve had rendered humanity as a mass of sin (*massa peccati*) and therefore incapable of doing anything to attain salvation, utterly dependent on God's saving grace.

The current formulation of original sin specifies that each person is born in inherited sin which is passed down to each generation as a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: *The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of the human history is marked by the original fault freely*

*committed by our first parents* (n.390).

There is general agreement among scholars that the doctrine of original sin is a creation of St Augustine (354-430). The Western church adopted Augustine's explanation about sin and defined it as official teaching. Eastern Christianity and the Orthodox Church did not accept Augustine's explanation of inherited sin or the mode of its transmission.

### Discarding or modifying the formulation of doctrine

The doctrine of original sin, as currently formulated and understood by Christians is in urgent need of reform, reformulation or even discarding. The following themes provide a rationale for discarding or modifying the doctrine as currently stated.

#### The doctrine contradicts human experience and common sense.

Every parent knows that when their child is born, the child is born with a nature which has the propensity to choose good or evil, altruism or selfishness. Why highlight 'born in sin' instead of being born in a state of moral ambivalence?

#### Neuroscience confirms parental intuition about their child's moral nature.

Brain research shows that the brain enables us to make morally good and morally bad choices. By nature humans are disposed towards co-operation and sharing as well as selfishness.

A holistic anthropology of the human person rejects any notion of inherited moral disability.

**The doctrine as stated does not incorporate the proven insights of modern science**, quantum physics, genetics and palaeontology about the evolution of the human person and insights from the social sciences about the human person.

**The doctrine does not situate the mystery of sin** within the inherent chaos of the evolutionary emergence of dynamic life, death and evolution in every phase of creation. Communal sin creates disorder and disrupts the integrity of the earth community.

#### The language of 'original sin' is flawed.

The word 'sin' implies culpability. A new born child is not morally culpable of sin. Neither the scriptures, nor church teachings in the first 400 years, Orthodox Christianity,

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# Ordination Anniversaries 2022



## Congratulations and Thank you!

Ordination dates supplied to NCP  
by individual clergy.

## **ORDAINED 74 YEARS**

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## **ORDAINED 72 YEARS**

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## **ORDAINED 71 YEARS**

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Rev Paul Bateman, Canberra & Goulburn, 23/07/1951  
Rev Mgr Vincent Tiggeman, Adelaide, 21/12/1951

## **ORDAINED 70 YEARS**

Rev John Raccanello CS, 22/05/1952  
Rev Leo Long, Melbourne, 08/06/1952  
Rev Finian Perkins OFM, 30/06/1952  
Rev Mgr Robert Aitken, Adelaide, 22/07/1952  
Rev Allan Connors SM, 23/07/1952

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Rev Francis Gilbert, Rockhampton, 29/06/1957  
Rev Kevin Caldwell, Brisbane, 29/06/1957  
Rev John Briffa SDB, 07/07/1957  
Rev Mgr John Swann, Adelaide, 20/07/1957  
Rev Peter Malone, Maitland-Newcastle, 20/07/1957  
Rev Mgr Robert Egar, Adelaide, 27/07/1957  
Rev Robert Matthews OFM, 28/07/1957  
Rev Louis Molloy SM, 13/12/1957  
Rev Kevin Murphy, Ballarat, 21/12/1957  
Rev John McKinnon, Ballarat, 21/12/1957  
Rev John Carey, Armidale, 21/12/1957  
Rev Dr Terence Johns, Broken Bay, 21/12/1957  
Rev Michael Doherty, Adelaide, 21/12/1957  
Rev Mgr William McCarthy, Melbourne, 21/12/1957

## **ORDAINED 60 YEARS**

Rev Robert Walsh SJ, 01/01/1962  
Rev Patrick O'Sullivan SJ, 03/01/1962  
Rev Kevin Canty CM, 18/01/1962  
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Rev John Mello CS, 17/03/1962  
Rev Laurence Murphy SDS, 07/04/1962  
Rev Malcolm Fyfe MSC, 25/05/1962  
Rev Martin O'Mahony, Bathurst, 17/06/1962  
Rev Michael McClure, Toowoomba, 29/06/1962  
Rev Alistair MacLellan, Melbourne, 29/06/1962  
Rev Kevin Johnson, Rockhampton, 29/06/1962  
Rev Mgr Francis Marriott, Sandhurst, 29/06/1962  
Most Rev Brian Heenan, Rockhampton, 29/06/1962  
Rev George Nader, Adelaide, 30/06/1962  
Most Rev Peter Stasiuk CSsR, Ukrainian, 02/07/1962  
Rev James Hargrave SM, 07/07/1962  
Rev Manuel Carracedo SJ, 16/07/1962  
Rev Graeme Howard, Hobart, 19/07/1962  
Rev Terence Sullivan, Sydney, 20/07/1962  
Rev Jeremy Stace, Maitland-Newcastle, 21/07/1962  
Rev Kevin Arundell, Ballarat, 21/07/1962  
Rev Kevin Eaton, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Paul Mulconry, Maitland-Newcastle, 21/07/1962

Rev Mgr Dr Neil Brown, Sydney, 21/07/1962  
Rev Peter Foley, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Desmond Panton, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Mgr Thomas Doyle, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Brian Cosgriff, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Peter Carrucan, Melbourne, 21/07/1962  
Rev Carl Ashton, Parramatta, 21/07/1962  
Rev John O'Neill, Parramatta, 21/07/1962  
Rev John Walter, Sydney, 21/07/1962  
Rev Raymond Weaver, Sydney, 21/07/1962  
Rev Giles Setter OFM, 1/07/1962  
Rev Albert Chan MSC, 21/07/1962  
Rev Paul Brennan MSC, 21/07/1962  
Rev Bede North MSC, 21/07/1962  
Rev Gerald Quinn CP, 21/07/1962  
Most Rev David Walker, Sydney, 21/07/1962  
Rev Geoffrey Mulhearn, Maitland-Newcastle, 21/07/1962  
Rev Ron Perrett, Armidale, 24/07/1962  
Rev John Tinkler, Wilcannia-Forbes, 25/07/1962  
Rev Nicholas Lucas OFM, 28/07/1962  
Rev Pacificus Scarf OFM, 28/07/1962  
Rev Noel McMaster CSsR, 29/07/1962  
Rev Patrick Corbett CSsR, 29/07/1962  
Rev John Hishon SSC, 02/12/1962  
Rev Mgr Peter Kenny, Melbourne, 22/12/1962  
Rev Mgr Michael Keating, Perth, 22/12/1962  
Rev John Landy OCD, 22/12/1962

## **ORDAINED 50 YEARS**

Rev John Baptist Pham Van Vuong, Wagga, 18/03/1972  
Rev Angelo Cagna CS, 08/04/1972  
Rev John Thien, Sydney, 28/04/1972  
Rev Mgr David O'Brien, Wollongong, 06/05/1972  
Rev Mgr Peter O'Keefe, Military Ordinariate, 10/05/1972  
Rev Geoffrey Plant, Sydney, 13/05/1972  
Rev Michael Whelan SM, 18/05/1972  
Rev Desmond Welladsen, Sandhurst, 19/05/1972  
Rev Gary Walker SSC, 19/05/1972  
Rev Vincent Walsh, Sandhurst, 20/05/1972  
Rev Gerard Spillane, Melbourne, 20/05/1972  
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Rev Thomas Brophy, Ballarat, 20/05/1972  
Rev Sean Lynskey CSSp, 10/06/1972  
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Rev Ray Crowley, Toowoomba, 09/08/1972  
Rev Denis Martin, Brisbane, 09/08/1972  
Rev John Scarrott, Brisbane, 09/08/1972  
Rev Wrex Woolnough, Brisbane, 09/08/1972  
Rev Ashley Warbrooke, Brisbane, 09/08/1972  
Rev Tyrone Deere, Cairns, 09/08/1972  
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Rev Peter Dorfield, Toowoomba, 10/08/1972  
Rev David Lancini, Townsville, 11/08/1972  
Rev John Peard, Toowoomba, 11/08/1972  
Rev Dr Gregory Moses, Cairns, 12/08/1972  
Rev Ray Johnson, Toowoomba, 17/08/1972  
Most Rev Leslie Tomlinson, Melbourne, 18/08/1972  
Very Rev David Orr OSB, 19/08/1972  
Rev Ludwik Ryba SJ, 24/08/1972

Rev Patrick Mooney, Rockhampton, 25/08/1972  
 Rev Gregory Beath, Canberra & Goulburn, 25/08/1972  
 Rev Zvonimir Gavranovic, Parramatta, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Michael Burke, Canberra & Goulburn, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Robert Hayes, Sydney, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Gary Rawson, Sydney, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Mgr John Usher, Sydney, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Joseph Camilleri, Sydney, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Peter Wieneke OSA, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Greg Arnold, Maitland-Newcastle, 26/08/1972  
 Rev Bernard Thomas, Wagga Wagga, 27/08/1972  
 Rev Garry McKeown, Bathurst, 01/09/1972  
 Very Rev Peter Whitely, Perth, 02/09/1972  
 Rev Anthony Schipp, Wagga Wagga, 02/09/1972  
 Rev Michael Brennan, Adelaide, 02/09/1972  
 Rev Tony Densley, Adelaide, 02/09/1972  
 Rev Bernard Hennessy, Canberra & Goulburn, 08/09/1972  
 Rev Thomas McDonough CP, 09/09/1972  
 Rev Philip Robson CM, 09/09/1972  
 Rev Gregory Cooney CM, 10/09/1972  
 Rev William Ousley OMI, 27/11/1972  
 Rev Philip Gambin, Melbourne, 08/12/1972  
 Most Rev Gregory O'Kelly SJ, 09/12/1972  
 Rev Ian Johnson, Bunbury, 09/12/1972  
 Rev Celso Romanin SJ, 16/12/1972

## ORDAINED 40 YEARS

Rev Anthony Chiera, Bunbury, 06/02/1982  
 Rev David Thoroughgood, Adelaide, 20/03/1982  
 Rev Mgr Joseph Takchi, Maronite Diocese, 20/03/1982  
 Rev John Parsons, Canberra & Goulburn, 03/04/1982  
 Rev José Adriano, Armidale, 12/04/1982  
 Rev Cornelio Solis, Sandhurst, 24/04/1982  
 Rev Paul Raj, Perth, 27/04/1982  
 Rev Christopher Riley SDB, 08/05/1982  
 Rev Gaetan Pereira SJ, 09/05/1982  
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 Rev John Hogan, Rockhampton, 24/05/1982  
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 Rev Gerard Moran OCD, 13/06/1982  
 Rev Karel Duivenvoorden, Rockhampton, 01/07/1982  
 Rev Albert Yogarajah, Melbourne, 02/08/1982  
 Rev John Stork, Wollongong, 14/08/1982  
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 Rev Rick McCann, Wollongong, 14/08/1982  
 Rev Joseph Thomas, Parramatta, 15/08/1982  
 Rev Martin Milani, Wagga Wagga, 17/08/1982  
 Very Rev Michael McLean, Sydney, 21/08/1982  
 Rev Vincent Casey, Broken Bay, 21/08/1982  
 Rev Thomas Smith, Perth, 22/08/1982  
 Rev Paul Maunder OCD, 26/08/1982  
 Rev Michael Roohan, Lismore, 27/08/1982  
 Rev Paul McDonald, Lismore, 30/08/1982  
 Very Rev Gregory Brett CM, 20/10/1982  
 Rev Ronaldo Rodriguez SVD, 23/10/1982  
 Rev Joseph O'Shea, Melbourne, 29/10/1982  
 Rev Christopher Slattery, Sydney, 30/10/1982  
 Rev Ross Naylor, Wollongong, 20/11/1982  
 Rev Christopher Horvat SJ, 04/12/1982  
 Rev Richard Shortall SJ, 04/12/1982  
 Rev Brendan Kelly SJ, 07/12/1982

Rt Rev Peter Stiglich OPraem, 11/12/1982  
 Very Rev Vincent Glynn, Perth, 18/12/1982  
 Rev Fredy Devassy, Syro-Malabar, 26/12/1982

## ORDAINED 30 YEARS

Rev Christopher O'Neil, Port Pirie, 08/02/1992  
 Rev Dermid McDermott, Can & Goulburn, 13/03/1992  
 Very Rev Peter Williams, Parramatta, 19/03/1992  
 Rev Paul Chanh, Brisbane, 29/03/1992  
 Rev Albert Saminedi, Perth, 22/04/1992  
 Rev Eric Skruzny, Sydney, 24/04/1992  
 Rev Joseph Pothenparampil MST, Sandhurst, 30/04/1992  
 Rev Marek Okarma CSMA, 01/05/1992  
 Rev Miroslaw Knap CR, 02/05/1992  
 Rev Maher Gurges, Chaldean Diocese, 02/05/1992  
 Most Rev Peter Comensoli, Wollongong, 22/05/1992  
 Rev Graeme Malone SSS, 06/06/1992  
 Rev Noel Brady, Melbourne, 19/06/1992  
 Rev Mario Zammit MSSP, 03/07/1992  
 Rev Artur Wojtowicz, Sydney, 04/07/1992  
 Rev Kevin O'Neill SSC, 10/07/1992  
 Rev Joseph Binh Dinh SDB, 11/07/1992  
 Rev Gregory Chee OCD, 18/07/1992  
 Rev Anthony Kennedy SM, 01/08/1992  
 Rev James O'Gara, Darwin, 04/08/1992  
 Rev Lachlan Coll, Canberra & Goulburn, 07/08/1992  
 Rev Paul Stuart, Military Ordinariate, 22/08/1992  
 Very Rev Denis Stanley, Melbourne, 22/08/1992  
 Most Rev Gregory Bennet, Sale, 22/08/1992  
 Rev Angelo Wijewickrama OMI, 22/08/1992  
 Rev Arsenio Tuazon, Melbourne, 27/08/1992  
 Rev Manuel Santiago, Sydney, 27/08/1992  
 Rev Gregory Tait, Ballarat, 28/08/1992  
 Rev Remy Bui, Sydney, 10/10/1992  
 Most Rev Brian Mascord, Mait-Newcastle, 31/10/1992  
 Most Rev Timothy Harris, Brisbane, 18/11/1992  
 Rev John Fitz-Herbert, Brisbane, 18/11/1992  
 Very Rev Dr David Ranson, Broken Bay, 21/11/1992  
 Rev Deacon Graeme Ramsden, Military Ord, 27/11/1992  
 Very Rev Mark Franklin, Brisbane, 28/11/1992  
 Rev Steven Tynan MGL, 04/12/1992  
 Rev Aloysius Lamere MSC, 06/12/1992

## ORDAINED 25 YEARS

Rev Michael Kyumu, Adelaide, 01/01/1997  
 Rev Kenneth Cafe OFM, 07/02/1997  
 Rev Joseph Truong OP, 22/02/1997  
 Rev Mark Croker, Canberra & Goulburn, 28/02/1997  
 Rev Christopher McPhee MSC, 07/03/1997  
 Right Rev Dom Steele Hartmann OCSO, 15/03/1997  
 Rev Stephen Byrnes, Brisbane, 04/04/1997  
 Rev Martin Ngwe, Hobart, 06/04/1997  
 Rev Dr Paul McGavin, Canberra & Goulburn, 02/05/1997  
 Rev Peter De Souza, Broken Bay, 10/05/1997  
 Rev Daniel O'Brien, Melbourne, 29/06/1997  
 Rev Anh-Hao Pham, Adelaide, 05/07/1997  
 Rev Joseph Pelle, Perth, 25/07/1997  
 Rev Andrew Jekot, Melbourne, 23/08/1997  
 Rev Deacon Paul Nagggar, Sydney, 23/08/1997  
 Rev John Healy, Melbourne, 23/08/1997  
 Rev Dr Max Vodola, Melbourne, 23/08/1997

Rev John Robson, Broken Bay, 06/09/1997  
Rev Phillip Fleay, Perth, 13/09/1997  
Rev Richard Ross, Hobart, 19/09/1997  
Rev Peter Hoang SDB, 27/09/1997  
Rev Peter Hoang OP, 04/10/1997  
Rev Adrian Beloqui, Sydney, 15/10/1997  
Very Rev Anthony Mellor, Brisbane, 12/11/1997  
Rev Paul Kelly, Brisbane, 12/11/1997  
Rev John Herd, Adelaide, 15/11/1997  
Most Rev Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE, 22/11/1997  
Rev Darren Howie, Sale, 27/11/1997  
Rev David Tremble MGL, 05/12/1997  
Rev Wally Kevis, Bunbury, 08/12/1997  
Rev Peter Dwyer, Armidale, 12/12/1997  
Rev Deacon Francis Feain, Perth, 13/12/1997

## **ORDAINED 20 YEARS**

Rev Manoj Kannamthadathil VC, 02/01/2002  
Rev Mgr Thair Sheikh, Chaldean, 11/01/2002  
Rev Donald Kettle, Perth, 09/02/2002  
Rev Anthony Girvan, Brisbane, 22/02/2002  
Rev Demetri Roh, Perth, 08/04/2002  
Rev Anthony Koppman, Armidale, 17/04/2002  
Rev Melhem Haikal, Melkite, 29/06/2002  
Rev Anthony Denton, Melbourne, 29/06/2002  
Rev John Nguyen, Brisbane, 05/07/2002  
Rev Daniel Redhead, Brisbane, 05/07/2002  
Rev Paul Newton, Melbourne, 14/07/2002  
Rev, Adrianus, Jenani, SVD, 24/07/2002  
Rev Warren Edwards, Parramatta, 02/08/2002  
Rev Peter-Damien McKinley, Melbourne, 28/09/2002  
Rev Ranier Fernandez, Perth, 04/10/2002  
Rev Joel Wallace, Wagga Wagga, 12/10/2002  
Rev Bernard Thomas OFM, 19/10/2002  
Rev Andrew Qingwen Fu, Sydney, 20/10/2002  
Rev Giang Tran, Melbourne, 23/11/2002  
Rev Minh Tran SJ, 30/11/2002  
Rev Paul Smithers, Sydney, 30/11/2002  
Rev Dr Christopher Ryan MGL, 06/12/2002  
Rev Brian Steele MGL, 06/12/2002  
Rev Neru Leuea, Wagga Wagga, 07/12/2002  
Rev Benedict Lee, Perth, 13/12/2002  
Rev Dat Vuong, Perth, 13/12/2002  
Rev Asaeli Rass SVD, 14/12/2002  
Rev Gayan Thamel, Parramatta, 16/12/2002

## **ORDAINED 10 YEARS**

Rev Deacon Garth Mayger, Military Ord, 17/02/2012  
Rev Joe Susai Manickam OMI, 14/05/2012  
Rev Mgr Harry Entwistle, P O of OLSC, 15/06/2012  
Rev Deacon Michael Phillips, Bunbury, 16/06/2012  
Rev Michael Lanzon, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Samuel Lynch, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Phan Nguyen, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Norvin Dias, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Pierluigi Passoni, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Pasquale Pizzoferro, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Epeli Qimaqima, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Allan Casquejo, Sydney, 04/08/2012  
Rev Ruben Martello FSF, 10/08/2012  
Rev Reynold Jaboneta, Bathurst, 04/09/2012

Rev Benneth Osuagwu, Melbourne, 08/09/2012  
Rev Kevin Williams, Melbourne, 08/09/2012  
Rev Neil Fryer, P O of OLSC, 08/09/2012  
Rev Ramsay Williams, P O of OLSC, 08/09/2012  
Rev Andrew McCarter, Melbourne, 08/09/2012  
Rev Jerome Santamaria, Melbourne, 08/09/2012  
Rev Antony Iball, P O of OLSC, 18/10/2012  
Rev Deacon George Piech Meat, Melbourne, 27/10/2012  
Rev Deacon Kevin Pattison, Melbourne, 27/10/2012  
Rev Deacon Malcolm Lock, Melbourne, 27/10/2012  
Rev Deacon Dr Joseph Leach, Melbourne, 27/10/2012  
Rev Deacon Philip King, Melbourne, 27/10/2012  
Rev Woo-Hyeong Cho OSA, 10/11/2012  
Rev Matheus Wuwu MGL, 23/11/2012  
Rev Lucius Edomobi, Brisbane, 07/12/2012  
Rev Shammi Perera, Hobart, 08/12/2012  
Rev Deacon Michael Flew, Wollongong, 18/12/2012  
Rev Deacon Peter McCulloch, Broken Bay, 21/12/2012

## **ORDAINED IN 2021**

Rev Jessie Pena Banez, Hobart, 09/04/2021  
Rev Matthew Tonini OCarm, 17/04/2021  
Rev Tony Simbel CP, Adelaide, 15/05/2021  
Rev Tuan Ahn Le OSA, 22/05/2021  
Rev Daniel Drum VDMF, 29/05/2021  
Rev Stephen Drum VDMF, 29/05/2021  
Rev Dr John Collins, Parramatta, 11/06/2021  
Rev Dr Michael Tan, Parramatta, 11/06/2021  
Rev Ashwin Acharya, Rockhampton, 17/06/2021  
Rev Jack Ho, Brisbane, 29/06/2021  
Rev William Aupito Iuliano, Brisbane, 29/06/2021  
Rev Francis Fernandes, Brisbane, 29/06/2021  
Rev Luke Bulley CP, 29/06/2021  
Rev Conor Power, Brisbane Oratory, 11/09/2021  
Rev Connell Perry, Wagga Wagga, 11/09/2021  
Rev Deacon Edward Galao MGL, 18/09/2021  
Rev Rogelio Delmonte, Broken Bay, 18/10/2021  
Rev Aldrin Valdehueza, Broken Bay, 18/10/2021  
Rev Samuel French, Broken Bay, 18/10/2021  
Rev Rafael Silva Galicia, Sydney, 03/12/2021  
Rev, Anderson, Gallego Rodas, Sydney, 03/12/2021  
Rev Alexander Chow, Melbourne, 04/12/2021  
Rev Jaycee Napoles, Melbourne, 04/12/2021  
Rev Hoang Tuan Dinh, Melbourne, 04/12/2021  
Rev Joseph Nguyen, Melbourne, 04/12/2021  
Rev Samuel Pearson, Melbourne, 04/12/2021  
Rev Prodencio Bognay, Lismore, 08/12/2021  
Rev Michael Boudaher, Maronite, 18/12/2021

**Congratulations  
and  
Thank you!**

Judaism or Islam support the notion of an original sin inherited by each individual person.

**The doctrine owes its origins to St Augustine (397) and was based on a mis-translation** of the text and a faulty exegesis of the text. Augustine used an old faulty Latin translation of Romans 5:12. The Greek text was, 'since when all have sinned'. Augustine and his contemporaries translated that statement 'In Adam' indicating that, because of Adam's sin, everyone inherits the first (original) sin. According to Augustine, Adam's semen allowed this purported moral flaw to be passed on to every living person (traducian). The Council of Trent went further and taught that Adam's sin was transmitted by propagation, that is, by intercourse. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n 404) taught that Adam and Eve's sin affected human nature which had been deprived of the original innocence of Adam and Eve.

In the words of Toews, (*The Story of Original Sin*, 2013 Pickwick Publications) according to Augustine: *All human beings subsequent to Adam, except for the few elect to salvation by God's grace and mercy, were condemned to eternal hell for a sin they committed pre-natally in Adam's genitals. The biblical basis for Augustine's theology of original sin was a mistranslation and mis-exegesis of Romans 5:12* (85).

**The theological and cultural context for Augustine's formulation** of the doctrine of original sin which became official teachings of the church in the late 4th century is a complex one involving such factors as, Augustine's early background in Manichaeism, his dispute with the monk Pelagius who advocated a much more positive view of human nature, Augustine's growing personal pessimism as he aged, especially his negative views on sexuality, the cultural impact of invading barbarian tribes overwhelming the Roman Empire borders, the harsh moral theological climate of Carthage (where Augustine grew up) concerning the depravity of the human condition and the influence of the writings of Ambrosiaster and Ambrose, Augustine's mentor.

What is extraordinary in the story of the development of doctrine of original sin is that, historically speaking, the necessary critique of Augustine's doctrine of original sin by theologians and the official church in Western Christianity has been significantly lacking. Possibly one of the reasons for the failure to seriously critique Augustine's formulation was influenced by the high esteem of Augustine held by theologians. Augustine's writings enjoyed a 'halo' aura

throughout the centuries. In addition, theologians in official theology teaching roles were, and are now, reluctant to openly insist that the church must now move beyond the doctrine of original sin as currently formulated. Those teaching in Catholic institutions are bound by the Mandatum of 2001 (Canon 812) to uphold teachings of the magisterium. Theologians and the magisterium itself need to allow the doctrine as currently defined to be revised within the evolving story of theological thinking.

By linking the doctrine of original sin with the mission of Christ as a redemptive action, the church painted itself into a theological corner about the consistency and veracity of its teachings.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: *The church knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ* (n 389). We now acknowledge that we do not need to uphold the teachings on original sin to affirm the mission of Jesus as the Christ for 'life in abundance' (John 10:10) and 'wholeness in God' for humanity and creation.

**The doctrine of original sin tended to divert the focus of the sacrament of baptism** away from initiation into the Christian community to 'washing away original sin'. Hence there was an evolution of teachings about limbo, a place where unbaptised children went to after death. Baptism was considered necessary for salvation. Until recently in Catholic culture, dying babies were sometimes baptised by Catholic nurses to save them going to limbo! Furthermore, because, for much of church history, baptism was considered necessary for salvation, such a teaching consigned the vast majority of the human race to hell. The theologian Karl Rahner tried to solve the problem by proposing that non-Christians were 'anonymous Christians', a designation which understandably offended those not of the Christian faith. What does the doctrine say about the moral integrity of the billions of people who are not Christian? Does the doctrine of original sin as currently defined suggest that only through the power of the church through dispensing the sacraments can a person be saved?

**The doctrine of original sin fostered a negative anthropology.** According to the doctrine, we begin life in a state of moral disability as a consequence of inherited sin. As a consequence to this teaching humans are inclined to concupiscence or an inclination to sin. Much of Christian spirituality was devoted to 'saving one's soul',

combating sin and generally propagating a gloomy spirituality. Why do we begin the Mass with 'Let us call to mind our sins?' Why not, 'Let us reflect on our relations with God, the many blessings of our lives and also let us call to mind our sins?' Some years ago in my prayer, I modified the traditional Christian mantra, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner' to 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, blest and broken'. Even as recently as the Second Vatican Council, this orientation towards sin is evident. In the document, *Gaudium et Spes* we read, *What is known to us through God's revelation is consonant with our experience. Looking into our hearts, we also find ourselves with a leaning towards evil* (no 13). Why not also add, *'leaning towards good?'*

**The belief that original sin was transmitted from generation to generation** by the act of intercourse in marriage is an indictment of the holiness of the physical act of sexuality. Sexual relationships in marriage express a God-given procreative energy for the propagation of the human race and expressions of intimacy in relationships.

**All the great religious traditions teach about the universal nature of sin.** However no religious tradition except Christianity, espouses teachings about inherited sin from a previous state of innocence. In the Upanishads (Hindu sayings), the divine light is clouded by sin. The major theme in Hinduism is the relationships between Brahman, the divine spiritual force in the universe and the individual soul. Sin impedes this relationship. In Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path enunciated by the Buddha, proposes a way of life for followers to eliminate suffering by living a virtuous life. The teachings of Confucius emphasised harmonious living with nature and fellow beings. Morality was concerned with integrity in social relations. The Golden Rule of Confucius was, *What I do not wish others to do to me, that also I wish not to do to them.* Sin is a breakdown in virtuous living.

### **A way forward for Christology and a theology of sin**

The mystery of sin in humanity and world is best described as a sacred myth. The religious truth of sin is to be told in symbolic mythical language rather than the language of logos. We need to express religious truths in mythical language because our literalism can never capture the depth and expanse of the divine mystery. Any endeavour to explain the mystery of sin in literal or a logos mode

*Continued page 30*



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renders the mystery of sin unintelligible to contemporary consciousness and modern science.

However one hastens to add that the reality of sin in such forms as, domestic violence, disparity of wealth, theft, persecution, planetary vandalism and racism are to be named, confronted and graced into a *metanoia* of conversion and reconciliation.

Rather than hitching the mission of Jesus as the Christ to the chariot of restoring us into God's favour after the purported 'sin' of Adam and Eve, the mission of Jesus as the Christ may be better understood within the framework of *theosis* or deification. The mythos of Genesis 3 is about humans making choices and the consequences of such choices, especially choices which seek to displace God as the centre of our being (4-5). The first mention of sin in the bible is Genesis 4:7.

Through the lens of *theosis* or deification, the mission of Jesus as the Christ may be viewed as the bringing humans into wholeness and 'abundance of life' (John 10:10) as 'partakers of the divine life' (2 Peter 1:4). In the process of *theosis*, humans are led into union with God. Jesus said to Philip, *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me* (John 14: 9-10). Irenaeus of Lyon (d 202) captured the essence of *theosis* when he wrote, 'God became what we are, in order that we may become what he himself is'.

For a Christian, Christ is the dynamic energy of the creative Spirit bringing all creation into a unification with God the creator (Colossians 1:15). Christ is the exemplar par excellence of the process of *theosis*. Christ is the icon of *theosis*. The mission of Christ is to bring each person and creation into 'wholeness' ('salvation'). Jesus as the Christ came into the world to lead all creation in loving evolutionary energy towards the wonder of being 'created in the image and likeness of God' (Gen1: 27).

The 'oneness' theme of harmony within all creation is very much a feature of modern evolutionary science, especially in the connectivity of quantum physics. The Eden myth is an enduring myth in virtually every ancient culture, reflecting a deep universal consciousness for all things living in interdependent wholeness. As humans, we cannot separate the doctrine of original sin from the energy patterns that ebb and flow through the whole universe. Our cosmic parents are the exploding stars. Doctrines such as original sin which teach about our humanity are always intertwined with beliefs about the Incarnation and our identity within the unfinished universe.

What will happen to the formulation of the doctrine of original sin in the official teachings of the church?

Teachings which are no longer relevant or appropriate in their current articulation are quietly put aside and the core truths of the doctrine are reformulated. The *sensus fidelium* or 'lived experience of the faithful' energises an evolution in how various church teachings are understood.

Throughout the centuries, teachings such as 'outside the church there is no salvation', limbo, Immaculate Conception, the necessity of baptism for salvation and so on, simply drop off the table of the corpus of official teachings.

In a rapidly changing world, Christians need to be both 'seekers' and 'dwellers' (Charles Taylor). 'Dwellers' desire to hold the essence of the tradition and 'Seekers' venture where the Spirit is leading humankind in the light of modern science and an evolving world consciousness.

The imperative to re-examine and modify the official teachings of the church on original sin is not some miniature theological issue but deeply touches into the heart of Christian revelation, especially Christian anthropology and Christ's redemptive mission. For the credibility of the church's evangelising mission, the issue of the doctrinal formulation of original sin must be urgently addressed. The ancient Christian dictum, *fides quaerens intellectum* ('faith seeks understanding') is honoured when we open ourselves to the Spirit of discernment to lead us to express faith beliefs about the mystery of sin in our human condition, the revelation of God in Jesus as the Christ and our responses to transforming grace through Christ towards a 'wholeness' within an unfolding universe.

The doctrine of original sin taught that we are born separated from God instead of being born into the graced embrace of God. *We are born in grace. We are not born in sin.*

Let us celebrate the joy and blessings of our humanity, we who live within the web of life in creation! *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* (1 Corinthians 3:16)

I express my gratitude to all those writers whose wisdoms I access and share. For further reading see: McFarland, I A. *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* Wiley-Blackwell Chichester, West Sussex. A John Wiley & Sons Ltd Publications, 2010 and Wiley, T. *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings*. Paulist Press, New York, 2002. ☪

# Day of celebration, mourning, survival, invasion or memorial

PETER MAHER

Peter Maher, Sydney priest, reflects on January 26 and its multifaceted meaning and history.



For Australians, January 26 is a public holiday to mark who we are as Australians and where we come from. However, this is a contested day because of multiple views about our history and how it should be remembered.

The nature of the day historically is problematic. It occurs on the anniversary of Captain Cook claiming Australia for England by planting the flag on the shores of Botany Bay. This day is problematic as much as for the way the initial contact with Aborigines took place, as for the way Cook, Banks and company reported it in a way that led the Privy Council to conclude it was “a tract of territory practically unoccupied without settled inhabitants”.

Where negotiation and treaty would ensue if the land were “occupied”, as happened years later in New Zealand, in Australia “terra nullius” entrenched over two hundred years of dispossession, oppression and erasure of the true history of Indigenous Australians.

To celebrate what it means to be Australian on January 26, reaffirms the injustice the original Australians feel and continue to experience as a consequence of terra nullius and the frontier wars.

While many Australians celebrate who we are on January 26, it is not surprising that many have a different perspective including more and more non-Indigenous Australians.

Some see it a day of mourning the loss of ancestors, land, language and culture of 60,000 – 80,000 years. This group see nothing to celebrate on 26 January. However, it does not mean they do not see a reason to celebrate who we are as Australians. Just not on the day that marks the end of their sovereignty in this land. They want to celebrate Australia’s achievements, multi-culture, successes and place in the region and the world, but on a day that does not mean death of Indigenous culture.

Many would like to celebrate survival of Indigenous culture in spite of the historical disadvantage emanating from 26 January, 1788. Others see it as a day of remembrance. Let’s recall the tragedy resulting from a particularly cruel and unjust colonisation which began on January 26, 1788. For these reasons some find the day more aptly known as Invasion Day.

In 1949 Archie Grenfell Price, in his book, *White Settlers and Native Peoples*, wrote: *During an opening period of pioneer invasion*

*on moving frontiers the whites decimated the natives with their diseases; occupied their lands by seizure or by pseudo-purchase; slaughtered those who resisted; intensified tribal warfare by supplying white weapons; ridiculed and disrupted native religions, society and culture.*

We might want to retain January 26 as a day of mourning, survival or remembrance but not a day to celebrate all Australians when for many it is a day reminding them of erasure and injustice if you are Indigenous and shame and regret if you are non-Indigenous.

There is a good argument for choosing another day to celebrate Australia for all Australians.

Noel Pearson, in his 2018 reflection on Australia Day (<https://tinyurl.com/yymn47afw>), argues for a January 25/26 Australia Day to celebrate both sovereignties. He says: *For indigenous Australians and the many other Australians who empathise with the view that January 26 is “dancing on our ancestors’ graves”, as the hashtag puts it, January 25 should be a most important date. For on the eve of January 26 the entire east coast was held under the ancient sovereignty of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes, the First Nations of Australia. This sovereignty existed over the entire continent and its islands.*

*The Uluru Statement from the Heart describes this sovereignty as “a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or mother nature, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors”.*

*In retrospect, this 48-hour period is the most turbulent in the continent’s history, and for good reason. It is controversial, and will remain so for as long as we cannot find a way to unite around its meaning and reconcile, because profound things happened in those 48 hours.*

We continue to wrestle with a national day. ☺

*“We are priests best when we are priests together.”*

# A simple guide to local ecclesiastical politics

BERNARD GUY

**Bernard Guy, priest living in retirement on the east coast of Australia, (using a pseudonym) wonders if the patronage found in civil politics is a mirror image of the 'election' of bishops.**

In the midst of various election campaigns, state, federal and local government, our alertness to political trickery and manipulation becomes more acute. We sometimes (indeed, most of the time) forget that the same sort of shifty dealing also occurs in the Church.

At a time of preselection for forthcoming elections, what is it that we notice annoys committed members and lifetime supporters of the various parties? Here are a few that spring to mind.

Parachuting outsiders into safe seats: the loyal people who have stood outside polling stations time after time, door-knocked houses with the party message, and turned up to regular boring branch meetings, find that the person whom they have been fostering, and who they know is committed to the area, with a wide and deep knowledge of local issues, is passed over in favour of a member of the political class (of which more shortly) with connections in high places.

## Branch stacking

Stacking branches: the long-time members, the loyal people already mentioned, are surprised (at first pleasantly, then unpleasantly) to find that they have been joined by an amazing number of new members, from a particular race or union or religious background, who turn out to be more interested in preselecting someone of whom the originals have never heard, want to dump their preferred candidate, and whose membership fees (it is rumoured) have been paid by the interloper or the interloper's sponsors.

The substitution of long-time local influence by that of a political class, in which local experience, and real-life experience in general, is suppressed in favour of "advisors" straight out of school or university, and whose chief skills seem to be character assassination and political skulduggery.

## Patronage, factionalism and orthodoxy

Patronage rather than transparency: "advisors", press secretaries, union

secretaries, PR people, all have a better chance of entering parliament than the people who know the area and its problems, simply because they have become known to the leaders of the party, either parliamentary or organisational.

Factionalism: which is, of course, behind all of the above, and which seems to get worse, the longer a party is in opposition (why can't the current leader win an



election?) or in government (the leader is tired, has run out of ideas, has been systematically vilified, etc.); and woe to the non-factionalised!

Orthodoxy: which flourishes especially among party theoreticians, which puts being right above winning the election (as with Labour and Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom until recently) and disallows changing one's mind (as John Maynard Keynes would advise) when the facts change; the local party member gets the impression that the party organisation has never appreciated the truth of what Edmund Burke said to the electors of

Bristol, "your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

I could leave my argument there, and let readers reach their own parallels and conclusions about the Catholic Church in Australia. Nonetheless I shall draw out the argument on some of the above hints, without (I hope) my readers feeling insulted about my estimate of their intelligence.

## 'Election' of bishops

Why do we accept so supinely the parachuting of bishops into dioceses? In politics there is at least the possibility that the local favourite might get up, especially in a marginal seat (where even a woman might get preselected), but if Head Office wants a certain person in parliament, they will overrule the locals. One might therefore think it reasonable that at certain times and in certain countries or regions, the Holy See might think it necessary to intervene in an episcopal appointment. But surely not all the time, as it has claimed ever since the promulgation of the first Code of Canon Law, in 1917! Why do the local clergy and people not have more of a say, as in the earlier Church? Why is every player a captain's pick?

A great deal of this is the product of patronage and obscurity. The present process allows the appointment of people who prima facie are most unsuitable. The irony is that the word "election" is used to describe the process, but who votes? The standard theological evasion would be to cite Acts 1:23-26 and say that the election is done by the Holy Spirit, with the method of discovering his will being subject to local custom or universal law; in which case we could cast lots, as they did. The present mode of "election" achieves the end of making the one chosen more dependent on the Holy See than on his own clergy and people – which is one reason why a local man is so rarely chosen. (We can remember, surely, the farcical situation where a priest of the diocese of Sale was despatched to Bathurst as bishop in 2009, and then a priest from Bathurst was sent to Sale in 2014.) But it also means that the appointing body (in practice, the Congregation for Bishops), which rarely has direct knowledge of possible candidates (except for those who have happily worked

in a Roman dicastery), gratefully receives advice, not only through official channels (especially through the papal representative), but also from others who know them well. Hence the patronage. Hence the corruption.

The patronage involved is rather obscure, and it is linked to factionalism. A factional situation is already at work in the Australian Bishops' Conference: at the last election for President, it is said, two candidates tied, and the job went to the senior by ordination. Next time the other candidate will not miss out: he is getting his ducks in line, and by getting his choices as his auxiliaries, and then having them transferred to residential sees as they come up, he will have the numbers. Watch out.

### Bishop's qualifications

And, of course, it has often been observed that most bishops, when appointed, are characterised by a marked lack of parish experience. Most come from a rather small pool – bishops' secretaries, seminary rectors, etc – rarely from parish priests. Indeed, the “pastoral experience” often attributed to those elected is no more than two or three years as a curate or (sometimes) parish priest before being raised to higher things; the actual experience of perseverance in a difficult relational job is trivialised.

It might be objected that participation of clergy and laity in the “election” of bishops is rendered impractical by the size (population and/or territory) of many Australian dioceses. The provisions of *Christus Dominus* §§22ff have, in any case, been overtaken by events, including the need for a diocese large enough to support the bureaucracy necessary to comply with civil and ecclesiastical regulation and the tendency (Parkinson's Law!) for bureaucracy to expand anyway.

(There are some dioceses in Australia where, if souls could be saved by policies, flow charts, protocols and decrees, the Kingdom of Heaven has already arrived. The Pope is rightly suspicious of prince bishops; has anyone alerted him to CEO bishops?) And, of course, one could recite a litany of examples of abuse in the direct election of bishops down the centuries. But would it be impossible, given modern conditions and means of communication, to devise a way in which clergy and laity could take part, their choice approved (or not) by the other bishops of the province, and finally confirmed (or not) by the Holy See?

A lot could be said, but better not. Let your memory and reason go to work. ☩

## Life-centred faith in a post pandemic church

PETER MATHESON

**Peter Matheson, Melbourne priest, questions church life post COVID by looking at the signs of the times and their effect on the current church.**



A post-pandemic Church in Australia hopefully will coincide in time with a post Plenary Council Church. But will they coincide pastorally, ritually, and theologically? The ritual of the community gathering for Eucharist during the pandemic disappeared. Did live-streamed Masses effectively replace the long established ritual of communal celebration? What is the Spirit really asking of the church in Australia?

Even before the pandemic about 90% of baptised Catholics no longer attended weekly Eucharists. And it wasn't because Mass was no longer celebrated in Latin! Recent rituals involving signs of peace, and sharing the chalice disappeared with Covid. New rituals of mask wearing, social distancing, hand sanitising, and avoiding touch, did little to enhance our faith journey. Will all be well again when the virus disappears? While digital technology has helped live-stream Masses during the pandemic, closed churches have wrecked other important rituals of faith, even the after Mass cuppa and conversation.

Many people over the years have found many ways of living their faith other than going to Mass. Think of the renew programs, the small church communities, family groups, and the Vinnies groups in most parishes. Not all people in those groups went to Mass regularly, or even occasionally. But their involvement in those different gatherings was their way of living their faith. We think too of the people who spend much of their time caring for loved ones or the lonely old.

Massimo Faggioli recently wrote an article, ‘Do Catholics still Read?’ (*La Croix International*, October 20, 2021). He concluded with these words: *Being a ‘listening Church’ does not mean just listening*

*to one another or listening to the Holy Spirit. It also means listening to what culture – religious and secular – has to say to the Church. The Council of Trent tackled the problem of ignorance among the clergy. Today, some 450 years later, there are signs that the Catholic Church is once again facing that same problem again, at a moment when its leadership is or should no longer be identified only with the clergy. The assumption that Church leaders can afford to be ignorant is just another form of clericalism.*

### The signs of the times

An online subscription to *La Croix* nourishes my daily reading and thinking, and often my prayer. Faggioli has many thoughtful articles from time to time in *La Croix*. Many of them touch on the problem of clericalism, and polarisation in the American Church. His recent article spoke of listening to culture. What culture do I listen to? What culture envelops younger generations? What culture envelops the 90% or more of baptised Catholics who no longer regularly Mass? What culture continues to envelop those priests identified as being part of the clerical problem?

Faggioli also said: *Catholics who have kept alive the theology of Vatican II over the last few decades have been better equipped to understand the link between the pope's synodality and the tradition of the Church.* Faggioli suggested it was because they are part of a generation of avid readers.

Vatican II came along at the same time as the international Cold War, and the Vietnam War. We grew older in a post Vatican II church developing life-centred catechetical programs inspired by *Gaudium et Spes*. Vatican II inspired us with the task to interpret the signs of the times in the light of the gospel (GS 4). I prepared homilies with the bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other. If I had more hands I would hold the local faith community and their traditions before my gaze as well. But local faith communities are dwindling, shrivelling. Have we also lost touch with the signs of the times?

The Plenary Council is asking us to reflect on what the Spirit is saying to the church in Australia, not just the 10% that go to Mass. Pope Francis is inviting the whole

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church to go on a synodal journey. To what extent are we priests committed to both requests?

### Priesthood renewal

The Vatican II document on the Life of Priests says, *(Priests) should be willing to listen to lay people, give brotherly consideration to their wishes, and recognise their experience and competence in the different fields of human activity. In this way they will be able to recognise along with them the signs of the times* (Presbyterorum ordinis 9).

Gideon Goosen, in another article in *La Croix*, asked whether it was time to rethink Seminary education (25 Sept, 2021). Much of his reflection was based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission. But the question about seminaries has been asked long before that.

I remember back in Propaganda Fide College in Rome in the late 60's we complained about our seminary training because we were being inadequately trained for a ministry 10,000 miles away from the people we would return to serve. The authorities did not appreciate our impertinence. Some of us were allowed to stay.

Goosen argued: *The Catholic Church in Australia has reached a critical point in its journey where a total re-generation of the church is required.* He noted that we need seminaries to be places that train new generations of clergy to be servant leaders who can pastor – not rule over – the faithful. The problem of clericalism again.

I think we also need to form lay people (as well as Seminarians) to create and form faith communities, including parish communities. The Jocist method that formed many Young Christian Workers in the 50's, 60's and 70's was brilliant for its time. I have worked in different parishes where those young Christian workers had aged to become the key leaders in parish finance committees and parish councils. I needed them. When these now aging leaders find their faith communities taken over by clerics who 'know' how to run things, will it be any wonder if they back off and disappear?

Goosen makes the point that Jesus never sent his disciples to a seminary, but introduced them to kingdom values not in a building, but 'on the road'. Being on the road in Australia over these past 50 years and more has seen a great development in our "culture" in which many signs of the times have appeared. Think of the waves of European migration after the Second World War, the Vietnamese boat people

of the 80's and 90's, the more recent surge in refugees and asylum seekers, the cuisine revolution, the new awareness of aboriginal history and culture, pay gaps between men and women, the role of women in church and society, and the emergence of the climate crisis, to name but a few. Listening to the heart of all these "signs" can also take us into the heart of Scripture where God continues to form a people.

### Signs from life

Timothy Radcliffe, a former Master of the Dominicans, has made a number of visits to Australia and delighted us with his stories and reflections on life, and with his sense of the presence of the incarnate God in the heart of our story.

Radcliffe is currently recovering in Oxford after a long and difficult operation to remove a cancerous tumour from his jaw. He wrote about his experience in the January 1 edition of *The Tablet*. He said, *The trauma of this operation, with the removal of several inches of my jaw and its replacement with bone and tissue from my leg, opened a small window on to the Incarnation, the embodiment of divinity. Is so much religion boring because we have shoved God back into heaven, remote from dangerous intimacy?*"

Is this also why people are leaving the pews in droves? The incarnation did not just happen 2000 years ago. It is happening every day in the heart of our world and its cultures. Radcliffe spoke of long days of confusion after the operation, of not being able to do anything, even wipe his own bottom.

He said *My fragile sense of self was nourished by their (the doctors and nurses) gaze and touch, their eyes and hands. We exist in the gaze others offer us.* May he make a full recovery, a full return to health, and hopefully another visit to Australia.

Would that we priests all had the capacity to enter into 'dangerous intimacy' with the Holy Spirit, and listen to what the Spirit is saying in our ever-changing culture. Then we would interpret the signs of the times in the light of the gospel.

Ray Lyons, a presbyter from the diocese of Portsmouth, in another recent *La Croix* article, said, *The truth is that the medieval model the clergy are so desperate to maintain cannot survive in an increasingly democratized (western) world.* He notes that the reality in the UK of importing priests is not the answer.

We have imported priests from Africa and Asia here too. They are a sign to the rest of us of the nearness of the universal church in our sometimes 'narrow' local churches. The Latin liturgy of the past was the basic

sign of the universality of the church. We were used to it. But the strange accents and idioms of the brothers from overseas create a culture shock which shakes our comfortable complacency. Think of the culture shock these brothers endured in leaving their own lands and coming here. Covid has been an extra shock. Remember our culture shock when we left this comfortable continent and journeyed to non-English speaking lands for the first time.

### Synodal journey

The synodal journey envisaged by Pope Francis invites us to journey with people we are not used to being around. It invites us to journey with those we have not chosen. We are called by God to be a church, an ecclesia, a gathering. If we only journey with those with whom we are culturally comfortable can we ever be the sign of God's church?

So what is the answer? I believe our quest for an answer will involve a long synodal journey. A brilliant book I read in the initial stages of lockdown was Orm Rush's *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles*. Orm makes the point that Vatican II has been called the first council in history to operate out of an 'historical consciousness'.

He defines historical consciousness as stemming from the sense of awareness that human existence is conditioned by a person's "situatedness" in a specific time, culture and context.

We are who we are because of our past. And furthermore human beings have the capacity and indeed the responsibility to participate in shaping their own future, to shape history (see pp 166-7). He quotes Hans Georg Gadamer: *The historical consciousness that characterises contemporary man is a privilege, perhaps even a burden, the likes of which has never been imposed on any previous generation* (p 165).

Those that ache for the old Latin Tridentine Rite seem locked in a Pre-Vatican II liturgical cultural world. Their historical consciousness has become frozen. When they assume 'consciousness' will they discover that time has passed them by?

Even if we don't know the answers to all our church problems at the moment perhaps we can take comfort in knowing that we carry a burden 'the likes of which has never been imposed on any previous generation. ☪

# A different God

RICHARD FRANCIS

**Richard Francis lives in the Bellarine on Victoria's South Coast, sacred home of the Wadawurrung people. He talks about the God present in all creation.**

**W**e are all idolators at heart for as soon as we use human words to express our understanding of the Deity we detract from that Reality, from the Mystery that is God. We try to have concepts of God, but God is Trinity, a Relational Reality with whom we are invited to have a relationship, not ideas about!

Whenever we are faced with mystery we have two options, that are not really options because we need both: silence and stories. Jesus of Nazareth knew both; a life lived in deep silence, and, true to his people's traditions, a life expressed in story. A life lived that reflected his intimacy with Abba. Sometimes our stories can so touch the heart of the Mystery that they become our myths that carry our social and spiritual culture!

I would like to share two stories that have had a profound effect on my own faith journey as I struggle to draw close to the Great Mystery at the Centre of Life, Love 'Itself'. One is from Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and director of the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico. And the second is from the book titled *Night* by Elie Weisel in which he tells of an experience in Auschwitz.

## God is not 'out there'

Richard tells of his encounter with a hermit/monk while Richard was having his silent retreat at his usual Carthusian Monastery. Richard knew that this hermit had been living a life of silent contemplation and prayerful study for many years and only spoke when he joined his community for Easter and Christmas celebrations.

As Richard walked one of the paths on the grounds of the Monastery, he saw the hermit coming towards him. Wanting to be respectful of the man's vow of silence Richard stood aside to let him pass and was astonished when the holy old man stopped to speak.

"Richard, you preach to people, don't you?" Without waiting for a reply, he went on, "Richard, tell them 'God isn't out there'." These words said as he pointed in the general direction of heaven. Of all the things this holy man might have broken his silence for, and have thought important for Richard to tell his listeners, why does

he think this is so important to convey to Richard and to us? I believe his contemplation has brought this holy hermit to a recognition of what the world, and especially us Christians, need to grasp for our times, and to hear their meaning deep in our hearts.

The repercussions of what the hermit said are not immediately obvious, it needs to be thought about, prayed about, contemplated! We are so used to a God who is 'out there'; a God apart from us, a God who is 'someone else', separate from us. Djokovic looks to heaven when he wins; Khawaja looks heavenward when scoring a century. We have been encouraged to think like that – a God who exists outside God's creation, a God 'out there'! We have been taught to adore, to pray to, and love a God 'out there'. The monk is inviting us to find the God within ourselves, and within every bit of God's creation which God inhabits or it wouldn't exist.

## The God on our side with us

Elie Weisel tells of an experience in Auschwitz when all the inmates of his cell block were stood out in the freezing cold to witness a young, emaciated boy of fourteen being hanged for stealing a scrap of bread. His body wasn't heavy and he writhed in agony slowly choking to death. Someone in the crowd called out: where is God now? And Elie heard a voice from deep within him clearly say: Can't you see him, he's hanging there in front of you. Our Almighty and all-powerful God 'out there', died in the horrendous sufferings and deaths of so many good, faithful, people in the holocaust, and the only God who survived was the God hanging there in front of you. What other God could possibly survive that experience?

I hope these two stories prompt us to re-visit the way we see our God and our relationship with that God.

These are not new ideas. They have been part of our catholic tradition for centuries, but I believe they are frighteningly pertinent for our age. If we don't take them to ourselves we can only become atheists or stumble around in darkness. It's too big an ask to believe in an interventionist, all male God, who, capriciously, doesn't use his power to come to the aid of his people.

The last vestiges of an all-seeing, all-controlling, omnipotent, interventionist authoritarian Father God died in Auschwitz! That God could not survive the horrendous sufferings and liberating deaths of so many of God's own people, be they Jews, Christians, Communists, or people with physical or mental disabilities. No wonder so many of the inmates of those camps fell into Atheism. The God they had been given to worship and pray to, couldn't survive what they were experiencing.

Elie Weisel gives them and us the only God who could survive, the God who suffers with us and in us, because that God is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. By all means, let's have our feasts of Christ the Universal King but let's not forget that the throne he sits on is made from the wood of a gibbet! Too dramatic? Possibly!

For centuries we Christians professed our faith in and prayed to an all seeing, all controlling, Almighty, All Powerful, rather authoritarian, Father Figure God. Given men's proclivity for power and control (with a little help from Constantine) that god of ours has led us down a path of patriarchy and hierarchy that gave us many blessings and many failures.

Its failures are all too obvious in today's world. I don't see that God as being the God of Jesus of Nazareth. While he forgives and heals in God's name, in the name of his God of love, I don't see him, even in his own terrible suffering and death, calling on an interventionist, all powerful god. But, with all the faith he could muster he clung to his Abba to stay with him and keep him faithful.

Ertie Hillesum, a Jewish woman who died in a concentration camp in 1943 (30 years old), came to such an intimacy with the God who revealed Godself to her in those awful conditions that she asked that God if she could help God carry the suffering and despair of the world that was all around her.

Her heart embraced the compassion of her God whom she knew would never abandon His people. Her God was no all-powerful, almighty patriarchal being. She found her God to be with her in the depths of her own misery; a God who could lift her heart.

I quote an excerpt from her diary, written from the bowels of hell – in Westerbork on July 3, 1943 – to a friend, which was found 40 years after her death: *The misery*

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*here is quite terrible, and yet late at night, when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire. And then time and again, it soars straight from my heart – I can't help it, that's just the way it is, like some elementary force – the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent, and that one day we shall be building a whole new world.*

**A new vision**

These stories and the evolutionary vision of Teilhard de Chardin are leading me to a very different God from the one I was brought up with; a God hanging on a tree speaks to the suffering of our world, while the God of de Chardin tells me that God's presence in that suffering is bringing about the fullness of the Kingdom. Our middle class churchianity built around such out-moded ideas of an all-powerful, interventionist God has so little to offer, that good people are leaving our patriarchal, hierarchal Church in droves. Mind you we don't want to replace hierarchical with 'layarchical', that might even be worse. We need to find the new Church to which Pope Francis calls us.

What is the 'hoo-ha' about the return to the Latin Mass with all the incense and brocade, the dressed up servers and obvious hierarchical structure of priest, deacon, servers, laity than a fear of changing our god. We are afraid. We are always afraid when someone threatens to take our god away. Whatever you do, don't take away our unchanging god who is up in heaven and who happens to be on the side of the comfortably rich people. We like that god. He stays up in heaven and doesn't get too close! He's God 'out there'. All of us want a God we're comfortable with, not a God who makes us uneasy. How much we need the story of the hermit/monk.

I suspect we all need to become atheists so that we can learn again who our God is and to experience an honesty and an intimacy with the God who is Love. How much do we need the stories of Elie Weisel and Ettie Hillesum so that we can embrace a God 'hanging there in front of us'. I believe these are not stories to be read and passed over as two more interesting stories, they need to be contemplated in the silence of our hearts where we may find a God for our age in whom to believe.

Monasteries and concentration camps are not places where a counterfeit God will survive, nor a counterfeit piety!

Laurence Freeman OSB, in *The Selfless* *Selfsums* it up: We live in the consciousness of God. ☪

# Remembering church bells

PATRICK FLANAGAN

**Patrick Flanagan, retired priest, Maryborough VIC, recalls stories about various experiences of bells in churches and liturgies.**



**I**n February this year, after 10 years of fairly active retirement living next to the Catholic Church in Red Cliffs Victoria (Red Cliffs is the beginning of Mildura) I moved a lot closer to Melbourne, taking up residence near St Augustine's Church, Maryborough Vic. It was not the first time I came to reside in Maryborough. I moved there in January 1973 as assistant priest to a wonderful Irishman, Fr Tom Scanlan.

I had been there about three months when I began to receive complaints, "Why don't we have the bells anymore." St Augustine's Church had a spire, but no bell in it. But it had some strong Speakers; and in the sacristy, on a record player was a (vinyl) recording of the Bells of St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne. It was the playing of these bells, which I had unwittingly terminated, that people were missing.

That wasn't difficult to fix. But, after a while, I began to wonder if there were other recordings of bells besides those of Melbourne's St Paul's Cathedral. And, of course, there were. I became a collector. The record player in the Maryborough sacristy was replaced by a cassette player; and Maryborough parishioners became able to be summoned to Sunday Mass by the bells of a variety of English churches, and even those of Westminster Abbey.

In 1982, as I was preparing to move from Maryborough to Edenhope Vic., I made copies of these recordings to take with me.

Edenhope had a kind of bell tower, but no bell in it. So it wasn't long before I installed speakers in it, and endorphins were able to be awakened by the bells of St Paul's Cathedral. A Mercy sister, Pius Fiscalini, had a Casio keyboard that had a chimes setting. Using this she recorded a number of hymns current in the sixties, seventies and eighties, hymns like, In Faith and Hope and Love, Sing Christ Risen and God gives his people peace. I was able to blend this with a background of bells to produce something different to play through the bells speakers. She also recorded for Australia Day tunes like Waltzing Matilda and Click go the shears.

I did something similar in each parish I was appointed to; but, quite understandably, the priests who succeeded me in those parishes did not see any point to playing recordings of bells. Practises I initiated did not outlast me.

Then, at the start of 2005, I arrived in Red Cliffs, Vic. By the generosity of parishioners and the drive of the Scalabrinian Fathers to whom Bishop O'Collins entrusted the parish, this largely Calabrian parish, Red Cliffs, has a beautiful new church, that included in its centre a very narrow spire equipped with loudspeakers. They had recordings of Italian bells. Compared with English bells, Italian bells are quite tinny; but they were good enough to cheer parishioners as they made their way to St Joseph's Church.

Here in Maryborough, the wiring to the spire broke long ago, so no bells ring from the spire anymore.

There are other bells though that ring in some churches. The bells rung at the consecration in many churches used to be called the Sanctus bell, which meant that it was rung during the Holy, Holy. When and why that ceased, I have no idea.

I watch every year the Christmas Eve Mass from St Peter's in Rome. Ringing the bells during the Gloria of the Easter Vigil is a long established and meaningful practice. At some time during his papacy, Benedict XVI began that practice of ringing the bells of St Peter's during the Gloria of the Christmas Eve Mass. Once the bells of St Peter's began to ring, bells in the church towers around Rome begin to ring in unison with St Peter's. Then I noticed that

there were bells ringing within St Peter's Church. I thought to myself: what is good enough for St. Peter's, Rome, is good enough for St Joseph's, Red Cliffs.

In Red Cliffs, I eventually had a lot of altar servers, of both sexes of course. I was retired, but still working pastorally, with the happy consent of Mildura's pastors, Tom Brophy & then Mick McKinnon. I helped with the Sacramental program, and I placed an expectation on the parents that, once confirmed, their children would

become altar servers. The purpose of this was so that their children's First Communion would not also be their last Communion. Most parents accepted this.

At our Christmas eve Mass, all of the altar servers would have a job. Those not doing the main serving would ring bells during the Gloria, the Holy, Holy, and also during the 'Through him, with him, in him . . .' It wasn't difficult to borrow lots of small bells for this purpose. Similarly, at the Easter Vigil they would ring the bells, and

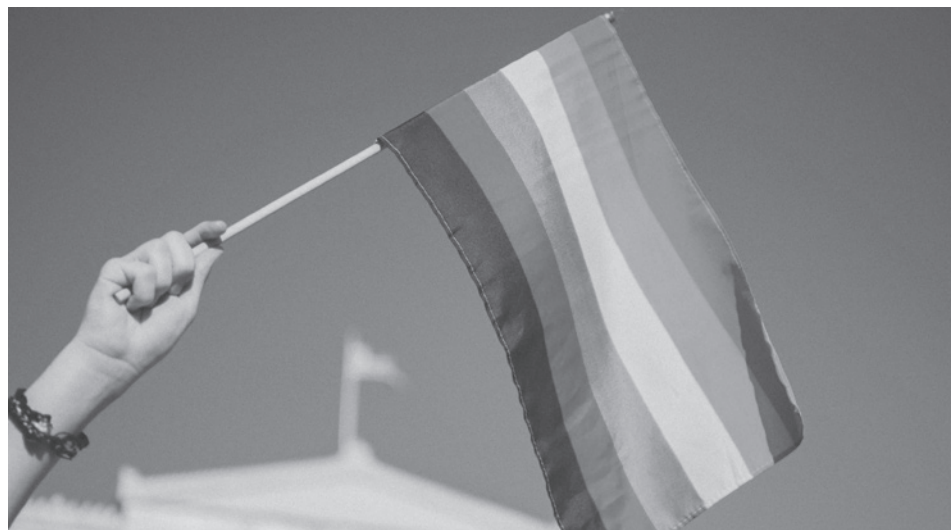
they would also help with lighting the people's candles, and with sprinkling the people with the Baptismal water.

To make the bells at the Easter Vigil more pronounced, I introduced in Red Cliffs a custom of having no bells at all, either inside or outside, for the whole of Lent. In the Tridentine liturgy, the bells were silent for a quite short period, from the Gloria of Holy Thursday until the Gloria of the Easter Vigil. Most people find the sound of bells very pleasant. ☺



## What's wrong with the Religious Discrimination Bill

**Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry made a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Religious Discrimination Bill and Related Bills on December 21, 2021 to highlight the problems with the Bill. The full Rainbow Catholics submission (Number 142) and the Josephite Justice Office submission (Number 79) can be read here: <https://tinyurl.com/yckubr4u>**



The Bill was withdrawn by the government on 10 February after amendments to protect women, people with disabilities and LGBTIQ people from harmful discrimination, overriding State laws and the removal of 'statement of belief' clause passed when government members voted with the Labor Party in the House and more amendments were expected to be passed in the Senate. Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry is a coalition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and non-binary (LGBTIQ+) affirming Catholic ministries, groups, pastoral leaders and organizers in the Australian Catholic community.

The following paragraphs are taken from the Submission:

We ask that the Bill be withdrawn. After prayerful discernment and through reflection upon Catholic Social Teaching

and; the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus, we find this bill to be lacking in care and protection for those who will be most adversely affected by it. We are deeply concerned that 'religious freedom' under the proposed legislation will be used, abused or weaponised expanding ways to discriminate against the vulnerable.

Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching which supports the Human Rights of all and the principle of non-discrimination, we submit that the Religious Discrimination Bill (RDB) should be withdrawn because it:

- a. Licenses harmful and hateful statements to be lawfully made under the guise of religious belief, even if they are uninformed, derogatory, offensive, insulting and humiliating and contrary to the common good or public benefit.
- b. Fails to protect genuine religious freedom, but instead it undermines the purpose of religious freedom as part of

the broader human rights framework by privileging some religious expression over others, especially ones that discriminate and marginalise others.

- c. Undermines and overrides anti-discrimination laws in the States that currently protect LGBTIQ civil rights for people of faith and LGBTIQ Catholics who have often been historically marginalised in their own church.
  - d. Entrenches divisions and marginalisation within our communities where people who wishes to use religion to promote sectarianism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, misogyny are given licence to do so under the guise of religion. Individuals of religious minorities will have their religious freedom suppressed or overridden due to the asymmetrical definition of the 'statement of belief' proposed within the RDB.
  - e. Increases the oppression of religious minorities (especially minorities within the same denomination or between religious traditions) who do not hold institutional resources and power to espouse their own faith perspective.
  - f. Moves away from a Human Rights integrated approach towards manifesting religious freedom for the sake of the common good or public benefit, balancing and protecting the human rights of all, rather than privileging and expanding one particular right at the expense of others.
- Gives undue power to dominant, well-resourced and powerful religious institutions without clear provisions on how that exercise of power will be scrutinised or held to account by those who are most affected, including members within those communities who have been historically minoritised, marginalised or abused, such as children, people of colour, people with disabilities, women and LGBTIQ people. ☺

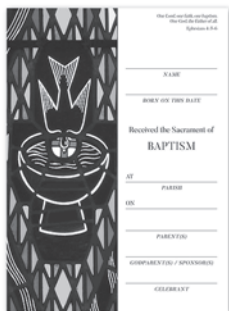


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## Beatitudes of the Bishops

At the beginning of an Italian bishops' conference plenary session, Pope Francis gave each a copy of a text called "The Beatitudes of the Bishop".

Originally written by the archbishop of Naples for his homily when ordaining three bishops last month, the eight "beatitudes of the bishop" loosely correspond with those spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

The beatitudes offer a portrait of how a pastor should be in the 21st century, in a world where there is so much poverty, injustice, conflict, suffering and human fragility.

They are a call to serve, to work for justice, peace and reconciliation, to find goodness and to work to build fraternity.

The Bishop's Beatitudes are:

*Blessed is the Bishop who participates in poverty and the sharing of his lifestyle, because by his testimony he is constructing the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who is not afraid to mark his face with tears until they reflect the sorrows of his people and the difficulties of his priests, finding in embrace with those who suffer the consolation of God.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who considers his ministry a service and not a power, making meekness his strength, and giving everyone the right of citizenship in his heart to inhabit the land promised to the meek.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who does not close himself in government buildings, who does not become a bureaucrat more attentive to statistics than to faces, to procedure than to stories, who tries to fight at the side of men for the dream of the justice of God, so that the Lord, met in the silence of daily prayer, will be his nourishment.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who has a heart for the misery of the world, who is not afraid to get his hands dirty in the mud of the human*

*soul to find the gold of God, who is not scandalized by others' sin and fragility, because he is aware of his own misery, so that the gaze of the Risen Lord will be for him the seal of infinite pardon.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who drives away duplicity of the heart, who avoids any ambiguous dynamic, who dreams of good even in the midst of evil, so that he will be able to rejoice in the face of God, finding its reflection in every puddle of the city of men.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who works for peace, who accompanies the paths of reconciliation, who sows the seed of communion in the heart of the presbytery, who accompanies a divided society on the path of reconciliation, who takes every man and every woman of goodwill by the hand to build fraternity: God will recognize him as his son.*

*Blessed is the Bishop who is not afraid to go against the tide for the Gospel, making his face "resolute" like that of Christ on his way to Jerusalem, without letting himself be held back by misunderstandings and obstacles because he knows that the Kingdom of God advances in the contradiction of the world.*

## Synod on Synodality submissions and Australian Bishop delegates

Groups and individuals are invited to reflect and respond to the key themes of the Synod – communion, participation and mission. Submissions of 250 words by groups or individuals can be made by February 27, 2022. A large amount of material for this stage of the process and submission information can be found here: <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>

The Vatican has a website with further information here: <https://www.synod.va/en.html> Contact details for making submissions directly to the Secretariat here: <http://secretariat.synod.va/content/synod/it.html>

Meanwhile, Archbishop Patrick O'Regan and Bishop Shane Mackinlay have been elected Australia's two delegates to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, to be held in 2023.

## Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ speaks candidly about Church future

In an interview with Loup Besmond de Senneville in La Croix International on January 24, 2022, Cardinal Hollerich who leads the Archdiocese of Luxembourg spoke candidly about key issues for the church today.

When asked if the church should give up defending ideas he said: No, it's not about that. We must try to understand the other, to build bridges with society.

On Christian anthropology he said: we must base ourselves upon the human experience of our interlocutor.

For although Christian anthropology is marvellous, soon it will no longer be understood if we do not change our method. And what use is it to us to speak if we are not heard? Do we speak for ourselves, to make sure we are on the right side? Is it to reassure our own followers? Or do we speak to be heard?

On the sexual abuse crisis he said: First of all, I want to say that these abuses are a scandal. ... There is a systemic fault somewhere, and it needs to be addressed. We should not be afraid of the injuries that this might inflict on us, which are absolutely nothing compared to those of the victims.

Some people have lost confidence. In order to regain it, when possible, one must have great humility. When one accompanies a community or a person, one must always keep in mind the principle of absolute respect for those whom one accompanies. ... If women and young people had been given more of a voice, these things would have been discovered much sooner.

We must stop acting as if women were a marginal group in the Church. They are not on the periphery of the Church, they are in the centre.

When asked about change to be made he said; The formation of clergy must change. It must not be centered only on the liturgy, even if I understand that seminarians attach great importance to it. Lay people and women must have a say in the formation of priests. Forming priests is a duty for the whole Church.

On sexuality, he said: Until now, we have had a rather repressed vision of sexuality. Obviously, it's not about telling people they can do just anything or abolishing morality, but I think we need to say that sexuality is a gift from God.

We know that, but do we say it? I'm not sure. [Priests] must be able to talk about [their sexuality] freely, without fear of being reprimanded by their bishop. As for homosexual priests, and there are many of them, it would be good if they could talk about it to their bishop without the latter condemning them. As for celibacy ..... Why not have married priests too?



### Donald Cozzens dies

Fr Donald Cozzens, former Writer in Residence and professor in the Theology and Religious Studies department at John Carroll University died, 82 years old, on December 9, 2021 with pneumonia as a result of COVID-19.

Cozzens was an academic and writer and was passionate about teaching. He became President-Rector and professor of pastoral theology at Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology in Wickliffe, Ohio. Cozzens wrote his first book *The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest* in 1997.

Cozzens' writing sometimes addressed issues within the church and drew criticism. Colleagues say his intent was not to draw attention to those problems but to help solve them.

Cozzens was very active in the JCU Campus Ministry. John Scarano, director of Campus Ministry said Don was one of those people who tended to attract students. Many were caught off guard by his willingness and eagerness to learn from young people. He exhibited both grace and complete attentiveness to another that easily conveyed the sense that he was listening and interested in them as a person.

### Fr Pat Flanagan Eucharist resources available online

In recent editions of *The Swag*, Fr Pat Flanagan has referred to a resource he has created that offers various options for Eucharists throughout the liturgical year. These include options for the penitential rite; prayers of the faithful and other prayers for that particular liturgy. Some have noted they would benefit from such a resource.

This resource is now available free online here: <https://tinyurl.com/bde5wpsw> Pat is very happy for you to use it in any way that helps your community to celebrate the Eucharist.

### Jesuit Rutilio Grande beatified

The close friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Salvadoran Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande along with two lay companions, elderly parishioner Manuel Solórzano and teenager Nelson Rutilio Lemus Chávez who were murdered March 12, 1977, were beatified on January 21, 2022.

Father Grande was born in 1928 and joined the Jesuits in 1945 and was ordained in 1959. He was the first priest killed in the civil war in El Salvador.

"Father Rutilio Grande was a Jesuit of unsuspected human and religious dimensions. In his weakness he found his greatness... He knew how to be a counsellor, an understanding and kind companion, and at the same time firm and serious about the Christian life and the responsible exercise of the priestly ministry," said, Father Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Jesuits.

### Pope confers ministries on Sunday of the Word of God

Pope Francis instituted the Sunday of the Word of God with the apostolic letter *Aperuit illis* on September 30, 2019, the 1,600th anniversary of St. Jerome's death.

"The purpose of this Note is to help reawaken, in the light of the Sunday of the Word of God, an awareness of the importance of Sacred Scripture for our lives as believers, beginning with its resonance in the liturgy which places us in living and permanent dialogue with God," said the text signed by the congregation's prefect, Cardinal Robert Sarah, and secretary, Archbishop Arthur Roche.

On January 23, 2022, Pope Francis conferred the ministries of Lector and Catechist on lay men and women. ☪

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

### Coming to terms with dying

My appreciation of the realism and sensitivity of articles in *The Swag* has again been confirmed by Tom Elich's contribution on pastoral care in the wake of the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation in your summer edition.

We live in a society which has some difficulty in coping with death. Over the years a more light-hearted approach has gained sway and a funeral is often described as a celebration of life and held at a football oval, beach or park. The music is variable and likely to feature Sinatra's *My Way* or *Over the Rainbow*. As selected by a conservative male friend, I heard his favourite song *I'm a Pistol Packin' Mama* played at the end of a funeral conducted by an Anglican cleric.

Funeral notices follow the same carefree pattern with expressions such as "rest in peace but keep partying" or "gone fishing". I've seen one which contained the ambiguous comment "peace at last"!

In this setting the faith would not be advanced by taking a judgmental approach to someone who seeks or supports voluntary assisted dying legislation or to the family or friends of the sufferer.

Father Elich strikes exactly the right note in saying that it is a time for the ministry of pastoral accompaniment, without judgment and with a profound respect, working collaboratively with family and friends, doctors and carers. In Elich's words, even if the decision cannot be supported by the Church minister, "the pastor nevertheless remains by the person's side".

*James Moore, Kogarah, NSW*

### Promoting the Eucharist

I was quite touched by the posthumous letter from Fr James Duck that you printed in the summer edition of *The Swag*.

James and I were members of the 1957 ordination class, 23 in number, from St Patrick's College Manly. John Swann and I, both of Adelaide, are the only two still on their pilgrim journey.

It was appropriate that James' letter, in praise of Patrick Kempton's article on the Eucharist in the winter *Swag*, proved to be a dying testimony of James' lifelong faith and joy in the Mass.

At a time when much of the publicity about the Church in the media is negative, I wonder whether we are sufficiently enthused in advertising the Mass as central to our existence.

Perhaps the Australian Bishops, as a teaching body, could issue a statement that is warm, gentle and gracious, inviting Catholic schools and parishes to reprint it widely and frequently. It could be reproduced on school enrolment forms and on applications for Catholic employment. It would serve as encouragement to practising Catholics, a reminder to the infrequent attendees, and information for the wider community. Among the disparate Catholic voices highlighted in the media at present, a clarifying proclamation of the centrality of the Mass in Catholic life is needed. Dioceses might proclaim it in the secular media from time to time.

My suggestion, I believe, serves well as a first step on the path of a process that the Church could and should take. Here are a few thoughts towards a bishop's statement:

Jesus said at the Last Supper, "Do this in memory of me."

For 2000 years Catholics have come together for the Breaking of the Bread (Acts of the Apostles 2:42). Participating in the Mass on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, is essential to Catholic life. Parents evangelise their children through their example of commitment to the Eucharistic community. We spread the Good News by greeting warmly our fellow worshipers at Sunday Mass. At the heart of the Church is this maxim: We need the Eucharist, and we need each other.

*Robert Egar, Adelaide, SA*

### Pope's vision for women's ordination

The successor of Peter was not young, and he had a punishing work schedule. About noon he went up to the flat roof of his apartment for some quiet time, and asked that his lunch be brought up to him. While the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open and something like a large sheet, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it was a large number of women all with a PhD in Theology. Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up and ordain!"

But the Pope said, "By no means, Lord, for I have always respected the longstanding tradition of the Church. I could never ordain that which is unworthy."

Then the voice spoke again and said, "How dare you say that anyone I have created is unworthy!" This happened three times, and then the sheet and the women in it were suddenly taken up to heaven.

Now, while the Pope was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision, a large

delegation of Cardinals arrived at his office. While the Pope was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, these men have come to see you. Now, get up, go down and meet with them without hesitation for I have sent them."

So, the Pope went down to the Cardinals and said, "Why have you come?"

And the Cardinals replied, "The Holy Spirit directed us to come to your residence to hear what you have to say." So, the Pope told them of what he had seen in the vision: the sheet with the women coming down from heaven, and God's command to ordain them.

Then he said, "You yourselves know it is a long-standing tradition of the Church that only men are worthy of ordination, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone created by God, unworthy." While the Pope was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the Pope's words. The Cardinals were astounded that the Holy Spirit's anointing of election had been poured out on these learned women.

Then, the Pope said, "Can anyone withhold the anointing of ordination on these women who have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, just as we have. Who am I that I should hinder God?" So, the Pope ordered the Cardinals to ordain holy women. With that, following the example of his predecessor from Galilee, the Holy Father, in accordance with the Creator's command, expanded a two-thousand-year-old tradition into a new and more inclusive one and so ushered in not an era of change, but a change of era.

And that, sisters and brothers, could quite possibly be a true story... perhaps. ☺

*Harry Moore SM, Herston, QLD*

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## Australian Catholic stories

*Then and Now: Australian Catholic Experiences*, Edmund Campion, ATF Theology, 2021. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Sitting in Campion's lectures at St Patrick's College Manly was a joy. We students saw history come alive as characters from the past seemed to materialise before us in the lecture hall. I didn't understand the alternate philosophies of history. I was just pleased to be enjoying history, joy that had eluded me throughout my school years of history classes.

Campion reflects in the first chapter on how he does history. He critiques an approach to history which privileges major figures, the powerful and those in the limelight, claiming that these characters tell only the story of power. Campion claims the stories of ordinary people have a great deal to offer a fuller view of a particular era or event.

In church terms this means exploring the experiences of ordinary Catholics. How did they relate to their church and church people? What formed them and influenced the way they lived their lives? What is the relationship between Catholics in the pews and the hierarchy? Campion does explore the influence of bishops like Mannix, Gilroy and Pell, and he also reflects on the impact of theologians such as Augustine, Luther and Congar. There is much about

some more well-known figures like John Henry Newman, Lord Acton and B.A. Santamaria.

However, it is the religious women and men who enabled Catholic health and education in Australia, the lay leaders of movements before, and since Vatican II, the people in the pews and the Catholics in ordinary civil, political and public life that Campion also explores in this book.

The chapters are articles from Campion's personal archives. While they span many years and have been written in various contexts, there is a wonderful connection in the collection. We are invited into instances of Catholic experience in Australia that help us understand ourselves. It is not a picture from the past but a pathway into our present reality. Why are we such a polarised church? How does power work in the Australian church and who benefits? Why is it so difficult for some groups to be heard in the Plenary Council? Why am I still a Catholic?

As Campion explores the church from the pews, the parishes, the religious orders, the lay movements and popular piety, he un.masks a trajectory of history that is often



Edmund Campion

lost or forgotten. In his final essay he looks at 'Why I am Still A Catholic?' We are not surprised to read that it is not because the church is such a good institution – indeed Campion points out the question is there precisely because of the long litany of flaws and hypocrisy in the church. Campion recalls Pell's words that the church is a hospital for sinners and a nursery for saints. It is to be in the family of humanity that makes the church attractive to Campion. It is the Catholic imagination that invites and intrigues.

Campion says: the Catholic imagination enriches my experience of the world, making it dense, mysterious, layered with meanings and splendours (p169). This book will reward the reader with many gems like this. ☺



## Wisdom born in experience

*The Joy of Ageing, A Spirituality for Oldies*, Brian Gallagher MSC, Coventry Press 2021. Gallagher reflects on the wisdom, paradox and contemplative nature of the later stages of life. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Retiring with plenty of time and energy to live is a relatively modern phenomenon. Until recently people retired when no longer able to work or with little prospect of a long healthy period of life ahead. With longer life expectancy and improved health services, older people live active and engaged lives well after retiring from their profession, occupation, role or work.

The development of gerontology and aged care has accompanied a growth and interest in the spirituality of ageing. Gallagher contributes to this growing body of literature. Through six themes: Awakening, Remembering, Dreaming, Living, Dying and Praying, Gallagher develops a comprehensive and reflective spirituality that rejoices in the opportunities of ageing and yet befriends the challenges with affection and grace.

While the body may be waning as we age, Gallagher points out that the 'inner life' may expand, mature and grow more reflective. The spirituality of ageing is about embracing new opportunities for a contemplative approach. Yes, we have more time. The question is how do we use it. Here is just one occasion that Gallagher explores the paradox of the experience of ageing. This new time can be experienced as loneliness or boring, but may also be space for very productive quiet reflection. Stopping or slowing down is a gift to notice blessings and be thankful. We have time to be present to reality in a way that previously may have been swallowed up in the busyness of life.

The chapter on remembering offers a delightful freshness. We are happy to remember good times and old friends but



the spirituality of remembering is much deeper. It is more like a remembering, a putting together. It is not a static photo album to jog the memory but more allowing the past to inform our present and shape our futures.

The references to the disciples never forgetting the moment that Jesus touched their hearts (about 4 o'clock in the

Continued page 42

## REVIEWS

afternoon. John 1:39) or the Last Supper's 'do this in memory of me', suggest active remembering that is informative and transformative in the here and now reality of our being. This kind of remembering is at the heart of healing and compassion for self and others,

Gallagher's thoughts on dreaming are

equally insightful. Dreaming is active hope for a better world and fulfilling relationships. Dreaming God's dream is at the heart of the spirituality of ageing in this book.

These insights are delightfully illustrated with personal stories – his own and those of friends. This spirituality is firmly rooted in the wealth of human experience.

Learning from experience, both positive and challenging, is the way of the heart and the way of welcoming the divine into our lives. This is true in a special way for the ageing. This book will inspire those growing older and empower those seeking to live with or journey with those living their later years. ☪



## Thomas O'Loughlin, church philanthropist of Victoria

***A Goldminer's Fortune: The Story of Martin Loughlin, 'Quartz King', racehorse owner and philanthropist, and of Thomas O'Loughlin, who inherited the fortune.* Anne Ridley, 2020. Published by A B Ridley, 36 Springdale Road, Killara, NSW.**

When gold was discovered in Victoria, a young Irishman, Martin Loughlin, and his cousin, Patrick, joined the thousands of diggers heading to Ballarat to make their fortune. Martin possessed a golden touch as he successfully built a portfolio of mines around Ballarat, Creswick and Timor. Not all were without controversy – indeed his purchase of the Mt Egerton mine led to one of the most famous court cases of the era. He never married and became a resident of Craigs Hotel. His growing wealth enabled him to indulge his keen interest in racehorses.

Starting his track career in Ballarat, he later entered his racehorses in Warrnambool and Melbourne with considerable success, winning many major trophies, including the Grand National Hurdle and Steeple, a Melbourne Cup and a Caulfield Cup. Some of his Melbourne Cup winnings were donated to various Ballarat and Creswick charities. Despite his success he never forgot his allegiance to the Catholic

Church acting in various roles in support of both Bishop O'Connor and Bishop Moore as he became more successful, as well as providing financial assistance.

His nephew, Thomas O'Loughlin, who inherited the fortune, became one of the most generous Catholic benefactors of the early 20th century – starting with building a new church in Kilkenny in memory of his late uncle. Having stayed for some time at the Bishop's Palace on his arrival in Ballarat, Thomas was very involved with the Catholic Church in Ballarat.

Over time he donated large sums of money to support many different Catholic projects, particularly in the area of education. He was active in most States, on many committees and appeared in many of the St Patrick's Day processions and following horse races and concerts. He also became a supporter of many of the smaller horse racing clubs in the Ballarat area. He was a founding member of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Ballarat near where he built his home, Killarney, at Warrenheip.



In 1915 he moved to Melbourne, where he became a great supporter of Archbishop Mannix, becoming a major donor to Catholic churches and projects in Australia. He was very involved in the conscription controversies that beset Australia and the Catholic Church during World War I.

This book traces the history of Ballarat, in particular in the areas of mining and horse racing, as well as of the Catholic communities and Irish culture in Ballarat and Melbourne, through the lives of two men. ☪



## A life in letters

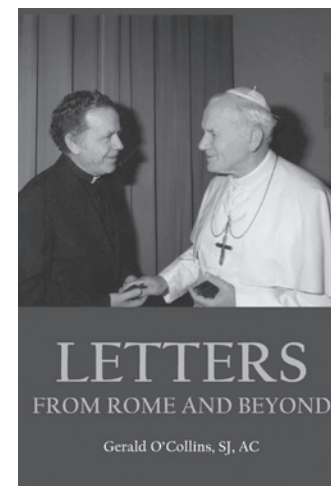
***Letters from Rome and Beyond*, Gerald O'Collins SJ, Connor Court Publishing, 2021. Reviewed by Peter Maher.**

Personal letters reveal much about the writer and their personal and social world but often little about the world we live in. O'Collins' letters gathered from a few people who had kept them safe for years, reveals the life of a man not just from a personal perspective but from a wider view.

The letters offer a window into the day-to-day life of the workings of the Catholic church from an insider living on the Tiber and an internationally recognised theologian.

But O'Collins is also an Australian Jesuit with a personal life and with a certain freedom that comes out in these letters much more than is possible in any of his formal theological or spiritual writings. It's the nature of the writing form itself that allows for this insight that makes this collection of letters worthwhile.

Someone once criticised a homily of mine as being 'self-referential' because I had begun with a story about going to the theatre and my critic thought that a bit of



a stretch for unpacking the Word of God. Of course, I thought it was engaging in a dialogue of literary and artistic imagination that might be more interesting than an explanation from some academic biblical commentary with the wild hope that some people might be interested enough to listen to a well-researched scholarly expose.

In some ways O'Collins letters could suffer the same criticism. It's a little self-indulgent to publish 250 pages of personal letters including detailed accounts of travel, lecturing engagements, family and friendship matters and opinion. All the letters seem to be published in full with no editorial comment. Some letters have a note added about who some of the people

are who are mentioned in the letter.

But these letters contain much more than personal anecdotes and in many ways it is the literary form of personal letters that allows us to discover the man, his passion and his influence on theology globally that cannot be found in his formal theological books.

We also see what interested O'Collins in culture and the arts, music and food. We see how he valued friendships and his vast international network of church and civic people that fuelled his inspiration.

We also learn much about the workings of the church over the nearly 50 years of these letters. We see how an eminent theologian

can have influence in the faculties of academia but also in the halls of power in the Vatican. O'Collins ability to foster and maintain friendships, both academic and amongst family and civil society, is on show here.

It gives us an insight into why he is so influential and well respected in multiple halls of the church's mission. These letters reveal how he is equally at home writing and lecturing at the highest level of academia, supporting colleagues at the 'Holy Office', writing for The Tablet and conversing with young people and family. All done in good humour and with passion for proclaiming the gospel of love and hope. ☺



## The real stories of abuse

**Peter Malone MSC takes second look at *Procession*, a Netflix film about sexual abuse in the USA and how the victims and survivors look at their experience.**



At first, the title seems to suggest liturgical processions (and there are some in this documentary) but the title is linked to Process, Processes, and, in this case, to clerical sexual abuse cases.

Over the years there have been many films (features and documentaries) dealing with the realities of abuse church-wide. (For an overview, see the chapter in Screen Priests by this author.) These films are not comfortable viewing and many audiences have chosen not to watch. But whether we watch or not, we know we have to face the realities. This is especially the case for empathy with the abused, especially underage boys and girls, the prey of paedophiles.

This is very important for *Procession*, especially as it has been available for worldwide viewing since November 2021 on Netflix.

Many who do not share Christian faith will be appalled. And Christians too. It can be said we need to be appalled. I have watched *Procession* twice. Once where the impact was overwhelming. A second time to try to appreciate more realistically and sympathetically the real stories of the six American men, their experiences of abuse in Kansas City, Missouri and Cheyenne, Wyoming, and not just read their stories

but listen to their voices, tones, emotions, bewilderment, hesitations, rage, and their lifelong regrets at their loss of innocence so young and their being dominated by clerics who claim to be men of God.

### A new approach to retelling the stories

And, the great advantage of the film is that we can see and respond to body language: faces, passive and impassive, frowns, smiles, pauses, bloated comments, outbursts seen in the body and not just heard in words.

One of my regrets is that the South African model of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation was not a feature of the church's experience of ministry to the abused and their pastoral care. Instead, the approach taken has been legal, concerned with finance and compensation, adversarial despite the principles of Towards Healing. An adversarial model, court cases and prosecutions, settlements, has taken predominance.

In more recent decades, in connection with assault cases, injury, burglary and theft, methods of Retributive Justice have been encouraged, assailants and those attacked meeting for some meeting of minds with a facilitator.

However, *Procession* takes a different approach, an innovative approach: drama and re-enactments. The film's director, Robert Greene, saw a press conference on television with four of the men with their lawyer, Kansas City prosecutor for many years, Rebecca Randles, with her assistant.

Greene had the idea for the men to meet, share their experiences, regrets, rage,

frustrations and then for them to work together, write brief screenplays – and perform them. A risky project. However, they employed a skilled drama coach, Monica Phinney who is present for all the discussions and filming.

### Getting to know the abused men

Over the running time of almost 2 hours, we get to know the men very well. Ed, married, is eager to explain his situation to his daughter. The angry Mike, never having an intimate relationship, unmarried, still enraged and swearing, condemns the willingness of the Archbishop of Kansas City and the independent tribunal to give credence to his stories.

There is the large 62-year-old Tom, case still pending, who volunteers to role-play bishops and priests, baptisms, the confessional and standover commands to the boys. Joe is quieter, tormented by nightmares, trying to rediscover his child-self, an interior grief. Dennis' memories have surfaced, his older brother also being abused, and is filmed with excerpts of conversations with his mother. Finally, there is Mike Sandridge, quiet, devout, intense, a listener, an actor, but also working with others on their screenplays.

The films we see have evocative titles: *Altered Boys*, *Confessional*, *Blatant Lies in the Name of the Lord*, *God Switches Sides*, *Letter to Joe*. Some of them are emotionally intense as the men relive those experiences.

Part of the men's therapies consists of visiting locations, churches, holiday camps, and reconstructing sets in churches and a studio.

Offending priests and a Bishop are named and photos shown. The credits show help from Catholic offices in Kansas City and Cheyenne and participation of the current

*Continued page 44*

local Bishop. Most of the cases are still pending.

A young boy, Terrick, has agreed to appear in each of the films, under the care of his parents and the concern of the men that Terrick not be traumatised by the films and

care in debriefing him after the episodes.

There is a rueful comment as Ed writes to Pope Francis and is happy to receive a personal reply. But his abusers have not yet been condemned. And he says that perhaps the Pope didn't have quite the clout he

thought he had.

One hopes that *Procession*, seen widely on Netflix, will move cases on and help the church to develop more clout in both compassion and justice. ☪

## Catholic imagination as horror

Peter Malone MSC reviews the Netflix film, *Midnight Mass* which is a Catholic philosophical horror movie.

**M**idnight Mass was a very popular 2021 limited series for Netflix. It was written and directed by Mike Flanagan, who has specialised in horror stories. The series was widely viewed during lockdown leading to a great deal of discussion. This reflection/outline is offered for those who saw the series and had questions. Spoiler alert for those yet to view the series.

The US setting is Crockett Island, a close-knit community held together by a veteran Monsignor who has travelled on a pilgrimage to Israel but taken ill and hospitalised. The sheriff of the town is a Muslim. A substitute priest arrives, Father Paul, young, enthusiastic, saying all the right religious and spiritual things. The parish manager, Bev, emerges as a holier-than-thou, humourless controller.

The first part fills in the background of key characters from the island, starting with the young man, Riley, who has left the island, been involved in a drunk-driving accident, has served a jail term, now returning home. His mother is portrayed as the typical and traditional devout Catholic mother. The father, rather quieter, upset by his son's behaviour, is a local fisherman. The younger son, teenager at school, altar boy at the church, but who sneaks out with friends, including the sheriff's son, to do drug deals.

Other key characters on the island include the teacher, Erin, who has returned to the island after experiencing a pregnancy, the local doctor, glimpsed at one stage with a lesbian friend, who serves the people of the island but looks after her ageing mother who has touches of dementia. There are also a number of big and burly men around the island, one who has accidentally shot a young girl and crippled her, her father being the Mayor.

There are many scenes of liturgy, generally with sound technical advice, giving a feeling of authenticity. While there is some strictness in practice, there is also an acceptance of more recent changes such as communion in the hand, communion from the chalice,

lay readers, there being a female communion minister, Bev.

### The new priest arrives

At the time of Father Paul's arrival, some extraordinary events occur and the word miraculous is used. Father Paul urges the crippled girl to stand and come forward to receive communion. She is healed. The doctor's mother begins to revert, becoming younger.

One of the features of the series which alienated audiences who simply want action and horror is that there are many long speeches, seeming monologues, tackling the issues of life and death, God, the transcendent, issues of sin and evil, many of them between Riley and Erin. Paul also persuades Riley to join in an AA session, which involves a lot of discussion about guilt, responsibility, faith. And the shooter of the young girl is also persuaded to join.

At an early stage, there is a flashback to the monsignor's journey, especially to Damascus, with overtones of Paul's conversion experience, the monsignor taking refuge in a cave, encountering a large mysterious creature (interpreted by him and others as an angel, for the audience it looks rather more demonic), it also has vampiric qualities, and its blood is stored and mysteriously transported in a chest to the island.

About halfway through, there is a highly violent sequence, changing the tone of the whole series, moving it into some of the realms of religious horror. The Angel/demonic creature will continually appear, threatening the congregation, killing, vampire blood.

Religious issues are to the fore with the presentation of Catholic tradition, Catholic doctrine. There is an interesting challenge with the presence of the Muslim sheriff, his stories about his police career, prejudice against him after 9/11, his presence on the island, his observing the rituals of prayer during the day, wanting his son to follow his footsteps, the son wanting to be part of the island life, friends with his peers, joining them, wanting to go to church.



### A strange Easter

Most of the action takes place during Lent, quite a ritual ceremony and explanation for the ashes on Ash Wednesday (and a strange custom of a local fair and feast on that day, everybody with their ashes on their forehead). The action progresses through Lent until Holy Week, the advertisement for a Mass on Good Friday (which is where the action veers from the orthodox) leading to the preparation for the Easter Vigil, the Midnight Mass, which is something altogether different, a culmination of the changes in the life of the island, the miracles, Father Paul advocating a different kind of baptismal ceremony, more a vampiric experience, the congregation killing each other, drinking the blood, reviving into a bizarre resuscitation, resurrection.

In the meantime, it has been revealed that Father Paul is actually the rejuvenated monsignor, coming to do good for the island, but caught up in the bizarre Damascus experience, able to speak authentically about the gospel and spirituality, but wanting to transform the island, the end justifying the brutal means.

The last episode has the mayhem of the Easter Vigil, the mass killings, revivals, zombies, Father Paul regretting what was happening, his being shot by the rejuvenated mother of the doctor – with the revelation that they had an affair in the past and the doctor is their daughter.

As regards the future, the various characters have their death experiences, Riley, Riley's parents, Erin herself, the doctor and her mother. However, in the confrontation with the Angel/Demon, Erin is able to snip the wings so that when it flies, it crashes.

The only survivors are the family's young son and the girl who was cured but who now reverts to her disabled state. The future? ☪

# Returned to God

## PETER RANKIN SDB

14/09/1958 – 14/01/2022



Peter, the Vice Provincial and Rector of the Formation House in Clifton Hill in 2021, passed away at his sister's house Melbourne on 14 January after battling with bone cancer. At the time of his passing Peter was surrounded by his siblings, members of the Clifton Hill Salesian community and the Provincial.

Peter was 63 years of age, a professed Salesian for 43 years and a much-loved priest of the Church for 33 years. He was one of very few Salesians in the Province who served exceptionally well in various sectors. Firstly, the contribution he made at the Don Bosco Youth Centre in Brunswick was amazing. Many young ones who went through this Centre still talk highly of him. Then as the parish priest at St John Bosco in Engadine, Peter was a great pastor who touched the lives of many families. His time at Dominic College in Glenorchy was short. Yet, he made many students feel loved and valued in the way of St John Bosco. Finally, in the formation sector of the Province, Peter not only indoctrinated the students to support the Bombers, but with the heart of Don Bosco, he made sure that the clerics and brothers become like Don Bosco while keeping God as absolute priority.

Sadly, Peter's last appointment as the Rector of the Formation House in Clifton Hill and the Vice Provincial was cut short due to his declining health. Yet, Peter was faithful to God right to the end, unafraid of dying and returning to the Lord.

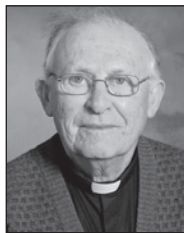
The requiem Mass was celebrated at St Anne's Catholic Church in Sunbury on Wednesday 19th January followed by the burial at the Salesian cemetery in Rupertswood, the mother house of the province. A close friend of Peter, Fr Chris Ford SDB, delivered a touching homily highlighting the memorable events of Peter's life.

As promised by Don Bosco: work, bread and heaven. Peter has nothing but heaven to enjoy with his loved ones.

May he rest in peace.

## LINO ANTHONY VALENTE

02/07/1928 – 14/09/2021



Lino Anthony Valente was born in Shell Harbour, NSW, the eldest of three children of parents Giacomina Antonio (Tony) and Artura Tullia (Tullia) Valente. Tony left the village of Cesuna, Italy, for Australia in 1924 and his then-fiancee Tullia arrived in May 1927, with the couple marrying in June. While brothers Lino and Aldo (deceased) were born in NSW, sister Rita was born in Queensland when the family moved seeking work during the Great Depression and eventually found work on farms near Texas.

During World War II, the family was interned near the town of Tatura, Victoria. Lino's parents were not naturalised until after the war and, like many others, were deemed "enemy aliens". During the school term in 1943, the boys were allowed to attend the Marist Brothers' school and sister Rita attended the convent school in Kilmore due to the efforts of Bendigo priest, Fr Arthur Owens.

During school holidays, the children stayed in the internment camp with their parents, where Lino would gather the Italian women to say the Rosary. The whole family was released in January 1944 and were allowed to return to the Texas area. After a good tobacco growing season in 1949, Lino's parents purchased a dairy farm called "Bellbrook" just outside Inglewood and converted it to growing tobacco and raising cattle.

By that time, Lino was 20 and already studying to be a priest at Banyo Seminary in Brisbane. He had completed school with the Christian Brothers in Warwick and Marist Brothers at Eagle Heights (Mt Tamborine). Lino was ordained in Warwick on 29 June 1954 by Bishop William Brennan, the first priest ordained by Bishop Brennan.

Lino served across the Toowoomba Diocese, pastorally caring for many communities. Since his first appointment to Dalby in 1955, Lino served in Stanthorpe, Mitchell, St George, Wallangarra, Crow Nest, St Patrick's Cathedral and Inglewood. He spent a time in 1974 on loan to Annerley Parish in the Brisbane Archdiocese.

In 2003, Lino was awarded the Certificato Di Benemeranza from the Italian Consul Brisbane for his efforts to promote interest in Italian culture and language, a testament to his love for his Italian roots.

Frank Vardanega recalled his Zio (Uncle) Lino's unique sense of humour. "He never seemed to wash his car, and in his defence, he would say 'I don't wash it so it won't rust'. If you asked him how he was going, he would many times say, 'If I were any better, I would be in heaven.'" Frank, summed him by saying, "Uncle Lino was a larger-than-life character in our lives and will be sadly missed and never forgotten. He has been referred to as a 'priest's priest' and, as my daughter once said, 'the type of priest you would want for your own parish priest'."

Lino officially tendered his retirement in 2003. However, not one to rest, he continued to serve as Priest in Residence for the communities of Inglewood and Wallangarra until 2015, when he moved to Stanthorpe. In 2017 Lino moved to St Vincent's Care Services (Lourdes Home) Toowoomba.

Lino will be remembered as a kind and welcoming man whose pastoral presence was appreciated by everyone who encountered him.

Continued page 46

## RETURNED TO GOD

### WILLIAM JOSEPH WRIGHT

26/10/1952 – 13/11/2021



Bill, the third and youngest child of Jack and Nan Wright (both deceased) is survived by his sister, Patricia and brother, Robert. He was born in Washington DC, where his father, an economist with the Australian Central Bank (Commonwealth, later Reserve, Bank) was seconded to the International Monetary Fund.

The family returned to Australia when Bill was only a baby. He was educated by the Sisters of Mercy at Pymble and by the Jesuits at St Aloysius' College, Milsons Point, with two years at Wimbledon College, another Jesuit school, when the family was in England.

Bill was educated for priesthood at St Columba's College, Springwood (1971-1973) and St Patrick's College, Manly (1974-1977) and was ordained to the diaconate in October 1976 and to the priesthood on 20 August 1977 at St Mary's Cathedral. After ordination, he gained a BA(Hons), largely in History, at Sydney University.

Bill served the parishes of Stanmore, Mount Druitt, Fairfield, Enmore, Dulwich Hill, Bonnyrigg, Moree, Sutherland and Liverpool. In addition, Bill was Vice-Rector of St Patrick's College, Manly (1985-1991) and Assistant Secretary to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in 1995.

Bill was ordained eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle by the former Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, on 15 June 2011 at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Hamilton. Since his ordination as bishop, he served as the Co-Chair of the National Committee for Professional Standards and was a member of the Truth Justice and Healing Council throughout its existence (2013-2018).

Bill was a member of the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry and the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Relations and most recently was a member of the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation Laity and Ministry and the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

May he rest in peace.

#### Returned to God, but no obit received. We hold them in prayer.

† John Allman (Diocese of Sale)	10/12/2021
† Stanislaus Barry CM (Vincentian Fathers)	27/11/2021
† Michael Butler (Archdiocese of Sydney)	24/12/2021
† Laurence Blake (Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn)	09/02/2022
† Ernie Carey (Diocese of Bunbury)	15/12/2021
† Peter Caruana (Diocese of Wollongong)	03/08/2021
† Ellis Clifford (Archdiocese of Brisbane)	06/01/2022
† Mel Cotter OFM (Franciscans)	13/01/2022
† Lyall Cowell (P O Our Lady of the Southern Cross)	05/12/2021
† John Dwyer (Archdiocese of Brisbane)	15/10/2021
† Karl Emerick OP (Dominicans)	05/10/2021
† James Esler SM (Marist Fathers)	18/12/2021
† James FitzPatrick OMI (Oblates)	19/01/2022
† Gerard Glynn CP (Passionists)	20/10/2021
† Edward Harte (Diocese of Sandhurst)	02/01/2022
† Kevin Johnston (Diocese of Bunbury)	20/12/2021
† Noel Mackay (Archdiocese of Melbourne)	16/01/2022
† Manoj Manuel (Wilcannia-Forbes)	18/01/2022
† George Rossman (Prelature of the Holy Cross & Opus Dei)	10/10/2021
† Christopher Seton (P O Our Lady of the Southern Cross)	20/11/2021
† John Snehadass (Archdiocese of Sydney)	25/01/2022
† Anthony Stott OFM (Franciscans)	18/12/2021
† Paulino Tui Kolio (Archdiocese of Sydney)	04/02/2022
† John Walsh SM (Marist Fathers)	11/11/2021

Please email obits to Sally at: [national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au](mailto:national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au)

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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.