

Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

theswag.org.au | Vol. 31 No. 1 | Autumn 2023



REGULARS

From the NCP Chairman	3
Editorial	4
Letters to the Editor	40
News	41-43
Reviews	43-44
Returned to God	44-47

FEATURES

Vale Peter Maher	5
Peter Maher – The “Come as you are” Priest	6
The essence of Sacrament	7
The Boxer’s Son: George Pell 1941-2023	7-9
Reflection on the Final Assembly of the Plenary Council	9-10
The Plenary Council is dead, long live the Synod of Bishops	11
Two meetings: Frascati and the Vatican	12
Journeying together in faith, hope and love ..	13-14
The time is ripe to move from rhetoric to action	15-17
Cultural Reconciliation	17-19
30 years on, Keating’s Redfern speech demands we back the Voice	19
Nancy Pelosi and the problem of the pro-choice Catholic politician	20-21
Cardinal Pell and “Clerical Errors”	21
The Family of Jesus	22-28
Ordination Anniversaries 2023	23-26
Some thoughts following the death of George Pell	28-29
Homosexuality in the Scriptures	29-31
St Therese’s Parish, Essendon – Centenary Mass	31-32
Floods and other entertainment	33
Meeting Jesus our friend in reconciliation	34
The value of <i>The Swag</i>	35
Transforming our wandering art gallery eyes ..	36-37
A personal tribute to Michael Slattery	38
A Synodal Parish	38-39
Is the Blood of Christ not sufficient?	39

NCP CONTACTS



Chairman

Rev James Clarke
150 Yarra St
Geelong VIC 3220
P: (03) 5222 1977
chairman@ncp.catholic.org.au



Secretary

Rev Jamie Collins
3 Memory St
Harristown QLD 4350
P: (07) 4636 1737
secretary@ncp.catholic.org.au



Treasurer

Rev John Conway
25 Vergulde Rd
Regents Park QLD 4118
Ph: (07) 3884 7600
treasurer@ncp.catholic.org.au



Committee

Rev William Burt SVD
100 Albion Rd
Box Hill VIC 3128
Ph: 0420 642 710
committee1@ncp.catholic.org.au



Editor

Rev Peter Matheson
2/21 Como Parade East
Mentone VIC 3194
Tel 0407 863 987
editor@theswag.org.au



Executive Officer

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



Administrative Officer

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

NCP NATIONAL OFFICE

PO Box 295, Belmont VIC 3216
74 Fryers Rd, Belmont VIC 3216
P: (03) 5244 3680
www.national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au
www.nationalcouncilofpriests.com.au
www.theswag.org.au

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:

E: editor@theswag.org.au

ALL ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

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

DESIGN

Privaro Design www.privaro.com.au

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.

Non-members and interested lay people are most welcome to subscribe.

Annual print subscription
\$50.00 per calendar year (four editions).

Annual online subscription
\$50.00 (four editions).

Pro-rata subscription for the print edition
\$12.50 (inc GST) per edition.

Please contact the NCP National Office for all subscriptions.

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

Copyright © National Council of Priests of Australia

This magazine is copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. All photographs not individually recognised in the pages of *The Swag* are either supplied by the author of the article, or from the free photo library website: www.unsplash.com or purchased from www.istock.com

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.

James Clarke



There are a number of “firsts” this year for the NCP. The first of these being to acknowledge Peter Maher, our past long-time Editor of *The Swag*. Peter’s death last year was a shock to all of us. We knew that he was ill and that his illness was terminal. However, even though we know that death is inevitable it still comes to us as a shock. Peter was a dedicated member of the NCP. He believed in NCP and all that we stand for and devoted himself tirelessly to the development and the promotion of *The Swag* magazine. His efforts as Editor were rewarded when *The Swag* was awarded the Best Print Magazine at the Australian Catholic Press Association Awards. Peter was also a compassionate Pastor to the LGBTIQ+ community, who will miss him deeply, as do we all.

The next “first” is to welcome Peter Matheson as the new Editor of *The Swag*. We were all very relieved and grateful when Peter said “yes” to our request. Peter is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and comes to the position of Editor with over fifty years-experience in parish pastoral ministry. Peter also brings to the editorship his experience in academia, as he taught theology at ACU for twenty plus years. Peter Matheson will not be replacing Peter Maher, he will be succeeding him and building on the foundation bequeathed to him. We don’t “fill anyone’s shoes” we continue the mission using our own gifts and talents. Peter Matheson brings to *The Swag* his many gifts and talents, and we wish him well and every blessing in this new endeavour.

The next of the “firsts” is that the NCP will not be holding a convention this year. On two occasions last year, the membership was surveyed and while there was general support to have a convention, there was also strong opposition to holding one in a hotel/ convention centre due to the cost.

In early February, the executive held its first face to face meeting in Geelong since the COVID-19 restrictions were removed. During our discussions we strongly agreed that NCP should focus on the well-being of clergy. As a result of this, the possibility of renewing an Australian based sabbatical programme

was raised. These programmes as we all know are opportunities for rest and renewal -spiritually, intellectually, physically and emotionally. We intend to raise this possibility with a committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. We are acutely aware that overseas sabbatical programmes are very expensive and for some priests, cost prohibitive. A locally based sabbatical programme would go a long way in reducing costs. Also, we have many suitably and eminently qualified men and women who could be presenters in such a programme. At the moment this is still at the concept stage as we are yet to approach the bishops.

In the spirit of “Synodality”, I take this opportunity to ask our clergy members what would you like the NCP to offer the priests of Australia?

The last of the “firsts” is that, after 25 editions, this year the NCP will not be publishing *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*. The decision was made last year to hand back the production of the directory to the ACBC. Once again, I wish to thank Sally and Chris for their untiring efforts in producing this valuable resource – an outstanding service to the Church in Australia.

Yours in His Priesthood

James Clarke ☞

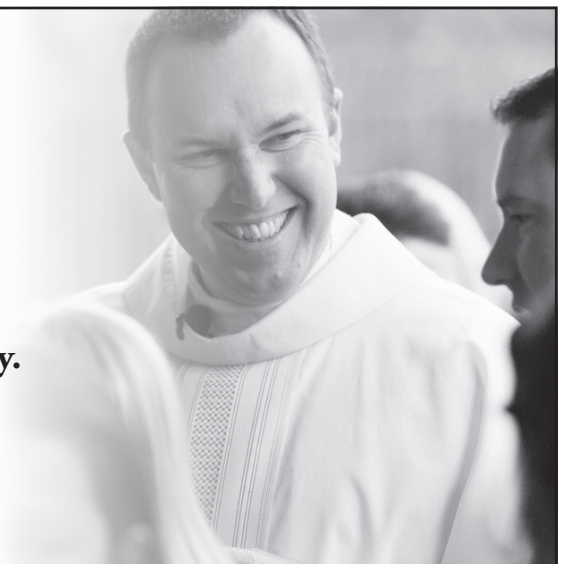


NCP Memberships 2023

2023 Membership Renewals will be mailed in February.

Your prompt renewal will ensure we are able to continue to meet our financial commitments.

Thank you one and all!



A new chapter in the life of *The Swag*

PETER MATHESON



The unfortunate death of our editor, Peter Maher, in November has forced changes to the production of *The Swag*. We move forward in the hope that his wisdom, courage, gentleness, humility and inclusiveness will continue to be reflected in this magazine.

Jim Clarke (chairman) has asked me to help put together this first edition of *The Swag* after Peter's death, and I do this with the help of other NCP members (especially John Swann in Kapunda SA). Special thanks again to all who have contributed articles, news, reflections, letters, etc., for this Autumn edition.

Peter's death, and the deaths of Benedict XVI and Cardinal Pell, and indeed every death, reminds us again of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop's saying, "We are but travellers here." Travel involves change. The Australian Catholic Church (and the world church) has changed since those heady days after the Second Vatican Council when the NCP was formed. The numbers of Australian born priests have dwindled. The numbers of overseas born priests here have increased. The numbers of new parishes being formed in our growing cities have dwindled. The numbers of parishes closing or partnering have increased. The faces of the people attending Mass especially in the growing outer suburbs reflect the multitude of cultures and languages of peoples that have arrived here since the NCP was formed.

The Australian reflection on the *Continental Stage Working Document* noted the experience of the polarisation and culture wars that exist in many communities, the grief and powerlessness that many clergy feel in the aftermath of the clergy sexual abuse crisis, the pressures of priest shortage, and the experiences of loneliness, isolation and burnout in religious and clergy, particularly among the elderly, those in country dioceses, and those from overseas.

Cardinal Pell, in the last article he wrote for *The Spectator* in London, just before his sudden death, damned this *Continental* document as a "toxic nightmare," "couched in neo-Marxist jargon," and "hostile ... to the apostolic tradition." It was a blatant attack on Pope Francis and his vision of church. In this edition of *The Swag* we reprint with permission Fr Frank Brennan's obituary to the Cardinal which appeared in the *London Tablet* on January 21. Brendan Walsh, editor of *The Tablet*, described Frank's reflection as a "nuanced, well-balanced analysis of a complex legacy."

To the Cardinal the apostolic tradition was related to the key unchanging dogmas of the church. But besides the orthodoxy of the teaching magisterium there is also the apostolic tradition's orthopraxis which focuses around the Lord's last command to his disciples on the night before he died, to love one another as he had loved them.

Vatican II reminded us that "In every age, the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. ... Ours is a new age in history with profound and rapid changes spreading gradually to all corners of the earth" (GS 4). Vatican II was the first Council of the church to operate out of a model of "historical consciousness."

Another new age has arrived. Faith and history journey together. St John Henry Cardinal Newman perceived the development of doctrine as a truth within the apostolic tradition in that 19th century period of intense ultramontanism.

The Swag has become a popular publication with many lay people in the Australian community due in great measure to Peter Maher's editorial contribution. Hopefully *The Swag* will be an ongoing forum in seeking a new way forward for the NCP. Parish priests have purchased bulk copies for sharing among their parishioners. Lay people are contributing articles of both local and national interest along with priests and religious. In fact, most of the grateful comments received by Sally and Christine come from lay people rather than priests. We hope that *The Swag* will continue to provide perspectives that will interest and encourage reflection on our Australian ongoing journey of faith.

In this edition of *The Swag* there are articles from friends of Peter Maher reflecting on their companionship with him, and reactions to his funeral. On the International level this year the Synod on Synodality is a major topic for the church. There are articles reflecting our synodal journey including one from Bishop Vincent Long OFM (Conv), bishop of Parramatta following the Plenary last year. There is another article by Bill Uren SJ on meetings associated with the development of the *Continental Stage Document*.

Frances North met with three other women involved in church ministry to reflect on the participation of women in that document and compiled their reaction. There is another article by Br Aengus Kavanagh on what we might do now even before the synod.

In Australia this year much attention will be given to the referendum on enshrining an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. There is an article from Tom Gleeson in Willunga (SA) speaking of his involvement with First Nations people. Hopefully *The Swag* will feature more articles this year commenting on the complicated journey to the referendum.

In recent months much of Australia has suffered from floods. Des Welladsen, a retired Sandhurst priest, was right in the middle of the flooded Murray River in Echuca, and he offers a personal reflection on his experience.

And there are many other articles and news items on different topics which will interest many.

The working document for the Continental Stage for the Synod on Synodality is startlingly different to the style of curial preparatory material previously produced for synods. The document quotes part of the report from England and Wales: "Through this process

we have discovered that synodality is a way of being Church – in fact, it is the way of being Church'. 'The Holy Spirit is asking us to be more synodal' (*Document for the Continental Stage, par 3*).

If this is neo-Marxist jargon as Cardinal Pell described it, then so be it. The symbol chosen in this Continental Stage document is the "tent" found in Isaiah 54, and the challenge from Isaiah is

"Enlarge the space of your tent" (Is 54:2). The "tent" is a symbol of people on the move, never settling down. The "Swag" as is our Australian NCP image. Both symbols reflect a similar message of people on the move. As the church moves confidently into a new way of being church, so may the NCP, and *The Swag*. Let us keep enlarging the space of our tent. ☪

Vale Peter Maher

BEN OH

Ben Oh, former Palms staff member and former Chair of the Palms Australia Board, explains what the life of Peter meant to him and so many others.



Peter Maher acted as Chaplain for Palms Australia for much of the time I have been Executive Director. A little over a week before he passed I was able to chat with him and pass on my appreciation:

"Peter, since the first Palms Orientation you attended, I have witnessed you humbly giving yourself to so many. You lived your faith as we are called to; on the side of the marginalised and supporting programs like Palms that were there with you in joy. You gave us connection whenever we asked, or you identified an opportunity. You engaged fully in supportive solidarity."

Peter Maher took his vocation to love and serve our human family very

seriously. Peter's humility stood out for me. In all the different roles he took on as an educator, a friend, a priest, a brother, a mentor, a supervisor, an activist, a grandfather, an ally, a companion, a chaplain, a dancer, a retreat facilitator and in his many other roles, it is clear the prophet Micah (6:8) informed his action, *To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with the holy one.*

Peter understood Paulo Freire's belief that "No one can be authentically human while they prevent others from being so." At the heart of his ministries, and indeed how he related to me personally was our shared sense of relationship built on deep mutuality, care and respect that strengthens one another's movement towards justice, interdependence, accountability, responsibility for one another's wellbeing, agency and integrity.

Peter did not suffer fools gladly, especially bullies acting to silence the marginalized and the poor. However, he followed the nonviolent Jesus; actively and creatively working and walking in solidarity alongside the minoritized: First Nations people, people of colour, international students and migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, LGBTIQ+ people, the unchurched Catholic and the poor.

Peter made ways and space to amplify the voice of the othered

because he truly believed he saw and was taught by Jesus through the poor and the minoritized. As someone who has had to deal with racism, heterosexism and various forms of internalised oppression, Peter gave me space to freely articulate, and speak with faith to teach from my own learning place of truth and reality.

Peter once shook his head in ironic disbelief that I sat down with a Catholic homophobe to pray the rosary. I thought how else am I supposed to stop them saying hurtful things whilst I shiver in trepidation? Let me just say, they were rough, but Peter was the one who first introduced them to me, so I thought how bad can they be?

Peter cast praying with such an adversary as a radical act as articulated by Paulo Freire. If true, I was led to it by Peter's example. One morning I learnt about him being at court supporting the same person who in the previous week broke into his home, broke things and stole things from him. He simply said: "at least he stole less this time" and described the person as one of his 'regulars'.

Paulo Freire said that "True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work to transform the world."

May we embody that 'true generosity' as expressed in the life of Peter Maher. ☪

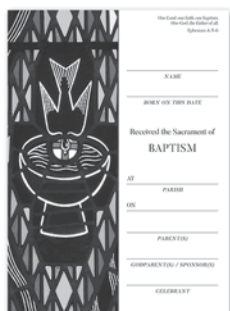


TARRAWARRA
Eucharistic
Breads



The Cistercian monks have been supplying eucharistic breads to parishes and communities in Australia since 2000.

We now offer baptismal stoles and sacramental certificates.



To view our range of products:
www.eucharisticbreads.com.au

Contact:

03 9730 2362 or
0408 447 345

sales@eucharisticbreads.com.au

Peter Maher – The “Come as you are” Priest

JOHN CROTHERS

The last time I saw my friend Peter Maher was a week before he died. I visited him at Sydney’s Calvary Hospital, and had the privilege of spending the best part of an hour with him.

He was still vibrant and engaged, despite his obvious discomfort and failing strength. He had not lost his mischievous smile or his quick retort. He knew his time was short, but he was at peace.

He was pleased that his funeral Mass was going to take place at the church of St Thomas More at Brighton Le Sands. It was where he came to Mass in Sydney for the first time after his family moved from Wollongong.

He remarked how fitting it would be for his last Mass to take place there.

He also mentioned how he had planned his funeral liturgy. “I’ve organised everything,” he said, with a note of satisfaction in his voice.

One of the things that Peter had organised for his funeral Mass was the hymn “Come as You Are.” It’s an extremely popular Catholic hymn, and is often sung at funerals.

It’s not hard to see why Peter chose it. He was very much a “come as you are” sort of person. He had no guile, no pretence. What you saw with Peter was what you got.

But perhaps more importantly, Peter had the ability to attract people to him “as they were.” His ministry to the marginalised is a testament to that fact. People came to him from all walks of life and they felt comfortable in his presence.

He was also a wonderful host and loved inviting people for a meal. You were never quite sure who was going to turn up at the table.

Sadly, at Peter’s funeral, we didn’t hear the hymn “Come as you are.” It was deemed to be not suitable for the occasion. I can only guess that the Archbishop either balked at the fact that it is a folk-style hymn, or that he felt the words were inappropriate.

Like many Catholics I have sung the hymn countless times and reflected often on the words. Here they are for your own reflection.

*Come as you are, that’s how I want you
Come as you are, feel quite at home
Close to my heart, loved and forgiven
Come as you are, why stand alone
No need to fear, love sets no limits
No need to fear, love never ends
Don’t run away shamed and disheartened
Rest in my love, trust me again
I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous
I came to bring peace, not to condemn
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
Why do you think I’d love you the less?
Come as you are, that’s how I love you
Come as you are, trust me again
Nothing can change the love that I bear you
All will be well, just come as you are*
(DEIRDRE BROWNE)

If there is anything in these words that is not appropriate for a funeral Mass, I fail to see it. On the contrary, they give me inspiration and encouragement on my journey of faith, and I’m sure they did the same for Peter. Indeed, it is not hard to see why this hymn has resonated with so many Catholics over the years, particularly in difficult times.

But Peter’s situation is not unique. There is a broader question here about whether the personal preference of a bishop for a certain type of music should override the wishes of the priest who has died. Surely this is a conversation that should be had now, between the bishop and the clergy of the diocese. It should be an upfront and honest conversation so that everyone knows where they stand. It should not be left until the time of the funeral.

Most priests serve the Church faithfully over a long period of time. They rarely seek reward, or even recognition. As their health fails, they often plan the liturgy for their funeral, and choose hymns that reflect their own life and ministry.

It’s a simple request. Is it really too much to ask? ☪

The essence of Sacrament

JOHN BUGGY

John Buggy offers another reflection on Peter Maher's funeral liturgy.

Our beloved Father Peter Maher died in November after a long battle with cancer. Peter was a member of Australian Reforming Catholics (ARC) since its inception and was a beacon in showing how Jesus' inclusiveness of everyone should be enacted. His manner of embracing those who felt rejected or marginalised was accompanied by an assurance that they should not be forever burdened by any ongoing guilt. God's unconditional love was paramount.

Peter wanted a simple funeral and he set out some of the readings and hymns in addition to nominating a priest friend to conduct the ceremony in the manner he desired. It was to include some elements not present in the usual send-offs for priests but which expressed the values and 'down to earthiness' of the ministry he exercised.

But it was not to be. An archbishop, two bishops, and a contingent of around thirty priests concelebrated the Mass and, through their powerful presence, set the tone of the gathering. The archbishop, while giving a brief mention of Peter's

qualities, referred to his theology as if it was to be questioned, thereby giving an implicit denial of some of the values that shaped his ministry. The fully robed bank of clergy, seemingly supporting the arch-conservative episcopal trio, helped to ensure a counter balancing stamp of orthodoxy against any statement or sentiment that traditionally might be considered inappropriate.

Yes, some items were permitted on Peter's coffin that evoked memories of his life. But others that were symbols of his compassion for the LGBTIQ+ community and the women traumatised by the experience of abortion were not. Even the hymn 'Come as You Are', sung in many congregations for years, was not included. Was its expressed inclusiveness a step to far in this context? No chance for any multi colours that could be construed as a rainbow or for even a copy of Father Ted Kennedy's book that might remind us of 'Who is Worthy'.

The concept of sacrament since Vatican II has broadened in practice, if not strictly in theology. We have moved

from participation in the 'priest's Mass' with his back turned to us towards various ways of expressing more personal encounters with God through sacrament and thereby drawing others to God through the 'earthy' connections. So, when certain objects are placed on the departed person's coffin that symbolise the way that person responded to God's love, those symbols can be catalysts in drawing others to the love of God as they witness it. This is the essence of sacrament – the sign of God's grace and enhanced by the manner in which people respond to it.

The symbols that many of those who attended expected to see associated with Peter's life were not shown here. Where was the sign of God's grace for some of those people? The sacramental experience felt incomplete. The rejected symbols were carried down the road to an informal reception at the local RSL. Individuals in this small gathering lovingly picked up an item and placed it on a table beside a lighted candle. The group sang 'Come as You Are'. Spontaneous expressions then came forth along with stories of comfort gained in the encounter with God's love through association with Peter. All were drawn together strongly in these moments. The sacrament was complete. The spirit shone through. ☺



The Boxer's Son: George Pell 1941-2023

FRANK BRENNAN SJ AO

This obituary appeared in *The Tablet*, 21 January, 2023, and is reprinted here with permission.

GEORGE PELL was an old-style churchman with strong opinions. He and I had our differences. He was no admirer of contemporary Jesuits, and I am one. I got to know him best when I attended his trials on charges of child sexual abuse, which I had realised at once were preposterous. I grew to admire his good humour and humility in the face of what was nothing more than an appalling police sting operation protracted by grossly erroneous judicial reasoning by Victoria's two most senior judges. His prison journals revealed a Christian able to find grace in the

middle of adversity and injustice.

Even in death, George Pell has continued to excite interest and controversy. I was in Boston during the 2005 conclave. Many Americans asked me if Pell might be elected. My standard answer was, "The Church is not yet ready for an Australian pope." Pell played a significant role in the 2005 and 2013 conclaves. Despite being over 80 and unable to vote, he hoped to have a decisive influence in determining the outcome of the next one. At lunch in Rome a few weeks ago, he assured me that the next

conclave was not far off. Knowing he was due for a hip replacement, he had told friends that he would not return to Australia for surgery (he died after a cardiac arrest following the operation). He didn't want to risk being on the other side of the world post-op and pre-conclave. Pope Francis is still with us. It's Pope Emeritus Benedict and Cardinal George Pell who are deceased.

In his posthumous article for *The Spectator*, Pell writes: "Diocesan bishops are the successors of the Apostles, the chief teacher in each diocese and the focus of local unity for their people and of universal unity around the Pope, the successor of Peter. Since the time of St Irenaeus of Lyon, the bishop is also the guarantor of continuing fidelity to

Continued page 8

Christ's teaching, the apostolic tradition. They are governors and sometimes judges, as well as teachers and sacramental celebrants, and are not just wall flowers or rubber stamps."

This observation about the role of bishops holds the key to his life and ministry. It explains his pugilistic approach, his focus on truth and tradition. He saw his role and solemn duty as a bishop to be an enforcer, especially against what he described as "the Protestant liberals in the Catholic Church". He thought many Jesuits – me included – were among them. He was dismayed in later years to see a new spring in our step in response to the Francis papacy.

George Pell was born in the provincial city of Ballarat, Victoria, on 8 June 1941. His father, also George, had been a publican and boxer, and was not religious; his mother, Margaret, was a Catholic of Irish extraction. George was an all-rounder, competent at sport and the academy. He excelled in the seminary and was sent to Rome, where he was ordained in St Peter's Basilica in 1966. He was then sent to Campion Hall, Oxford, where his doctoral thesis was "The exercise of authority in early Christianity from about 170 to about 270" – the time of St Irenaeus of Lyon.

In the introduction he wrote: "As orthodox and heretical teachers began to develop a Christian theology during the second century, the teaching role of the clergy (bishops and presbyters) was brought under severe pressure. The bishops led the fight for orthodoxy, characterised their opponents as intellectuals, and channelled popular feeling for their position by appealing to the simple, traditional, oneness of faith against the speculations and extravagances of their opponents."

He detailed, and did not lament, the waning influence of the laity by the third century: "The mass of the laity never dominated the life of the Church, but individual charismatics, be they teachers, prophets or confessors, played important parts at times. We have mentioned the eclipse of lay teachers. Similarly, the appeals of the confessors to reconcile the lapsed are brought under episcopal control. The rejection of prophecy, following on the Montanist crisis, closed another avenue of lay

expression. That their influence diminished the further we move into the third century is shown in the part they played in the election of clerics, and in conciliar gatherings. They were still quasi-official witnesses, but their role came to be more and more dominated by the provincial bishops."

He returned to Australia in 1971, confident that any bishop worth his salt would keep the laity in their place. Little did he know that his later career was to be plagued by the curse of child sexual abuse in the Church and by financial scandals in the Vatican – the sins not of laity, but of clergy. At a very early age, he became a diocesan consultor to the Bishop of Ballarat, Ronald Mulkearns. In 1985 he was appointed rector of the seminary in Melbourne, and in 1987 became an auxiliary bishop to the Archbishop of Melbourne, Sir Frank Little. Mulkearns and Little oversaw dioceses with a disproportionate number of child sex offenders in the ranks of clergy and teaching brothers; both were old-style bishops who kept the bad news to themselves.

When he became Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, Pell set up the "Melbourne Response", an attempt to deal with a backlog of cases of child sexual abuse. The other dioceses in Australia were finalising details of their joint protocol "Towards Healing". Pell chose to go it alone and, as ever, went to the top end of town and employed the best lawyers to assist. His protocol was designed in co-operation with Victoria Police and the Victorian solicitor-general. Whatever defects in the protocol were to be found later, none had been declared by police or government at the time. Similar defects were later found in "Towards Healing".

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, established in 2012 and reporting five years later, had a strong focus on the Catholic Church. The chief commissioner, Justice Peter McClellan, and the assisting counsel had Pell in their sights. In their Ballarat case study, they said it was "inconceivable" that diocesan consultors, including Pell, did not know by July 1977 of the abuse committed by the paedophile priest Gerald Ridsdale "given the usual practice and the general

knowledge in the community". But they went on to accept the evidence of two other consultors that they did not know about the abuse until many years later.

This shoddy and selective dealing with the evidence was repeated in the Melbourne case study, which looked at Pell's treatment of an offending parish priest when he was auxiliary bishop; once again, the commission identified no evidence that Pell knew anything. Having received a detailed analysis of the royal commission's findings from a panel of lawyers, Pope Francis allowed the publication of photos of a private audience at which he welcomed Pell back to Rome.

Enough has been written about the police sting and the miscarriage of justice Pell suffered when in 2017 he was charged with child sex offences alleged to have occurred in the sacristy of St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, after an 11am Sunday Mass. The police had instituted a three-year "Operation Tethering" that they said "was set up to investigate possible unreported crimes committed by Cardinal George Pell". It turned up nothing.

The police did not even interview any altar servers, concelebrants or money collectors who would have been in the sacristy routinely immediately after the Sunday Mass. Not even the two state judges wanting to uphold the convictions could postulate a theory, let alone point to any evidence as to how Pell and two choristers could be alone in the sacristy immediately after Mass. According to his final account to the jury, the complainant would have reached the sacristy a couple of minutes after the altar servers arrived and some minutes before Pell could possibly have arrived.

On 7 April 2020, in a unanimous judgment, Australia's highest court, the High Court, with all seven judges sitting, unanimously upheld Pell's appeal and quashed his convictions.

When we had lunch in Rome a month ago Pell was in good spirits, fearing nothing, and more than happy to give vent to his views, even to those like me who have a different appreciation of the attempts by Pope Francis to make the Church more synodal. I left him knowing that we would always hold

very different theological perspectives but in no doubt about Pell's fearless, joyful proclamation of truth and tradition as he saw it.

We have all now been told that Pell was the author of the memo released last year under the pseudonym "Demos" and circulated to various cardinals, describing the present pontificate as "a disaster" and "a catastrophe", and outlining the priorities for the next pope: "restore normality, restore doctrinal clarity in faith and morals, restore a proper respect for the law and ensure that the first criterion for the nomination of bishops is acceptance of the apostolic tradition". Shortly before he died Pell had apparently decided to allow *The Spectator* to publish the article that appeared under his own name this week in which he condemns the forthcoming synod on synodality as a "toxic nightmare".

If a cardinal had published such excoriating views of the Pope and a pending synod process during the time of John Paul II or Benedict, Pell would have been the first to call for his dismissal from office and from all future curial activities. But for Pell, anything goes in the defence of what he was convinced was truth and tradition. I recall Pell's supporting Benedict's dismissal of the very pastoral Australian bishop William Morris in 2011. Pell gave this rationale: "The diocese was divided quite badly and the bishop hasn't demonstrated that he's a team player." By the time of his death, Pell was no longer a team player; he was taking a leading role in the faction opposed to the Pope's reforms.

Pell was doing all he could to uphold the role of bishop as he had enunciated it in his doctoral thesis 50 years ago. For Pell, unity with the pope was contingent

on a shared understanding of truth and tradition.

Emboldened by the High Court's vindication and by the exposure of the shortcomings and prejudices of the police, the director of public prosecutions and the two most senior judges in Victoria, Cardinal George Pell was determined to maintain the role of the bishops as defenders of unchanging church teaching and to quash the pretensions of the synodal process. He never shrank from a fight. He thrived on conflict and it cost him dearly.

Frank Brennan is a Jesuit priest, Rector of Newman College at the University of Melbourne, and an adjunct professor at the Thomas More Law School at the Australian Catholic University. He attended the Pell trials and appeals at the request of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. ☞



Reflection on the Final Assembly of the Plenary Council

VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN OFMCONV

This reflection followed the conclusion of the Second Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, and was delivered on the 16th Sunday, Ordinary Time, Year C, 17 July 2022. Bishop Vincent refers to the dramatic day during the Plenary when the majority of bishops, but short of the required two-third majority, voted in favour of the motion concerning the dignity and equality of women. His reflection echoes parts of Peter Maher's last article he wrote in his last edition of *The Swag*. This reflection was originally published in *Catholic Outlook, News from the Diocese of Parramatta* and used with permission.

Dear friends in Christ,

Last week, nine delegates from our Diocese, including myself, participated as members of the Plenary Council in the Final Assembly in Sydney. This was a historic event in the life of the Church in Australia. We gathered to pray, listen, discern and make decisions, mindful of the voice of the Holy Spirit through God's Word, tradition, the magisterium and the signs of the times. We were conscious of your communion with us through personal interest, prayers and loving support. As at the first gathering on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, we were stirred by the call issued to us as once to him: "Go and rebuild my Church that is falling into ruins". We earnestly sought to address the

many challenges we face as a community of disciples and map out a better future for the Church going forward.

I am pleased to say that the Plenary Council has been a moment of grace, a celebration of hope and a conviction of God's enduring accompaniment. Like the disciples with Mary in the Upper Room, we were bonded in one common faith, one baptism and one Lord. Despite our differences, which were many and intense at times, we came together with the best interest of the Church at heart.

Of the many issues discussed, debated and voted upon, the Plenary Council showed strong support for the Uluru Statement from the heart. Catholics have largely been ahead of the general

community on First Nations concerns. We have long learned to honour indigenous language, culture, wisdom, sovereignty and way of life. Calling for a First Nations voice to Parliament to be enshrined in Australia's constitution is indeed a momentous step.

On ecology, there is a recognition of the urgency in addressing the environmental crises of our times and a commitment to join the *Laudato Si* Action Plan. This call to action obliges us not only to care for our common home as a matter of planetary sustainability but also a sense of God-given stewardship. In other words, ecological conversion in all of its manifestations is a deeply spiritual concern arising from our love of God and all of His creation. Our response to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth is inextricably linked together.

One of the most contentious issues was the motion concerning the equality and dignity of women and men in governance structures, ministry and decision-making mechanisms. The discussion took place at a half-way point and proved to be a pivotal moment. Providentially, the reading for that day

Continued page 10

the swag



FEATURES

was part of the Pentecost story. It read “and suddenly from heaven, there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting”. We did not expect a kind of “violent wind” that disrupted, changed the group dynamic and led to a moment of profound revelation.

When the initial motion failed to receive the majority of the deliberative votes, the bishops realized we could not continue business as usual. There were tears, deep sorrow and hurt in the room, especially among those who staged a silent protest. This caught me totally unawares at first but I eventually walked around and shared the pain. Later on, the bishops held crisis talks, agreed on the re-drafting and the assembly passed the re-worked motion.

For some, the protest might have been judged as a stunt and an act of intimidation. For many others, myself included, it was a respectful and powerful gesture of dissent, rooted in the prophetic tradition. The assembly could have walked away with a superficial unity had we not addressed this iconic issue of our time.

I believe that the Church cannot have a better future if it persists in the old paradigm of clericalism and male dominance.

So long as we continue to exclude women from the Church’s governance structures, decision-making processes and institutional functions, we deprive ourselves of the richness of our full humanity.

I thank God that the Plenary Council had the humility and courage to not go home with a false unity but a deep and new awareness of God’s unfolding revelation and our evolving maturity. At least that is the indication of the majority. The synodal journey can be messy, painful and uncertain. But it can lead to renewed and deepened commitment and even transformation. The mood of the assembly changed after the matter had been dealt with. For many, it was like a paschal moment that brought a ray of hope out of despair.

The Plenary Council was an act of enormous trust, or perhaps in betting terms, a massive gamble. It was an Abrahamic journey from the start.

We gambled on the invitation of Pope Francis to be the People of God, walking together, sharing the burdens of humanity, listening to the voice of the most marginalised, reforming its structures and ways of doing things. We did not set out to resolve every question of importance. For instance, on matters of sex and gender, there was very little on the agenda. The acceptance of LGBTIQ+ as the reference to non-binary brothers and sisters was perhaps not a small consensus among the members.

In the end, the significance of this synodal exercise was much more than what was decided. What was highly symbolic and paradigm-shifting was the fact that we met as equals. The emphasis on the superiority of the ordained gave way to an ecclesial communion based on common baptism.

Bishops, priests, religious and lay were all addressed by our first names. No one’s voice counted more than another’s. There was a profound sense of being together and working together even if we have distinct roles in the Church.

Dear sisters and brothers,

In today’s Gospel, Martha was occupied with serving her guests, while Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to his teaching. Martha wanted her sister to help with the serving, but Jesus gently informed her that Mary had chosen the better portion, which would not be taken from her.

This stance was more radical than modern readers may realize. In Jewish culture, women weren’t allowed to study theology, and the student’s place at a rabbi’s feet was reserved for men only. By welcoming Mary as a pupil, Jesus flipped that cultural script on its head.

There were many other stories of how he treated women with kindness and respect, affirming their value and dignity as those made in the image of God.

He welcomed them, defended them, freed and empowered them to find their identity as daughters of God. He included women in his ministry team and welcomed them as disciples, to follow and learn from him – actions unheard of for a Jewish rabbi.

Inspired by the example of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the Plenary Council, may the Church learn to embody a way of being together, sharing responsibility and proclaiming God’s Kingdom.

We must continue to embody the alternative relational paradigm that Jesus taught. This counter paradigm turns the world’s system of power structures on its head because it is rooted in the biblical narrative of the new social order of radical inclusion, justice and equality.

All things considered, the Plenary Council has moved decisively towards the vision of Vatican II. I am heartened to say that most of its insights have already been captured by our unique “Parramatta Way”. Women, in particular, are indispensable in our synodal structures and decision-making processes such as the Diocesan Curia. We hope to keep the momentum going and implement all the endorsed decrees. As we move into a new era, may we grow to be a more fit-for-purpose Church, so that we can be a more effective vehicle for the Good News.

May the Holy Spirit “lead the Church in Australia into a hope-filled future, that we may live the joy of the Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord, bread for the journey from age to age.”

Amen. ☩

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

The Plenary Council is dead, long live the Synod of Bishops

JOHN WARHURST

John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and was a member of the Plenary Council. This article first appeared in Eureka Street on 6 December 2022, and provides personal reflections on the journey from the Plenary Council, through the Continental phase, to the Synod on Synodality.

The Church in Australia is living in an age of transition, but also of continuity. This notion is summed up in the saying, ‘The king is dead, long live the king’, meaning that the transition from an old to a new monarch is one of continuity as well as change.

For years the Australian Church has devoted itself to the whole-of-church consultation known as the Plenary Council. That council concluded its work at the end of its Second Assembly in the second week of July. Its members were thanked and departed never again to come together in the same form. In this sense, reinforced in recent official correspondence, the Plenary Council is dead.

In another sense, of course, it remains alive. The Plenary Council decrees were considered and approved by Australia’s bishops at their Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) November meeting, then sent off to Rome for review. In six months’ time they will be officially promulgated.

Each of the decrees has been assigned to one of the official bishops’ commissions for monitoring and coordination. Progress in implementation of the decrees is to be reported back to the ACBC in May 2023, then 2025 and finally 2027. Back in July at the Second Assembly it was agreed that a new national synodal roundtable, representing the wider Church, would be set up to coordinate the review, but no announcement about any progress with that has yet been made. It appears that it will be created late in 2023 after the First Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

At this national level lay Catholics risk being disenfranchised at a critical moment. There is a real danger that the momentum generated by the Plenary Council will be lost.

Effectively implementation is now in the hands of each diocesan bishop. That has unpredictable consequences. In the

recently published ACBC Annual Report for 2021, the retiring president Archbishop Mark Coleridge plainly lays out this state of affairs that ‘The real powers in the Church rest with the Dioceses’; while he also predicts optimistically that ‘The days of dioceses as independent fiefdoms and the Bishops as a law unto themselves are gone.’ Tell that to lay Catholics in many dioceses where business as usual prevails and little is being done about the reforms agreed at the Plenary Council. That is what many former Plenary Council members report from the ground.

Attention has now switched to the Synod of Bishops, which has now reached the stage of further consultation on the latest Continental phase working document. Many lay Australians have welcomed the forward-thinking and plain-speaking about the crisis of the Church contained in this document, which is entitled ‘Enlarge the Space of your Tent’ (Isaiah 54:2). It was drafted after a meeting of a small international group, including Australians Susan Pascoe and Ormond Rush, to consider and reflect upon the many national submissions. On matters of inclusion, like equality for women, remarried divorcees, and LGBTQIA+ Catholics, it goes further than the Plenary Council.

Long live the Synod. The road is a long and arduous one, however, until the Synod Second Assembly concludes in Rome in October 2024. The closing date for submissions on the Continental phase document was December 9. Many Australians, buoyed by its contents, made a herculean effort to put aside their consultation fatigue and to participate in this further consultation.

In turn the National Centre for Pastoral Research has just a few weeks to distil these submissions into a national contribution towards the construction of an Oceania document to be sent back to Rome. The timetable is tight for everyone.

The Synod of Bishops, to which all People of God in Australia have now had their attention redirected after the Plenary Council, is another gigantic exercise in consultation and discernment undertaken by the Church. The possibilities for progress are inspiring, but also hedged around by enormous pressures of time and capacity. In a sense it is the Plenary Council writ large.

For all its limitations the Plenary Council exercise empowered many lay Catholics. Among the members themselves valuable networks were formed across dioceses and between the lay women and men, religious leaders, and clerical members.

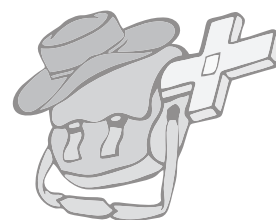
Translating that empowerment into the new era is difficult. Reports suggest that little is happening in many dioceses. Engagement with the Synod of Bishops offers the prospect of greater fruits at the international level, even if it is inevitably conducted at arm’s length from average Catholics. However, the greater boldness at the international level should show the Church in Australia that we are not alone and provide fresh energy for implementation of the progressive spirit of the Plenary Council. ☪

The Swag Winter Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 17 April 2023.

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

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



Two meetings: Frascati and the Vatican

BILL UREN SJ AO

This article by Bill Uren SJ reflects on two different meetings in Italy where the main agenda related to developments associated with the upcoming Synod on Synodality. The article first appeared in *Eureka Street* on 27 November, 2022.

Catholics who are hoping for a more inclusive, less dogmatic and open Church will have been heartened by reports of two recent meetings.

The first of these meetings took place in Frascati in Italy in early October. A small group of bishops, priests, religious and lay men and women were commissioned by the General Secretariat of the Synod to review the submissions from 112 episcopal conferences and 15 Oriental Catholic Churches.

There were reflections, too, from 17 of the 23 dicasteries of the Roman Curia and from various other religious and lay institutes. Each of these reported on the reactions of their respective institutions to the prospect of the upcoming Synod on Synodality, which is to be convened in two sessions in Rome in October 2023 and October 2024.

After two weeks of meetings, the small group, drawn from all continents and with “a very diverse disciplinary expertise”, produced the Working Document which is to serve as a basis for the meetings of bishops grouped together, continent by continent, in March 2023 in preparation for the drafting of the agenda for the October 2023 Synod.

The Working Document is refreshing. Its icon is the tent proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah: “Enlarge the space of your tent”. Its theme is inclusiveness.

Its agenda does not shirk from addressing the hot button issues that confront the contemporary Church: clerical sexual abuse, clericalism and autocratic hierarchical structures and practice, the absence of young people in the Church, clerical celibacy and the shortage of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and the culture of exclusion that disenfranchises so many groups: the poor, the disabled, the indigenous, the lonely elderly, migrants, prisoners, the LGBTQIA+ and, of course, women.

Against this culture of power, exclusion, secrecy and sexism the Working Document proposes an open tent of communion, participation, co-responsibility and transparency. It will be interesting to see how the representatives of the episcopal conferences, continent by continent, will respond to these challenges in March 2023.

The second meeting that may also give encouragement to those seeking a more open inclusive Church was the five-yearly *ad limina* meeting of 63 German bishops with the Pope and the Vatican Curia in mid-November. It was not that the Vatican endorsed or withdrew its reservations concerning the German Synodal Way.

On the contrary, heavy Curial artillery was directed at the German episcopate and the DBK central committee of lay Catholics. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, raised concerns that the Synodal Way was aimed at “reform of the Church” rather than “reform within the Church”. Cardinal Luis Ladaria, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, expressed reservations about “the methodology, content and proposals” of the German process. And finally, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops, even proposed a moratorium on any further meetings of the German Synodal Way.

The Cardinals’ major concerns centred around the Synodal Way’s approval of a permanent synodal council that included not only bishops but also equal numbers of laity to advise on major developments in church and society. There were concerns, too, around its call for women to be admitted to the diaconate and for a consideration of allowing women priests. And there were strong reservations concerning its further call for a revision of the Church teaching on homosexuality and its approval of blessings for persons in committed same-sex relationships.

Despite these reservations and their advocacy by the three influential Curial Cardinals, the suggestion that a moratorium be imposed on any further meetings of the Synodal Way was rejected. The fifth meeting will go ahead in March. Nor did the President of the German Bishops conference, Bishop George Batzing, resile from the necessity of addressing these and other neuralgic issues in Church life and governance. He also noted that many of the issues that the German Church was addressing had also been reported in the submissions of the 112 episcopal conferences from which was drafted the substance of the Working Document for the continental meetings of bishops.

The Synodal Way did not emerge unscathed from the Vatican scrutiny, but at least it did emerge to fight another day, and the contentious issues it has had the courage/temerity to address remain on the table, hopefully for consideration at the October Synod. If this is not exactly as heartening as the Working Document, at least it should evoke a sigh of relief that the Vatican was unsuccessful in its attempt to close down the Synodal Way.

It will be interesting to see how the Vatican will react after the March meeting of the German synod. But Bishop Batzing has to some degree pre-empted a negative judgement by invoking the synergy in agenda between that of the Synodal Way and that of the Working Document of the Secretariat of the Synod.

Clericalism, hierarchicalism, secrecy in decision-making, exclusion and disenfranchisement, women, young people, sexuality – these are issues common to both agendas. While the Pope has said that the Synod on Synodality will be primarily about process, it is to be hoped that at least by October 2024 these issues, too, will be addressed. While process and practice are in principle distinct, often the way we process is an indication of the way we practise in life. So, reforming the process to embrace synodality arguably may lead also to a more open and inclusive Church. ☪

Journeying together in faith, hope and love

FRANCES NORTH

Recently four experienced pastoral associates, administrators and educationalists from SE Melbourne, Mary Cameron, Anne Hunt, Berna Wake and Frances North, came together to reflect on the Continental Stage Working Document (DCS), and in particular on the place of women in a Synodal Church. They agreed with Joan Chittister who wrote: *“The notion that any psychologically, spiritually healthy human being, either male or female, will, in years to come, join in great numbers an organisation that is blatantly sexist is at best a psychedelic dream.”* Frances North compiled their thoughts.

Watching Pope Benedict’s Funeral Mass while contemplating our response to the next phase of preparations for the coming Synod, we couldn’t help but wonder if liturgies like this affect peoples’ perception of the Catholic Church? You watch a sea of old men dressed in red, Church leaders and decision-makers who are far removed from the ordinary faithful, and their lives. Is this the Church that calls us to fulfil our mission to evangelise the world?

Jesus encountered people wherever they were and whatever their circumstances. He initiated a Kingdom, not a church. The Church – and that is all of us, not just the hierarchy – exists to serve the Kingdom. Serving the Kingdom means that we are a Church for the wounded, the lost and the marginalized.

The synodal journey

In 2023/2024 bishops will convene at the Vatican for a synod on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”. In promoting the Synod, Pope Francis defines Synodality as “the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” With an emphasis on listening to the entirety of the faithful, the Synod has the potential to reform the culture and reshape the power dynamics in the Church.

As the People of God on this synodal journey we have been invited to a time of shared discernment, aided by the Holy Spirit, to listen with open hearts and minds, to see with a disciple’s eyes, and to discern what steps to take to grow as a synodal Church. Our participation in the consultative phase of the Synod has provided an opportunity to voice concerns, hopes and dreams, and to be listened to, for which we and many who have participated have greatly appreciated.

The call for a conversion of Church culture

We are excited by the call for a conversion of the Church’s culture and the possibility of establishing a new culture, with new practices and structures: a culture of servant leadership and a clear vision of the future; a Church where all are welcome, each and every one recognized as a beloved child of God, and accorded the dignity that is their due; a Church that listens and acts; a Church for Mission.

A critical and urgent area in regard to cultural change concerns the role of women in the Church and the hierarchical structures that have in many ways limited the influence of lay people and especially women. Amid Pope Francis’ many attempts to reform those structures has been his appointment of Sr. Nathalie Becquart, a French Religious Sister of the Congregation of Xavieres, to the role of undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, making her the first woman with a right to vote during the synod of bishops, a right traditionally reserved for ordained men. Becquart comments on the significance of her role: “During many years and centuries the governance of the church was linked to ordination. The bishops and priests had leadership positions. Now we can see more and more the disconnect between the exercise of leadership from ordination. I am an example of that.”

The role of women in the Church as an issue in the Australian Synthesis

In the Local/National consultative phases of the synodal journey, diverse groups and people from across Australia (and similarly across the globe) were invited to reflect and provide input into the synodal journey, with the reports on those listening sessions then synthesized to produce the *Australian Synthesis*.

Many people in parishes and dioceses noted that the limitations on the role of women in leadership constituted an obstacle to greater synodality and this issue needed urgent attention. Many participants called for women, as baptized members of the Church, to be accepted as equal to men and “for their talents, experiences and abilities to be recognized and used at all levels of the Church”. They called for equal, just and full participation of women in Church governance, mission and ministry which, for some groups, meant recognising their admissibility to any role, such as deacon, priest, or representative on decision-making councils. Participants believed that the principles of synodality could be strengthened by including the laity as equal leaders.

A greater priority than the ordination of men – or women – in such a rethinking of Church leadership was the formation of individuals as leaders dedicated to God’s Word, who could facilitate dialogue, were trained to listen and discern, and were appointed to serve rather than assuming power over others.

Participants also agreed that issues such as clericalism could be addressed by educating clergy and laity about the importance of accountability, transparency and dialogue, as well as strengthening seminary formation, and including the role of women in that process. One group noted that the Synod prompted a “re-awakening of the laity” and a “change in the mindset of the clergy” for “better listening, deeper dialogue and enthusiastic collaboration”.

Numerous groups noted that the continued exclusion of women from the permanent diaconate and ordained ministry and from some Church governance and structures was “disempowering” and resulted in the loss of their charisms and gifts.

The role of women in the Church as a global issue

In preparation for what is called the Continental Phase of the Synodal journey, the recently released Working Document for the *Continental Stage* (DCS) synthesizes hundreds of reports

Continued page 14

Keeping the Faith alive



When you hear the word 'charity' what comes to mind? Perhaps it is feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, or sheltering the homeless. These are vital physical needs and the Catholic Church has carried them out since her inception. There is no organisation comparable to Christianity that has taken so seriously the provision of **material needs** for the poor.

But is that it? Is the Church here to only fill stomachs and tend to wounds? Actually, even if the Church could eradicate all poverty for all time that would not be her greatest gift to the world. The Church's greatest gift to the world is Jesus Christ. The Church exists primarily to sustain the **spiritual needs** of its people, who by their lives of faith will bring Christ to the world.

Herein lies the beauty and uniqueness of the Pontifical Foundation Aid to the Church in Need, or ACN. We are the only international Catholic charity that focuses on the spiritual and pastoral needs of suffering Christians. Our mission is to nurture the faith where the faithful are oppressed and persecuted.

We support the Church where the Church cannot support herself. We form priests, fund nuns, build churches, provide pastoral transport, train catechists and distribute Catholic books and media. In short: **we offer faith, hope and love to our brothers and sisters** who cry out to us for Jesus.

Can you help ACN support your fellow brothers and sisters in the faith?

Would you consider putting ACN materials in your parish? Email info@aidtochurch.org and we can arrange this for you.



Scan the QR code to learn more.



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

1800 101 201

www.aidtochurch.org

from the Synod's consultative phase. The content is detailed and open: nothing has been excluded.

While DCS notes that some reports call for priestly ordination for women, while others consider it a closed issue, what is striking is that DCS highlights that, from across all *continents*, comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptized and equal members of the People of God, entitled to full and active participation. DCS notes that women love the Church deeply and are the backbone of Church communities, both because they represent the majority of practising members and are among the most active members. Yet their contribution is seriously limited and they are often excluded from key decision-making processes. Most Church governance roles are held by men. The lack of equality for women within the Church is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world.

DCS also notes that many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a set of specific questions in regard to women and their roles: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, a female diaconate and the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in Parish settings.

What would Jesus think?

As we ponder DCS and its summary of responses from across the world, we wonder what Jesus would think. In Luke's Gospel we see Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary. Martha complains that she is doing the bulk of the work in the kitchen while Mary sits at Jesus' feet. Jesus replies "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part." (Luke 10:41) As far as Jesus was concerned a woman's role should not be confined to housework and incidentals. Part of the disciple's role is to listen and learn.

Jesus valued women and included them in his ministry. The first preacher of the Good News we come across in John's Gospel is the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well (John 4:28- 29). Jesus allowed Mary Magdalen, Joanna and

Mary the mother of James to be the first witnesses to the Resurrection (Luke 24:2).

Living in hope

Women seek genuinely full and equal partnership with the Church in every area of their lives. They also recognize the strength that flows from working together to protect the vulnerable, feed the hungry, be a voice for the voiceless, and empower people to flourish. How depleted would the Church be without women's full participation?

We also wonder about our children, grandchildren and the generations to come. Will they want to belong and participate in a church that doesn't provide for, and respect, women's full and equal participation? We agree with Joan Chittister who writes: "The notion that any psychologically, spiritually healthy human being either male or female will, in years to come, join in great numbers an organisation that is blatantly sexist is at best a psychedelic dream."

The DCS document makes us rejoice that responses from all over the world have been comprehensively documented in the consultative phases, and have emerged in the DCS for the next stage of the synodal journey. This itself is an important development. There is an accountability to history that comes from committing these reports to print.

As the next phase of synodal listening and discerning proceeds, the possibility that this can lead to something transformative fills us with hope. ☞

Bulk Swag Subscriptions

Parishes and Schools

**\$2.00 per copy
for orders of
10 or more
plus postage.**

**Contact the
NCP National Office.**

The time is ripe to move from rhetoric to action

AENGUS KAVANAGH FSP

In late September 2022, chosen delegates comprising clergy, religious, and laity representing all continents, gathered at Frascati, a retreat and conference centre outside Rome. The purpose of the gathering was to synthesise the findings in synodal submissions from national Catholic churches across the world. A Vatican release statement of 27 October 2022 contained the following assertions: *'Globally, participation exceeded all expectations. In all, the Synod secretariat received 112 out of 114 Episcopal Conferences and from all the Oriental Catholic Churches, plus reflections from 17 out of 23 dicasteries of the Roman Curia, besides those from Institutes of Religious life and lay movements of the faithful.'*

One can only imagine the challenge involved in sifting through a tsunami of issues coming from such a diverse spectrum of contexts and cultures. It is reassuring then to find a parallel between themes in the Frascati synthesis document and dominant themes at the heart of the Australian Plenary Council processes. Not surprisingly, release of the Frascati document includes the comment: *'In the reports, the People of God express a desire to be less a Church of maintenance and more a Church that goes out in mission.'*

The intention is that the Frascati statement now becomes a stimulus and resource for further discernment and discussion in each country feeding into continental syntheses for submission to the Synod Secretariat by 31 March. In June 2023, the Synod Secretariat will convene a panel to develop an *Instrumentum Laboris* – 'a working document' for the First Synodal Assembly of Bishops in October. Australia will be represented at the Synod on Synodality by Archbishop Patrick O'Regan and Bishop Shane Mackinlay. The concluding bishops' assembly in Rome is scheduled for October 2024.

These developments are among the most momentous in the history of the Catholic Church. Never before has there

been so much sustained and widespread discernment and discussion among the People of God on what God wants from our Church in the changed, and rapidly changing, social conditions of our times. Surely, the wide embrace of principles underpinning the synodal pathway is an affirmation of the Pope's vision for a Church renewed, as well as being a sign of the Holy Spirit at work in the pilgrim journey of the People of God.

Whereas the rhetoric flowing from Diocesan Assemblies, Diocesan and National Synods of the past decade has been awash with considered proposals for better ways of being Church, evidence is scant of significant change in policy and practice at the levels of Universal Church, Diocese, or Parish. With very few exceptions, more of the same remains the formula. It seems that the plea of Pope Francis ten years ago – *'So what are we waiting for?'* (*Evangelii Gaudium* 120), remains mainly unheeded. This plea was made in the context of his invitation to new attitudes, practices, and language in support of his ardent desire to move the Church from maintenance mode to one with a strong 'missionary impulse'. Parramatta Bishop, Vincent Long OFM Conv, adds another dimension to the same desire: *'Carrying on former practices, agendas, and priorities without acknowledging the need to change course can be at best futile, and at worst, defiant against the movement of the Holy Spirit.'* (Keynote address. Walter Silvester Memorial, Melbourne, 2 January 2022.)

No need to wait for the outcomes of the final Synod on Synodality Assembly in 2024! In the fluidity of the synodal pathway, there is plenty of scope for paradigm shifts at diocesan and parish levels, shifts that lead to changes which will find resonance in the hearts of most practising Catholics. Continued adherence to outdated models of Church in an almost exclusive focus of catering for the needs of the 'faithful remnant', leaves a weary and diminishing clergy unwittingly presiding over demise. Greatly reduced priestly vocations, record low levels of active parish affiliation by the baptised, along with the aged and migrant profiles

of church congregations, tell the story. Against this scenario, the Frascati synthesis gathering assembly courageously adopted an Isaiah directive as its motto: *'Enlarge the space of your tent.'* (*Is* 54:2)

Possible areas of focus: The remaining section of this article will attempt but preliminary and short explorations of but two pivotal focus areas of Church life with the view to provoking creative imagination and possible action, for an enlargement of the tent space. Diocesan and Parish Pastoral councils, maybe even Deaneries, might find interest in sharing on some of the issues canvassed.

Deeper embrace of inclusion and diversity: With this heading as a main theme of Sydney's 2022 New Year's Eve celebrations, there was an instance in the firework's display when the slogan *'Welcome to All'* was emblazoned across the Harbour Bridge. This is a slogan which might well be emblazoned within the heart of every Catholic parish and diocesan community. Meaningful expression to this aspiration goes way beyond the church door greeting or the peremptory welcoming words from the altar. Meaningful expression is borne out of an awareness and appreciation of the reasonable sensitivities to 'where people are at', in their faith journeys, in coping with disabilities, in their capacity to understand the liturgy, in their dealing with church-related grievances, etc. This is not to propose that churches act as therapy centres but that they be places where ordinary sensibilities find some acknowledgement and response.

In this context, an area in which the Church could readily do some catching-up is in its eradication of obviously sexist language in the liturgy. Whatever the Committee responsible for the New Missal translation – *Vox Clara* – may think, it seems reasonable to assume that Jesus would not have a problem with the following changes in Scripture readings: substituting – men and women for 'men'; brothers and sisters for 'brothers', and so on for other texts emanating from an outdated mind-set, not the mind-set of Jesus, that sidelines up to 70% of current congregations.

Composition of Parish Pastoral councils

Continued page 16

the swag



can often be a barometer of representation of a range of needs and perspectives at this level of guidance within the parish. So too at diocesan level where the Curial governance structure is exclusively comprised of male clergy in most cases. Even given that most Canon law dealing with matters of structures and governance speaks to a bygone context, Canon 469 still allows enough wriggle room for the inclusion of women at diocesan curial level. Also, is it time also, to scrap rulings prohibiting reception of Holy Communion, by those deemed to be in irregular marriage situations?

Fr Peter Maher was Editor of *The Swag* up to shortly before his untimely death in November 2022. Common themes in the many tributes following his death were: his integrity; his enlightened faith and rich humanity; his commitment to groups at the margins, especially the gay community; his overall reflection of a very positive image of priesthood in contemporary society. His funeral Mass in the family's home parish at Brighton Le Sands, Sydney, witnessed a large and obviously Catholic congregation, with a good smattering of senior clergy. One can imagine a wry smile of satisfaction on Peter's face as the First Reading was confidently proclaimed by a youngish man wearing a rainbow T-shirt, while a male gay couple, along with their young daughter, comprised the Offertory procession. Additionally, an MSC priest homilist interspersed his homily with short didgeridoo renditions. Inclusive, yes. Where there is a will, there is a way!

Towards reworking ways of being church: Most readers of this article would share an ardent conviction that the mission of Jesus was meant for all people, throughout all time, and in all places. In the Western world especially, each decade seems to witness further departure from that ideal. The problem is not with the mission, but with more enlightened commitment to its promulgation. Here, many external factors beyond the control of the Church are in operation. However, the current situation seriously challenges the Church to explore ways and means whereby it may become more fit for purpose in a continuing transforming presence of Jesus in society. The starting point for such exploration ought not to

be rigid adherence to the letter of the Universal Law of the Church. Evidence of the stultifying and polarising influence of this stance was to the fore at some stages of the Plenary Council, and not just in the women's stand-off initiative at the final assembly. Framing submissions from the Plenary Council to accord with the Universal Law, would nullify the whole Church reform agenda of the Council.

The death of Pope Benedict XVI triggered much commentary on his style of leadership and his legacy. A constant theme was his conservatism. In that context, it is of interest to re-visit an exhortation included in his message – August 2012, to an International Forum for Catholic Action: *'Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but rather, as people who are really 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and action. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops.'*

It is unfortunate that, over ten years later, the change of mindset invited by Pope Benedict seems to have had little or no impact within the institutional Church. Surely this injunction must be at the heart of any efforts to fashion a sustainable Church into the future? A default reaction now, in the Western world at least, is to amalgamate or cluster parishes in the face of a shortage of priests. Frequently, such restructuring is instigated by the availability and willingness of a 'younger' priest to step into the breach. Priests involved may find themselves cast in the role of "Mass machines", as well as having to cope with greatly expanded administration duties, while parishes mourn the loss of their treasured stories. What is a likely outcome of this scenario say twenty, or even ten years from now?

Unpacking of the co-responsibility concept would see much greater concentration on the selection, formation, and commissioning of suitable lay people to carry-out many of the functions of the

Church's mission which do not require ordained ministers. Such a commissioning could witness an era normalising lay ministry in the leading of off-church settings for funerals, weddings, and home baptisms in remote outback family homes where invited neighbours could gather. Frequently, Church leaders lament the perceived ignorance many Catholics have of their faith. Less mention is made of the fact that there are probably more committed lay Catholics now than ever, with some level of tertiary, even postgraduate, qualifications in religious and theological studies.

It seems a pity that Church leadership is slow to recognize this abundance in the midst of scarcity and is not proactive in the pastoral formation and training in cohorts of 'para-priests' to assume a much higher profile in lay-led liturgies and outreach ministries seeking to bring the Church to the people in their lived realities. One spin-off of such an initiative would be the potential for parishes to continue to flourish as faith communities with diminished reliance on the full-time presence of an ordained minister.

A fairly recent development in the leadership of Catholic education systems has been the import of non-educators from the corporate, political, or NGO world. This is currently the situation for 'heads' of The National Catholic Commission; NSW Catholic Schools; the Diocesan System of Schools in Sydney, Broken Bay, Parramatta. Unsurprisingly such sidelining is upsetting to many Catholic men and women for whom Catholic education has been a life vocation, who speak the language of education and faith, who have professional qualifications in leadership and who have been highly effective in their roles.

Maybe then, bishops involved in such appointments, and others, might consider the appointment of suitable non-ordained candidates as administrators, managers' 'leaders', in parishes. Canon Law, which currently outlines the juridic, pastoral, etc., responsibilities of the pastor, was last revised over forty years ago, long before the massive loss of trust in the Church because of sexual abuse disclosures,

before the major decline in vocations to the priesthood, and before the greatly increased bureaucracies in managing the temporal affairs of a parish. These Canons, which focus heavily on shoring up the authority of the priest, impose impossible burdens on them and do not speak to today's realities, while crafting an image of the priest as a ruler rather than a servant-leader. Besides, a 'one-size-fits all' makes no allowance for the vastly different social and cultural locations in which the Church is situated.

For parishes who can afford them, the emergence of clerical and secretarial staff, helps to ease of some of the burden. However, the appointment of a parish 'administrator' or 'manager' – full or part-time, could bring a new dimension to shared parish governance, freeing the pastor from the multiplicity of compliances not directly connected to religious and pastoral ministry. This would be a far more expansive role that that carried out by current

secretaries. Most parishes have active lay retirees, committed Catholics with a proven track record as effective leaders, who would value such an opportunity.

Sing a new song to the Lord (Psalm 96): Many other Focus Areas in the life of the Church could likewise be scrutinised in a search for possible policies and practices that might align with Pope Benedict's wish for greater co-responsibility of the lay baptised in the mission of the Church. It is obvious that the quest for co-responsibility resonates readily with the whole concept of synodality. Pope Benedict was prophetic when stressing the need for a mature and committed laity to be consolidated for contribution to the mission of the Church. In the light of present trends, it seems reasonable to assume that such consolidation is the best guarantee for sustainability of the Church into the future. It is no longer acceptable that the life of a parish waxes or wanes with the personality and ecclesiology of the

pastor. Amalgamation or clustering of parishes to adapt to priest shortages are but short term solutions.

Across the world and more often than ever previously, the past decade has seen thousands of Catholics who love their Church and deeply yearn for reform, call for significant change. Now is the time to search out ways to move from rhetoric to practice. Scripture compellingly names the challenge: *'Our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active, only by this can we be certain that we are children of the truth'* (1 John 3:18-19). ✚

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



Cultural Reconciliation

TOM GLEESON

Ngatjo Yakkanandalya, ngatjo Yungandalyangabuddna Kurna yattina. This is our local Kurna language. It means: *My Dear Sisters, My Dear Brothers, this is Kurna Country.*

The Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains of South Australia, who have lived on this land for many thousands of years, received a new Dreaming (a term describing the complex spiritual connection of our first nations people to Country) called T'jilbruke, meaning 'hidden fire', at the end of the last ice age. This 'hidden fire' has guided them through the last ten thousand years and as I think of the Plenary Council's decision to accept the invitation of the First Nations People to 'walk with them' in the spirit of reconciliation, this 'hidden fire' seems to be kindling a new fire within my heart; and it demands that I speak and share it with you. As I do, I want to recall some of the words of our Popes and others who help me reflect on my experiences.

Pope John Paul, addressed the Aboriginal community in Alice Springs in 1986, where he said:

For thousands of years you have lived on this land and fashioned a culture that endures to this day, and during all this time the spirit of God has been with you. Your dreaming which influences your lives so strongly that no matter what happens you remain forever people of your culture in your own way of touching the mystery of God's spirit in you and in creation. You must keep your striving for God and hold onto it with all your lives. Your culture which shows the lasting genius, and dignity of your race must not be allowed to disappear.

How can we as Australian Christians support the recovery and development of this sacred ancient culture in our liturgy and church today?

Bernard Häring, a leading moral theologian of the twentieth century, who taught Pope John Paul II and Pope

Benedict, and was also the theologian whom Pope John XXIII thanked for the work he did for the Second Vatican Council. In his last book, *My Hope for The Church*, Bernard Häring speaks about inculturation, or the adaptation of the Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background. He makes the following vital point:

Objectively speaking, the Vatican has not only made foolish mistakes on the subject of inculturation it has out and out sinned by a monstrous excess of regulation. This is most obvious through its harsh imposition of the Latin Rite, Roman Canon Law and European theology (p. 54).

The Vatican continues to sin in this regard, and the bishops of Australia ensure that this sin is perpetuated here in every diocese of Australia. Häring goes on to suggest an initial process to correct this situation and open doors to healing and reconciliation and says there are two crucial points:

- First the profound realisation of the simplicity of biblical thinking, above

Continued page 18

FEATURES

all of the Gospels.

- The second prerequisite is a loving and thorough knowledge of each individual nation, intimacy with the thinking and feeling of the people along with respect for all cultures.

In his address to all of us, Pope Francis echoes Pope John Paul and Bernard Häring when he says within paragraph 144 of *Laudato Si*:

There is a need to respect the rights of people and culture and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their own proper culture. Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without. All quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each group.

Pope Francis continues: *'In this sense it is essential to show the special care for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions.'* (paragraph 146).

Considering the above, I wonder whether we can truly listen to the invitation of the First Nations People of this country and engage in meaningful dialogue with them towards 'a better future'? (Uluru Statement from the Heart). Can we consent to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in our lives and open our hearts and minds to this call?

Fr Denis Edwards, who died in 2019, wrote in his final book, *Deep Incarnation*:

The spirit is the energy of love that enables the universe to emerge and light to evolve. The spirit is at work within the word of God in the processes that gave rise to the observable universe in the big bang and the primordial hydrogen and helium.

Fr Denis Edwards goes on to quote Karl Rahner SJ: *'Humans emerge into a universe that is a world of grace, a world in which the spirit is always present in self offering love.'*

Here in Australia this is most profoundly evident, as Pope John Paul II reminded us earlier.

In his book, *Alcheringa*, Fr Rod Cameron

speaks of the Dreaming. Fr Cameron, who worked in Cape York between 1950-1990, writes:

To walk anywhere in this sacred land is to walk where the ancients walked.

To learn anything about this sacred land is to move into the mystery of God.

To be open to the moods of this ancient land is to become a child of the universe.

To live in communion with this land is to carry the stigma of light.

Beyond all the dreaming in this land is a yearning, burning love.

Every blade of grass is blessed, every trembling leaf caressed.

Every leaf of every tree is blessed, we are loved.

So, my Sisters and Brothers when I think then of ourselves wanting to be a creative and life-giving contributor to the words from the Plenary Council, an effective way of being this Good News and celebrating this within Australia, we are deeply challenged by the words and passions of these leaders. If we are to be truly: 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church', it is time for us to honour our Indigenous culture, to develop an Australian liturgy that expresses the faith and life of us as people on this sacred land. This Holy Land. We speak of the 'Holy Land' as a place over there in Palestine or in Israel and it is a Holy Land. But this land is Holy too. As we say each time we celebrate Eucharist: 'Heaven and Earth are full of God's glory'.

Here in my diocese, I have walked up on Mount Hayfield, the Holy mountain where 'Divine Wisdom' revealed the dreaming of Tjilbruke to the listening heart of the Kurna, Ramindjeri, Ngarrindjeri, and Peramangk peoples. The 'hidden fire' that kindled the hearts of all of these people, held them, guided them and enabled them to relate to one another on Earth and to form creative communities that lived and respected each other and this Country. I walked this sacred dreaming track, some 400 kilometres, and experienced the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. In the 'hidden fire', Jesus came to light.

We have come to this land wanting to impose a Roman culture, we use a book that is called a Roman Missal. Recently

I addressed a significant Catholic Kurna Elder and I said to him, "What do you think about this liturgy that we use?" He said, tellingly: "When in Rome, do what the Romans do".

In my soul I heard him and I said: "My brother, you are so right, this Book, this Roman Missal, belongs to Rome and when in Rome we should use it. Here in Australia, we walk on this sacred land, we are given such a rich heritage here, if only we would listen".

A wise and well-known Elder from up at Daly River, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, said, "We are not listened to, there is just no opportunity given to our people".

From Uluru these people have extended an invitation to us; to all of Australia, to walk together in a movement of the Australian people for a better future. Surely the Spirit of God is wanting to awaken us as Catholics, as Christians, to walk with them on this land, to be a living sacrament of this love. The presence of Jesus kindles this 'hidden fire' to all who dare to open their hearts, that we may walk this Country as a living sacrament, united to all the other Churches, religions and cultures, including the Church of Rome and all of the other countries around the world.

Bill Gammage, author of *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, concludes with these words:

This book interrupts law and country at the moment when terra nullius came and an ancient philosophy was destroyed by the completely unexpected, an invasion of new people and ideas. A majestic achievement ended, only fragments remain. For the people of 1788 the loss was stupefying. For the newcomers it did not seem great. Until recently few noticed that they had lost anything at all. Knowledge of how to sustain Australia, of how to be Australian vanished with barely a whisper of regret.

We have a continent to learn. If we are to survive, let alone feel at home, we must begin to understand our country, if we succeed, one day we might become Australian.

I wonder, can we walk the humble path of Jesus on this land? Will our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Catholic Council leaders help us learn?

My Sisters and Brothers if we are seriously consenting to the Uluru 'Invitation' in response to the question: What is God asking of us? We need to be open to a real relationship with our Indigenous people. Will we listen when Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis, Pope Paul VI, Miriam Rose and others, tell us that this culture is sacred, that this land is holy.

When Fr Rod Cameron writes, *'beyond all of the dreaming in this land, is a yearning, burning love'*, I believe its

yearning and burning in the hearts of people. An Australian people, Catholic or otherwise, religious or not, they know this fire in their hearts. I hear the call for us to create an Australian liturgy, respecting our Indigenous culture, engaging and listening deeply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If we do this, I believe we will open up an exciting future for all Australians and discover something more of the life and energy of the Good News of Jesus. '

Jesus, you came to light a fire and my brother, my Saviour, you have kindled

that fire in each of us. You call us to be true sisters and brothers to each other, but we cannot be true sisters and brothers on this land if we continue to impose this 'Roman' liturgy and this Roman European patriarchal culture with its Canon Laws here in Australia.

We must learn anew, the law of your love, the compassion of your heart and begin to be Australian people, and bring alive what it is to be truly catholic, to be true to the Gospel in the light of this land, this holy land, this land of the Holy Spirit. ☪



30 years on, Keating's Redfern speech demands we back the Voice

FRANCIS SULLIVAN

Francis Sullivan AO is Chair, Catholic Social Services Australia. He was CEO of the Catholic Church in Australia's Truth, Justice and Healing Council, in addition to being the previous Secretary-General of the Australian Medical Association. The following was the Press Release from Catholic Social Services Australia on 16 December 2022.

On the 30th anniversary of former Prime Minister Paul Keating's historic Redfern Speech, First Nations Australians are still waiting for the vision it articulated to be realised.

Keating's speech was a watershed moment in the sorry history of Indigenous reconciliation. Never before, and only once or twice since, has the leader of our Nation so clearly spelt out the history and the future opportunities of Indigenous reconciliation.

Never before had the impact of the colonial takeover of Indigenous lands, alcohol, disposition and disease been so vividly articulated by our national leader as when Keating asked Australia to "imagine if it were you...".

Keating, in a clear strong voice admitted, "we committed the murders", "we took the lands", "we brought the diseases" and "we took the children". Keating's assertion of the collective responsibility of the present generations for the outrages of the past rings just as accurate now as it did 30 years ago.

And yet as a nation, we still anguish over even the smallest steps towards a just reconciliation and a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Every step along the way, voices opposed to change rise in opposition, signalling the social decay each reform will bring.

Same-sex marriage, now five years since the plebiscite, hasn't destroyed the institution of marriage or seen the demise of Mother's Day as claimed by many.

John Howard's 1990's prediction that native title would herald in veto laws over three-quarters of Australia's land mass and produce a targeted attack on suburban back yards hasn't happened.

Now we have the same disingenuous and tired arguments being made against the Voice; it will be a third chamber, it will dictate Government policy, it will divide the country and lead to dissent.

The rhetoric is loud and ill-informed and flies in the face of the tagline we all love to label our country with, 'a fair go for all'.

The Voice is just the next step in a slow and difficult path towards Reconciliation.

It is no threat to our democracy; it is not a threat to our country, and it is not a threat to us as individuals.

As Keating said back in 1992 'I believe that the great things about Australian

social democracy reflect a fundamental belief in justice'.

While the challenge of reconciliation has been a test for many Prime Ministers, across all political persuasions, since Keating now and in the lead up to next year's referendum, the challenge for all will be to unite the country behind the Voice and to take the next step towards a fair go for all. ☪

**Holiday Accommodation
for Priests**



**New self-contained
two-bedroom unit
available now
on beautiful
Magnetic Island,
off Townsville**

Bookings essential

For more information and to
make an enquiry, visit
www.magneticislandhaven.tsv.catholic.org.au

Nancy Pelosi and the problem of the pro-choice Catholic politician

BILL UREN SJ AO

Bill is a Scholar-in-residence at Newman College at the University of Melbourne. A former Provincial Superior of the Australian and New Zealand Jesuits, he has lectured in moral philosophy and bioethics in universities in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth and has served on the Australian Health Ethics Committee and many clinical and human research ethics committees in universities, hospitals and research centres. This article first appeared in *Eureka Street* on 8 December, 2022.



In the aftermath of the United States mid-term elections, Nancy Pelosi announced her retirement as leader of the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives. She proclaimed on retiring that she was a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a devout Catholic and a proud member of the Democratic Party.

A devout Catholic? The archbishop of her home archdiocese of San Francisco, Salvatore Cordileone, certainly did not agree. Citing her support for pro-choice abortion, he has forbidden her access to Holy Communion anywhere in the archdiocese. In this he does not hesitate to differ from Pope Francis, who has received Mrs Pelosi at the Vatican and apparently has no reservations in ministering Holy Communion to her.

So, the question remains: how does Mrs Pelosi, as a proclaimed 'devout Catholic', reconcile her support for pro-choice abortion with the Catholic teaching that, apart from a few exceptional cases where the life of the mother is threatened by a continuation of the pregnancy, abortion is morally unacceptable in all circumstances? Or, more broadly, what sort of moral reasoning could Mrs Pelosi invoke to

support her pro-choice stance? May I rehearse three general considerations and then three more specific to Mrs Pelosi's circumstances?

Firstly, Mrs Pelosi may simply believe – and, presumably, in good conscience – that the Church teaching is just wrong. Recalling the Church's negative pronouncements on contraception (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968), In Vitro Fertilisation (*Donum Vitae*, 1987) and women's ordination (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 1994), she might claim that it is just another manifestation of the Church's patriarchal, chauvinist and misogynistic attitude towards women that it prioritises the right to life of the embryo or foetus over the right of the mother to decide to continue or discontinue her pregnancy.

Secondly, Mrs Pelosi may believe in inverting the Church's priority in all cases or she may limit it to cases of rape, incest, child pregnancy, or cases where severe – or even lesser – signs of disability are detected in the early stages of pregnancy.

Or, thirdly, she may believe that, whatever may be said of the later stages of pregnancy, the early embryo and foetus certainly do not qualify for personhood status and the consequent protection which we afford fully fledged human beings.

The foregoing three considerations are the standard justifications for the pro-choice stance which Mrs Pelosi apparently supports. There are, however, three further justifications specifically in the American context that may have been even more influential in attracting Mrs Pelosi to the pro-choice camp.

The first of these is the belief that, following on fifty years of liberal abortion policy after *Roe v Wade* (1973), legislating now to forbid or limit abortions will inevitably increase the incidence of 'back-street' abortions and augment the number of maternal deaths and other peri-natal complications.

Secondly, she may submit that continuing to be an influential member of the Democratic Party and thereby legislating many other social justice policies highly palatable to Catholic sentiment requires that she toe the party line on pro-choice abortion. She, like President Biden, may regret this line personally (although there is no evidence that she does), but the 'greater good' of the social justice policies enables her to 'square her conscience' on promoting legislation that permits abortion.

The third and final argument pertains to Mrs Pelosi specifically as a national legislator. There is considerable evidence that about 80 per cent of the American population support abortion, at least in limited circumstances, e.g., in the first trimester, or in pregnancies as a result of rape or incest, or where the victim is a child or otherwise vulnerable. Is there an obligation, certainly a political one, perhaps even moral, for a legislator to respect and endorse this overwhelming consensus in such a contested moral issue rather than impose more restrictive legislation?

One would have hoped that on an issue as contentious as abortion all members of the Democratic Party would have been permitted a conscience vote without compromising their political standing or aspirations. In most Australian jurisdictions this is generally the case. But it is not the case in the Democratic Party apparently. Being openly pro-life, rather than pro-choice, is in effect political suicide.

Granted this, then, granted, too, the importance of Mrs Pelosi's continuing political influence for good social policy, and granted the strong support for abortion in America, could not Mrs Pelosi argue that, even as a 'devout Catholic' she really has no choice but to be perceived as supporting pro-choice legislation?

Pope John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* ('The Gospel of Life') in paragraphs 73-74, explicitly adverts to the problem confronting Catholic politicians like Mrs Pelosi seen to be cooperating with what are, from a Catholic point of view, unjust laws.

He spells out some leeways which a Catholic politician may exploit, and it might seem at first glance that Mrs Pelosi, if she wanted to, might take cover under these exceptions. However, he then explicitly excludes the operation of such leeways when abortion or euthanasia are at issue, except where such legislation is aimed at limiting, rather than maintaining or expanding, the existing policies. Abortion and euthanasia, the Pope claims, are 'innocent life' issues for which the Catholic politician must be willing

to sacrifice political influence and even career opportunities. I am sure Mrs Pelosi's archbishop in San Francisco would agree.

Does Pope Francis, in receiving Mrs Pelosi at the Vatican and ministering Holy Communion to her, have a more expansive view of the leeways and exceptions? Or does he just respect/accept/tolerate her pro-choice stance, believing it to be held in good (if erroneous) conscience? But if this latter view is the case, is not Mrs Pelosi entitled to invoke a similar line of

argument to justify morally respecting/accepting/tolerating the pro-choice stance of the 80 per cent of Americans who also, presumably (a large presumption), hold this stance in good conscience? If this is the case, many a professed Australian Catholic politician in similar circumstances (Anthony Albanese and Daniel Andrews spring readily to mind) may, I suspect, breathe a sigh of relief. Our abortion and euthanasia laws, which they have promoted, are among the most liberal in the world. ☺



Cardinal Pell and “Clerical Errors”

GERARD HENDERSON

I read with interest Professor Desmond Cahill's review of the book by Peter Murnane titled *Clerical Errors* which was published in *The Swag* (Summer 2022). Early on, Cahill focused on the first chapter in *Clerical Errors* titled “The Trials of George Pell”. Cahill commented that this chapter ends by asking: “Has George Pell been the victim of a gigantic conspiracy involving media, police and even persons in the Vatican, through more than a quarter of a century? Or is he actually guilty of sexual offences against boys...?”

Cahill did not answer this (leading) question. However, Murnane makes it clear in *Clerical Errors* that he is of the view that Pell abused young boys at “a Ballarat swimming pool in the 1970s” and at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, in the mid-1990s.

Cahill did not take issue with Murnane's comments cited above. But Murnane's case against the late cardinal with respect to his alleged crimes of pedophilia is extremely weak. Pell was charged by Victoria Police in 2017 with 26 counts of historical child sexual abuse. None prevailed. Murnane writes that what he refers to as the Swimmers Trial (concerning Ballarat) “was cancelled... because of illness and the death of one accuser”. Not so. The Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions dropped the case because there was insufficient evidence to attain a conviction – this followed a decision in the Victorian County Court

that certain tendency and coincidence evidence advanced by the prosecution was not sufficient to go before a jury.

Pell faced only one trial – he was accused of four charges of assaulting “A” and “B” (as they were referred to in the High Court) and one charge of assaulting “A” alone. The first jury could not reach a unanimous, or 11 to one, decision. The second jury reached a unanimous decision of guilty after deliberating for four days. As is well known, the verdict was upheld by the Victorian Court of Appeal in a two-to-one decision but subsequently quashed by all seven High Court judges.

Murnane makes much of the fact that “the High Court did not declare the cardinal to be innocent”. No court ever finds a defendant “innocent” – no such verdict is available in Australian criminal law. However, the High Court did find that in the Pell Case that there was a “significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted”. These words were taken from Justice William Deane's strong dissent when Lindy Chamberlain's conviction was upheld in the High Court – it was quashed some years later. It is most unusual for an appeal court to refer to an “innocent person” when quashing a criminal conviction.

In his review, Cahill referred to the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It was hostile to Pell and made findings that, when in a position to do so, Pell had not responded

properly to child sexual assault. I devoted Chapter 9 of my book *Cardinal Pell, the Media Pile-On & Collective Guilt* (Connor Court, 2021) – which was reviewed in *The Swag's* Winter 2022 issue – to the Royal Commission.

The fact is that none of the Royal Commission's findings against Pell were supported by oral or documentary evidence. Rather it found that the cardinal's evidence before the Royal Commission was, variously, “inconceivable”, “implausible”, “not-tenable”, “unlikely” and so on – and that he “should” or “could” have done something or other. These are opinions only – unsupported by evidence. Moreover, the Royal Commission's findings against Pell contained errors and serious inconsistencies. Fr Frank Brennan has referred to its “shoddy work” and suggested that it exhibited “animus...towards Pell”.

George Pell never claimed that he was without fault in the handling of historical child sexual abuse. But he did say that he was among the first members of the Catholic hierarchy to act to prevent such crimes – and that clerical child abuse was close to non-existent after he established the Melbourne Response within months of being appointed Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996.

It is important to point out that, in *Clerical Errors*, Murnane has relied to a significant extent on Pell's media antagonists. Having said this, I conclude by saying that I found Cahill's reflections on the other nine chapters of *Clerical Errors* to be informative and insightful. ☺

The Family of Jesus

HARRY MOORE SM

Almost forty years ago when I was working in the slums of Mexico City, the kids told me of a lucky escape by the whole human race. It seems that a saintly lady had a vision of a very angry Jesus. He was totally fed up with the ungrateful human race who had had been given chance after chance and were still recalcitrant. He had been patient enough. It was time for them to go, so he lifted his mighty fist and was on the point of sending homo sapiens into the land of extinction when his mother Mary grabbed his wrist and once again saved the human race from the wrath of God. Phew! What a lucky escape. Thank goodness for the little girl from Nazareth.

Over the millennia there have been a plethora of holy people who have had similar visions of Jesus or Mary, but Karl Rahner in his book on spirituality, is sceptical about their value as a basis for understanding the place of Mary, the mother of Jesus in God's plan for us. He says that in our quest for a genuine Marian spirituality we should confine ourselves to the scriptures which in Mary's case means confining ourselves to the Gospels.

To help me in my search for a scripture-based understanding of Mary's journey of discovery of her Son, and how her example can help me in my glacial progress of discovery into the person of Jesus, I need to know who was Salome and the other Mary.

Who was salome and the other Mary?

Mark 15:40

"There were also women looking on from a distance, among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provide for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem."

So, Mark mentions three women by name; Mary Magdalene – we know who she was; Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joses – there are arguments about who she was, and Salome.

If James the Younger, son of Mary, was the James mentioned in Galatians 1:19 as "the Lord's brother", it seems reasonable to assume that James the Younger and his mother Mary were some kind of blood relatives of Jesus. Presuming that there would not be two sisters of the same family with the same name. Could it be that this Mary was in fact the mother of Jesus and this James was the younger sibling of Jesus? and if so, there is possibly some very significant reason of context where the Evangelist refers to Mary of Nazareth in this oblique way. Scripture scholars help!

Matthew 27:55-56

"Many women were also there looking from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."

Matthew also mentions three women by name: Mary Magdalene whom we know; Mary the mother of James and Joseph whose identity we are not quite sure of; but who could be the little girl from Nazareth herself; and the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee, whom I think it is fair to say is the Salome mentioned in Mark.

So, it seems fair to say that the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John, the fishermen, was a woman called Salome.

Later, in Matthew's story, 27:61, he has: *Mary Magdalene and the other (unidentified) Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.*

John 19:25

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

John adds a fourth woman to the group – the mother of Jesus. Mary Magdalene gets another mention, and another lady who is identified as the sister of Jesus' mother who is presumably Salome, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John the fishermen apostles.

I do not think that scripture scholars can say for sure, but if "sister" means the same for John as it does for us, it looks very much like James and John were the first cousins of Jesus and their mum was his aunty, Salome.

Matthew and Mark have the women "looking on from a distance", but John wants to have Jesus giving important instructions to his mother and the unnamed disciple whom he loved,

Continued page 27



NCP PLAQUES FOR SALE!

Beautiful wooden and ceramic plaques

(15cm x 20cm.)

Perfect NCP memento.

\$50.00 (includes postage).

Contact the National Office to order.

Ordination Anniversaries 2023



Congratulations and Thank you!

Ordination dates supplied to NCP
by individual clergy.

ORDAINED 75 YEARS

Rev Mgr Raymond Pope, Port Pirie, 28/07/1948

ORDAINED 73 YEARS

Rev Christopher Baker SSC, 23/09/1950

ORDAINED 72 YEARS

Rev Mgr Francis Hickey, Sandhurst, 22/07/1951
Rev Paul Bateman, Canberra & Goulburn, 23/07/1951
Rev Mgr Vincent Tiggeman, Adelaide, 21/12/1951

ORDAINED 71 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

ORDAINED 70 YEARS

Rev Patrick Duggan, Melbourne, 07/06/1953
Rev Paul Glynn SM, 19/07/1953

ORDAINED 65 YEARS

Rev Daniel O'Donovan, Broome, 25/02/1958
Rev John Ford, Sydney, 08/03/1958
Rev Michael Kelly, Sydney, 08/03/1958
Rev Kenneth Sargent, Sydney, 08/03/1958
Rev Dr David Coffey, Sydney, 08/03/1958
Rev Eugene Stockton, Parramatta, 08/03/1958
Rev Donald Willoughby, Sydney, 08/03/1958
Rev Francis Mulcahy, Lismore, 09/03/1958
Rev Mgr Michael Burgess, Wagga Wagga, 11/03/1958
Rev Morris Clarke, Armidale, 13/03/1958
Rev Guy Carlson SJ, 19/03/1958
Rev Anthony Loth, Wagga Wagga, 22/03/1958
Rev Anthony Scerri OCarm, 27/03/1958
Rev Mgr Benedict Camilleri, Melbourne, 15/04/1958
Rev Jefferies Foale CP, 08/05/1958
Rev Ennio Mantovani SVD, 15/05/1958
Rev Myles Lynch OSM, 18/05/1958
Rev Francis Gerry SVD, 07/06/1958
Rev Eusebius Mak OFM, 29/06/1958
Rev Patrick Stratford, Brisbane, 30/06/1958
Rev Francis Gordon, Cairns, 30/06/1958
Rev Gerald Arbuckle SM, 17/07/1958
Rev Benno Rausch SAC, 20/07/1958
Rev Josef Butscher SAC, 20/07/1958
Rev John Prendiville SJ, 26/07/1958
Rev Clem Cafarella, Melbourne, 27/07/1958
Rev John Brady, Melbourne, 27/07/1958
Rev Gerard Dowling, Melbourne, 27/07/1958
Rev John Davine, Sale, 21/09/1958
Rev Hilton Roberts, Can & Goulburn, 23/11/1958
Most Rev Barry Hickey, Perth, 21/12/1958

ORDAINED 60 YEARS

Rev Gerald O'Collins SJ, 02/01/1963

Rev Vittorio Basso CS, 19/03/1963
Rev Peter Tangey OSA, 05/05/1963
Rev James Corcoran, Perth, 02/06/1963
Rev Dermot Clinton, Wagga Wagga, 09/06/1963
Rev Gerard Beasley, Melbourne, 27/06/1963
Rev Terence Hickling, Toowoomba, 28/06/1963
Rev Leo Skelly, Brisbane, 29/06/1963
Rev Kenneth Keating, Perth, 29/06/1963
Rev Walter Dethlefs, Brisbane, 29/06/1963
Rev Alan Sheldrick, Townsville, 29/06/1963
Rev Paul Carey SSC, 29/06/1963
Rev Anthony Kelly CSsR, 30/06/1963
Rev John Begg SM, 06/07/1963
Rev James Carty SM, 06/07/1963
Rev Carl Schafer OFM, 13/07/1963
Rev Christopher Gardiner OFM, 13/07/1963
Rev Desmond Williamson OCD, 14/07/1963
Rev Peter Christie, Sydney, 20/07/1963
Rev Witold Brymora, Sydney, 20/07/1963
Rev Peter Rees, Mait-Newcastle, 20/07/1963
Rev Mgr Anthony Doherty, Sydney, 20/07/1963
Rev Terence Bell, Sydney, 20/07/1963
Rev Henry Kennedy, Broken Bay, 20/07/1963
Rev Bernard Frize, Armidale, 23/07/1963
Rev Edmund Kenny, Parramatta, 23/07/1963
Rev John Ryan, Sandhurst, 27/07/1963
Rev Brenan Donohue, Melbourne, 27/07/1963
Rev George O'Connor, Melbourne, 27/07/1963
Rev Mgr Peter Jeffrey, Sandhurst, 27/07/1963
Rev Peter Connor, Rockhampton, 21/12/1963
Rev William Burston, Mait-Newcastle, 21/12/1963

ORDAINED 50 YEARS

Rev William Burt SVD, 10/02/1973
Rev Sebastian Mappilaparambil VC, Melb, 18/02/1973
Rev John Wotherspoon OMI, 19/02/1973
Most Rev Peter Elliott, Melbourne, 19/02/1973
Rev Wieslaw Slowik SJ, 25/02/1973
Rev Oswald Lewis, Perth, 01/03/1973
Rev Senan Ward OSA, 10/03/1973
Rev Francis Ughanze, Perth, 05/05/1973
Rev Phillip Hicks MSC, 12/05/1973
Rev Robert Irwin MSC, 12/05/1973
Rev Terry Wade, Melbourne, 19/05/1973
Rev Anthony Callinan, Melbourne, 19/05/1973
Rev Michael Elligate, Melbourne, 19/05/1973
Rev James Collins SM, 26/05/1973
Rev John Follent OCD, 10/06/1973
Rev Peter Dunn, Adelaide, 01/08/1973
Rev John Chalmers, Brisbane, 07/08/1973
Rev David O'Connor, Brisbane, 07/08/1973
Most Rev James Foley, Cairns, 07/08/1973
Very Rev Dr Adrian Farrelly, Brisbane, 08/08/1973
Rev James Smith, Brisbane, 09/08/1973
Rev Michael Lowcock, Townsville, 10/08/1973
Rev John Willis, Armidale, 23/08/1973
Rev John Sullivan OSA, 24/08/1973
Rev Matthew McPhee OCarm, 24/08/1973
Rev Kevin Carey, Brisbane, 25/08/1973
Rev Kerry Crowley, Cairns, 25/08/1973
Rev Peter Varengo SDB, 25/08/1973

Rev Brendan Lane, Melbourne, 25/08/1973
 Rev Andrew Granc, OFM, 26/08/1973
 Rev Thomas Gleeson, Adelaide, 01/09/1973
 Rev Don Coutts MGL, 01/09/1973
 Rev William van de Camp, Ballarat, 05/09/1973
 Rev Barry Dwyer, Wilcannia-Forbes, 05/09/1973
 Rev Lawrence O'Toole, Ballarat, 06/09/1973
 Rev Anthony Frey, Canberra & Goulburn, 21/09/1973
 Rev Rex Curry, Broken Bay, 18/10/1973
 Most Rev Robert McGuckin, Toowoomba, 20/10/1973
 Rev Mgr Brian Rayner, Sydney, 20/10/1973
 Very Rev Phillip Zadro, Sydney, 20/10/1973
 Rev Robert Wood, Melbourne, 24/11/1973
 Rev Peter Addicoat CP, 01/12/1973
 Rev Mark Raper SJ, 08/12/1973
 Rev Francis Phat, Adelaide, 16/12/1973
 Rev Francis Phan, Geraldton, 18/12/1973

ORDAINED 40 YEARS

Rev Ralph Besterwitch SAC, 01/01/1983
 Rev Ranillo Creta, Parramatta, 07/04/1983
 Rev Terence Nueva, Brisbane, 03/05/1983
 Rev John Girdauskas, Hobart, 20/05/1983
 Rev Leo Duck, Wollongong, 21/05/1983
 Most Rev Kenneth Howell, Brisbane, 24/06/1983
 Rev Emmanuel Bonello, Melbourne, 25/06/1983
 Rev Olexander Kenez, Ukrainian Eparchy, 29/06/1983
 Rev John Agnew, Brisbane, 12/08/1983
 Rev William Busuttin, Townsville, 12/08/1983
 Rev Mgr Glynn Murphy, Ballarat, 12/08/1983
 Most Rev Michael McKenna, Bathurst, 19/08/1983
 Rev Quintin Culpeper, Brisbane, 19/08/1983
 Rev Robert Borg, Broken Bay, 20/08/1983
 Rev Martin Fleming, Melbourne, 20/08/1983
 Very Rev John Salvano, Melbourne, 20/08/1983
 Rev Steven Rigo, Melbourne, 20/08/1983
 Rev Ian McGinnity, Parramatta, 20/08/1983
 Rev John McSweeney, Parramatta, 20/08/1983
 Rev Paul Miles SDB, 20/08/1983
 Most Rev Terence Brady, Sydney, 20/08/1983
 Very Rev Christopher de Souza, P'matta, 20/08/1983
 Very Rev Brian Moloney, Broken Bay, 20/08/1983
 Rev Dr Richard Lennan, Mait-Newcastle, 27/08/1983
 Rev Mgr Edward Wilkes, Armidale, 31/08/1983
 Most Rev Patrick O'Regan, Adelaide, 02/09/1983
 Rev Owen, Mason SDB, 01/10/1983
 Rev George Hogarty SSC, 12/11/1983
 Rev Jack Otto SJ, 25/11/1983
 Rev Robert Davoren SJ, 26/11/1983
 Rev Nestor Candado SSP, 10/12/1983
 Rev Daniel Madigan SJ, 10/12/1983
 Rev Aliko Langi SM, 15/12/1983
 Rev Phillips Royan, Sydney, 17/12/1983
 Rev George Condookala, Wollongong, 19/12/1983
 Rev Colin Xavier, Melbourne, 29/12/1983

ORDAINED 30 YEARS

Rev Mick MacAndrew, Can & Goulb, 19/01/1993
 Rev James O'Donoghue, Brisbane, 19/03/1993

Rev Robert Greenup OSA, 20/03/1993
 Very Rev Bernard Gordon, Wollongong, 09/04/1993
 Rev Peter Tien, Wollongong, 17/04/1993
 Rev Christopher Matala, Adelaide, 02/05/1993
 Rev Stanislaw Kluk CSMA, 02/05/1993
 Rev Stephen Ardill, Port Pirie, 15/05/1993
 Rev Taras Gorpynyak, Ukrainian Eparchy, 27/05/1993
 Rev Michael Leek OSB, Perth, 27/05/1993
 Rev Anthony Lemon, Lismore, 28/05/1993
 Rev Robert O'Bryan, Geraldton, 09/07/1993
 Most Rev Antoine-Charbel Tarabay OLM, Maronite, 11/07/1993
 Rev Paul Roberts, Parramatta, 24/07/1993
 Rev Deacon Christopher Wallace, Lismore, 30/07/1993
 Rev Philip Watkins SSS, 31/07/1993
 Rev Gregory Barker, Mait-Newcastle, 13/08/1993
 Very Rev Werner Utri, Melbourne, 21/08/1993
 Rev James Clarke, Melbourne, 21/08/1993
 Rev Brian Collins, Melbourne, 21/08/1993
 Rev Joseph Nguyen, Wollongong, 28/08/1993
 Rev Dr Phillip Gleeson SDB, 28/08/1993
 Rev Dr Kevin Lenehan, Ballarat, 04/09/1993
 Very Rev Bernard Buckley, Sale, 10/09/1993
 Rev Richard Gates, Sydney, 11/09/1993
 Rev Martin Cruickshank, Wagga Wagga, 17/09/1993
 Rev Paul Pearce SM, 23/10/1993
 Rev Laurence Leonard SJ, 03/12/1993
 Rev Timothy Hogan, Parramatta, 04/12/1993
 Rev Anthony Ha, Wollongong, 08/12/1993
 Rev Paul Tru, Melbourne, 08/12/1993
 Rev Arno Vermeeren, Port Pirie, 11/12/1993
 Rev Richard Leonard SJ, 11/12/1993
 Rev Wayne Davis, Perth, 17/12/1993
 Rev Brian Harris OMI, 17/12/1993
 Rev Ian Esmond, Perth, 17/12/1993

ORDAINED 25 YEARS

Rev Shaji Joseph, Port Pirie, 03/01/1998
 Rev Johny Edapulavan CMI, 09/01/1998
 Rev Cao Nguyen SJ, 18/04/1998
 Rev Ronald Donoghue CCS, 25/04/1998
 Rev Erick Quinteros, Lismore, 25/04/1998
 Rev John Spiteri OFM Cap, 12/06/1998
 Rev Colin Marshall, Melbourne, 27/06/1998
 Rev James Lunn, Mait-Newcastle, 27/06/1998
 Rev Ivo Tadic OFM, 29/06/1998
 Rev Martin Monaghan, Sydney, 10/07/1998
 Rev Petelo Vito Pau SDB, 18/07/1998
 Rev Brian Mathews, Port Pirie, 20/07/1998
 Rev Deacon Anthony Aspinall, Sale, 14/08/1998
 Rev Boris Perlaki SSS, 15/08/1998
 Rev Brian Keogh OCSO, 15/08/1998
 Rev John O'Connor, Melbourne, 22/08/1998
 Rev Nhan Le, Melbourne, 22/08/1998
 Rev Mgr Franco Cavarra, Melbourne, 22/08/1998
 Very Rev Julian Wellspring, Canb & Goulb, 27/09/1998
 Rev Paul Fox, Perth, 09/10/1998
 Rev John Piumatti, Perth, 09/10/1998
 Rev Dr Armando Carandang, Perth, 15/10/1998
 Rev Joti Bilowalu CM, 14/11/1998
 Rev Andrew Hayes, Ballarat, 18/11/1998

Rev Delmar Alberto Silva Paez CS, 28/11/1998
Rev Ho Tran SVD, 05/12/1998
Rev Gerald Tan, Bunbury, 11/12/1998

ORDAINED 20 YEARS

Rev Richard Smith, Perth, 22/03/2003
Rev Deacon Ron Webb, Bunbury, 01/05/2003
Rev Bryan Pipins SJ, 16/05/2003
Rev Rick Micallef, Wagga Wagga, 17/05/2003
Rev Zygmunt Smigowski SDS, 24/05/2003
Rev Deacon Peter Stringfellow, Sale, 06/06/2003
Rev Anthony Doran, Melbourne, 14/06/2003
Rev Dr Thomas Brancik, Wagga Wagga, 05/07/2003
Rev Deacon Nicephorus Tan, Parramatta, 19/07/2003
Rev Michael Belonio OSA, 24/07/2003
Rev David Francis OMI, 01/08/2003
Rev Gerard Conlan OMI, 15/08/2003
Rev Kene Onwukwe, Sydney, 16/08/2003
Rev John Daly, Perth, 22/08/2003
Very Rev Van Vuong Nguyen, Sydney, 23/08/2003
Rev Blaise Kurek, Wagga Wagga, 03/10/2003
Rev Hien Vu, Melbourne, 11/10/2003
Rev Vincent Nguyen, Melbourne, 05/12/2003
Rev William Edebohls, Melbourne, 06/12/2003

ORDAINED 10 YEARS

Rev Joseph Sebastian IVDei, Melbourne, 02/01/2013
Rev Mgr Carl Reid, OLSC, 26/01/2013
Rev Dean Mathieson OFMCap, 09/02/2013
Rev Darrell Irvine, Toowoomba, 25/02/2013
Rev Victor Lujano, Perth, 08/03/2013
Rev Bradley Rafter, Wagga Wagga, 05/04/2013
Rev Christopher Lim Han Lee OPraem, 19/04/2013
Rev Deacon Michael Hangan, Hobart, 19/05/2013
Rev Tuan Tran, Armidale, 07/06/2013
Rev Ladu Yanga, Brisbane, 29/06/2013
Rev Stanley Orji, Brisbane, 29/06/2013
Rev William Senn, Rockhampton, 03/07/2013
Rev Daniel McCaughan, Sydney, 06/07/2013
Rev Nicholas Rynne, Sydney, 06/07/2013
Rev Dominic Nguyen, Sydney, 06/07/2013
Rev Peter Rozitis, Adelaide, 27/07/2013
Rev James Kerr, Ballarat, 06/09/2013
Rev John Escarlan, Parramatta, 13/09/2013
Rev Ashley Caldwell, Sandhurst, 14/09/2013
Rev Paul Nulley, Canberra & Goulburn, 27/09/2013
Rev Brennan Sia, Perth, 27/09/2013
Rev Siju Xavier, Sale, 05/10/2013
Rev Jepsen Bermudez OSA, 18/10/2013
Rev Vincent Nguyen, Broken Bay, 26/10/2013
Rev Stephen Onyekwere, Wagga Wagga, 16/11/2013
Rev Deacon Poukesi Vaka'uta, Melbourne, 23/11/2013
Rev Deacon Pselio Lemalu, Melbourne, 23/11/2013
Rev Deacon Michael Moore, Adelaide, 24/11/2013
Rev Stephen Gronow, OLSC, 29/11/2013
Rev Neville Yun, Brisbane, 29/11/2013
Rev Josue Quej Moran, Sydney, 29/11/2013
Rev Joseph Holloway, Lismore, 12/12/2013
Rev Luke Verrell, Can & Goulburn, 13/12/2013
Rev Edward Wilson, OLSC, 14/12/2013

ORDAINED IN 2022

Rev Thao Van Nguyen, Bathurst, 28/01/2022
Rev Diep Quang Nguyen, Bathurst, 28/01/2022
Rev Anthony Beltrame, Adelaide, 12/03/2022
Rev Olek Stirrat, Adelaide, 12/03/2022
Rev Jackson Saunders, Sandhurst, 25/03/2022
Rev Brian Redondo, Toowoomba, 25/06/2022
Rev Nathan Webb, Toowoomba, 25/06/2022
Rev Peterpaul Chikezie, Armidale, 29/06/2022
Rev El Louie Jimenez, Brisbane, 29/06/2022
Rev Brian Muling, Melbourne, 15/07/2022
Rev Ignatius Tan, Melbourne, 15/07/2022
Rev Andrew Kwiatkowski, Melbourne, 15/07/2022
Rev William Lowry, Ballarat, 22/07/2022
Rev Matthew Restall, Ballarat, 22/07/2022
Rev Joshua Nash OMI, 22/07/2022
Rev Adrian Simmons, Sydney, 06/08/2022
Rev Benjamin Gandy, Sydney, 06/08/2022
Rev Benjamin Saliba, Sydney, 06/08/2022
Rev Mark Anderson, Sydney, 06/08/2022
Rev Grzegorz Rapcewicz, Perth, 12/08/2022
Rev Micheal Kasiita, Sydney, 13/08/2022
Rev Andrew Rooney, Parramatta, 26/08/2022
Rev Joseph-Awtel Maroon, Maronite, 01/10/2022
Rev Robert-Pio Albayeh, Maronite, 01/10/2022
Rev Mark Hughes, Sale, 15/10/2022
Rev Nam Dinh Le, Bathurst, 04/11/2022
Rev Albino Dos Santos OCarm, 12/11/2022
Rev Christopher Maher OFMCap, 17/11/2022
Rev Deacon Tom Green, Parramatta, 27/11/2022

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

**If your anniversary is not
on this list,
please contact our office so we
can update our database.**



so in his story he moves the whole group forward to the foot of the cross.

The Three James

It seems there is a consensus among scripture scholars that there were three James in the Jesus story.

James the Greater The brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, the first cousin of Jesus and a blood relative of John the Baptist. This James gets many mentions in the Gospels. The last we hear of him is in Acts 12:2 where King Herod ends his life in a similar way to his relative John the Baptizer.

James the Less One of the twelve, the son of Alphaeus. Tradition has given him the name “The Less” to distinguish him from the other member of the twelve James son of Zebedee who is called “The Greater”. We don’t know much about the subsequent history of James son of Alphaeus aka James the Less.

James of Jerusalem This James speaks with authority on behalf of the Church of Jerusalem in Acts 15:13 on the matter of circumcision and other Jewish regulations as a prerequisite for non-Jews to enter the community.

Some scholars link Jerusalem James with the James in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. *“He appeared first to Cephas and secondly to the Twelve, then he appeared to James”* who was not one of the Twelve.

They are also happy to link him to the James who is met by Paul in Galatians 1 18:19 *“I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas. I did not see any of the other apostles; I only saw James the brother of the Lord”*.

Some Catholic Scripture Scholars are also comfortable with linking Jerusalem James with James in Mark 15:40 *“There were also women looking on from a distance, among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joseph, and Salome”*.

Even more courageously they are comfortable with linking Jerusalem James with the James in Mark 6:3 *“This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us”*.

This would make Jerusalem James the younger sibling of Jesus.

I realise this is a challengeable proposition, but for the sake of my argument I ask your indulgence dear reader, and allow me to assume it.

Jealousy of the pharisees

Matthew 12:24 and Luke 11:15 have people saying that Jesus does his good works through the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. In John 7:19-20, it is even more dramatic. Jesus asks “Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?” and the crowd answers, “Because you have a demon.”

His family, of course, would have been well aware of these death threats and the danger he, and perhaps by association, they were in.

His family loved him and gradually grew to understand him

John 7:1-5 had his family giving Jesus all kinds of worldly advice. “There is a festival on in Jerusalem. Why don’t you go up there, cure a few people and you will become well-known,” and Jesus responded “No, thanks. I’m not ready to be killed just yet. You go up. You will be safe.”

At this stage, his family was just at the beginning of their journey of understanding the person of the real Jesus. But they loved him nonetheless.

This love was demonstrated in Mark 3:20-21. This is the story of the family’s concern for Jesus. They have heard reports about his possession by the devil and the death threats. At the time he was so dedicated to his teaching and so many demands were being made on him that he did not have time to sleep or eat, so the family had a meeting and decided that if his enemies didn’t kill him, exhaustion and starvation would. He was too good for his own good and the best thing to do was to go and force him to come home where he could be properly looked after. They loved him.

Incidentally, the Jerusalem Bible translation says “They (i.e. the family) said ‘He is out of his mind.’” I prefer the more friendly translation of the RSV, “People were saying he was out of his mind.”

Mark 15:41 tells us who followed Jesus and provided for him. Once again, it was his loving family, Mary his mother and Salome his aunt.

Jesus loves his family

For the sake of my argument can we assume that James and John, the sons of Zebedee and Salome, were the first cousins of Jesus.

- Who, in Mark 1:19, were the second to be selected as disciples? The cousins.
- Who, in Mark 1:29, were invited to accompany Jesus when he cures Simon’s mother-in-law? The cousins.
- Who, in Mark 3:17, when Jesus appoints the twelve, were appointed second and third? The cousins.
- Who, in Mark 5:37, were present when Jesus cures the daughter of Jairus? The cousins, again.
- Who, in Mark 9:2, were privileged to witness the Transfiguration? You guessed it.

What about the Agony in the Garden in Mark 14:33. Who does Jesus select to be with him in that crushing experience? Once again, members of his family, James and John.

And again, who gets to eat the grilled fish in the post-resurrection story of John 20? The sons of Zebedee.

For the sake of the argument, can we also assume that James the younger son of Mary of Nazareth is favoured with an apparition of Jesus in 1 Cor 15:7, and has a meeting with Paul in Galatians 1:9, and who speaks with great authority in Acts 15. So, James the younger a highly influential figure in the ancient church, is also a blood relative of Jesus.

Jesus loved his family, and his family members were very influential, and indeed, privileged in the early church.

The early church could be forgiven for thinking that there was a bit of nepotism going on here.

The correction

When the ten disciples heard that the mother of James and John had asked for favourable treatment for her sons, they were understandably angry. Matthew 20:20.

Jesus took the opportunity to explain things very clearly. “Aunty Sal,” he said, “that’s not how it works. In my community, blood relationship counts for nothing. Anyone who wants to be the boss in the community must be the servant of the community.”

Continued page 28

Another opportunity comes for clear teaching when the family goes to snatch him and bring him home. Mark 3:33-35.

“Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside the house and sent in the message asking for him. A crowd was sitting around Jesus, and they said to him, “Look, your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, and they want you.” Jesus answered, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” he looked at the people and said, “Look! Here are my mother and my brothers! Those who do what God wants them to do is my brother, my sister, my mother.”

What does this mean for us?

I think that this is what Jesus is saying to us.

“Suffering for the sake of the Kingdom and being a servant to all, is what makes someone my disciple, my brother or my sister. Blood relationship counts for nothing. It is totally irrelevant. It doesn’t matter if Mary McKillop was your great aunt. It doesn’t matter if you were born a Catholic and went to a Catholic school. Everyone has to undergo the tortuous journey of gradually understanding my message and growing in a relationship with me. It is a life-long journey and does not end until you see me face to face. You have to slowly hear the Word of God and keep it. You have to constantly be the servant of all.

Why is my mother loved all over the world by people of many faiths? It’s not because she is my mother, but because from the time she was a girl, she said yes to God’s Word and still remains the servant of God’s people. She looks, she listens, she says very little, but she treasures things in her heart and she gets the job done. That is why everyone is inspired by her and you would all do well to follow her example.”



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

Some thoughts following the death of George Pell

MICHAEL MORWOOD

Cardinal George Pell died in Rome, 10th January. The lead story in today’s *The Age* newspaper (13th January, 2023) reveals that he was the author of an “anonymous memo” labelling Pope Francis’ pontificate a “disaster”, a “catastrophe”. He loathed the German bishops and their progressive agenda. It’s no secret that he had been the go-to man for the ultra-conservative block of bishops and cardinals to ensure the next conclave elected someone to their liking. Pell is being hailed by them (and conservative politicians here in Australia) as a man of great intellect. Pell clearly thought of himself as such, lamenting, as he did, the shift in this pontificate from the intellectual superiority (as he thought) of Ratzinger and JP11.

I first met George Pell in his Archbishop of Melbourne’s office in February, 1998.

He had ordered me, a priest at the time, to attend and hear his condemnation of my book, *Tomorrow’s Catholic. Understanding God and Jesus in a New Millennium*.

As I had expected, the meeting did not go well.

I was handed a ten-page document laden with quotes from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I was told that I was in error, that a public announcement would be made to that effect the following week, that my book was banned from sale, and that I was not to speak publicly on the key issues the book addressed.

There was no room for any conversation. Several key theological points emerged from this meeting.

- George Pell literally believed that the human species had emerged into a state of paradise. My book had clearly stated that this thinking is scientific nonsense and should be discarded.
- George Pell literally believed that Jesus rose bodily to heaven. Try getting teenagers to believe that today.
- George Pell literally believed that Jesus spoke the words attributed to him in John’s Gospel. Catholic Scripture scholars know this is not so. They know the Gospel is a “theology” about

Jesus written more than sixty years after he died, when Christianity had separated from Judaism.

My experience with Pell has been repeated again and again and again throughout the Catholic Church in the past fifty years with members of the Catholic hierarchy silencing scholars and writers who dared question the traditional theological story: “Humans came into Paradise; the first humans made a terrible mistake; God closed heaven; someone had to descend from heaven to earth in order to “save” us and reopen heaven.”

In the past fifty years no man questioning that story could become a Catholic bishop.

Ask any Catholic bishop today: “Do you believe the human species emerged into a state of paradise?” and they will assuredly do their utmost to avoid the question. Why? Because 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 man. ... The harmony in which they had found themselves ... is now destroyed.” (#390, #400)

No bishop would publicly disagree with that story about a “fall”.

Here’s the crucial point:

- Did George Pell – along with all those other bishops – *really*, literally believe scientific nonsense? Or were (are) they willing to deliberately choose and publicly profess what their intellect told (tells) them not to believe – in order to become a bishop? Or, were (are) they just woefully ignorant men, willing to defend the Church at all costs?
- Was George Pell, a bishop of the Church, totally ignorant of contemporary biblical scholarship? Or, like many other bishops – even Joseph Ratzinger – did he deliberately choose to ignore the Church’s own scholarship so he could conveniently shut down any theological questioning with a quote from John’s Gospel?

George Pell will be remembered and feted as a great defender “of the Church”.

However, he and many of his fellow bishops, have steeped the Catholic Church in intellectual dishonesty that parallels the moral corruption of the sexual abuse scandal. The dishonesty and the corruption stem directly from efforts to protect the institution's unique identity and its power. The bishops have played the intellectual dishonesty game well. It has given them immense power and authority.

Catholic theologians are answerable to these bishops. That's the real tragedy. Bishops like Pell have no competence to address today's major theological issues. They fail dismally in their responsibility to bring the story and the message of Jesus to 21st century minds. It is not at all surprising that older Catholics are leaving the Church in large numbers. They no longer believe "the story" about God and Jesus they were told and that

bishops still unquestionably hold to.

It's time for bishops to allow its scholars to write and speak freely and openly – on all theological topics – and let facts, truth, scholarship and honesty guide followers of Jesus into a religious story worth believing. There is a much better story to be told about whatever "God" is for people today, what it means to be human, and what Jesus has to say to us about shaping a better world. ☪



Homosexuality in the Scriptures

MICHAEL FALLON MSC

Society, obviously including Christians, strongly condemns abusive sexual behaviour by both heterosexuals and homosexuals. No one argues from the abuses of heterosexual behaviour to claim that all heterosexual behaviour is sinful. However, there are some who condemn not only the abuses of homosexual behaviour, but all homosexual behaviour. They do so because they are convinced that according to the Bible all homosexual behaviour is forbidden by God. They judge that their Christian faith requires of them that they obey God's will as revealed in the Bible. My aim in this article is to examine the biblical texts to see if they support their position.

Before we do so, we need to know that the Bible is not an immutable proof text dictated by God. Rather it is an inspired living text that documents the evolution of religious consciousness: a text composed by fallible human beings grappling beautifully, sometimes even unsatisfactorily with an ineffable Mystery. The Bible is, as scripture scholar Raymond Brown has said, 'the literary objectification of a faith that is a response to revelation.' What we find in the Bible is an expression of the faith-response of the inspired authors: a response that is necessarily limited. The Bible, like a library, contain all types of genres including poetry, prose, history, metaphor, biography, parable. It is a collection of works composed within different historical contexts and across many centuries. It has aspects that transcend time and culture. We think of the 'golden rule': 'Do to others as you would have them

do to you' (Matthew 7:12). But there are also aspects that are limited to a particular time and culture, for example the law of circumcision and the polygamy of the patriarchs.

The religious leaders who rejected Jesus did so because they were convinced that he was not obeying God's will as expressed in the Bible. He ate with the wrong people, healed on the Sabbath, and challenged religious leaders who elevated mere human thinking to the realm of the divine: "In vain do they worship teaching human precepts as doctrines. You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition" (Mark 7:7-8). Jesus told them to go and learn the meaning of the words they claimed to be following (see Matthew 9:13). We have to do the same. Otherwise there is a danger that we, like some of the religious leaders, will impose our erroneous understanding on the biblical text.

A more fundamental problem arises when Jesus disagrees with teachings clearly found in the Old Testament. An obvious example concerns how we are to relate to our enemies. Throughout the Old Testament it is assumed that the enemies of Israel are God's enemies. The psalmist portrays God as a Warrior Lord who 'gallops over the plain' and 'scatters the enemy'. The people of Israel are challenged 'to bathe their feet in blood, that the tongues of our dogs may have their share of the foe' (Psalm 68). 'It is God who judges the nations, shattering heads, heaping up corpses' (Psalm 110:6). They thought that God was determined to wipe the enemies out,

and it was God's will that Israel be God's instrument in this: The psalmist writes: 'The enemy is destroyed, memory of them has perished. You razed to the ground their cities' (Psalm 9:6). 'Destroy the offspring of your enemies from the earth' (Psalm 21:10). 'Annihilate the nations in your wrath, that they may be no more; that they may know that God rules in Jacob and to the utmost ends of the earth' (Psalm 59:13). The psalmist is confident God will ensure that 'Blessed and happy will they be who take Babylon's children and dash them against the rock' (Psalm 137:9).

Clearly Jesus saw the error of this view. His image of God was radically different: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous' (Matthew 5:43-45). A Christian needs to examine any teaching found in the Old Testament in the light of Jesus' life and teaching.

Let us examine what the Old Testament has to say about homosexual behaviour. There is actually very little. There is the terrible story of Sodom (Genesis 19), which accounts for our word 'sodomy'. Given the importance of hospitality in Semitic culture it is obviously a condemnation of inhospitality and also rape. To interpret the text as condemning all homosexual behaviour is to introduce an idea that is not found in the text. There is the even worse story of the Levite (Judges 19), which also involves

Continued page 30



FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS
PROJECT COMPASSION

**HELP BUILD
A BRIGHTER
FUTURE FOR
THEM**



caritas.org.au/project-compassion
1800 024 413
#projectcompassion

Caritas AUSTRALIA
End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

a condemnation of rape. Both stories demonstrate an assumption of male superiority and a disgusting denigration of women. Apart from these stories there is a condemnation of cult prostitution: ‘None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute’ (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

The only other texts on the topic of homosexual behaviour are found in Leviticus: ‘You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination’ (Leviticus 18:22). ‘If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them’ (Leviticus 20:13). The word ‘abomination’ occurs 116 times in the Old Testament and covers a range of behaviours (see for example Proverbs 6:16-19). Since no context is given for the condemnation expressed in these two texts from Leviticus, we must ask what is the behaviour that the authors are calling an ‘abomination’? What is the nature of the behaviour which they are setting out to condemn?

It is often assumed that what we have here is a blanket condemnation of all homosexual behaviour. But what is the evidence for interpreting the texts in that way? We are not helped by the fact that no context is given for these regulations, and there is no discussion of the issues involved. Were those responsible for the law aware of homosexuality as we have come to understand it thanks to the advances in human sciences? Did they think that everyone was, by nature, heterosexual, which would make all homosexual behaviour unnatural? Did they even imagine the possibility of a homosexual relationship of consenting adults? Or were they thinking of the kind of public, flagrant, male prostitution that they observed in the Gentile world?

The culture in the Greek and Roman worlds was, speaking generally, quite accepting of male sexual behaviour. An adult male was encouraged to have a young male friend, which would include a physical relationship, but quite independent of any notion of a homosexual orientation.

It was expected that the intimacy be intellectually stimulating, and that the

older male would look to the education of the younger male and behave towards him in a sensitive way. Laws were enacted to protect young males against sexual harassment and rape. Moralists condemned those who ran brothels, and those males who made a living out of offering their sexual services to older males. But most moralists of the time extolled the virtues of love directed by male adults to boys.

The presence of coiffured and perfumed young men in the streets and public squares was a common sight and moralists of divergent philosophical persuasions spoke out against what they decried as decadent behaviour. One Greek moralist writes: ‘To be in love with those who are beautiful and chaste is the experience of a kind-hearted and generous soul; but to hire for money and to indulge in licentiousness is the act of a man who is wanton and ill-bred’ (Aeschines, Timarchus, 137).

There are good reasons to understand the texts from Leviticus as condemning the kind of abuses that moralists in the Greek world condemned. It is likely that they also include a condemnation of pederasty. But they cannot be quoted as condemning all homosexual behaviour.

When we turn to the Christian Scriptures, we find that Jesus has a lot to say about love, about patience, about respect and forgiveness – values that are basic to any committed love. There is no record of Jesus ever addressing the subject of homosexuality. For that we have to go to Paul.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul lists people whose behaviour ‘will not inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Corinthians 6:9).

The gospel is about human lives being transformed through the power of God’s Spirit. Paul names some of the more obvious vices that resist grace, corrupt the person and the community, and which, without repentance, will mean the loss of salvation. In his list Paul includes ‘male prostitutes and sodomites.

The Christians in Corinth would have read this as a condemnation of the exploitative, corrupting or injurious homosexual behaviour, including pederasty, that was rampant in Corinth. Since all we have is a list, without including any context or exploration of

the values involved, we are going beyond the evidence to claim that Paul is condemning all homosexual behaviour.

The same must be said about the statement in 1 Timothy 1:10. Among those who behave in ways that are 'against sound teaching' he lists 'sodomites' and 'slave traders'. Paul is probably referring to those who take slave boys into brothels for purposes of prostitution.

In the only other text in which Paul refers to homosexual behaviour he goes, however briefly, beyond a simple listing.

He writes: 'Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another.

Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error' (Romans 1:25-27). Is Paul expressing here the traditional Jewish opposition to male prostitution and pederasty, extending his words to include women to demonstrate the universal degradation from which human beings need

redemption? Certainly in a culture where temple prostitutes were the norm, this is the obvious reading.

We would need more evidence to conclude that Paul is condemning every form of homosexual behaviour.

We should note that everything Paul says about love, sensitivity, mutuality, and the sacred nature of sex, is relevant to the discussion of sexual behaviour. What we cannot do is take these few texts from Paul and use them to close the discussion on homosexual behaviour, as some are wont to do. The Bible has a lot to offer us, but we must discover the most loving way forward, given what we now understand about the possibilities of loving committed homosexual relations.

If we want to act in a Christian way we need to keep our eyes on Jesus, who revealed in everything he was and said and did that God is love. In every scene in the Gospels, we see him loving people. He rejoiced in their goodness and when people were behaving badly, he knew to embrace them in love, knowing that only love can offer us the space to change when change is needed; only love can attract us to find our deepest self and grow in the unique expression of love that each person must find.

Though homosexuality is not mentioned in the Gospels, it is surely obvious that our sexual identity is at the heart of who we are. Jesus pleaded that we love others as we love ourselves. If we are heterosexual surely we should rejoice in that, as well as in the amazing gift to us and to society of people who are homosexual.

If we are homosexual we should rejoice in that, as well as in the amazing gift to us and to society of people who are heterosexual. Our hearts should be filled with gratitude as we rejoice in our differences.

As regards our sexual identity it will take us all our life to learn to express our identity in ways that are only beautiful, and we will need everyone's help on this journey. People who are homosexual need special sensitivity because they are in the minority and they have suffered a long history of ignorance and prejudice.

If we believe that God is love, and if we watch the way Jesus respected and loved everyone why do we not love each other across our differences? Should not Christians be the first to embrace their own sexual identity and joyfully join people who identify as heterosexual or homosexual. ☺



St Therese's Parish, Essendon – Centenary Mass

JOHN HANNON

On Sunday, 6 November, 2022, many gathered to celebrate the centenary of St Therese's Parish, Essendon, Victoria. The following is the homily given by John Hannon PP. John has been parish priest of St Therese's for the last five years. He is a Canon Lawyer, and is the 9th parish priest of Essendon in 100 years. Ordained 44 years ago, he has been assistant or resident priest in seven parishes in Melbourne and Ottawa, and PP of seven different parish communities in Melbourne and Sydney over the last 29 years.

Let us remember, give thanks, rejoice, be glad, and look forward. A recent "Faith" column in *The Sunday Age* provided a nostalgic reflection on what might be called 'Old Time Catholicism' and 'Catholic Culture', which I well remember, looking back on growing up in St James's Parish Gardenvale, in the 1950's and 60's. In many ways, it was a happy and seemingly uncomplicated time, when families went to Mass

together; there were parish picnics, snow picnics and dances (which intimidated me!), regular social gatherings. YCS and YCW groups for the younger generation were very alive and active, and the parish priest was king, not to be questioned or challenged on any issue, including by the curates, generally speaking! Well, that much has changed, hasn't it, and for the better?!

It has to be said that in those times

there was a real sense of community and friendship through parish and school gatherings on a regular basis. And there was a real sense of connection between parish and primary school communities. So there's much to acknowledge and celebrate as we look back.

At the same time, we can't gild the lily, nor live in the past. Beneath outer appearances, there were exclusions, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel proclaimed and lived by Jesus. Divorced, and certainly divorced and remarried Catholics, not to even mention gay Catholics, were not made to feel welcome. There was too much of a sense of unhealthy Catholic guilt. Mixed marriages generally had to be celebrated in the sacristy, or the cathedral chapel, if you could afford it! There are those who

Continued page 32

FEATURES

can remember these situations, even here at St Therese's. And, of course, there was no going into non-Catholic churches, even for weddings or funerals, without special permission, which could well be refused! My maternal grandfather made up his own mind in 1959, at 83, I recall! Walls were reinforced, rather than bridges built, in order to find our common ground in Christian faith and beyond, as Pope Francis demonstrates so well.

Fortunately, times have certainly changed since then. My 'Baby Boomer' generation straddled Vatican II. I can well remember my fascination with Latin Mass, and the Roman missal's divided pages between Latin and English, then dialogue Masses coming in, then the full English Mass, with active participation and responses of all present. The altar rail barriers came down, then came Communion in the hand, and locally, a new approach to seminary training behind Monash University at Clayton, with far more appropriate pastoral formation and parish experience. And then, somehow, the numbers went down from there! But it was also a time of massive change in our society and the world in general.

What's the common factor between then and now? To my mind, we can't question the validity of the Gospel message of Jesus, that call to love God, neighbour and self. We're no use to anyone else if we don't develop a healthy ego and confidence in our ability to make a difference in living the Gospel as Good News in our lives.

The Catholic traditions and celebrations continue to be strong and well celebrated, with the transition from Confession to Reconciliation, First Communion to First Eucharist, and the wandering sacrament of Confirmation, mostly for Grade 6, as a sign of growth in Christian maturity, before graduation to secondary school. There is a much improved focus on forgiveness and compassion over guilt and scruples. The Eucharist is now seen as *Bread for the Broken* rather than for the pure and the perfect, of whom there are none anyway. And, for me, the fruits of the Spirit are more meaningful and practical than just the 7 gifts, which you older lot should know by rote: "*Wisdom, understanding, courage,*

counsel, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord" (*It worked for me anyway!*).

This is where today's Gospel comes into focus. Jesus, in his Last Supper farewell, he began by washing feet, as a call to service, which continued with his command to love as he loved, in word and deed. We were to be his friends, as well as friends with one another, and beyond. The resulting fruits of the Spirit emerge as the qualities or virtues we are called to produce – "*love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*".

I mention these often, as a canon lawyer, because these are at the forefront of Jesus' teaching, not a long list of rules and regulations. Unfortunately, Canon Law was often, and even now, sometimes used and abused, as a means of saying no to new proposals and ideas, rather than as a liberating force for the good of the faithful People of God.

And here at St Therese's, we gather in faith to celebrate our parish centenary, acknowledging the evolution of a thriving faith community over those years, since 1922, which was also the year my parents were born. We can look back with some pride and satisfaction, on the achievements over those 100 years, the many celebrations of life and death, and sacraments in between, not to forget the friendships formed and memories shared, and the services provided to those in need, in all sort of directions, from St Vincent de Paul Society to the more recently formed Refugee and Asylum Seekers group, and our Senior Friendship Group, among so many others.

At the same time, we need to make the most of the present, in our own lives, contributing by our presence, to the continuing spirit of maintaining and growing our parish community. The future is uncertain, but challenging, for those of us who keep the faith and contribute to sustaining our sense of welcome, inclusion and belonging. Our post-lockdown profile demonstrates further reduced numbers in regular Mass attendance, and an ageing cohort, such that I can still feel young at 60+10 (as the French put it!), as a very, very doubtful fringe benefit!

Jesus presents a God in the image of a loving and forgiving father. Too often,

this has been lost in an emphasis on obligation and punishment for transgressions. As Church, we've come a long way, but we still need to encourage others to belong, and engage with them, and lead by example. We still have a very long way to go.

The readings from Paul's letters, chosen for today, emphasize the open community dimension of unity in diversity, and inclusion. Paul encourages generosity, and the sharing of resources, in a spirit of compassion, humility and service. The old fundamentals of doing good and avoiding evil are at the heart of the Gospel too, but expanded exponentially into Jesus' law of love and forgiveness, even of enemies, and that's really hard, isn't it?

'Ecclesia semper reformanda' is an old adage for a "*Church always in need of change or reform*", but somehow human nature can tend to resist and deny this reality! To me, as a parish priest, the words, "*But, Father, we've always done it this way!*" are hardly music to the ears, but rather, anathema!! Just look at our own lives!

And let's remember the conclusion of the last canon (1752) of the 1983 Code of Canon Law: "*always observing canonical equity, and keeping in mind the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law.*" This is in the section on "*Procedure for the Transfer of Parish Priests*", but don't go getting ideas! My take on this, in Australian lingo, is *a fair go for all and for the good of the People of God!*

And so, all are welcome, as we gather in faith to remember and learn from history, to express gratitude for the many who have contributed, and who continue to do so now, to being part of, and building up this community of St Therese's Parish and School, and to celebrate Eucharist. We also look forward in faith and hope, to the future, for the next 100 years, a step at a time, but who knows in what shape or form parish life, priestly ministry, religious life, and mission, will evolve into by then!

Whatever happens, the Gospel Good News of Jesus remains universal and the same, namely his Law of Love – of God, neighbour and self! So let us give thanks, rejoice, pray, and celebrate together, as we move forward. ☺

Floods and other entertainment

DES WELLADSEN

Echuca was one of the towns badly affected by floods in 2022. We invited Des Welladsen, a priest of the Sandhurst diocese, and former PP of Echuca, who has retired to what became a flood bound home in the area, to reflect on the experience.



“Religion should teach us ‘how to see’—not answering the question before we ask the question.” (Rohr).

Echuca has lately experienced a ‘once in a hundred-year’ flood. The part of town in which I reside was relegated behind a quickly constructed (and in my amateurish opinion), questionably placed levee bank. Boat was the only means available for reaching home.

‘The Swag’ has invited me to share some reflections on what this flood has meant in my life and the lives of others, especially my close neighbours, some whose homes were completely inundated with polluted river water.

Now cerebral juices quiver days before action happens, however I seem to remember that the word religion has to do with returning to or reuniting with Life and what is essential about our place in the cosmos. Floods, like other interruptions in our navel gazing lives, tend to demand quick and immediate response, often forcing decisions without balanced foresight. Returning to the Source, quietly making rational decisions and, endeavouring ‘how to see’ are quickly washed down the street!

Why endeavour to build a levee in two days, when local authorities were invited years ago to improvise and protect the whole town? Who decides where it should

go and, what right have those living in other places to make such decisions? Is it true that our local Council had no say in such decisions as they claim? From whom do we procure sandbags? Who helps to fill them? How does one help neighbours when trying to secure one’s own abode? Is it worth the trouble with such a quantity of water descending upon the town? If so, how do I manage to place furniture and other household commodities on tables high enough to escape rollicking water? These were some of the questions and heated debates taking place in the part of town where I live. The media naturally excited and rallied the angry and disappointed troops. Meanwhile neighbour did aid neighbour, many others from around the town unselfishly assisted with the heavy lifting, while service groups from nationwide offered relief.

As the water invaded, like everyone else in the street I shifted across town to higher, safer accommodation. Interestingly enough this move saved me from much of the debate and vitriol happening back ‘home.’ One charming friend who put me up talked incessantly, only watched the sports channel on TV, and did not buy the local paper. Hence it was a fortnight later when arriving home by boat to begin inspecting property damage that I was informed of local intrigue. At the time of writing, the levee still exists, and the debate and accusations continue, but with less vigour and some human lethargy.

Does it read as too much of an exaggeration to propose that on returning by a boat containing a neighbour, his handicapped friend, an over excited dog, and myself, that a fellow was reminded of the Old Testament and the Noah story?

Allow me to digress. Scripture scholars inform us that God told Noah to bring all the opposites into the Ark. (Already I am reminded of ourselves in the above-mentioned boat!). That all the

animosities were put together in the one place. And to quote Rohr again “the ego always wants to settle dust quickly and have answers now.” However, the Ark story teaches that in holding things together while unreconciled, being prepared to live with partly unresolved questions and disagreements and not demanding perfect closure or a definite explanation, is the sign of a maturing Gospel person. As St Paul reminds us in (Rm 8 : 24) “In hope we are saved, yet hope is not hope if its object is seen’.

Learning from the Ark story then, Rohr goes on to point out, believers are taught that we are liberated and refined because of a God given ‘testing’ time in each other’s company. A people of God carrying the contradictions, opposites, tensions, and paradoxes of humanity. Love is gradually learned in the context of otherness, which leads to forgiveness, a forgiveness of reality for being what it is.

I have finally managed, after six weeks of living with different generous friends, to return home. Unlike other residences in the street, no water entered my house. However, the effect of so much water rushing through the property dislodged an enormous grey box tree—it missed the house; the front garden looks like a war zone. Other locals are gradually returning. As I stated earlier, the levee remains because authorities are forecasting more floods in February!

Back home alone with no need to answer countless but concerned questions regarding my state of play in all the above, I have the opportunity to ponder Rohr and other wise peoples’ thoughts. Partaking of a ‘quiet’ whiskey, with sunset happening and gentle music wafting through the room many of their thoughts, suggestions and insights give me expectant hope. Meanwhile, if it is necessary to venture outside at night, mosquitoes in their hundreds attack like bees. And, as I quickly move back into safety after completing whatever needed attention, for some reason Eckhart comes to mind. “The eyes by which we look at God, are the eyes which first looked at us. Our goal is not to change others, but to keep cleaning our glasses.”

☪

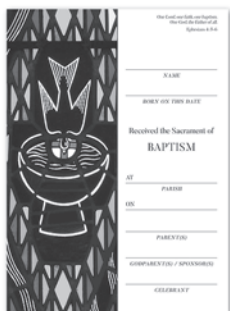


TARRAWARRA
Eucharistic
Breads



The Cistercian monks have been supplying eucharistic breads to parishes and communities in Australia since 2000.

We now offer baptismal stoles and sacramental certificates.



To view our range of products:
www.eucharisticbreads.com.au

Contact:

03 9730 2362 or
0408 447 345

sales@eucharisticbreads.com.au

Meeting Jesus our friend in reconciliation: a homily

BRIAN GLEESON CP

Brian is a Passionist priest who has taught the theology of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Sacraments, over many years in various theological schools of Australia and Papua New Guinea. He offers this homily based on Matthew 11:28-30 as one that could be used in a liturgy of reconciliation.

We have gathered as friends around the person of Jesus. We recognise him for what he was, and what he remains – our ever-loving and ever-faithful friend. A dictionary definition says that a friend is a ‘person one likes, and chooses to spend time with’. In his years on earth, Jesus showed over and over again that he not only liked to be with people and enjoy their company, but that he also liked to act for their benefit and well-being. In serving others as their friend, he kept treating them with honesty, respect, acceptance, kindness, compassion, patience, affection, and generosity. He kept treating others as if they were his own blood sisters or brothers. He did not stop telling them the truth about life, living for them the truth he taught, and bringing them pardon, peace and joy.

His command, ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (Jn 13:34) refers to his goodness, kindness, care and compassion, in all his activities of mixing and socialising, affirming, talking, listening, preaching, teaching, and healing. He viewed his approaching death as the death of a friend for a friend, when he said: ‘No one has greater love than this than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (Jn 5:13). He insisted that ‘by your love for one another everyone will recognize you as my disciples’ (Jn 13:35).

Jesus excluded nobody from the love burning in his great heart. He even addressed Judas, his betrayer, as ‘Friend’ (Mt 26:50). He befriended not only disciples and close associates, but others outside his circle and comfort-zone, such as strangers, foreigners, outcasts and drop-outs (Mt 9:10; Luke 15:1-2). Indeed, he went out of his way to welcome sinners and eat with them (Lk 15:2; 19:1-10; Mk 2:15-17). He enjoyed the company at table of people whom Jewish law banned as ‘unclean’, immoral, and

unacceptable, such as extortionists and prostitutes. So much so that he was taunted by his enemies, as he put it himself, for being ‘a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners’ (Mt 11:18-19) – for being in today’s lingo ‘a real party animal’! But contact with him, as happened so strikingly with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) triggered their conversion.

To this day, Jesus remains ‘the friend of sinners’, and therefore our friend. Our understanding, compassionate, and forgiving friend! The one who is present when others are absent! The one who is there when others drop us or desert us! The one who calls us by name, and invites us to his table! The one who helps and heals when others criticize and condemn! The one who never gives up on us and never despairs of us! The one who waits patiently for us to change our lives, and who allows us time to do so! The one, in short, who loves us with an everlasting love – an everlasting forgiving love, an everlasting healing love, and an everlasting transforming love!

It’s this very same Jesus that we are meeting here and now in our Community Service of Reconciliation. We are meeting him in the welcome and acceptance we are extending to one another. We are meeting him too in the priest to whom we shall go to tell our sins and to hear Jesus say to us in the words of our priest, ‘I absolve you from your sins. I set you free.’ Free from the guilt that weighs us down. And free to keep on loving and imitating Jesus, who was, who is, and who will always be, the best friend we will ever have!

So, let us keep praying for ourselves and one another, that we will always stay firmly connected, yoked, and tethered to Jesus, who remains our Friend and Saviour, for ever and ever! ☪



The value of *The Swag*

IAN CAMERON

Understand that the publication of *The Swag* faces an uncertain future and so I contribute some reflections on how it has been of great value to me. I was appointed a Plenary member in 2019, with the background of being an ordinary parishioner, not a cleric or church employee. The Plenary consultation phase four years ago revealed people's joys and hurts and the patterns of critical issues to be addressed. This meant that to be an authentic Plenary contributor, I had a lot of homework to do; to read a broad range of formal Church documents, books, the writings of laity, community commentary groups, bishops and theologians. I then consulted widely to test my conclusions. This still left a critical need for an understanding of a national cross-section of the wisdom of informed Catholics, on the contemporary issues facing the Australian Church.

The Swag met that need because it provided the wisdom of priests and others formally trained and pastorally experienced in the Church. It provided the rigour I sought, for example, with articles for and against the seal of confession in the one edition. It provided

direction to relevant contemporary local and broader issues, documents and authors. *The Swag* proved to be my single most valuable resource for Plenary preparation, so I read back issues to inform my insights and looked forward to new editions.

The Swag introduced me to people like Peter Maher and many other men and women and their seemingly unconditional empathy, an inspiration and model for us all. It brings the insights of women contributors, educational for those of us used to seeing life through men's eyes. *The Swag* introduced me to the late Bishop Geoffrey Robinson and his book, *Towards the End of My Days*, surely a blueprint for a contemporary Australian and broader Church, and an indicator of the wisdom that is sometimes permitted and freely expressed and sometimes not. *The Swag* and other research and consultations corroborated my conclusions that, where people are free to express themselves, there is a great deal of consensus of thinking among lay, religious, priests and bishops.

Critically, through listening to the voices of many, through formal consultation processes, the voices provided through *The Swag*, writings and personal

conversations, I gained the self-confidence to speak up, from the heart, with evidence, with empathy, mindful of what Jesus might say, focussed on the voices and needs of those not at the table at the Plenary Council.

I am employing this confidence still. Through the Plenary Council journey, I saw the integrity of many and the honesty, heartfelt sharing, empathy and compassion of so many members. I also saw other forces at play, the silencing, falsehoods and failure to candidly represent the full import of some matters. This distressed me because institutional Church stances matter in people's lives. The remedy is to speak up to the global Church.

I expect that many would share my appreciation of *The Swag*, for these or their own reasons, and also because it provides news of events across the country and brings us people's stories, including the celebration of those who have gone to God. The absence of *The Swag*, would leave a vast gap in our national conversation, a need not readily met elsewhere. My thanks to those who have contributed the gifts of their goodness and faithful wisdom. ☪

Transforming our wandering art gallery eyes

PETER DAY

Encounter

*You looked with love upon me
And deep within, your eyes imprinted grace;
This mercy set me free,
Held in your love's embrace,
To lift my eyes adoring to your face.*

(JOHN OF THE CROSS)

'In the beginning was Encounter, the Encounter was with God, and the Encounter was God.' Here, and excuse my awkward tinkering with a profound text, I am thinking of the divine dance between the Lover and the Beloved; a timeless rhapsody shared between a Father and a Son who are, as John of the Cross reflected, 'simply, amazed at each other: nothing gives me joy, Son, outside of your company.' These dance partners live in each other and their dance 'creates a shared vitality that is the Holy Spirit' (see Iain Matthew, *"The Impact of God"*, p.120).

In this 'Encounter' we have what we might call the original Big Bang: that singularity in which all time, space, matter, and being is contained – is brought into existence. Indeed, 'the universe is charged with the grandeur of God.'

The encounter made flesh

It has been said that a person is enlightened, not when they get an idea, but when someone notices them. A person is enlightened when another loves them.

Jesus noticed people. Love notices. The Gospels too have eyes – eyes that notice and penetrate and transform. This contrasts our usual way of seeing – that is, with art gallery eyes that passively wander from person to person, from exhibit to exhibit, leaving what they see unchanged. (see Iain Matthew, *"The Impact of God"*, p.28).

As Pope Benedict has said, 'Christianity is not an intellectual system. It is not a collection of dogmas. It is not a moralism. Instead, it is an encounter. A love story. An event.' This is the effect of a God who is 'constantly gazing at us, whose eyes anticipate, radiate, penetrate, and elicit beauty.' (*ibid.*, p.28).

'The Gospels,' as Pope Francis says, 'frequently show us Jesus "on a journey"; he walks alongside people and listens to

the questions and concerns lurking in their hearts. He shows us that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side. He meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life. Today, as we begin this synodal process, let us begin by asking ourselves – all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this "style" of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity. Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: "It's useless" or "We've always done it this way"?

When we allow God's gaze to penetrate and transform our very being, our eyes are opened anew; they start to look and see differently. No longer passive and dispassionate, they notice – and this noticing compels us towards encounter with *the beggar lying outside our gate*.

Listen

Many years ago I had the privilege of attending a Retreat with a faith community at which one of the presenters recounted an experience of visiting a psychiatric institution in the early 1960's.

'I approached the visit,' he said, 'with great trepidation and fear, asking myself: "What will I say to these people? How will I act? What will they say to me?"

'When I arrived at the asylum I was confronted by dozens of men walking aimlessly up and down a spacious room seemingly carrying the weight of deep anguish and loneliness. My stay lasted an hour and all I was asked over-and-over during that time were three questions: "Do you love me? Will you come back? Will you be my friend?"

These questions are the produce of what I call *relational poverty*: an entrenched isolation in which there is minimal and, oftentimes, no meaningful human contact. Among people with chronic mental illness, for instance, this is an all too pervasive reality; one that leaves those who are very sick fending for themselves on the streets, in refuges, gaols and public housing estates

throughout the nation. It is the poverty of the lonely, broken heart. And it cripples and destroys lives.

When people are overwhelmed by relational poverty their capacity to engage, to find work, to get better, to 'get up', and to live with dignity is significantly diminished; sometimes even extinguished.

Much of our collective approach to welfare and homelessness (governments, community, charities and churches) is underpinned by impersonal charity which tends to focus on relieving material poverty – i.e. through the provision of low-cost housing, welfare benefits, soup kitchens, refuges, second-hand clothing bins, anonymous cash donations, vouchers etc. This has its place and, at times, is critical. But it has little, if any, impact on addressing relational poverty. More often than not, our impersonal charity helps people only survive or exist. Lives are not transformed.

In relation to accommodation, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the crisis approach tends to be reactive and superficial only: a "one-night stand" type of care that has little long-term impact. Within this milieu, relationships are not fostered or encouraged, so people become entrenched in a never-ending cycle of homelessness: bouncing around refuges, housing estates, hostels, and the streets. Thus, the often complex issues that underlie peoples' crises are never properly addressed, so nothing really changes. We just re-cycle homelessness.

It is my contention that this approach tends to address 'houselessness' (physical needs), rather than homelessness (relational/spiritual/emotional needs). Thus, there is no real Encounter, no real Listening, and no real Discerning.

Discern

*You are the towel people,
Soothers, cleansers, healers
Of feet tired and sore and cut from
the journey.
Veronica people,
Wiping away the dirt and blood and spittle
Of the world's hatred spewed onto the
faces of the weak.*

*You are the towel people,
This is your badge of service:
On your knees before others,
Like bootlacks,
Cinderellas,
Floor scrubbers;
On your knees before others –
And in homage to them,
For Christ is there.
Except it won't be as romantic as that sounds,
Because feet and dirt and blood and spittle
Have no romance.*

(FR. PAUL BYRNE OMI)

We are good at knowing *about* – and writing about – people overwhelmed by poverty; but we are not so good at *knowing* them, at knowing their name(s).

The majesty and credibility of Catholic social teaching, of synodal life, hinges not just on our willingness to humbly wash the battered and bruised feet of our world, but to enter into relationship with those whose feet we wash – just as our founder did. This is why the crucifix is at once beautiful and dangerous. When we hang it on the walls of our offices, hospitals, aged care facilities, and homes we are making a statement: ‘Christ, who became poor for the poor, shapes what we do.’ We can no longer be defined as NGOs, or doers of good, or altruists/humanists.

The crucifix is a game-changer

This is why Pope Francis’s exhortation that we be a ‘poor church for the poor’ has relevance to those grappling with Catholic social teaching. Indeed, it is the seminal challenge of the age, a potential game-changer. Our catholic health depends on it.

When Christ instituted the Eucharist with the self-emptying words, “This is my body, this is my blood,” he did so outside the confines and safety and laws of the Temple cult. His words and actions changed everything: the in-crowd was turned on its head; the superficiality of Temple sacrificing was laid bare; the cold, bullying nature of the institution was put in its place; while those crippled by exclusion and self-doubt were welcomed as the new guests-of-honour to the banquet of life.

One might say that Christ’s life was a manifestation of social triage: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: ‘Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice.’ And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinners.” (Mt 9:12-13) In other words, the ones outside our gate, so to speak, are triaged as the highest priority.

But none of this is as romantic as it sounds because he “who emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7) did so at

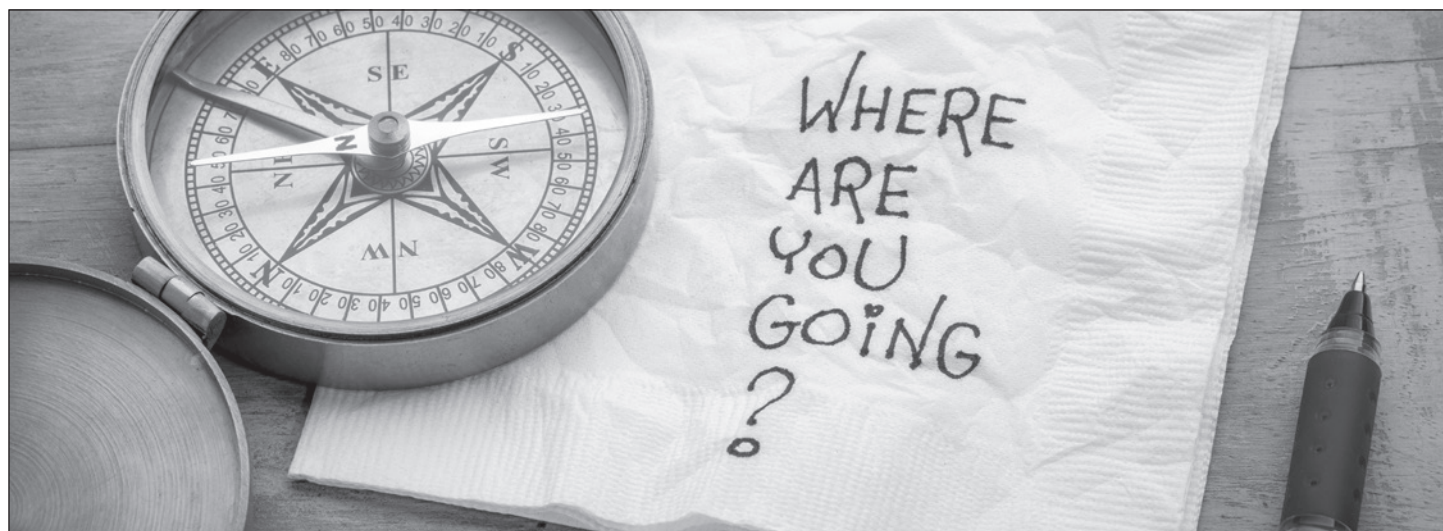
great personal risk. His relationships with outsiders not only had him lampooned by the religious authorities as ‘a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of sinners’ (Lk 7:34) – these relationships also contributed to his eventual death: “This is my body, this is my blood.”

To be a Eucharistic and synodal people means leaving the safety of our gated communities; it means going beyond the superficiality of our non-sacrificial bread-crumbs-charity that is bereft of communion.

‘Saint John Chrysostom warns us: “Do you want to honour the body of Christ? Do not allow it to be despised in its members, that is, in the poor who lack clothes to cover themselves. Do not honour him here in the church with rich fabrics, while outside you neglect him when he is suffering from cold and naked.

“The one who said, “this is my body”, confirming the fact with his word, also said, “you saw me hungry and you did not feed me” and, “whenever you failed to do these things to one of the least of these, you failed to do it to me” (*Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 50, 3). You may say to me: “Father, what do you mean?

‘Are the poor, the beggars, young drug addicts – all those people that society discards – part of the Synod too?’ (*Pope Francis, Rome, 18 Sept. 2021*) ☪



It is up to each one of you to let the NCP National Office know when any of your contact details change. Don't risk missing out on your copy of *The Swag* or other NCP news.

A personal tribute to Michael Slattery

JOHN HANNON

Having worked with Michael Slattery in the Curia Offices of the Diocese of Broken Bay, since around 2000, along with him becoming a good friend and confidante, I found him to be a person always prepared to go well beyond the call of duty, in whatever field in which he was involved or whatever task he was asked to fulfil, along with the love, patience and support of his wife Bev.

His warm, encouraging and friendly personality and his commitment to following through were fundamental elements to his engagement with others. Among other things, he conscientiously and capably co-ordinated the program for permanent deacons on the diocese, spending much time outside the normal range of the working day, to attending evening meetings and preparing and presenting talks and pastoral advice to those involved. His own background experience in earlier priestly ministry stood him in good stead. Bishop David Walker realised that he had much to offer when he employed him to work in the diocese. When I parachuted into the wonderful community of St Patrick's Asquith as parish priest in January 1998, parishioners were still talking about Michael's pastoral care and concern from decades before, when he was an assistant priest there.

Then there was his involvement in not only organising and supervising a program

for overseas priests who came to work in the diocese, but also first meeting and picking them up at the airport when they first arrived. He invariably provided a welcoming face to those who came in from other places, and made them feel at home.

Michael was a man who passionately and conscientiously lived his Catholic faith out in action, with perseverance and always a friendly smile. He became a good friend over the years we worked in the same environment, and have remained in regular contact since my return to Melbourne. Only weeks before his own 70th birthday, he had sent me his and Bev's best wishes for my 70th, just ahead of him, as usual, with positive words of encouragement!

I quote him from Christmas 2021: "Hi John. Just like to wish you a very happy Christmas and more normal New Year. I enjoyed your piano playing during COVID. You've kept your talent well hidden. Still doing 2 days a week at McQuoin Park. It's amazing the number



of people I meet who were parishioners from Asquith and Pymble. The circle of life. Anyway, thinking of you this COVID Christmas." And on 21st October 2022: "Hi John. Michael here (for a change!). Have a great 70th – mine is next month. I've fully retired now, and have finished at McQuoin Park. Enjoying the next stage of my life. Good health. Please keep Bev and myself in your prayers. Kind regards, Michael."

And so we do, dear friend Michael, keep you and Bev in our prayers, as we give thanks for your love and your life, commending you to the God whom you faithfully served throughout your life, with all its challenges and changes, twists and turns. May you rest in peace, gone far too soon. And our thoughts are with Bev and family at this very sad time of grief and loss.

(Ed: Michael died suddenly of a heart attack on Friday 9th December 2022, only a few weeks after his 70th birthday.)



A Synodal Parish

BERNA WAKE

The parish of St Mary of the Cross, Mordialloc and Aspendale, is walking the path of synodality. Berna Wake is a member of the Parish Leadership Team and Parish Pastoral Council. She writes the following:

In 2021 our parish embarked on a journey of parish renewal that invites the participation of all parishioners to create a mission-focused church. Faced with declining mass attendances, an aging demographic and 90%* of those who identify as Catholic in our community

having little or no involvement in parish life, it was obvious that we needed to do something radically different to assure the relevance of the timeless Gospel message and our own parish survival.

Working alongside our Parish Priest Fr Andrew Jekot, and fully communicating with the parish community, we have committed to a parish mission to *Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples*.

Re-organising our parish organisation structure has been a critical enabler in pursuing our missional path and an

example of what it means to be synodal-walking together.

Our Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is responsible for envisioning what our parish will look like in 3-5 years time. This involves a deep dive into our four strategic anchors (see above).

The PPC meets seven times per year for a structured, facilitated workshop on one of the four anchors. The diverse group of six women and seven men, inclusive of the parish priest and assistant priest bring their knowledge and gifts to share, debate

and listen to each other. The outcome of which is a pathway for each anchor that enables our parishioners to deepen their faith and relationships with one another and encourage a new culture of a parish that increasingly looks outside toward the wider community (missionary focus). Our goal is to make our parish and the gospel message more accessible and relevant.

Complementing the PPC albeit with a distinctly different operating role is the Parish Leadership Team (PLT) which we formed in September 2021. The PLT is a game-changer in the way the parish is run. The PLT consists of five people, three women, and the parish priest and assistant priest. We meet weekly, supporting the parish priest in his leadership and taking responsibility for

the day to day activities of the parish. Leading out of a team gives our parish priest a greater knowledge and experience base from which to discuss and debate ideas and actions flowing from our parish mission, our four strategic anchors and the visionary plans of the PPC.

I truly believe that the establishment of a strong, committed and inclusive Parish PLT and PPC embracing the knowledge, skills and gifts of passionate women and men is the change that the Church must make to realise the vision of Pope Francis for a truly synodal church."

If you are interested to know more about the parish journey of St Mary of the Cross Parish, Mordialloc and Aspendale please contact berna.wake@cam.org.au 📧

This mission is underpinned by four strategic anchors:

Grow Wider: Listen and respond to the wider community with love, care, mercy and welcoming acceptance.

Grow Deeper: Grow in our faith and as a community of belonging; living our lives in accordance with Jesus' teaching.

Leadership: Where we are all called to serve in our parish ministries and wider community.

Create an weekend experience: Hospitality, homilies and hymns under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



Is the Blood of Christ not sufficient?

JOY LUBAWY

Joy Lubawy is a retired teacher, academic and published author who is actively involved in her parish of Our Lady of Fatima, South Wagga Wagga, NSW.

I was inspired by the article in the Spring Issue of *The Swag*, by Christa Murphy SSSP especially the ending, *"We are not born under the curse of original sin, doomed to struggle ceaselessly. We are originally blessed. Our DNA is divine!"*

Christa Murphy quoted some wise words from American Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr.

This got me thinking about some very central theological teachings that are very near and dear to me, the Good News! What is this Good News we ask? *"For by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

At the beginning of Mass the priest says these words, *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

And we joyfully reply, "And with your Spirit."

The Grace? What does this mean to you? To me it means that Christ paid the ransom for us, in full, that by his blood, his suffering, his death and

resurrection and because of his love he set us free from sin and reserved for us a place in one of the 'many rooms' in the heavenly mansion. (John 14:2)

Grace is the gift to us from our Heavenly Father who loved us so much that he gave us his only begotten son (John 3:16) that those who believe, may be saved for eternity.

Is this gift not enough? Do we have to try to earn our own place in Heaven, are we to distrust his gift to us?

In the Middle Ages when humanity was struggling with life and death in all its horror, the church stooped so low as to sell Plenary Indulgences to the rich with the resultant corruption that brought about. Oh, I wonder then about what Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matt. 19:24.) We know from the painful history and aftermath of the Reformation beginning with Martin Luther nailing his list of Ninety-Five Theses to the church door on October 31, 1517 that we were on the wrong road entirely. For a time, we were indeed lost!

And yet, here in 2022, I see (strangely enough for October 31, the Eve of All Saints and All Souls Day) that Plenary Indulgence (only one per day) may be granted according to a list of conditions (according to Pope Paul VI *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*) re-surfacing in a local Catholic church. Was this a reaction to the efforts made at the Second Vatican council some short years prior? Was it about power? Or fear? Do we make the rules?

Do we not have enough faith that the price has already been paid by Jesus? Are we spiralling backwards to the Middle Ages? Have we learned nothing? Are we suspicious it is a trap, that The Good News is too good to be true? Can we instead be inspired by the idea of a New Pentecost, and allow the Holy Spirit to descend on us as in the Upper Room when those gathered were thought to be drunk, such was their fervour and excitement and St Peter stood before the crowd the preach the good news that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, had been raised from the dead, and now the forgiveness of sins and life in the Holy Spirit was possible. (Acts 2:13 and 38). Let us proclaim this! Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound! 📧

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How sad your team would be feeling at the loss of your beloved editor. We send our sincere sympathy to the many who have known and loved him for many years.

We have no personal connection but having been introduced to your excellent magazine a couple of years ago feel a close bond. We came to know the magazine and its great worth at a time when we felt isolated and discouraged by our institutional church. It was heartening to hear so many enlightened voices then and continues to enrich us now. May you go forward with new breath for many years to come. Our grateful thanks for Peter's work and devotion.

Gabrielle and David Archer

How pleasant to read the excellent article by Peter Maher...now resting in peace. I am not so fond of the popular term 'Mindfulness' but the essence of Peter's writing was so enlightening.

By coincidence, another article on Prayer by Pope Francis corresponded so well and further enhanced what our Christ was all about. My own daily prayer is constant and I often plea that Rome would completely and urgently reserve its thinking in line with Peter Maher and Pope Francis. My Christ ... My Great Christ!

Ray Reardon, Highton VIC

Can we
find
you?

If you move, please let the NCP National Office know, otherwise you may not receive your copy of the next edition of **The Swag**.

At present I live in a small parish in country Victoria. I have worked in Catholic Education, on Parish Councils, Education Boards, Renew Coordinator, Ecumenical Coordinator and other lay leadership roles in Melbourne. I completed a B.Theol in 1987.

The response of the Bishops, at the Plenary Council, regarding the equality and dignity of women was the last straw that pushed me into resigning as chairperson of the Parish Council in my Parish. How long do they expect women to serve the Church with the continuing misogyny and fear that was so apparent during the Council? My small step may be insignificant but I have finally disassociated from an archaic clericalism that refuses to acknowledge that women have dignity, worth, intelligence and ability to lead. One small step, with many more steps, may forge a new path down a Spirit-filled road, not yet travelled.

A D Penhale

On conclusion of my term as Director of Students at St Patrick's Seminary at Manly at the end of 1973 in which role I had very little to contribute for the students and for which I am very sorry, I was appointed as assistant priest at Incarnation Parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There were four priests and a deacon. It is one of more than 185 parishes in the Archdiocese of St Paul/Minneapolis in USA.

I mention this because the Archdiocese had a very progressive group of parishes and communities in so many ways. For example, I was given the task of writing and presenting a ten week course in the RCIA programme, something that was unheard of in Australia at that time.

Also they had placed a boycott on a clothing manufacturer and on purchasing Californian grapes, lettuce, tomatoes and the like, all because they were not paying a fair wage to their workers. They were very big on Social Justice and welfare. This time was a source of great encouragement and education for me along with the Pastoral Community of S. Merri mentioned in my previous letter.

I recall these couple of things because Archbishop Hebda of St Paul/Minneapolis has just issued a thirty-five-page Pastoral Letter entitled "You Will Be My

Witnesses," after the conclusion of a Synod which has for the past three years witnessed groups of prayer, discussion, and gatherings following which four hundred and sixty-four lay, religious and clergy have voted on various proposals that might be useful for ministry in the Archdiocese.

So, I just place before you one or two sentences from that Letter dealing with the Liturgy of the Word and how it might be more fruitfully presented. You may also get some ideas that could be implemented in a parish if you peruse the Letter.

35. The form of the Mass

One of the earliest revelations of the form of the Mass is given to us by the evangelist Luke in his account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). Many theologians, including Pope Benedict XVI, believe that Luke is offering a liturgical catechesis, the goal of which is to help the Christian community understand that the risen Christ is encountered ever anew in the Eucharistic worship.

The evangelist highlights two pillars of Christian worship: the interpretation of the scriptures (v. 27) and the breaking of the bread (v. 35). These correspond, then as now, to the two pillars of Catholic liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We have already said much – and will say more – about the Liturgy of the Eucharist. I would like to draw our priests' attention to the Liturgy of the Word, because one of the goals of Second Vatican Council was to restore its proper dignity in the Mass, where the Council spoke of two tables: the "table of the Lord's body" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium 48) and the "table of God's word" (Sacrosanctum Concilium 51).

Regarding the latter, the Council says, "The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word" (Sacrosanctum Concilium 51).

This is just another little dot that might help bring a change some where some day. Hope springs eternal...

I would recommend the Pastoral Letter to you and you may access it on <https://www.archspm.org> and you can also hear Archbishop Hebda on Youtube. 🎧

John Ford (Sydney)

Salesian Centenary in Australia

2023 marks the 100th year of the Salesian presence in Australia. Celebrations have included a commemorative book by Fr Frank Moloney SDB, recalling the 100 years of Salesian presence in Australia, the Opening Centenary Mass and blessing of the newly minted memorial of gratitude to all benefactors at Rupertswood, Sunbury, VIC, on January 24, and the ordination of five Salesian deacons by Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB of Perth in St Francis' Church, Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, on January 28. The Rector-Major of the Order, Fr Fernández Artime Ángel, will visit the province in late April.

On Friday 30th March 1923, a group of Salesians arrived with high hopes in Fremantle, WA later joined by Bishop Coppo. The genuine intention was to work with the indigenous in the Kimberley in the education of the young people. Due to unforeseeable circumstances and difficulties, they encountered, some Salesians returned to Europe somewhat disappointed, and others moved onto Melbourne to minister to Italian immigrants. They sought to educate the poor and abandoned young people of Victoria. These few determined Salesians moved forward in hope, trusting entirely in God's will, for their new mission in Melbourne. From a humble and trusting beginning in the West in 1923 to a daring celebration in 2023 is what God has brought to the young of the Australia-Pacific Province.

Dominicans to leave Canberra

After serving the people of Canberra for 60 years, the Dominican Friars will be leaving before the end of November 2023.

The Dominican Provincial, Fr Dom Murphy informed the parishioners of Blackfriars Parish at all Masses just before Christmas that the congregation had no alternative due to declining numbers and the age of the community.

Archbishop Prowse paid tribute to the long service of the Dominicans to the Archdiocese when he said:

"The Dominican Friars have been part of the pastoral care of Canberra since 1962; it is a sad occasion for the whole archdiocese but especially the people of the Watson Parish who have had such a long and deep relationship with this Congregation."

A similar decision has recently been made in South Australia by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart who have withdrawn from the Henley Beach parish after 64 years. A farewell Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Patrick O'Regan on Dec 4.

Seattle Archdiocese criticized for buying \$2.4 million home for archbishop

Seattle Archbishop Paul Etienne will be moving from a parish rectory into a newly purchased \$2.4 million home in an upscale waterfront neighbourhood. Archdiocesan officials say the relocation is necessary to better accommodate guests, and point to overall high prices in one of the nation's hottest real estate markets, but the decision has also garnered criticism.

"The move is breaking a promise that the archbishop made to us in a pretty major way," said Tim Law, a Seattle Catholic and attorney who is a member of Heal Our Church, a Washington-based alliance calling for a lay-led review of the Seattle Archdiocese's private records on clergy abuse.

In 2019, on Etienne's first day as head of the archdiocese, he told priests and deacons in a letter he would forgo the traditional archbishops' residence – a 9,000-square-foot mansion named the Connolly House – and "live a more simplified life."

Priests Retirement Funds

The London Tablet reported before Christmas (Dec 10, p 29) that the Portsmouth diocese was under fire over the merger of the Retired Priests' Fund into a larger diocesan trust. Two members of the retirement fund committee resigned after their strong professional advice was ignored. The Portsmouth bishop, Philip Egan, regretted their departure describing the diocese's provision for retired priests as second to none.

Different retirement funds are in use in Australia. The Melbourne "Priests Retirement Foundation" was established by Charter, signed by Archbishop Little, in 1990. Earlier, a "Priests Remuneration and Retirement management committee" had been established in the late 60's by the then Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Knox. Out of this came a "Priests Remuneration Fund," to assist priests

working in poor parishes to receive a suitable income, coupled with the "Infirm Priests Sustentation Society," to assist sick and retired priests, a "Society" which had been in existence following a statute of the 1907 First Provincial Council of Melbourne. This latter "Society" merged into the "Priests Retirement Foundation" with Archbishop Little's Charter. A retirement investment fund (RIF) was initiated to service the Foundation's work. The RIF was funded with monies from the Archdiocese, the Priests Remuneration Fund, and the funds of the Infirm Priests Sustentation Society. The Retirement Foundation has since repaid the Archdiocese all the monies (in excess of \$7 million) initially given by the Archdiocese to help establish the RIF, and the Archdiocese has no further claim on any funds in the RIF. A committee (consisting of seven elected priests and four lay financial and legal experts) control the workings of the Retirement Foundation, and the funds are protected by legal Charter from being used for purposes other than the retirement benefits due to Melbourne retired priests. What happened at Portsmouth, cannot happen in Melbourne.

Corpus Christi College centenary

On March 1, 2023, Corpus Christi College celebrated its centenary of operation as the regional diocesan seminary for Victoria and Tasmania. And it has had different locations over these past hundred years. Archbishop Mannix established the first seminary in 1923 after purchasing the Chirside mansion on the banks of the Werribee river south west of Melbourne, and handing over the running of the seminary to the Jesuits. It lasted as a seminary for some 50 years. Since Vatican II there have been many changes to priestly formation in Australia and elsewhere. The Werribee campus was split in the late 1950's when the theology students moved to Glen Waverley in the eastern suburbs. No sooner was Glen Waverley established than the Second Vatican Council took place, and further moves to formalise the academic and pastoral formation of priests developed. Catholic Theological College was established at Clayton in the south east suburbs next door to Monash University, and Corpus

Continued page 42

Christi College moved from both Werribee and Glen Waverley to the same Clayton campus. In the same period Yarra Theological Union began at Box Hill, and the Jesuits were involved in the ecumenical development of the United Faculty of Theology in Parkville next to Melbourne University. Seminarians from different religious orders came to study at CTC or YTU or UFT. Those at CTC studied alongside diocesan seminarians. At the turn of the century CTC moved to the old Christian Brothers College in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, and Corpus Christi College moved from Clayton to Carlton. On March 1 this year, a number of aged former seminarians who studied at Werribee plan the trip back down memory lane to lunch at the old Chirnside mansion which, after the students' departure, has since transformed into a multi star boutique hotel. It was never like that in their days.

The formation of priests

The Tablet (2 Dec 2022) reports that a key concern for Pope Francis and many others in Rome is the formation of priests. The Brazilian Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, who leads the dicastery for religious, has warned of the "re-taking of traditionalist positions" by younger priests and seminarians, while in their synod report, the Union of Superiors General talked about the "emergence of young ultra-conservative priests, not inclined to listen to alternative voices".

Francis has encouraged seminarians to be "normal people". In a recent interview with *America Magazine*, the Pope stressed the importance of including women in the selection process of candidates for the priesthood.

He said that when he was a bishop some of the "best information" he had received on whether to ordain a candidate had come from lay women. Once, he had received a timely warning about a "bright candidate" who later had a crisis and left the seminary. "If he were my son, I would not let him be ordained," a woman had warned. The Pope recognises the need for an expanded role for lay people, including women, in selection and formation of candidates for the priesthood. He also wants bishops to be willing to listen to their advice.

Survey of USA priests

Researchers surveyed 10,000 U.S. Catholic priests across 191 dioceses and eparchies last year. They received 3,516 responses, or about a 36% valid response rate. They also conducted in-depth interviews with more than 100 priests who participated in the survey, and sent another survey out to all of the U.S. bishops, of which 131 replied. The survey used the Harvard University Flourishing Index to measure the bishops' and priests' well-being. The results show that in general 77% of priests and 81% of bishops can be categorized as "flourishing," based on the cut-off scoring recommended by the Harvard team.

There were, however, areas of concern: 45% of priests reported at least one symptom of ministry burnout. 9% reported severe burnout. And the survey found that younger priests are more likely to be the ones who experience some form of burnout. Trust was another issue. 49% of surveyed priests expressed confidence in their bishop, but only 24% expressed confidence in the leadership and decision-making of the U.S. bishops as a whole.

The study found that many priests fear being falsely accused and aren't confident that their bishop would support them if that were the case.

'Young' Pope Francis signs up Conclave Politics

Bill Uren SJ notes that since Jorge Maria Bergoglio was elected Pope ten years ago, at the age of 76, and took the name Francis, he has appointed 111 Cardinals. 81 of them are under the age of 80, and currently qualify to vote at the next conclave. But there is almost an equal number (114) who were appointed either by Pope John Paul II (50) or by Pope Benedict XVI (64). Bill goes on to write: "Even though only 45 of these currently qualify to vote at the conclave, all 114 are entitled to participate in the wide-ranging and influential consultation on the state of the Church that precedes the conclave. So, although almost two thirds of the actual electors have been appointed by Pope Francis, and, one might presume, would favour appointing a Pope in a similar mould to Pope Francis, this presumption is very fragile when the total number of Cardinals and

the importance of the pre-conclave consultation are taken into account. This consultation may be even more important than usual because many of Francis' appointees come from remote dioceses and may be more susceptible to Vatican politicking." Bill went on to write that "the sole Australian Cardinal, Cardinal Pell, does not have a vote in the conclave, being over the eligible age. But he is likely to be a very influential player in the pre-conclave consultation, perhaps even more than his United States colleagues." As we have seen Cardinal Pell was already actively involved in this process in the days before his sudden death. He had called Francis' pontificate "a catastrophe," and the upcoming Synod a "toxic nightmare."

See Bill Uren SJ "Significance of Broglio's election for the US Church" Eureka Street, 15 Dec 2022.

Monsignor Tomáš Halík: The Afternoon of Christianity

Monsignor Tomáš Halík paid a visit to Rome in December to promote the Italian translation of his new book "Afternoon of Christianity: The Courage to Change." One special event on his itinerary was a panel discussion at the "Istituto Giovanni Paolo II" in the Lateran University. The Lateran panel discussion can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/X50fLHeyHfo> much of which is in Italian, but Halík speaks in English, as does one of the other panellists, Cardinal Michael Czerny.

Halík is a Czech priest, a philosopher, theologian, and scholar, and is the professor of sociology at Charles University in Prague. He tells his story in his autobiography, "From the Underground Church to Freedom" published by Notre Dame University Press in 2019.

Halík sees a church in crisis; churches and seminaries are empty. But it is a crisis enabling new life and wisdom to emerge. He speaks of Pope Francis' image of the field hospital, but notes that the church is not just a field hospital. It has to diagnose and treat. A wounded society needs help from the church, and our seminaries should be schools of wisdom, and centres of spirituality.

The background of his new book is a metaphor of Carl Jung for an individual life. The morning of Christianity is the pre-modern time, a time to build up the institutional and doctrinal structures of the church. This is followed by the noonday crisis, the time of modernity and secularisation. But now we are on the threshold of postmodernity, the post-secular age. This is the afternoon of Christianity, a time for maturity, to go deeper. He refers to the encounter of Jesus with his soon to be disciples after a night of fruitless fishing. Jesus immediately sends them out again, to try again, to go deeper. Halík suggested we be inspired by St Paul, who had the courage to transform Christianity from one of many Jewish sects to a reality that infused the whole culture at that time. There is a universalism in Christianity inviting us to go deeper even for today.

As mentioned above, one of the panellists at the Lateran discussion was the 76-year-old Jesuit Cardinal Michael Czerny, the Czechoslovakian-born Canadian prelate of the Catholic Church who has been prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development since April 2022. Czerny saw in Halík's book a mixture of a "Confession" à la St Augustine, an "Apologia" à la Newman, an "analysis" à la Jung, a "Spiritual Exercise" à la Ignatius Loyola, and a "Missiology" à la Vatican II and Pope Francis.

Czerny recalled the English historian, Christopher Dawson, who said every human culture must possess some spirituality if it is to survive, and a society that has lost its spirituality will inevitably lose its culture. Czerny pondered the challenge that, given Christianity is so far flung that no single continent can claim to be the centre of global Christianity, how in the light of faith and the light of the church can we interpret the events of the time?

Lay presiders at baptism

Different News Services (including Brisbane Liturgy News) have reported that two dioceses in Germany have allowed lay people to preside at Baptisms: Essen and Rottenburg-Stuttgart. Two reasons have been advanced: the shortage of priests and a concern to promote equality between men and women in the Church. One woman who celebrated baptism in a parish in Essen recently is Elvira Neumann. She is part of a team of three lay people who administer the parish together with the priest.

With a degree in theology, she is a support person in the parish bereavement ministry and a liturgical leader who has prepared families for the baptism of their children for many years. She is one of 18 in the diocese (17 of them women) who were authorised for the ministry by the bishop in March 2022.

Jesuits and Franciscans leave parishes

The Tablet (Jan 14) reports that the Jesuits are to leave the parish of St Francis Xavier in Liverpool after 175 years. The Church in Everton (known as SFX) has been staffed by the Society of Jesus since it opened in 1848, although the Jesuits have had a presence in Liverpool since the sixteenth century.

The church was originally built with funds raised by eight Liverpool businessmen and offered to the president of Stonyhurst, fostering the long connection with the Jesuits. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins served there for two years in the 1880s during his unhappy parish ministry.

In Ireland the Franciscans bid farewell to Athlone, Co. Westmeath, after a presence of almost 800 years. The departure follows the Franciscans' withdrawal from Clonmel after 753 years. Fr Aidan McGrath OFM explained that the decision to leave was due a lack of vocations and the "rapidly ageing" profile of the friars. Out of 76 friars in the Irish province today, 50 are over the age of 75, with many needing specialist care. He said: "As Christians we are called to move forward in hope. The Gospel is not about keeping people living in a certain place or keeping buildings open or maintaining a certain fixed schedule of services." ❧

REVIEWS

Priestly Ministry and the People of God – Hopes and Horizons

REVIEWED BY JOHN SWANN

Edited by Richard Gaillardetz, Thomas Groome and Richard Lennan.

Back in September 2016 Boston College established a seminar to study and imagine the future of the priesthood. Over the next two years twelve working members met four times each semester, finally producing a document entitled 'To Serve the People of God – Renewing the conversation on Priesthood and Ministry.'

The document was shared with all the bishops of the English speaking world and with Pope Francis. In January 2020

a group of 40 people, including three cardinals, met at Boston College for an intense conversation on the document. Then Covid struck!

This volume is in a way a continuation of the process of studying and imagining the future of the priesthood. It begins with the original document 'To Serve the People of God.' Then there are 20 chapters reflecting on the document written by Professors Lennan, Gaillardetz and Groome, Cardinal Marx and 16 other

participants at the conference, including seminary rectors, pastoral ministers and academic theologians.

This indeed is a challenging book, especially for those promoting vocations, selecting students and involved in the formation and education of priests.

It addresses many of the problems facing the present day church and the role of priests. It has frequent quotes from Pope Francis.

There is a strong emphasis on synodality and the relationship between priests and the laity. It addresses the issue of clericalism, described as 'a sad distortion

Continued page 44

of priesthood – an attitude that sees the ordained as belonging to a separate caste.’ The question is raised: Is celibacy pastorally effective in today’s culture?

There are lots of positive recommendations regarding the formation of clergy, the need to change the present seminary system, the need for psychological assessments, even suggesting an assessment tool similar to *focus* or *prepare*, widely used in marriage education.

It addresses the need for ongoing education after ordination, which should be seen as compulsory, together with some form of ongoing appraisal and accountability. To quote one writer: ‘Unfortunately, once ordained, priests are largely free from any obligation to seek further

human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. There are generally no mechanisms for accountability other than making sure the sacraments are celebrated and the books are balanced. There is no required evaluation of preaching or pastoral skills, and no requirement for ongoing professional development.’

The original document lists five central aspects of priestly ministry: The Priest as a Preacher, as a Leader of worship and prayer, as a collaborative leader, as a public representative of the church, and as a practitioner in pastoral charity.

One writer describes how she asked 50 people in the parish where she serves what their best hopes for the future of

priesthood might be. Some of the most common responses were for priests who are compassionate, pastoral, approachable, and enthusiastic; priests who because of real life experiences, understand the lives of today’s families and youth; priests who lead by serving, who are available, and who are present in the wider community; priests who are not rigid but open-minded, and are good preachers and priests who are holy.

Although developed in an American setting this book is certainly relevant to our Australian church. It will be a useful guide for Vocation Directors, Seminary staff and leaders in Priestly Life and Ministry. It will also serve as a benchmark for any priest willing to review his life and ministry. ☪



Returned to God

FRANCIS (FRANK) ARNOLD

06/11/1928 – 11/07/2022

✠ Frank found his vocation to the priesthood during his time in the Movement, the organisation set up under the direction of BA Santamaria to fight against the spread of Communism within the trade union movement and elsewhere.

Frank entered the seminary after qualifying and working as an actuary. In the seminary, the story went he enjoyed analysing how to place bets on the horse races to ensure you would come home with a rattle in your pocket. Such was the continuing sharpness of his actuarial mind.

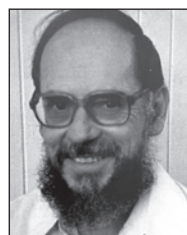
Ordained a priest by Archbishop Justin Simmonds on July 24, 1960, after the usual eight years of formation at Corpus Christi College Werribee & Glen Waverley, Frank served as assistant in the parishes of Caulfield South, Dandenong and Bennetswood, then as administrator in the parishes of Box Hill and Essendon West, until finally, in 1975, he was appointed Parish Priest at Blackburn North, where he served happily and devotedly, with a lot of flare and pastoral nous, until his retirement in 2011. Frank was one of the many good priests of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Upon his retirement, he moved into his parents’ home in Moreland, which, as their only child, he had inherited. In his youth Frank used to rise early to ride his bike down to Flemington racecourse to watch the horses being put through their hoops. In retirement, he resumed that practise, though more comfortably in his car.

Frank enjoyed for nearly the whole of his life extremely good health – until his late eighties he did not even have a GP – so much so that those who knew him well thought he would live to be 100. May God, whom Frank served, fill him with joy unending.

RICHARD (DICK) BUCHHORN

16/08/1932 – 15/11/2022



Dick Buchhorn was buried at Boggabilla on 26th November, in the country that stole his heart, with the community that he loved as his Murri and Koori family.

Dick came from Glen Innes, and was ordained for the Armidale diocese in Rome, 1960. His passion for justice and peace was first expressed in his work with the YCW of which he soon became diocesan, and eventually, State chaplain. He became involved in the anti-apartheid and anti-Vietnam War movements, and in supporting the causes of aboriginal people. He was among the group which established the National Council of Priests in 1970.

In 1975, he was appointed assistant secretary of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, and was responsible for writing the 1978 Social Justice Statement for the Bishops of Australia. It was the first statement to be made about the situation of our Aboriginal People, and aroused significant protests and support, exposing many prejudices.

In 1979 he returned to the diocese as PP of Boggabilla, and quickly immersed himself in the life of the aboriginal community, supporting initiatives to improve housing, work conditions, education, etc, and recognising the sacred site of Boobera Lagoon. He famously delivered the eulogy at the grave of 'Cheeky' McIntosh, a young aboriginal murdered by whites in Moree.

In 1983, realising how little the parishioners recognised the Murriss as 'the least of the brethren' of Jesus, he resigned from the priesthood. Eventually, he settled in Brisbane, living with the artist and cultural leader, Aunty Lilla Watson, and her Murri family who loved and supported him to the end. A truly inspiring human being, a Christ figure who did not fit the mould, but who could never stand by and do nothing when he saw suffering and injustice.

PETER JOSEPH FOUNTAIN

07/05/1945 – 01/01/2023

✠ Peter was born in Adelaide to Patrick and Mary, a brother to Marie-Therese, Julian and John. After completing his secondary education at Rostrevor College, Peter joined St Francis Xavier's seminary and was in one of the largest classes of students ever ordained from this seminary. Of the 12 students, nine including Peter were ordained for Adelaide Archdiocese on 4 September 1971. Peter was very religious, even as a young boy and very early in life he expressed his desire to be a priest.

Unfortunately, Peter did not always enjoy good health, nevertheless he was always determined to be a good and faithful priest, fully committed to his vocation. Early in his ministry he was advised to "Be yourself", and he followed that advice in his priestly ministry, not comparing himself with any others, but being himself.

Peter served in thirteen different parishes, as Parish Priest in four, mostly in the South East in SA and finally spent his last years in retirement in Mount Gambier. With failing health, he moved to the priests' retirement Villa Murphy, but was only there a short time before succumbing to terminal cancer. Peter died in Calvary Flora McDonald nursing home, aged 77. His funeral Mass was celebrated by Archbishop O'Regan in St Francis Xavier Cathedral on 15 January, with a good number of fellow priests concelebrating.

JOSEPH PATRICK HYNAN PE

11/03/1935 – 14/12/2022

✠ After undertaking seminary studies in St Patrick's College, Carlow, Eire, Joseph was ordained on 11 June 1960 at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Carlow Eire. Shortly after, he arrived in Melbourne and was appointed Assistant Priest in the parish of Ormond (1961) followed by Newport (1965), Oakleigh (1970) and Mount Waverley (1973). He was then appointed Parish Priest at Dandenong North (1974), Kyneton (1986), Forest Hill (1994), Oakleigh (2002) and Balwyn (2006). Upon retirement in 2010, Joseph was appointed *Pastor Emeritus*.

Joseph served the Church in a very positive and pastorally enriching manner, giving fine example to both his brother priests and the Archdiocese of Melbourne for 62 years and we are most grateful for his untiring service. May he rest in peace.

WILLIAM MELICAN

03/01/1931 – 15/10/2022



Bill said that the best way to be a Catholic Christian was by believing and belonging. Bill was a much loved, admired, and respected brother, brother-in-law, and uncle of the dairy farming Wangoom (near Warrnambool) Melicans. He was colourful, never more so than in full flight reciting *'The Man from Snowy River'*, cracking the whip and resounding the thunder of the horses as they flew down the mountain. Unassuming as he was, he gathered a considerable library of books reflecting his great interest in history and sport, with a love of poetry that made his conversation interesting and entertaining.

Bill's historical consciousness afforded him a broad and wide perspective on most things. History, *that great teacher of life*, taught Bill so much – and primarily the perspective that he said came from knowing that Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever and that the Church is to reflect Christ and is Christ.

Bill served in 12 parishes across the Diocese, where he brought an inclusive, non-judgemental approach and encouraged real growth in community. Upon retirement from active ministry in 2011, his farewell recognised his faithfulness to the People of God through drought and pain, remembered for his distinctive gestures and expressive shrugs, regaling with Plato and Aristotle and vociferous quoting of his beloved *Tablet*. As a Spiritual guide he was appreciated for his thoughtful, literary mind.

A Diocesan Priest of the Ballarat presbyterate for 67 years, he went to everything, in good times and in bad, as clergy gatherings were so important to him.

In 2019, when Pope Francis wrote to priests on the feast of St John Vianney he may have been writing personally to Bill, *"you who have quietly left all behind in order to immerse yourself in the daily life of your communities... You served in the trenches, bearing the burden of the day and the heat, confronting an endless variety of situations in your effort to care for and accompany God's people. Despite the hardships of the journey, you have written the finest pages of the priestly life... Thank you being a merciful shepherd."*

TAO XUAN PHAM**17/06/1970 – 15/01/2023**

Tao Xuan Pham was born in the diocese of Vinh (Vietnam), son of Loan Pham and Nghia Tran, seventh of their eight children. He was ordained at St Patrick's Cathedral for the archdiocese of Melbourne on 16 September 2016.

His seminary education began in the minor seminary in his home diocese (1984-1991), continued with studies for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Literature) in Saigon (1992-1997), leading to his being a teacher of literature in the minor seminary. He completed his studies of philosophy and theology in 2004 in Saigon.

His transfer to the diocese of Sale led in 2007 to resumption of studies at Corpus Christi College, Carlton and to undertaking various language studies and pastoral experiences in the Sale diocese.

In 2011, two weeks before the due date of ordination to the diaconate, he contracted tetanus. This event marked the remaining years of his life.

His recovery from illness necessitated 765 days in hospital, 688 of these continuously at St Vincent's in Melbourne, and over thirty surgical interventions. He was a guest of the Redemptorist fathers after discharge at their monastery in Kew where he continued rehabilitation for 18 months.

Impressed by Tao's faith, Archbishop Denis Hart sponsored him as a seminarian for the Archdiocese. Presbytery accommodation that suited his physical needs was found at North Greensborough parish, where he stayed until his death.

His courage and faith quickly won the hearts of all parishioners. One of the mourners at his funeral said to this writer that she never failed to be uplifted by the manner in which he celebrated the Eucharist. He would go off to hear confessions late into the night at the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang in Keysborough. He developed an online ministry among Vietnamese Catholics, notably throughout the Covid lockdowns in Melbourne.

Three times life support was stopped, three times he survived. During these ordeals, he would hear people's voices, including the voice of his brother who had been summoned to accompany his coffin. He was tormented with ideas of suicide. After one such struggle, he was visited by Bishop Christopher Prowse who gave him a copy of the late Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan's prison reflections *Five Loaves and Two Fish. Meditations on the Eucharist* (CTS, London 2009). The young bishop, frustrated by absence from his diocese, heard a voice asking, "Have you chosen God alone, or his work?"

Reading this passage was decisive for Tao. He wrote: "If I will become a priest or not, is unimportant, the important thing is to choose God and carry out God's will. So whether I am disabled, or able to walk again, belongs to the will of God. Thanks to these words which Bishop Thuan wrote in his little book, they have helped me to be peaceful and the voice has not attacked me, tempted me or tormented me anymore."

He prayed daily before the Blessed Sacrament. Tao went to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving in his home village and parish. "In the village, many people came to see me and asked about my sickness and how I had recovered. They still did not congratulate me as a newly ordained priest." His Thanksgiving Mass brought together two Bishops, 40 priests and over 3500 people. He said, "Most of them came to see me because I was resurrected from the dead."

On 9th January 2023, he arrived at Tullamarine airport to go to celebrate a marriage liturgy for twenty-eight of his nieces and nephews. His health had deteriorated overnight and he was taken to intensive care at the Austin Hospital where he completed his own Paschal Mystery six days later. May the noble soul of Fr Tao Xuan Pham rest in peace.

Michael McEntee

DENNIS VICTOR RILEY**23/08/1949 – 29/11/2022**


Dennis, born in Sydney NSW, to parents John and Veronica, had three siblings – Maureen, Peter and James. Dennis attended St Aloysius Primary School, Cronulla and completed his secondary schooling at De La Salle Catholic College, Cronulla and Christian Brothers, Sutherland.

Following his schooling years, Dennis went on to take on Lay Missionary work in Papua New Guinea. His experience in this work led him to later commence his training for the Priesthood at St Paul's Seminary in Sydney, New South Wales. In August 1978, he was ordained a Priest in Cronulla, with his first appointment as an Assistant Priest in the Archdioceses of Brisbane beginning in the Sacred Heart Parish, Booval. After a year in Booval, Dennis moved to the St Oliver Plunkett's Parish in Cannon Hill for four years and also took on a Hospital Chaplaincy appointment for Mt Olivet Hospital. His first appointment as a Parish Priest began in 1989 at St Joseph's Parish Kangaroo Point where he remained for 20 years.

Dennis retired in 2012 and resided at Camp Hill. He was much loved by his family, friends and fellow Priests and will be remembered for his care and concern for others, particularly the sick, elderly and the disadvantaged.

ERWIN SCHMUTZ SVD

05/10/2022

 Erwin Schmutz SVD was remembered for his very full life of service – as priest, missionary, medic and botanist – at his funeral Mass in the St Arnold Janssen Chapel, Marsfield, following his death in Sydney in October, 2022. Erwin was born in Germany, and spent 30 years as a missionary in Indonesia, then some years as a German Airforce chaplain, before arriving in the SVD AUS Province where he was chaplain to Adelaide's German community for many years.

Forced into the German army at just 13 years of age to defend his home-town during World War II, Erwin saw things in the dying weeks of the war that stayed as indelible wounds in his memory. One of his two brothers was killed as a soldier two days after the official surrender in 1945.

After leaving school he studied chemistry for a while, but he soon joined the Divine Word Missionaries after first coming across the SVD in his home-town where they had a house. He entered at St Augustine's seminary in Germany and took his vows in May 1958. On completion of his theological studies, he was ordained and then was missioned to Manggarai on the island of Flores, in eastern Indonesia. He worked on a remote station, Nunang, for 30 years. There, he lived a very solitary life, devoted to pastoral work. He had great medical skills which he used to assist many people. He also pursued his love of botany. Erwin also specialised in Biblical studies and gave Bible courses all over Indonesia and Africa, making a big contribution to the formation of catechists in Flores.

For a time, foreign missionaries were restricted from entering Indonesia and Erwin took that as an opportunity to become a chaplain to the German Luftwaffe, an experience he loved. Erwin's final mission was in Adelaide, where he served the German-speaking Catholic community for many years. In retirement, he came to the SVD community at Marsfield. He died at St Catherine's Nursing Home, also in Marsfield, NSW. ☞

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

† John Archbold OMI (Oblate Fathers).....	17/11/2022
† Anthony Bolt MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart).....	26/11/2022
† Allan Connors SM (Marist Fathers).....	30/11/2022
† John De Luca (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	18/01/2023
† James Kane (Diocese of Bathurst).....	09/11/2022
† Louis Molloy SM (Marist Fathers).....	09/11/2022
† Andre Nahhas (Archdiocese of Perth).....	29/12/2022
† Desmond Purcell SJ (Jesuits).....	15/01/2023
† Peter Quinn (Diocese of Sandhurst).....	14/01/2023
† Laurence Sorensen (Diocese of Bunbury).....	14/01/2023
† Anthony Young MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart).....	08/01/2023

Please email obits to Sally at: national.office@ncp.catholic.org.au

Specifications: **Text as a Word Document (max. 350 words)**

Digital photos not less than 300 KB sent as a separate .JPG file (*not to be included in the Word Document*).

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

The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)

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.