

Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

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ABOUT THE NCP

The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Priests 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.

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

John Conway



This is my first message as Chairman of the National Council of Priests, and I want to take this opportunity, first to thank Jim Clarke for his guidance and leadership as Chairman over these past few years. Jim has certainly brought an energy and enthusiasm to the role that I am sure will be a great challenge to match.

I have been but a short stint on the Executive but have certainly appreciated Jim's sense of leadership that has guided and directed the Executive and I am sure the NCP over these past few years. I am sure that he will be only too willing to assist me in this rather daunting task as the next Chairman of the NCP.

I also want to join with Jim in acknowledging and thanking our two amazing staff members, Sally and Chris,

who have decided to move into retirement after giving so much of their lives and their commitment to the Organisation that has truly benefited from this commitment and dedication that they have shown, not only to the National Council of Priests but their support and care for all of us who are priests within the Organisation.

For the past 25 years, they have been the engine-room of the NCP Office. Sally and Chris have been effective in so many areas of the life of the National Council of Priests.

From the NCP Conferences that have been arranged, planned, prepared and implemented in various Dioceses across this wide brown land every two years, (before COVID struck), and Sally and Chris have been at the forefront of all of the planning and preparation.

As I thank them for all that they have achieved over these past 25 years, I wish them well as they move into a new and quieter phase of life as they focus a little more perhaps on their families who will also benefit from their ability to plan, prepare and implement.

Thank you, Sally, and thank you, Chris. May God continue to bless you in your retirement years.

So, a new year has begun and with it, perhaps a whole new way of the NCP executive to meet and plan for the future. Bill Burt SVD continues as a member, and I am grateful once again for his

wisdom and insight when it comes to Church affairs. Jamie Collins, the bard from the bush, continues as Secretary of the NCP and we have welcomed a new arrival, David Ryan SJ, who joined our Executive towards the end of last year.

I have certainly benefited from the wisdom and guidance that each of these priests has given to me as I joined the Executive just a few short years ago, and now have undertaken the role as Chairman. I know that these Executive members will continue to guide and direct me in my capacity as Chairman of the NCP.

I am also grateful to Peter Matheson who had taken on the editorship of *The Swag*, following the passing of Peter Maher. Because of Peter's commitment, *The Swag* will continue presenting the articles that provoke such great thought and conversation from the many and varied authors who have submitted articles for our reflection.

Through Peter's editorship and his support team, no doubt *The Swag* will continue to be a significant theological magazine inspiring us as priests in our lives and in our ministries.

But for now the National Council of Priests is about to emerge anew ready to face the year that is ahead. May our God of creation continue to guide us together.

Yours in His Priesthood,
John Conway ☺

RE-CONNECT | RE-ENGAGE | RE-ENERGISE

17-20 March 2025

It's time to re-boot the NCP after the disruptions of the past few years! We intend doing so in the best way we know how - by getting together to re-connect with one another, to re-engage with the original spirit of the NCP that began over 50 years ago and to re-energise ourselves and the NCP into the future.

The Great Southern Hotel, George St, Sydney -
right in the heart of Chinatown and 100 metres from Haymarket Parish.
Further details to come.

SAVE THE DATE – NCP CONVENTION



Peter Matheson



A new year has begun. It seems hard to believe that we are nearly a quarter through the 21st century. The human world seems to be changing at an unprecedented speed due to political, economic and climate issues. Awareness of historical consciousness made Vatican II different to any previous Council of the Church, save perhaps the first at Jerusalem. The Emmanuel, the God with us, drives us ever more to re-evaluate the mystery of the incarnation in our own times. Through the year ahead of us, we will, no doubt, reverberate with USA political tremors, between, as the Australian Weekend recently declared, “age impaired Joe Biden and destructive narcissist Donald Trump” (p 15, 23-24, Dec 2023).

At the end of 2023 the De La Salle Brothers buried one of their own, Br Christian Moe FSC. Br Chris was nearly 102 when he died. In earlier days, he had worked in schools and seminaries in Papua New Guinea, Victoria, and New South Wales. He was an excellent teacher of history and literature. And he was a staunch advocate for orthodoxy in matters

of faith. The eulogist at his funeral indicated that, to Br Chris, “Vatican II failed the test of orthodoxy.” He apparently had a great admiration for John Henry Cardinal Newman, and one wonders whether he believed anything new had happened in the church since the death of that famous 19th century Cardinal. Yet, Newman had written that here below, to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.

The challenge of historical consciousness is a shadow affecting much of the current conflict between conservatives and progressives in the church.

Br Chris was on a committee convened by Archbishop Pell at the start of this century to produce a catechetical curriculum which resulted in the publication of “To Know, Worship and Love.” The current archbishop of Melbourne, Peter Comensoli, commissioned a Review of RE Curriculum in Melbourne in late 2022. The Review was published a year later in November 2023, basically condemning, what the three authors of the Review discovered, were severe deficiencies in ten areas of faith content. A return to the Catechism of the Catholic Church was recommended.

Interestingly, “To Know, Worship and Love” was mentioned only once in the 145-page review. “Schools may consider using it” (p 70), given that everything else was “not fit for purpose.” So much for the stated aim of the Review on page 3 to detail and evaluate existing theory and practice within Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

What was detailed and evaluated was the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) partnership work between the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) and Catholic Education Melbourne over the last 15 years, and the Pedagogy of Encounter emerging from that partnership. The Review savaged the Leuven project and the Pedagogy of Encounter. Within weeks of the publication of the Review, Leuven replied with its own 15-page document savaging the Review’s critique for its shallow understanding of ECSI.

The authors of the Review seemed to have no appreciation of the history of RE in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, from the time of Mons John F Kelly’s “Catechism of the Australian Church” and the subsequent decades of the teams

under Mons Tom Doyle that developed the Guidelines for Religious Education through the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s stemming in some measure from the inductive methodology in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dei Verbum*. Perhaps this was to be expected with two of the three authors coming from overseas and interstate. While there are selective quotes from Vatican II and other Post Vatican II Church documents, the Review has not a single quote from *Gaudium et Spes*, and only two from *Dei Verbum*, both from the one paragraph 10. Those two Constitutions were crucial in the development of religious education programs and processes in the wake of Vatican II.

Australia’s Fr Orm Rush reminded the participants at last October’s Synod on Synodality of the energy and dynamism of revelation in his theological reflection on the synthesis.

He told the participants that the heart of *Dei Verbum* is the retrieval of a dynamic understanding of *tradition*. It retrieved a personalist understanding of *revelation*, as found in the Bible and in the patristic writings of the early centuries of the church. Revelation is presented as an ongoing encounter in the present, and not just something that happened in the past. God comes in friendship to establish relationship.

Orm also quoted from *Gaudium et Spes* (par 44) where the entire People of God have the “task of hearing, distinguishing, and interpreting the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the Divine Word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, and better understood.”

The authors of the Melbourne RE Review selectively chose to bypass *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dei Verbum*. We reprint with Orm’s permission in this edition of the Swag his reflection to the Synod participants.

What was deeply sad about the Melbourne Review was that in the whole 145-page document there was not one word of thanks to the many RE teachers and catechists who have laboured long and hard in doing what GS 44 requested. The Catechism of the Catholic Church will always be a part of RE curriculum, but it is only a part of the whole encounter with the Living Word of God. The Swag would certainly

NCP
exists for you
and
because of you!

wish to thank the many catechists and religious educators around the country who continue to help uncover God's ongoing friendly encounter, the Living Word, with the young in the living history of their lives in their RE programs.

As for Br Christian, I'm sure he has already caught up with Cardinal Newman in heaven and had a chat or two about Vatican II.

– Postscript –

This edition of *The Swag* is the last for Sally Heath and Christine Moore at the helm of production. Their retirement at the end of last year after many years in the NCP National Office in Belmont means that the NCP (and the executive) have lost much administrative, professional, personal and human capital. Sally and Chris, along with running the NCP National Office, also managed the production and mailing of *The Swag*. The National Office is no longer manned (or womanned), and until further notice contact with the NCP will have to be via the members of the executive or the editor. ☺

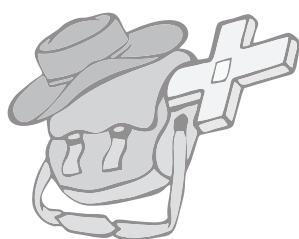
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and articles is

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



Address to the Synod on Synodality 23 October 2023

ORMOND RUSH

Ormond is a priest of the Townsville Diocese, Associate Professor and Reader, Australian Catholic University, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Research Centre for Studies of the Second Vatican Council, and Institute for Religion & Critical Inquiry. Invited theologian to the Synod on Synodality.

Having listened to you over these past three weeks, I have had the impression that some of you are struggling with the notion of tradition, in the light of your love of truth. You are not the first to struggle with this. It was a major point of discussion at the Second Vatican Council. I thought it might be helpful to recall the questions they debated, and the answers they came up with. Their answers are, for us, the authority for guiding our reflections on the issues that confront us today. So, maybe Vatican II has some lessons for this Synod, as you now bring to synthesis your discernment regarding the future of the church.

Over the four sessions of the council, one of the major recurring points of tension was this matter of “tradition”. In the first 1962 session, a draft text was presented to the assembly on “the sources of revelation”; it was styled in the categories of neo-scholasticism, which spoke of revelation, faith, scripture and tradition in a mostly one-dimensional way: in terms only of propositional doctrinal statements. When put to the council, the bishops virtually rejected it. The next day, Pope John XXIII agreed that a new text was indeed needed. On the historic significance of this debate, as well as the pope's decision to intervene, the council peritus Joseph Ratzinger wrote at that time:

The real question behind the discussion could be put this way: Was the intellectual position of “anti-Modernism” – the old policy of exclusiveness, condemnation and defense leading to an almost neurotic denial of all that was new – to be continued? Or would the Church, after it had taken all the necessary precautions to protect the faith, turn over a new leaf and move on into a new and positive encounter with its own origins, with its [fellow human beings] and with the world of today? Since a clear majority of the

fathers opted for the second alternative, we may even speak of the Council as a new beginning. We may also say that with this decision there was a major advance over Vatican Council I. Both Trent and Vatican Council I set up bulwarks for the faith to assure it and to protect it; Vatican Council II turned itself to a new task, building on the work of the two previous Councils.

That new task was an engagement of Christian faith with history

What Joseph Ratzinger saw during Vatican II as the source of tension here were basically two approaches to tradition. He calls them a “static” understanding of tradition and a “dynamic” understanding. The former is legalistic, propositional, and ahistorical (i.e., relevant for all times and places); the latter is personalist, sacramental and rooted in history, and therefore to be interpreted with an historical consciousness. The former tends to focus on the past, the latter on seeing the past being realised in the present, and yet open to a future yet to be revealed.

The council used the phrase “living tradition” to describe the latter (DV, 12). In speaking of the dynamic rather than a static understanding of “the apostolic tradition”, *Dei Verbum* 8 teaches: “The tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress [*proficit*, “develops”] in the church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on.” And it goes on to speak of three interrelated ways through which the Holy Spirit guides the development of the apostolic tradition: the work of theologians; the lived experience of the faithful; and the oversight of the magisterium. Sounds like a synodal church, doesn't it?

According to a dynamic understanding of tradition, says Ratzinger:

Continued page 6

“Not everything that exists in the Church must for that reason be also a legitimate tradition; in other words, not every tradition that arises in the Church is a true celebration and keeping present of the mystery of Christ. There is a distorting, as well as a legitimate, tradition... Consequently, tradition must not be considered only affirmatively, but also critically; we have Scripture as a criterion for this indispensable criticism of tradition, and tradition must therefore always be related back to it and measured by it.”

Pope Francis alluded to these two different ways of understanding tradition, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Tradition is a living reality and only a partial vision regards the ‘deposit of faith’ as something static. The word of God cannot be moth-balled like some old blanket in an attempt to keep insects at bay! No. The word of God is a dynamic and living reality that develops and grows because it is aimed at a fulfilment that none can halt”.

At the heart of *Dei Verbum*'s retrieval of a dynamic understanding of *tradition* was its retrieval of a personalist understanding of *revelation*, as found in the Bible and in the patristic writings of the early centuries of the church. Revelation is *not only* a communication of truths about God and human living, which is articulated in Scripture and in the statements of doctrine at particular times in the church's history, in response to time-conditioned questions put to the tradition.

Revelation is primarily a communication of God's love, an encounter with God the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit. *Dei Verbum* speaks of divine revelation in terms personal friendship and encounter, and especially in terms of love and truth.

Let me quote DV 2: “By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company... The most intimate truth [*intima veritas*] thus revealed about God and human salvation shines forth for us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of revelation.”

In *Dei Verbum* – and this is important for understanding synodality and the very purpose of this Synod – this divine revelation is presented as an ongoing encounter in the present, and not *just* something that happened in the past. The event of God's self-revealing (always in Christ, through the Holy Spirit) and God's offer of relationship, continues to be a living reality here and now. That doesn't mean there can be some new revelation of who God is.

But, the same God, in the same Jesus Christ, through the enlightenment and empowerment of the same Holy Spirit, is forever engaging with, and dialoguing with, human beings in the ever-new here and now of history that relentlessly moves humanity into new perceptions, new questions and new insights, in diverse cultures and places, as the world-church courses through time into an unknown future until the eschaton.

We see this present-nature of the divine-human dialogue in *Dei Verbum* 8: “God, who spoke in the past, continues to dialogue with the spouse of his beloved Son [the church].

And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the church – and through it in the world – leads believers to the full truth and makes the word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness.” Therefore, according to Joseph Ratzinger, in *Dei Verbum* we are given “an understanding of revelation that is seen basically as dialogue... [T]he reading of Scripture is described as a *colloquium inter Deum et hominem* [a dialogue between God and human beings]... The dialogue of God is always carried on in the present... with the intention of forcing us to reply.”

This Synod is a dialogue with God. That has been the privilege and challenge of your “conversations in the Spirit.” God is waiting for your reply. At the end of this week of synthesis, you might well want to begin that synthesis by saying, as did that first Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” In their time, their letter to the churches then went on to address an issue on which Jesus himself had left no specific directions.

They and the Holy Spirit together had to come to a new adaptation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ regarding that new question, which had not been envisaged before.

Vatican II, accordingly, urged the church to be ever attentive to the movements of the revealing and saving God present and active in the flow of history, by attending to “the signs of the times” in the light of the living Gospel. Discernment of the signs of the times in the present seeks to determine what God is urging us to see – with the eyes of Jesus – in new times; but also urging us to be attentive to the traps – where we could be being drawn into ways of thinking that are not “of God”.

These traps could lie in being anchored exclusively in the past, or exclusively in the present, or not being open to the future fullness of divine truth to which the Spirit of Truth is leading the church. Discerning the difference between opportunities and traps is the task of all the faithful – laity, bishops, and theologians – everyone, as *Gaudium et Spes* 44 teaches: “With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.”

That “divine word”, that “revealed truth”, is a person, Jesus Christ. So, as we move to discernment of our final synthesis, may we be guided by the injunction of the Letter to the Hebrews 12: 2: “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.” ☞

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Franciscan bishop implements Jesuit pope's synodal vision in Australia

CHRISTOPHER WHITE, NCR VATICAN CORRESPONDENT

With thanks to *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) and Christopher White, where this article originally appeared. Republished in full with permission from the author, and from the NCR and from *Catholic Outlook* of the Parramatta Diocese where this article also appeared on 2 December, 2023.

As more than 200 delegates participating in the first-ever synod for the Australian Diocese of Parramatta filed out of their opening Mass, they were discreetly given flyers by those questioning both the meeting and the bishop who had called it.

Since his installation as the head of the diocese in the western suburbs of Sydney in 2016, Bishop Vincent Long has ruffled more than a few feathers for his support of LGBTQ Catholics, his advocacy in support of the country's recent referendum on Indigenous representation, and his own personal testimony of being a victim of clergy sexual abuse.

For taking those stances, Long is unapologetic.

"I try to follow Pope Francis' lead by focusing on pastoral priorities such as a church that is more inclusive, participatory, open to the gifts of all members, especially women," he told NCR on Nov. 8.

"More aligned with the poor, the dispossessed and the marginalized, more in partnership with others, more engaged with the world not flight from or hostility against it."

To be clear, Long says he does not want to compare himself with the pope, but that he is simply trying to draw from what Francis is teaching and apply it in his own backyard.

"The pope has had many critics both within and outside the church. I have my share. But I would not compare myself with him. ... This comes with the territory," he said.

Long's remarks came during an interview with NCR on the sidelines of the plenary meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference at Mary MacKillop Place in Sydney, and while this reporter was in the country for a

series of lectures sponsored by the Parramatta Diocese, the La Salle Academy at Australian Catholic University, and Newman College, Melbourne.

Like Francis, Long is somewhat of an outsider.

Ordained an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne in 2011, he is the country's first Asian-born bishop. Now in Parramatta as the first Vietnamese-born bishop to head a diocese outside of Vietnam, he leads one of Australia's most diverse and rapidly growing dioceses and serves as the chair of the Australian Bishops' Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

While he began his studies for the priesthood in Vietnam, he, along with several other family members, fled the country on a boat as a refugee in 1979, arriving first in Malaysia and then Australia, where he eventually became a Conventual Franciscan friar.

He would go on to serve as superior of the order in Australia and, from 2008 to 2011, serve as an official at its headquarters in Rome.

Long's own background as a refugee, combined with his Franciscan spirituality that emphasizes a care for creation and the poor, has aligned him closely with this Jesuit pope who chose the 13th-century saint as his namesake.

"I find that synergy between Pope Francis' vision of the church and my own, which was nourished and formed by my Franciscan upbringing," he said, describing "a church of poverty, a church of simplicity, a church of humility."

Long admits that this can be a bit of a shock to the system for some.

"I think I touch some raw nerves that make some react strongly," he said. "Like when I speak for LGBTQI,

asylum seekers, Indigenous people."

Short in stature and at times soft-spoken, what Long has to say is often bold and shocking in a country where the late Cardinal George Pell's brash and bullyish-style Catholicism has seemingly cemented the perception of the Australian church for many.

"Some are fearful that the world is not the way we thought it was going to be. I think what has happened is that we've taken all of our anxiety about the old world disappearing," he continued.

Marginalized groups, he said, often "become the scapegoats for all that is wrong."

Aware of these tensions and the fact that the church has to maintain unity in diversity, Long said that soon after he arrived in Parramatta, he decided it would be beneficial to hold a diocesan synod.

Those plans were delayed when the Australian bishops decided to hold a national plenary council to discuss a number of proposals regarding church governance.

While the plenary was originally scheduled for 2020, it was not completed until 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflecting on the decision to hold the plenary, Long described it as a "very bold step on part of the church and the bishops, in particular," knowing that there would be "moments of tension and disruption."

But those moments, he said, were "transformative" and the entire experience served as "a template for the synodal journey" – both for the global church and his diocese, where Long said he felt the need to hold a synod so he didn't just "impose my own wishes."

In the lead-up to the Parramatta synod, Long said, there was apprehension about it further dividing the diocese over hot-button issues, concern about the logistics involved, and worries that it might further exacerbate the divide between the laity and clergy.

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“It is like a journey to the unknown,” he said, noting that the entire process required vulnerability at every level, with some participants fearing change and others afraid nothing would change.

In the end, Long said the entire experience was marked by prayerfulness and that the No. 1 word chosen by delegates in a survey afterward was that they felt “safe.” Moreover, it delivered concrete results and, as Long emphasized, was “not just a talk fest.”

Resolutions to welcome LGBTQI persons, increase resources for women’s leadership formation, and implement greater outreach and dialogue with Indigenous peoples all passed with a two-thirds majority. Only one proposal to offer an “acknowledgement of country” of Aboriginal lands at the beginning of liturgical celebrations failed to pass.

Long acknowledged that personally, he felt a bit of whiplash, enjoying an emotional high from the momentum of the synod, while at the same time feeling “very flat” over the fact that on the same weekend the synod took place, Australians overwhelmingly rejected a national referendum that would have given greater rights to the country’s Indigenous.

But he said he believes that the synod is still showing that the church is moving forward on a journey together to better understand itself and the world in which it operates.

The fact that the diocesan synod took place at the same time as the first session of the Vatican’s synod on synodality, he said, only added a certain energy to the entire process.

“For me, synodality is a crucial step in the church’s self-understanding,” said Long. “It takes the reception of the Second Vatican Council to a new level.”

“Pope Francis has engaged in an ecclesiological gear shift. Synodality or the whole people of God is what God expects of the church going forward,” Long said. “The church cannot be fully itself without the contribution of all the faithful to her mission.” ☪

Catholic Seminaries in Australia: 1835-2023

PETER J WILKINSON

Part 4: St Patrick’s College Manly and growth period.



St Patrick’s College, Manly

On 19 November 1885, Day 6 of the First Australasian Plenary Council, Archbishop Patrick Moran laid the foundation stone for his new Sydney archdiocesan seminary, St Patrick’s College, at Manly. It was to serve ‘exclusively for the Education of Aspirants to the ecclesiastical State’ and ‘in after years as a centre for higher Philosophical and Theological studies for all the dioceses of Australia’.

In the first intake in January 1889, there were insufficient ‘major’ seminarians for the 80 places available, so applicants as young as 13 years were admitted for preparatory classes. The staff consisted of 8 priests, some with considerable teaching experience in Ireland and Rome, and 2 lay teachers.

The curriculum was based on Scholastic philosophy and theology and the ‘more wholesome doctrine as contained in the works of Thomas Aquinas’ which Pope Leo XIII had restored in 1879.

Initially, the screening of applicants was lax, resulting in a high dropout rate. Of the first groups of 76 seminarians, almost all were from middle-class Catholic families and had attended Catholic schools. Many were of Irish descent whose parents were ‘respectable’, ‘pious’, ‘decent’ or ‘good’ practical Catholics. Though no bishop recruited seminarians from Ireland for Manly, some Irish students made their own way.

Money, especially the lack of it, was a major consideration in the recruitment and formation of Australian priests. Many bishops, even the generous ones, took a hard-nosed approach, and Manly was not open to poor Catholics unless a non-family friend assisted. Moran’s policy was that ‘no student in arrears is to be advanced to Orders’ and some students were forced to leave because of their parents’ financial difficulties. If there was a serious barrier to vocations before 1906 it was the failure of the bishops to make special provision for the education expenses of seminarians, especially those who were financially disadvantaged. It was an overly cautious and conservative approach.

The Manly formation program lasted 6-10 years, with the main emphasis on daily religious and devotional life. The bishops wanted the seminary staff to produce priests who were pious, docile (‘obedient’) and ecclesiastically minded.

The regime was strict and ordered. The daily timetable accounted for every minute of the waking day and silence was to be strictly observed at the prescribed times, especially during the ‘great silence’ from night prayers until after breakfast. The only breaks from the routine of study and silence were on major feast days and Thursdays when there were no classes and students were permitted to go on walks outside the seminary precincts. However, when outside, students were forbidden to talk

to 'externs', stray from the group, buy anything, or receive anything from externs. They were also forbidden to speak to seminary employees, male or female, although it was many years before females were employed by the college. The only visitors permitted were 'immediate relatives' at the appointed times and in the public reception rooms.

The seminary year was divided into two semesters, with a week's holiday in mid-winter and a two-month summer break when students could return home. On holidays they were expected to maintain their normal practice of prayer and spiritual exercises.

The seminary professors were all well-educated Irish and Australian-born priests. Occasional lay teachers were the exception. Spiritual directors were usually chosen for their piety and holiness. Staff and students did not fraternize but maintained a mutual respect.

The curriculum closely resembled that of the Propaganda Urban University in Rome, though initially Manly did not confer degrees. The teaching method was scholastic, and the humanities courses included Latin, Greek, French, Italian, English Composition, Grammar, Elocution, Geography, English and Roman History, Algebra and Geometry. Dogmatic Theology was based on the Summa Theologica of St Thomas Aquinas, and Moral Theology covered 'human acts', conscience, law, sins, the virtues, the Decalogue, contracts, the obligation of vocation (especially marriage), the sacraments, and ecclesiastical censures. Most of the moral teaching was focused on questions affecting individuals, rather than issues affecting society.

Source of seminarians

The Manly seminary had an instant appeal to the Australian and New Zealand bishops who wanted a quality priestly formation for their local-born candidates. Soon, seminarians were arriving from the dioceses of Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch, Melbourne, Adelaide, Port Augusta, Brisbane, Ballarat, Geraldton, New Norcia, Sandhurst, and Wilcannia-Forbes, as well as Sydney.

In the period 1889-1895 a quarter

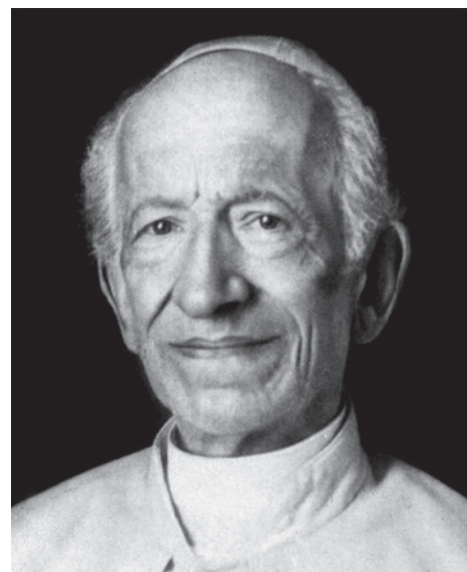
of all the students were under 16 years of age on entering, and half aged 16-19 years. The ordination rates for these two groups were 65 per cent and 71 per cent respectively. For students aged 20 years and over on entering, the ordination rate was 40 per cent.

Within three years St Charles Seminary in Bathurst was unable to compete with Manly and closed permanently in 1891.

Though many of the dioceses were desperate for priests, some Irish bishops still preferred Irish to Australian priests and actively recruited in Ireland. For a time, Moran himself continued to send some of his students to Propaganda College and the Irish College in Rome and to source Irish priests from All Hallows. However, he eventually decided that Manly should take precedence and that priests from Ireland be selected exclusively on their academic qualifications. Around this time there was growing dissatisfaction with the quality of some priests formed at All Hallows and other Irish seminaries.

Moran insisted on absolute control over all staff appointments, did not consult or seek professors from his fellow bishops, and maintained total authority over every aspect of the formation program. He refused to provide other bishops with students at the seminary with any detailed reports on their academic or general performance, leaving them ignorant of their progress. Some complained, but to no avail. Moran's attitude was that Manly was his 'diocesan' seminary, as president he was not accountable to any other bishop, and they would have to defer to him. He never welcomed any collaboration from his fellow bishops on seminary matters and flatly rejected joint Episcopal governance of Manly when suggestions were made. Moreover, he reserved to himself alone the right to ordain all Manly candidates to the priesthood, irrespective of which diocese they belonged to. If a bishop wanted to ordain his own seminarian, or ordain him early, he would have to approach Moran as president. Less than a quarter of the students were ordained by their own bishop, just another way that Moran dominated his Episcopal colleagues. When, at the end of the century, several bishops with

seminarians at Manly became unhappy with the product and lost confidence in the institution, Moran ignored the malaise. This led some bishops to send an increasing number of their seminarians to Rome (7 in 1903).



Pope Leo XIII – Encyclical *Ad extremas*

In 1893 Pope Leo XIII (above) published his Encyclical Letter *Ad extremas* which called for the development of a 'native clergy' and formation of 'indigenous' priests in the mission territories – including Australia, New Zealand, USA, and Canada – through the establishment of local seminaries which were to be financed by the European churches.

Leo acknowledged that 'a foreign clergy has difficulty in winning the hearts of the people [and] the work of a native clergy would be far more fruitful [as] they know the nature and customs of their people [and] know when to speak and when to keep silent'. Moreover, missionaries from abroad were far from adequate to serve the existing Christian communities and there was always the hazard of critical conditions arising which might lead to the expulsion of foreign priests.

Just days before the 2nd Plenary Council of Australia was to convene in Sydney on 17 November 1895, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart sought the approval of (now) Cardinal Moran to establish a new seminary at the Sydney suburb of Kensington for the training of Indigenous men from New Guinea and the Pacific

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Islands as catechists and priests. As it was not intended to rival Manly, the de facto ‘national seminary’, Moran, who had long dreamt of spreading Christianity throughout Asia, immediately gave his approval and on the closing day of the Council, laid the foundation stone.

The seminary opened in December 1897 and by the following April had 12 novices in residence (pictured above).

2nd Plenary Council of Australia

At the Second Plenary Council in November 1895, the 23 Australian bishops in attendance said little about seminaries generally and made no mention of the 1862 proposal to establish an Australian College (seminary) in Rome.

By the end of 1900 five seminaries were functioning in Australia: Moran’s Sydney diocesan seminary, St Patrick’s College at Manly, (opened 1889); the Jesuit novitiate at Greenwich, NSW (opened 1884 in Richmond VIC, moved to Kew VIC in 1886, then to Greenwich in 1890); the Redemptorist novitiate at Mayfield NSW (opened 1888); the Passionist scholasticate at Glen Osmond SA (opened 1896); and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart scholasticate at Kensington NSW (opened 1897). The Passionist novitiate which had opened in Goulburn NSW in 1890, had closed in 1896.

At the close of 1900, 41 candidates had completed their formation at Manly and been ordained to the priesthood: 36 for Australian dioceses, four for New Zealand dioceses, and one for the New Norcia Benedictines. The Passionists had formed 10 new priests, including six Australian-born; the Redemptorists had formed one Australian-born priest and admitted two Irish-born ordained priests to their novitiate; and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had formed just one Australian-born priest.

When the new century commenced on 1 January 1901 some 2050 priests had arrived in Australia from churches outside Australia, including 1,377 (67%) from Ireland, of which 450 were from All Hallows Seminary in Dublin. In 1901, of all 816 priests in active ministry in Australia – 621 diocesans and 195 religious – 87 per cent were Irish. ☪



The Voice: Catholic considerations

SR ANTONIA CURTIS OSB

Sr Antonia is a Benedictine Sister at Jamberoo Abbey, NSW. She wrote this article last Lent for *Catholic Outlook*, the communications arm of the Parramatta Diocese, before the referendum failed. We reprint this article with the permission of *Catholic Outlook*. She recently conducted an online retreat on Aboriginal Spirituality with Theresa Ardler of the Dahrawal Nation. You can access the course, *Sacred Connections* at www.jamberooabbey.org.au

A voice said, “cry out.” and I said, “What shall I cry?” – Isaiah 40:1

Scripture abounds with pleas from God calling on us to cry out; to challenge injustice; to hear the voices of the poor, the powerless, and the weak.

As Christians, we cannot ignore these voices. Jesus was, and still is, constantly asking people to listen, to hear, to reach out, to live justly. And so, in Australia now, at this moment, we need to question ourselves honestly as to how well we listen to the voices on the margins of our Church, and especially to our Indigenous brothers and sisters whose cry is: ‘Give us a Voice’. But also:

“What aboriginal people ask is that the modern world now makes the sacrifices necessary to give us a real future...to let us breathe, to let us be free... Let us be who we are – Aboriginal people in a modern world – and be proud of us.

Acknowledge that we are here with our songs, our ceremonies, our land, our language and our people – our full identity. What a gift this is that we can give you, if you choose to accept us in a meaningful way.” – ‘rom watangu’: Galarrwuy Yunupingu, the monthly, July 2016.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

In an upcoming national referendum, we will all be asked to listen and respond to this call. The Voice would ensure that the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are heard by lawmakers, and could help Parliament enact better and more effective laws. Will we give them a voice?

Pope Francis, marking the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, said to us:

“The world needs the catholic church to witness to that Christian vision of community, participation, solidarity, and joint responsibility. In too many countries power is in the hands of just a few people, the dignity of many is denied and authority is abused.”

Perhaps we could ask ourselves whether we are up to this challenge. Are we capable of softening our hearts and opening our ears to hear the voice calling from Uluru? Are we afraid of the consequences for our Church, our country? Are we afraid of telling and hearing the truth? These are serious questions, and they require of us the courage to allow ourselves to be challenged. For: “Australia has a dark history, and we need to recognise that and own it. We also need to recognise that the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia have a unique and inherent connection to, and responsibility for, country under their law and custom.” – Dr Ed Wensing, centre for aboriginal economic policy research at the Australian National University.

Pope Francis asks: “Are we good at listening? How good is the ‘hearing’ of our heart? Do we allow people to express themselves?”

“Listen to the world, to the challenges and changes that it sets before us. Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one another.” – 50th anniversary of the Synod of bishops.

The Australian Catholic Bishops, on the recommendation of their key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisers, have endorsed the Uluru Statement from the Heart informed by the words of Pope St John Paul II, who in a visit to Alice Springs in 1986, said to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: “You must not be allowed to disappear... Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages, must never be lost.”

The Plenary Council in Australia has also made positive commitments for the Catholic Church to endorse the Uluru Statement from the Heart; to accept our responsibility for the part played by the Church in the harms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have suffered; and to commit to continuing to work toward recognition, Reconciliation, and justice.

Can we individually commit to moving out from our comfort zones and embrace something new; to humbly accept that there are things we can learn from our Indigenous brothers and sisters?

Collectively we must consider how to come to terms with unresolved and legitimate grievances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples arising from colonisation and its ongoing consequences.

“Console my people, console them’ says your God. ‘Prepare in the wilderness a way for Yahweh. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.” – Isaiah 40:3-4 2

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Catholic Church stories in 2024 in the USA – are there parallels in Australia?

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

Michael wrote this article in the *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) in early January this year. Although he writes mainly about the Catholic scene in the USA, can we see parallels in the Church in Australia? Reprinted with the permission of the NCR and the author.

The life of the Catholic Church in 2024 is filled with forks in the road, most of them placed there by our reforming pontiff, Pope Francis. As the pope pushes ahead with his effort to recall the church to Gospel basics – God’s redeeming mercy and grace, concern for the poor and the outcast, holiness and catholicity – American Catholics are faced with a well-financed, well-organized opposition for whom “the basics” are a series of culture war issues.

Synodality has emerged as the leading vehicle for ecclesial reform and the preparations for the second session of the synod, as well as the synod itself in October, will dominate the year. Those preparations got a belated start. Generally, the synod organizers have done a great job but it was shocking that, at the synod’s close, they had no instructions ready for the local churches to follow up and prepare for this year’s gathering. Over a month later, on 12 December, the synod office made public a document that encouraged “further consultation” at the local level, with the synthesis document used as a “reference point.”

By then, of course, the worldwide media attention the synod had generated in October was largely dissipated.

We will see how much “further consultation” actually occurs. Will dioceses that barely engaged the synodal process now step up to the plate? Will bishops lead synodal discussions about some of the issues identified in the synthesis document? It will be especially interesting to see if bishops engage the important discussion about formation, especially the formation of seminarians. Will pastoral councils become more effective? Will discussions about the role of women become serious or remain formulaic? Will legal artifacts like corporation sole, which vests all church property in the person of the bishop, be

discarded for more synodal arrangements?

We are also beginning to learn more about what transpired at the first session of the synod, and it will be interesting to see how the preparations for the second session confront the problems that emerged or, in true Bergoglio fashion, allow the tensions to continue to percolate. For example, while no one will go on the record, after speaking with many participants, it’s clear there were tensions between the theologians and the bishops according to several synod attendees, with different people assigning different reasons for the tensions. Some blame the theologians, saying they wanted to run the show and were not permitted to do so. Others suggest the leadership experts who undertook many of the tasks of facilitation had undue influence over the proceedings.

And, of course, there were tensions between demographic groups, with bishops from the Global South resisting some of the proposals for greater acceptance of gay and lesbian Catholics that European and North American bishops proposed.

It remains to be seen how these tensions will play out at the local level during this period of consultation. How many bishops have reached out to theologians to explore the issues raised in the synthesis document? How many pastors have read the synthesis document? Whatever one thinks of this issue or that, has the synodal process begun to take root?

Synodality is one way Pope Francis will be reshaping the universal church. Personnel appointments is another. Nowhere is this more important than in the selection of new cardinals who not only serve as key advisers to the pope but also become leaders in their home countries. And, with the pope having turned 87, naming new cardinals takes

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on the added quality of shaping the selection of the next pope.

In January, Cardinal John Onaiyekan of Abuja, Nigeria, turns 80 and will lose his right to vote in the next papal conclave. In February, Cardinal Pedro Baretto Jimeno, the archbishop of Huancayo, Peru, and Cardinal Jose Lacunza Maestrojuán of Panama will turn 80 and lose their votes. Ten more cardinals will age out of the conclave in 2024, including Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, who was seen as a papal contender last time. That will bring the total number of cardinal electors down to 121, one more than the informal limit of 120. Will Francis hold another consistory? Or will he wait until 2025 when even more cardinals age out?

Speaking of Boston, O'Malley submitted his resignation when he turned 75, but the Holy Father kept him on as archbishop. So far, the pope has not allowed diocesan bishops to serve past 80. So, we can expect a new archbishop in Boston sometime this year. Detroit and Cincinnati are also due for new archbishops, their incumbents having turned 75 last year. Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile and Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome ListECKI both turn 75 in March, as does Houston's Cardinal Daniel DiNardo in May. Kansas City's Archbishop Joseph Naumann and Omaha's Archbishop George Lucas hit the retirement age in June, and Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans turns 75 in November. They will all submit their resignations as required by canon law.

Also, mark April 12 on your calendar: That is the date on which Archbishop Leonard Blair of Hartford, most famous for leading the investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, turns 75 and his coadjutor Archbishop Christopher Coyne will assume the reins.

Each of the nine new appointments to metropolitan sees is its own fork in the road. In each, the pope has the opportunity to choose men who agree with his reforms. In each, time is flying by. Those charged with processing appointments need to expedite the process and name some new leaders. Throw long. Take chances.

The essential fault line in the Catholic

Church in this country runs between those who support Pope Francis' missionary approach and those who resist it. In an interview with *America* magazine, Cardinal Christophe Pierre explained how "astounded" he was when he arrived in the U.S. in 2016 that "many of the bishops didn't know what had happened in Aparecida. They did not know that *Evangelii Gaudium*, the first document of Pope Francis, was rooted in Aparecida."

Later in the interview Pierre added, "I would not concentrate on Francis so much because Francis is now seen as the big sinner by some. There are some priests and religious and bishops who are terribly against Francis as if he was the scapegoat [for] all the failures of the church or of society."

This did not sit well with the U.S. Catholics who have resisted the pope's reform efforts. Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said at a press conference, "So I think there might be a little bit of a dichotomy between what was presented in that article and what the reality is. That's my perception. He's open to his opinion, and I'm open to mine." This kind of casual dismissal of important and informed criticism, choosing not to engage Francis' reform, can be expected to continue.

Tim Busch, founder of the Napa Institute, an organization for conservative plutocrats, took to the pages of *National Review* to rebut the nuncio. Busch did not suggest the U.S. church look to Aparecida and the lessons from Latin America. I wonder if Busch consulted Napa's "ecclesiastical adviser," Archbishop Paul Coakley, the secretary of the USCCB and archbishop of Oklahoma City, about his rebuttal?

Instead, Busch argued that "Global Catholicism could learn a lot from the U.S. example of empowering everyday Catholics to preach the gospel." He pointed to the lay apostolates in the country, many of which offer a highly conservative version of Catholicism, a theme he has sounded before, as my colleague Tom Roberts reported previously. Busch said he thinks the fact these lay groups (he mentioned *Legatus* as well as Napa) have access to capital is a good thing, not a hindrance, which is

one way of looking at it. No "poor church for the poor" for him.

Busch also has previously argued that the U.S. church, or at least the business school at Catholic University that bears his name and the Napa Institute itself, could serve as a model for the rest of the church when it comes to Catholic social teaching. "We can be the teaching pulpit for the American church, but also the teaching pulpit for the Vatican and for the global church," he told a 2017 conference at CUA. "We can be that. And we will be that going forward, especially on the issues and topics of business." The only problem is that Busch is hostile to most of what Catholic social teaching has to say about economics. His pernicious influence with large swaths of wealthy Catholics and the bishops who hang out with them will continue.

The inability of the U.S. church to place Catholic social teaching at the heart of its public witness remains a scandal. Will 2024 see any real effort to confront climate change by the nation's bishops? Will we defend the dignity of migrants with the same fervor that we defend the dignity of the unborn? Will we promote a more equitable, and less *laissez faire*, economy?

It is not just social teachings that provide another fork in the road. There have emerged two ways of responding to the pope's continuing call to help people meet Jesus before we start beating them over the head with the catechism, with a heavy emphasis on sexual sins. This is the real issue at the heart of the controversy occasioned by the publication of *Fiducia Supplicans*, the Vatican's recent document on giving blessings to people in irregular marital situations. That document did not alter one iota of Catholic doctrine. It merely helped to explain that a priest can give blessings to people for all sorts of reasons and in all sorts of contexts, that invoking grace can only help people, and that every human relationship has something of worth and value.

From the reaction, you would have thought the pope was advocating free love. Many bishops issued statements explaining precisely what the document does and doesn't say. Others, as they have in the past, place the most uncharitable

interpretation on anything that issues from this pontificate. Unsurprisingly, the latter chorus was led by the former Archbishop of Philadelphia Charles Chaput. “Confusion among the faithful can often be a matter of innocent individuals who hear but fail to understand the Word. Confused teaching, however, is another matter. It’s never excusable,” he ranted in *First Things*. He complained, “Deliberate or persistent ambiguity—anything that fuels misunderstanding or seems to leave an opening for objectively sinful behaviour—is not of God.” Nice.

Sadly, Chaput was not alone. “We have received a number of inquiries from the faithful concerning *Fiducia Supplicans*, a Vatican document published Monday on the topic of blessings,” according to a joint statement by the two Catholic bishops in South Dakota. “It specifically discusses the offering of a blessing by a priest to persons living in situations of unrepentant serious sin, such as same-sex sexual relationships, fornication, or adultery.” Nice.

Chaput and his ilk have refused to receive the teaching of *Amoris Laetitia*,

Pope Francis’ 2016 apostolic exhortation following the twin synods on the family. It was during those synods that I dubbed Chaput the captain of Team Javert: “Those who falter and those who fail, must pay the price” sums up their moral outlook. I do not anticipate any lessening in their criticism of the pope in 2024.

On the other hand, plenty of bishops in this country have embraced the pope’s vision and do so wholeheartedly. Consider the statement about *Fiducia Supplicans* from Las Vegas Archbishop George Leo Thomas. “Our Holy Father Pope Francis has long shown his pastoral concern for the salvation of souls and his closeness to people in every situation, including those who are struggling spiritually, or alienated from the Church,” his statement began. “His writings, instructions, homilies, and indeed his very life, demonstrate his desire to minister to all people, especially those who are most in need of God’s mercy and grace.” He went on to explain the declaration in the same generous manner it was intended. Is there anything in Thomas’ statement that is “not of God”?

Other areas of church life will continue to fascinate even if they are less likely to dominate the headlines. Catholic higher education has enormous opportunities to shape public discourse, as I discussed in the wake of congressional testimony by three presidents of secular universities turned into a trainwreck.

The charitable arms of the church will continue to do what they can to address the problems of homelessness, the plight of migrants and others in need. The deeper challenge of preaching the Gospel in an affluent society will be noticeable mainly for its absence from most Catholic pulpits.

So, 2024 promises to bring continued polarization within the U.S. church. But maybe, just maybe, the weight will begin to shift among the hierarchy from those who oppose the pope to those who embrace him, from those who follow Francis at the various forks in the road and those who take the alternate path, from Team Javert to Team Valjean. At any rate, these are the stories I anticipate covering in the coming year. ☺



Australia and the recent Synod

JOHN SWANN

Much has been written about the Synod held in Rome during last October. On a recent visit to Australia Christopher White (an NCR writer who was present at the Synod) made the observation that Australia had far more influence than might be expected, given that Australia has less than 0.5 per cent of the world’s Catholics.

Why would he say that, you might ask. Well there are a number of reasons.

Firstly look at the number of Australians who attended. The Oceania contingent included ten non-bishop voting members, half of whom were from Australia:

Dr Trudy Dantis, director of the National Centre for Pastoral Research; John Lochowiak, chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council; Kelly Paget, Diocese of Broken Bay chancellor; Fr Sijeesh Pullenkunnel, chancellor of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne; and Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan, national head of philosophy and theology from the University of Notre Dame Australia.

We also sent six experts and facilitators to the synod,

The Australian experts were the ACU academics Dr Sandie Cornish and Fr Ormond Rush, key Plenary Council facilitator Br Ian Cribb SJ, and member of the synod methodology commission Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe.

Divine Word missionary Fr Asaeli Raass SVD is listed as a Fijian expert but is serving in remote central Australia, while Fr Eamonn Conway, a priest of the Diocese of Tuam listed for Ireland, serves as professor of integral human development at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

In addition Australia also provided five

bishops: Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP, a member of the Council of the Synod of Bishops; Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; Bishop Anthony Randazzo, president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania; Archbishop Patrick O’Regan of Adelaide and Bishop Shane Mackinlay, of Sandhurst, Victoria.

The experience of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia was seen as a key reason three Australians were part of a group of about 20 people from around the world who prepared a key document for the global Synod on Synodality – Archbishop Costelloe, Susan Pascoe and Fr Ormond Rush were part of the writing group that prepared the *Instrumentum Laboris*, or working document, for the Plenary Council. They were also invited to help prepare what was known as the Document for the Continental Stage.

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Susan Pascoe, who was a member of the Synod's commission on methodology, said before the Synod that people around the world had been watching Australia's adoption of a synodal approach, especially through the Plenary Council. "We have been ahead of the pack, given that the process of spiritual conversation used for much of the Plenary Council is similar to that proposed for the discernment on the Synod in both the first stage in the local churches and for the continental stage," she said.

During the Synod, Bishop Shane Mackinlay offered a reflection on the Plenary Council of Australia. His

experience in handling the controversial issue of the role of women in the Church during the Plenary Council was referred to.

Bishop Shane Mackinlay was appointed by Pope Francis to the committee which drafted the final synthesis document for the Synod on Synodality.

This was effectively a report on the Synod discussions and outlining the steps to be taken between now and the next sitting of the Synod next year.

Other Australians who featured prominently in the synod process were Bishop Anthony Randazzo and Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan, being

selected to join the press briefings.

And then we have the more recent news that Pope Francis has appointed Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB as a consultor of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. This appointment, announced on January 10, is in conjunction with Archbishop Costelloe's concurrent appointments as a Member of the Preparatory Commission and as one of the nine President Delegates to the Synod.

Our Australian Church can be proud of its contribution to the Synod on Synodality. ☪



Walking with, or walking away from victims of clerical child sexual abuse?

MICK LEAHY

A former Melbourne priest, Mick Leahy (STL Rome, Ph D Newcastle, Ph D Deakin) taught religious education, theology, and educational and political philosophy at secondary and tertiary level for many years before retirement. Married to Pat for 50 years, they have three children and seven grandchildren.

The entire hierarchy, including various Popes, have apologised for the sexual abuse of children by clergy, and committed themselves to 'walking with' victims by providing just compensation, and appropriate counselling and pastoral care to help heal their wounds. They also pledged to establish safeguards against future abuse. These commitments were claimed to be unconditional.

Victims, however, have learnt to see these undertakings as heavily conditioned. For victims the apologies are tainted by the conditions applied to the provision of compensation and care.

Compensation, so victims are finding, is resisted and delayed for years, often until the eve of their court cases. Refusal of victims to accept the settlements offered has even been met in some dioceses with applications for a permanent stay of proceedings on the ground that the perpetrator is dead or no longer capable of defending himself. Thankfully, this is a condition likely rendered unenforceable by the High Court decision of 1/11/2023 (*A High Court case gives one woman a*

green light to sue the Catholic Church and hope to thousands of sexual abuse survivors – ABC News).

Counselling services are also limited, for budgetary reasons, to those indicated by the church. The church's commitment to walking with victims, in short, is conditional upon the cost of doing so not rendering it bankrupt. After all, the argument goes, the church needs to protect its finances to support its schools, parishes and other institutions needed for its mission of 'preaching the gospel'. Victims, though afflicted, need to come to terms with these 'reasonable' limits on the remedies the church can offer given the need to carry on this mission.

But preaching the gospel means preaching the good news to the poor. Of all people, victims of clerical child sexual abuse are entitled to feel themselves numbered among the poor. The wounds inflicted on them never go away. For many, their lives are totally ruined. For all, the effects damage their ability to live normally. These people are entitled to ask 'what does preaching the gospel mean if it does not mean granting what civil courts deem

just compensation for their suffering?'

Bankruptcy is a secular device for preserving assets from debt collectors. If the church is serious about protecting its ability to preach the gospel, therefore, it will heed the gospel call to 'go, sell what you have and give the proceeds to the poor, THEN come follow me' (Lk. 18:22). Nowhere does the gospel command us to protect the church from bankruptcy.

Indeed, the imperative of seeking protection from bankruptcy derives from trust in worldly assets. But the fundamental call of the gospel is 'to entrust one's whole self freely to God' (*Lumen Gentium* 5). The witnessing power of St Francis of Assisi's embrace of total poverty attests the power of trust in God rather than in wealth to preach the gospel.

The unconditional commitment to walk with victims turns out to be a conditional one. Why then should victims not feel that the church is again walking away from them?

Prima facie, new safeguards offer victims at least some assurance that others will be protected from such crimes. But their zealous erection can also be a bureaucratic avoidance of responsibility for addressing the church's *cultural* problems which the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Clerical Child Sexual Abuse

identified as underlying these crimes.

In the safeguarding documents, culture is generally taken to mean attitudes towards the child in our institutional personnel and practices. It is never allowed to include the moral doctrines about sex that conditioned the entire Catholic community, and conferred such a powerful role in its policing on the clergy. Far less is it allowed to include the long genesis of these doctrines in the church's history.

The church's efforts at defining the role of sexual expression in love have proven to be dismal failures because they reflect a presumption of divine illumination in regard to that role, a presumption rendered dubious by the teaching of the church's most revered authority, St Thomas Aquinas. St Thomas held that the natural moral law was not divinely revealed but imprinted in human nature in such a way that human reason, operating correctly, could discern its content. He held nonetheless that Original Sin had so weakened human reason that human beings required the guidance of the church in interpreting the law's content. The law itself being accessible to human reason, the role of the church in interpreting it for human beings, even on Thomas's teaching, can be no more than auxiliary.

But Thomas lived in the 13th century. Our understanding of human nature, moral law and Original Sin has evolved considerably since then. The doctrine of Original Sin was an ancient attempt to account for the constant presence and effect of failure in the human striving for perfection throughout history, failure which in some of its forms the biblical peoples came to conceptualise as sin. Since Vatican II, this doctrine like all others has to be reinterpreted within the evolutionary perspective accepted in *Gaudium et Spes* 5. In this perspective this aspect of human experience is better understood as the experience of the imperfection characteristic of our stage in the evolutionary process: we have not yet reached, and we often fail in our efforts to do so, the perfection to which God calls us. The church, being the people of God, also suffers from this historical condition: it has no hotline to heaven enabling it to bypass the requirements faced by the rest of the human race in searching for the answers to the moral questions of the day in the light of reason. The church can contribute from revelation only its Christ-sourced witness to the primacy of love in determining the answers to those questions.

If the church is serious about synodality entailing the need to listen even to sources outside its own boundaries, it will consider the findings of such authoritative bodies as Australia's Royal Commission:

Evidence we received and review of the literature and previous inquiries suggest that a combination of theological, historical, cultural and structural or organisational factors in the Catholic Church enabled child sexual abuse to occur in Catholic Church institutions in Australia and contributed to inadequate institutional responses (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final report, book 2, p 586).

Synodal listening, the *Instrumentum Laboris* tells us, 'is necessary to mark and transform all the relationships that the Christian community establishes among its members as well as with other faith communities and with society as a whole, especially towards those whose voice is most often ignored (n. 22, emphasis added). The Royal Commission listened to victims; a synodal church should listen to both. 🙏



Mary in Mark

HARRY MOORE SM

A brief look by an interested amateur.

A reminder

We are all familiar with the stages of development of the Gospel.

Stage 1

Mary and Jesus had a life together at Nazareth and various other places, but in those days there was no dash-cam, no smart phones, and no CCTV so we will never know what He really said to her or what she did or didn't actually say or do or what either of them actually looked like.

Stage 2

After Jesus died, individuals and communities selected stories to suit their purposes and told them over and over.

Stage 3

The evangelists took those stories, knocked them into some kind of chronological order and put spin on them to suit the faith needs of their intended readers. The stories as we have them in the gospels are all we have that might give us a glimpse of what really happened in Stage 1, but I doubt if they would be admissible in a modern court of law.

Time and target

The target audience for Mark's gospel could be any Mediterranean Christian community, which had experienced persecution. Some say it could have been the Roman community after the time of

Nero and the burning of Rome. It seems to have been written in the early 70's, which would put Mary in her late 80s if she were still alive.

The mentions

Mary only gets a few real mentions in Mark. The first happens in Chapter 3. It is the "who are my mother and my brothers" story, which I think is pivotal in our understanding of Mary in the life of the early church and in our lives now. We will return to that story later, but first let us look at the other stories where she gets a mention

Chapter 6:1-3

A very ordinary family

He left that place and came to his hometown and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the

Continued page 16

synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Jo’ses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters her with us?”

What is the author of Mark wishing to impart to the Christian community of Rome about the family of Jesus and his mother in this story? I think Mark was trying to tell them, and us, that the family of Jesus were not high flyers. They were unspectacular, solid, working people and that Mary had many children, two of whom were called James, and Jo’ses, a bit of information which will become relevant later in the story.

Chapter 15.40-41

Who were the true followers

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Mag’dalēne and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Jo’ses and Sa-lo’mē. 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.

15:46-47 Then Joseph (of Arimathea) brought a linen cloth and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

So who were his true disciples who followed him in good times and in bad and didn’t desert him when danger and death showed his face? Mary Magdalene, his mother (identified here as the mother of James the younger or as the mother of Joses) and Salome (the wife of Zbedee, mother of James and John, and sister of Mary of Nazareth).

They were the ones who did the will of God and followed him to the end.

Who are my mother and my brothers?

3:20-21 Then he went home; and the crowd came together again so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying he has gone out of his mind.

3:31-35 Then his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you. And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Some commentators argue that this story shows that the family of Jesus had a very poor opinion of him and that he in turn did not think much of them. I struggle to find this in the text and Chapter 15 of Mark seems to me to indicate the very opposite. Jesus had already received death threats. He was now working so hard he had no time to eat or sleep. His family were worried that if they did not rescue him, by force if necessary, and take him home where he could sleep and have a decent meal he would have a complete physical and mental breakdown.

But the question as to why Mark has Jesus being rude to his mother and family still requires an explanation. I think the answer is in the context. Rome had people pouring into it from all countries of the world, many of them wanting to be followers of the Way. Now remember not long previously there had been a heated debate about prerequisites for becoming a Christian. Some insisted that it was necessary to become a Jew first before becoming a Christian. James the brother of Jesus had the final word on the subject. James and John, the first cousins of Jesus, were prominent in most of the Jesus stories. His mother and his Aunt Salome were not only his first followers but were his most courageous disciples. A person contemplating becoming a follower of Jesus could be forgiven for thinking that not only did Jewish Christians have a special place in the community, but being a blood relative of Jesus did not do you any harm either.

I think that Mark, in the “who is my family story in Chapter 3, wanted to make it perfectly clear to prospective Christians that in the Jesus Family ethnicity and blood relationship are absolutely irrelevant.

So what is Mark telling the early Roman Christians about the places of Mary of

Nazareth in the life of their community and in their lives as individual Christians. Well he is not telling them that the most significant thing about Mary is that she is theotokos, (mother of God) that came much later in the history of the community. What Mark has Jesus telling us is that Mary, his mother, is great, not because she is his mother, but because from her early life she listened attentively for the Word of God and by her actions kept it. She is great because she was his first and truest disciple and her quiet listening and courageous life is a worthy example for us to follow in our discipleship. Mark may also be telling the early Christians that for Mary her understanding of Jesus was a gradual process and so too will it be for them – and us.

Harking back to the “crucifixion and burial” story; why is Mary of Nazareth identified by Mark by citing two of her other children, Joses and James? Could it be an intensification of the point he is making here in the “who is my mother story”? Could it be a further clarification, albeit in an oblique way, that for the Roman Christian community blood relationship with Jesus is totally irrelevant.

Relevance to us

The Gospels are supposed to be relevant for all cultures at all times. I have speculated about Mark’s message to the Romans, may I now speculate about the relevance of Mark’s message for us.

- Jesus chooses very unspectacular and ordinary people to be his disciples and indeed his family. That should be a consolation to us.
- All her life Mary of Nazareth struggled to understand the person and the message of her son, Jesus. So if it is good enough for her it should be good enough for us.
- The first and truest disciple of Jesus, quietly observed, listened, treasured things in her heart and was content to live in a state of not understanding and misunderstanding. So again, if that is good enough for his first and truest disciple it should be good enough for us.
- For those who aspire to be a disciple of Jesus try following the example of his mother, listen for the word of God in all it’s forms and try to live it. ☪

Clergy golf days

EUGENE MCKINNON

Eugene is Parish Priest of Redan and Sebastopol as well as Administrator of Linton of the Diocese of Ballarat.

People often ask, what keeps you going as a priest? As I approach retirement age, I muse on what has sustained and invigorated me in my priestly journey.

People, appointments to difficult places, unique opportunities that somehow God has seen fit, for me to be in the right place at the right time, certainly have helped.

Yes, there have been times of question and difficulty, but I am the priest today, because of a long history of involvement with other priests.

As a seminarian, I saw friendship and camaraderie in the Friday night card

games with the Melbourne priests.

Another constant with continuing support and company have been the Clergy Golf Days. These days, whether they be formal tournaments or just a hit have been part of my life for fifty years.

Along with Gerry Prunty, we have been organising the Ballarat Day for a number of years. I reflect on many such men who with a little effort and much joy have been doing the same in their own places. Well done.

One day I was playing golf with the late Tony Redden in Port Pirie. After a few holes, he commented on my golf, which

to that point was poor. I rolled back history, cleared the air, and the match improved. I later spent an afternoon with Tony before his death. Many ongoing friendships have been formed.

Not all discussions on the golf course are life or death. Football, politics, priests, bishops, parishioners, and a myriad of other topics are pursued with the odd reference to one's form or lack of it.

I have been fortunate to play on many different courses, here in Victoria, but also in P.N.G, Ireland, and the States. Styles and courses may vary, but there is a constant, friendship and a bit of bull dust accompanies the round and the subsequent drink and meal afterwards.

Days and hours with such company make me rejoice at where my life is today. ☺



Reminiscences: Finance and Parish Councils

PATRICK J FLANAGAN

Patrick is a retired priest of the Diocese of Ballarat.

As I understand things, Canon Law requires parishes to have a Finance Committee. Parish Councils are highly recommended, but not mandatory.

The Plenary Council has made Parish Councils obligatory in Australia, but the decrees of the Plenary Council do not come into effect until they have been rubber-stamped by some official in the Vatican bureaucracy. Which means that you and I may not live to see them become an everyday part of parish life in Australia.

Because, as things stand, the finance committee is compulsory, and the parish council is not, finance committees may be regarded as superior to parish councils. To me, this could present serious problems. A parish council may devote several meetings to decide that the parish needs a parish centre, and then find the finance committee, which has not been party to the parish council's deliberations, vetoing it on the grounds that 'we can't afford it.' That's

not theoretical. It has happened at times, and it has caused tensions.

When I had a few years of being a parish priest under my belt, I tackled this problem quite simply. The finance committee and the parish council became one body. I held meetings of the executive of the parish council weekly over lunch, and we discussed finance and other problems. The parish council met each month except January. I used to issue for parishioners a statement of receipts and expenditure at the end of each quarter. And there was an annual general meeting of parishioners, who would be invited to propose in advance items for the agenda of the AGM.

I think the arrangement worked fairly well; so I offer it for consideration by other budding pastors. ☺

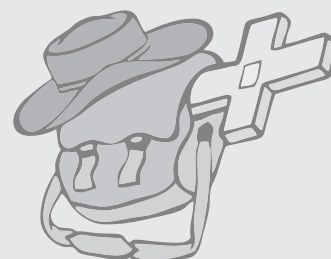
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God of life and love

RICHARD FRANCIS (AN ALIAS)

Richard lives on the Bellarine Peninsula. It's beauty has profoundly affected his thinking, as has his reading of de Chardin and Ilia Delio.

Brisbane's Archbishop, Mark Coleridge, showing great awareness of his position in the Australian Church, described himself in an interview as, '...pale, male and stale...', he didn't have to add, 'clerical', because the photo showed him in full black clericals with pectoral Cross. I thought it was quite a good description of many of us males in the Australian Church! Recently, I have begun to think it's a good description of the western Catholic Church's God: 'Pale, male, stale and clerical, (celibate?)'. Maybe one could add the word, 'tired' to that. I say this because I believe that the Church had a great influence in shaping cultures that allowed and even encouraged some of the worst evils that have beset the non-white members of the human family. And our world is tired of this God – it can't afford any more of this God!

There is a spiritual void that goes deep into the heart of all the Australian Churches because we cling to that old God. And I don't put all the blame for that on the clergy, because the laity have gone along with this white powerful patriarchal God, mainly because most of us are white and in privileged positions when it comes to wealth and status in the community.

In this article I would like to give a brief, somewhat jaundiced, view of the God we cling to and the effects of that belief on so many non-white nations in the world!

I apologise for the use of gender pronouns when referring to God, but I don't know a better way of doing it without being very clumsy.

The all-powerful patriarchal god (always male!)

Seeing God in these terms immediately allowed the Church to condemn half the human race to be second class members of the human family. God handed his power down to the Pope, the Pope gave it to the Bishops, who, in turn, gave it to the priests. This produced

an authoritarian God/Church. You were 'in' if you were male and clerical, and 'out' if you weren't. I know it's an exaggeration, but...

Exclusive

The baptised were in, and the unbaptised, 'the heathen', were out. Think of the damage this teaching has caused the human family. It has blessed the Crusades, antisemitism, the Inquisition, the sacking of England and Ireland... the list goes on!

Colonisation and slavery

From our white privileged position, the evils of these western cultures – blessed by the official white euro-centric Church seemed like a good thing to do! Don't ask the native American Indians, our own indigenous nations, the Afro-Americans, the native South Americans peoples, what they think of our white privileged God that blessed this murder, rape and thievery! I am bemused to see so many desperate refugees from Africa, South America, Mexico, wanting a share in the riches of Europe and America, that were stolen from them!

Can all these evils be laid at the feet of our White Patriarchal God? I believe the recent referendum on the Voice shows that we would rather cling to our old ways than risk changing to something that might have echoes of the Realm of God of which Jesus spoke.

Can all these evils be laid at the foot of the Christian church? So often we thought the Powerful of this world would help the spread of our "Good News", but the Good News was bastardised and used to promote and condone so much evil, so that the Church could be aligned with the ruling power and privilege. We all make God in our own image and likeness, but let's not cling to the vestiges of this tired, male, white god.

Today, any thinking person would not see the 'watch-maker' God (the Prime Cause) as fitting our reality, or our experience. The Watchmaker God who

wound up creation at the beginning of time, gave it a good nudge, and now sits back on his heavenly throne looking down on his creation. Rituals are meant to point to Reality, but this God (Reality) still lurks, hidden, in the way our liturgy is celebrated, the way we preach, and the way we pray; and unexamined, in the way we think of ourselves and the world (reality). Dare I say, the way we think without thinking! We see God as far away. And, in our co-dependency, we still think of ourselves as little children in our relationship with this God. And this God is like some capricious Father Christmas, giving his favours and gifts to the good little children. So, we keep asking him for things! Isn't it time we grew up, became adults, and got on with the work of co-operating with The Spirit in the work of building a world of justice and peace for this whole world that God loves so much. Any thinking person would find the idea of a loving Father, who would require His Beloved Son to die the most agonising death on a Cross to wipe away our sins, a theological construct that does not look at all like the God that Jesus gave us! God is in love with God's creation and in love with us!

A new god: "I AM"

Our God cannot be some kind of static Being up in heaven, our God can only be the dynamic creating energy of all that is; beautifully imaged in all that is living and loving; – creation, this swirling chaos of galaxies, is not a static ticking clock; it is alive with the life of the Divine. Our God is pouring God's self into creation every moment of its existence. His love is totally inclusive, God's power is the power of love. He has never condemned anyone! Don't we say "God gives life to all things" – note the present tense!

On a Trinitarian level, and here human gender language has to limp along as being totally inadequate; the Father is doing the only thing that Incandescent Love can do, He is pouring the whole of who He is, Life and Love, into the Son in a continuous total self-emptying of love. That is what love does, love gives all. God is total Kenotic Love. He didn't give life to the Son at the beginning of

time, the Father is always begetting the Son; always in a Kenotic relationship with the Son – a love that's sets creation afire! And in the giving Love is not diminished! We even have experience of this in our human life – the more loving we become the more loving we are able to be! We give ourselves away in loving, but eventually we are diminished physically, but our spirit shines ever brighter. God is not diminished, just Total Dynamic Life-giving Love.

The Son, continuously receiving the fullness of Life and Love from the Father, is doing what He sees the Father doing; overflowing out into this living, pulsing creation, so full of divine energy, of life and love (charged with the grandeur of God). Again, Love is Divinely Infinitely Kenotic. Jesus, the human image of the Son, gives all of

himself, totally. Even, John testifies, “blood and water flows from his pierced side” – in the end, nothing is left; except everything is left, the all-pervasive activity of His Spirit, that loves “to play with the sons and daughters of men”. Creation will come to its fulfilment when it has given birth under the power of this Spirit to the Kingdom of God on earth. De Chardin's Omega Point that is the Christ. The Kingdom is not a state or a place, it is a Person! This is my God and at the moment of my reading, thinking and meditating, the only God I can have – the only God that makes sense, but of which I have little experience. Augustine testifies to this God, “Too late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, O Beauty so new”. And Aquinas, “All I have written (15 volumes of Summa Theologica!) is as

straw after the things that have been revealed to me.”

This is why writers today speak of God in terms of Totality of Relational Person, Utter Connectedness, Fullness of Being, and No Being. God is Complexity, Diversity, Union. What Divine Paradox! What infinite Mystery! That beckons us enter and be enthralled for “God is Love”.

The whole rich mystical tradition of our Church is full of an infinite loving, forgiving, merciful, connecting, relating God, so let's stop creating God in our own poor image and try to imagine a different God, a God for our times:

If Aquinas can say “all I have written is as straw”, what should be said of what I have written!

Tell them, “I AM sent you”. ☪



He rose in silence

BR MARK O'CONNOR FMS

Mark is a Marist Brother and Vicar for Communications, Parramatta Diocese.

*Let me keep my distance, always,
from those
who think they have the answers.
Let me keep company always
with those who say
'Look!' and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.*

– Mary Oliver, from ‘Mysteries, Yes’ in Evidence: Poems

In the Gospel of Mark, the Resurrection takes place in silence!

Mark's Gospel ends in an extraordinarily enigmatic fashion. It states that after discovering Jesus' tomb to be open and empty and hearing the angelic message about the resurrection and a coming rendezvous with the risen Jesus in Galilee, the three women fled in astonishment: “and said nothing to anyone for they were afraid”. (Mark 16:8)

In Matthew's account there is an earthquake, a flash of lightning as a mighty angel descends and the heavy stone is rolled back with force, the crash of armour as the frightened guards fall to the ground.

But in Mark, there is none of this.

Instead, there is silence. There is almost something modest and ordinary about it. There was a quiet, with a stillness that only love and fear can create. It is very understandable that many in the early Church had difficulty with this ‘silence’ of Mark. The ending was too sharp and abrupt. How could the Resurrection, which had begun in fear, not end in joy? How could it end in silence and even fear?

Maybe, we too, can agree with their puzzlement. But perhaps Mark is suggesting that resurrection faith must always include an aspect of questioning. For the Easter mystery is so dazzling; it is beyond our rational comprehension and liberating beyond even our wildest dreams!

Indeed, Dominican Herbert McCabe was fond of saying that: *God is not the answer. Rather, God is the question!*

For our God is above all, a mystery. The word “God” is actually a label for something we do not know. A mystery is not a problem. A problem is a puzzle to which techniques can be applied,

intuition brought to bear, and a solution found. Science tackles problems. It's great at it. But a mystery is not amenable to that strategy. And our faith life is littered with mystery. So, listen again to the mysterious words of the young martyr at the entrance to the empty tomb in the Marcan narrative: *‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee’.*

The angel is effectively telling us: *‘You will find him when you refuse to allow his death to be final; when you make his work live, he will live with you. You will find him when you go on to whatever is your Galilee.’*

And yes, 2024 is our ‘Galilee’ now, as we cope with a world convulsed with fear.

Mark's key message then is clear and full of hope. The appearances of the risen Christ also take place through us. The story of the Risen Jesus is incomplete until it is completed in us. For as St Teresa of Avila prayed: ‘Christ has no body now on earth but yours.’

As we ‘break bread’ for the life of others, we encounter the Risen Jesus in the amazing explosive victory of the God of Life that we call Resurrection. Even in the silence of our lives and especially in difficult lonely times, Jesus of Nazareth is still with us. *He rose in silence.* ☪

Saint Vincent's Church, Redfern: An artistic precinct and a sacred site

STEVE DARMODY

Steve is a retired carpenter/builder and a lay parishioner at St Vincent's since 1991.

People have always come to this place. The lay of the land provided a purview here of the vales and the waters of Tumbalong (Cockle Bay) to the north, and west to Tjerruing (Blackwattle Creek). Cool southerly breezes would arrive here late in the day.

In 1816, 500 acres of Gadigal land were granted to Doctor William Redfern. The Catholic diocese of Sydney purchased a block of it in 1853, on the south side of Redfern Street running back to Turner Street. The St Vincent de Paul School-Church was opened in 1886.

Since then, thousands of people from around Australia have come to these grounds for solace, friendship, education, medical treatment, refuge, essential provision, reconnection with family and spiritual communion.

In 1971, in response to the challenge of the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal James Freeman appointed Fathers Ted Kennedy, Fergus Breslin and John Butcher to the parish.

It was something of an experiment. There was to be no parish priest. Kennedy became Administrator.

It is said that the original vision was that the parish would develop as some sort of intellectual and artistic hub. But reality bites.

The three priests arrived in the aftermath of the 1967 referendum. One outcome of that Yes vote was that people living on government missions were free to relocate without government permission. Many came to South Sydney at that time.

Within a month of the arrival of the trio of priests there were a hundred people were living and meeting in the presbytery, fed and clothed. Not a few passed away there.

At this time the convent school on the east side of the precinct was given over to the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, only the second of its kind in Australia. Today the AMS occupies a new building on the same site. Their

cardiac and renal clinics are housed directly behind the church.

The former presbytery is now home to Redfern Jarjum College for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, opened in 2013.

Much has been written about this period and now more can be found online of course. 'Mum Shirl' Smith wrote a book. Ed Campion wrote one. Ted wrote one himself. A large photographic archive is available at <https://church-mouse.net/>

It was in the natural course of things for artistic works to be created for, and about, this place, and its people.

In 1986, Pope John Paul II spoke in Alice Springs: "... I want to tell you right away how much the Church esteems and loves you, and how much she wishes to assist you in your spiritual and material needs. ...

"For thousands of years... you lived your lives in spiritual closeness to the land, with its animals, birds, fishes, waterholes, rivers, hills and mountains... you touched the sacredness of man's relationship with God, for the land was the proof of a power in life greater than yourselves.

"You did not spoil the land, use it up, exhaust it and then walk away from it. You realized that your land was related to the source of life..."

In 2006, Aboriginal Catholic Mission Victoria, with the assistance of the Australian Bishops, created message sticks to send the speech to churches around Australia.

In harmony with the Message Stick Relay, the Aboriginal Mural at St Vincent's Church was created by parish laity and clergy, and community artists including Gary Griffiths, Archibald Prize winners Bruno Grasswill (2015) and Blak Douglas (2022). It was blessed on 30 July 2006.

A baptismal font was created for the church in the 1970s. Hundreds of Aboriginal people were baptised there. The font and a tabernacle are of Australian Trachyte from 'Bowrell'

(Mount Gibraltar) in Gundundurra and Dharwal country, near Mittagong.

Australian Trachyte was once regarded as the signature stone of Australia, with superb structural and decorative qualities.

"The Five Wounds of Christ" was used as the main altar from 1971 until the 2010s. It is retained in the side chapel. It was sculpted by Tom Bass (1916-2016) in the late 1960s.

A new church altar of Italian marble was blessed on November 1st, 2015. It contains a relic of St Mary of the Cross (MacKillop).

Coleen Shirley Perry Smith AM MBE (1921-98), better known as 'Mum Shirl', was a devout Catholic and up to her end was a powerhouse in the work of the parish.

She is commemorated in a bronze sculpture by William Clements (1933-2024), situated inside the gates of the Redfern Jarjum College.

Clements has quoted her: "All the years that I had been visiting prisons, really bad things had been happening.... I also saw the prisoners' eyes, the pain, the fear, the shock and other things that one should never see in another human's eyes."

Also by Clements, hung on the wall of the school, is a bronze triptych ("Sanctuary") depicting earlier days in the presbytery.

Martin Sharp (1942-2013) created two works for the church: "Aboriginal Cross" (c.2004) and "The Morning Star" (c.2001).

The story of the Carrolup artists is fascinating in itself. Their artistic legacy was only recovered this century.

Revel Cooper (1934-83) is one of the best known of them. He painted murals here and three of them survive, cared for on the grounds of the AMS and the school.

It goes without saying that the parish welcomes all visitors. I invite them to come and read the Church's promise of commitment to Australia's First People (in full colour!!). ☺

Fr Gerard Patrick Dowling OAM DE (1932 – 2023)

KEVIN DILLON

Gerard, who was ordained in 1958, passed away on 26 November 2023, aged 91. Melbourne's own 'radio priest' was farewelled on Thursday 7 December at St Patrick's Cathedral, where more than a thousand family, friends, fellow clergy, former parishioners and colleagues gathered for the Requiem Mass. The following is a condensed version of the homily given on the occasion by Fr Kevin Dillon.

Two weeks ago, Fr Gerard's niece rang to tell me her beloved uncle had gone to God. Earlier that morning, the Feast of Christ the King and unaware of Gerry's death, I had speculated that if I was Pope(!), I would change the title of the feast to something little more contemporary – maybe "Christ the Influencer." What better day for Fr Gerard to be called than the feast of "Christ the Influencer"?

Because that's what he was, who he was and what he did. In a wonderful way, Fr Gerard Dowling brought "Christ the Influencer" into the lives of countless people. He allowed Jesus to influence so many, to rescue so many from the brink of who-knows-what, and convinced so many that life and faith were worthwhile. As both a priest and a great person, he carried the influence of Christ for all of his life. Just three weeks ago that he broadcast his final "Family Counsellor" broadcast, more than fifty years after the first in September 1973. And while he carried the message of "Christ the Influencer" in so many in other ways – books, articles and especially his personal counselling – those fifty years on radio somehow encapsulated his life, his ministry, and especially his focus on the individual person – listening, caring, making people know that they mattered.

For many years, Paul McCartney's *Let It Be* introduced the program and this genial priest reached out to an invisible but substantial congregation. Every Sunday was sacrificed to bring the comfort and peace of Jesus to believers and non-believers alike, helping them to finish the week on a positive note and hopefully start the next week on a better note.

"When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom: let it be. And in my hour of darkness, she is standing right in front of me, speaking words of wisdom: let it be".

The body of this priest, this friend, this treasured family member, lies here where he was ordained some 65 years ago. Has there ever before been a coffin like this in St Patrick's Cathedral – proudly painted in the blue and white colours of his beloved North Melbourne Footy Club? But there is always a first time, and it is more than appropriate that a priest who connected so effectively with the ordinary person be sent to the Lord bedecked in the colours that spoke so much of who he was.

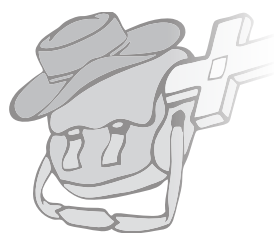
He gave his life to God, but he also gave his life to countless people, an example of Christ-like selflessness we can take with us as we honour, pray for and thank God for this extraordinary but ordinary priest.

His emphasis on the importance of each individual person was demonstrated especially in his endless handwritten letters. Just yesterday we learnt that Australia Post will soon deliver only every second or third day – Gerry would be devastated, as his personal letters, in his large flowing writing, were in stark contrast to today's practice of "bulk emails" His focus was individual people, giving whatever time and effort was required for each.

His books also, with titles *When You're Feeling That Way*, *Seasons of Life* and *Ripples of Hope*, reflect the effort he made to help each person according to individual need. And then there was the personal, "one-on-one" counselling – maybe five, ten, even more people each day, incredibly challenging and demanding on energy, concentration and even just staying awake! And he did this not just for years but for decades. Finally, he didn't say much about it, but he did get hurt, in the Church and by the Church. He kept it deep in his heart, offered it to God in faith, and got on with the job. What an example!

In the great Australian idiom, he was "fair dinkum" – always. And each night at the end of the *Family Counsellor* program, he would close with *The Peace Prayer of St Francis*:

"Lord make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Grant I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. For it is in giving that we receive, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." ☪



The Swag Winter Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 6 May 2024

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

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

Our shrinking church

JOHN SWANN

Reading an article recently on the rapidly shrinking church in the Netherlands and the effect it is having on priests prompted me to think about a similar experience of many priests here in Australia. Like the church in Holland we too have diminishing congregations, a shortage of priests, amalgamation of parishes, closing of some churches, and all this does create stress for our clergy.

I recently attended a presentation by Bob Dixon, formerly of the ACBC Pastoral Research Office, who gave a depressing picture of the Church in Australia. Not only do we have a declining number of Catholics but the age profile shows an ageing cohort of attendees but declining numbers of young people. And while over 50% of Catholic children attend Catholic

schools only about 4% are parish Mass-goers.

This year we have farewelled 10 priests in our diocese, all aged men but they had continued to ministry well into retirement. We are fortunate to have several overseas priests to help us, but many of us are uncomfortable in bringing priests from countries where there may be a greater need than here.

As in many parts of Australia we have parishes merging and closing of some churches. Now some priests can feel they are seen as ogres rather than the bearer of good news. Despite the best efforts in consultation, in the mind of some people the priest may be seen as the angry manager who has to close things down by order of the bishop.

Merging parishes usually carries extra demands on the priest, having to

celebrate three or even four Masses over the weekend, and in the country the need to travel sometimes large distances between Masses adds an extra stress.

In my “retirement” I have been assisting in a parish that has eight Mass centres, some over 100Km apart. Celebrating Mass in one centre and then having to rush off to the next is something I find discomfoting as it does not allow you to mingle with people after Mass enabling them to raise questions or issues, or simply to get to know you are a person, not simply as a so-called “mass-machine”.

Today there is growing concern for the wellbeing of clergy – physically, mentally and spiritually. Priests do need to care for themselves, to have some time to themselves, time for rest and relaxation ... and not to be caught up in negativity. ☪



A format of blessing for committed couples in differing situations

FRANK O'LOUGHLIN

Frank, a retired Melbourne priest, was formerly Director of the Melbourne Liturgy Office, Parish Priest of Sandringham, and lecturer in liturgy and sacramental theology at Catholic Theological College. One of his recent books is *Does Sin Matter? Separation, Reconciliation, Redemption*, Coventry Press 2022. Following the recent Vatican publication allowing personal blessings of couples in same sex relationships, Frank offers the following as a suggested liturgy of blessing.

Initial Prayer:

Father, by the power of your Spirit you have filled the hearts of your faithful people with gifts of love for one another.

Hear the prayer we offer for N. and N. Increase in them your Spirit that they may live in the light of your gospel.

Suggested Readings:

First Reading:

- Romans 12.9-18.
- Romans 15. 1-3,5-7,13.
- I Corinthians 12.31-13.8.
- Colossians 3.12-17.

Responsorial Psalms:

- Response: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord

- Psalm 33(34) 2-3,4-5,6-7,8-9.
- Response: The Lord's kindness is everlasting to those who hold him in awe.
- Psalm: 102(103) 1-2,8,13, 17-18.

Gospels:

- Matthew 5.1-12.
- Matthew 7. 21,24-25.
- John 15.12-16.

Homily (Expression of commitment to each other)

Prayer of the Faithful

We pray for N. and N. that in their life's journey they may be a blessing to each other; We pray for their families and friends who support and surround them;

We pray that they may know the patience, kindness and selflessness which are marks of Christian love;

We pray for all here present that they may be blessed in their relationships;

Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Blessing

Ever-living Father, you always show your faithful love to those who love you and you are never far away from those who seek you.

Remain with your servants N. and N. on their life's journey and guide their way in the light of your gospel.

Shelter them with your protection by day and by night and give them the peace of your grace, and, as their companion on the journey.

Bring them to the peace and joy of your kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Final Blessing (if needed) ☪

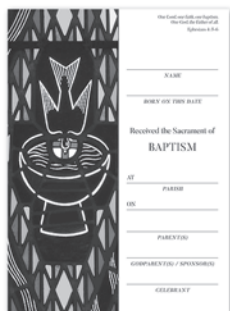


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Vale Fr Kevin Bates SM (1946 – 2024)



Marists and many others throughout the world mourn the death on Jan 31 of their confrere, spiritual guide and friend, Kevin Bates SM. After months of failing health, Fr Kevin's last moments were spent at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, where he died peacefully after days of family and fellow Marists by his bedside.

Kevin, the author of many albums of songs, hymns and reflections, is known not only for his musical talents but as a gentle, ever-cheerful and devoted guide and pastor. Prior to his retirement he had been parish priest of Holy Name of Mary parish, Hunters Hill-Woolwich, NSW.

Kevin, a one-eyed Geelong Cats supporter, was born in Geelong, Victoria, the eldest of five children. His father, Albert, was a house painter and mother, Maureen, a full-time Mum. He was a first-day student of Chanel College, Geelong, where he completed his secondary education.

Entering the Marist seminary at Toongabbie in January 1965 and novitiate in Armidale the following year, Kevin was professed in February 1967 and ordained priest in Melbourne on 20 May 1972. He taught briefly at St John's Woodlawn College, Woodlawn, NSW, then at St Paul's, Bellambi, NSW. His next appointment was to the parish staff at St Patrick's, Church Hill, Sydney, before taking a Masters Degree in Theology at the Jesuit School at Berkeley, California, in 1974-75.

Kevin became Socius of the Marist Novitiate at Toongabbie, 1975-80, and lectured in liturgy at Catholic Theological Union, Hunters Hill, from 1975-83. He helped develop the Marist Centre at Toongabbie as an adult education and retreat centre during the 1980's before becoming director of Sydney's Aquinas Academy in 1993. In 2000 he took a Masters of Education Degree at the Australian Catholic University, Sydney.

From 1980 Kevin worked extensively in both primary and high schools around Australia with students and staffs, giving retreats, conferences and in consultancy work. He also gave adult retreats and in parishes a rough equivalent of the old parish missions. Marriage preparation and the celebration of marriages and baptisms formed a significant part of his ministry.

Kevin composed and published many albums of music and contributed to a number of other musical publications. He contributed to various areas of mission, including *'Spirituality in the Pub'*, chaplaincy work for the Edmund Rice Justice Education Centre in Sydney and young adult education programs.

After an extended period as parish priest of Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill/Woolwich, and with deteriorating health, Kevin joined the community of Maryvale/Montbel, Hunters Hill, where he lived until his peaceful death at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney.

May he rest in peace. ☩

In Mount Melleray

FRANK O'SHEA

Frank is a retired teacher who lives at Point Cook, VIC and a regular contributor to *The Swag*.

I can't actually remember his name, but I recall that he worked as a shoemaker in a local shoe store where he did general repairs and made hobnailed boots for farmers. All the girls in town were secretly in love with him, which was no wonder because he was tall and handsome and always well dressed. In a football-mad town, he played at centre half-back on the local team and was in that position the year they were beaten in the championship final.

The following week he disappeared. It was assumed at first that he had gone 'on the batter' and would turn up in a few days. Others said he had gone home to look after an aged mother, but then it was pointed out that he was an orphan and had spent some of his youth in an orphanage, which was where he learnt his shoemaking trade.

Finally, the truth came out. He had

gone into Mount Melleray. Only a few of his friends knew and they were the kind who didn't take part in small-town tattle and were happy to let the truth come out in its own time.

Mount Melleray is a Cistercian monastery in the foothills of the Knockmealdown mountains in the South-East of Ireland. I don't know what the situation is now, but in those days, the Cistercians were the strictest of all the male religious orders. They dressed in a coarse woollen habit, white with a black scapular down the front, and a cowl of the type worn by bogans today.

They went about their daily work in complete silence from one end of the year to the other. Their superior was an abbot, which is the same rank as a bishop, and all the monks said the full Office every day – matins and lauds and compline and vespers and I can't think of the others. It was a life completely given over to prayer and contemplation.

Our mothers talked in hushed tones of what it involved and for all I know, tried to ruin our lives by secretly praying that one of their own might get the call. If our fathers had any opinions about it, they kept them to themselves, except that they were a bit annoyed when they discovered that their fine centre half-back, who was friendly with their oldest daughter, had disappeared forever into that silence.

When I was in secondary school, one of our outings in our final year was to Melleray. It was always in one of the cold months of the year – November to February – presumably to highlight the great hardship and hence the sanctity of the monks. I assure you that snagging turnips on the slopes of the Knockmealdown's in November is nobody's idea of an idyllic existence.

I remember our visit well because the chap from home was one of the monks who showed us around; there was a rule that allowed them to speak with visitors but not with each other unless as part of

their work of hospitality. He was as cheerful as I recalled him, but he never asked me about the old town or how the football team was going or which of his friends had married or what had happened to any of his sweethearts. In the monastic pecking order, he was "only a brother" – he did not have the Latin to become a priest and was not allowed to sit in chapter, whatever that meant.

He showed us the refectory with its plain wooden tables where the monks ate and one of the spartan cells where they grabbed a brief sleep before rising at some unearthly hour for the Office. We saw the dairy and bakery, the bleak well-pruned orchards and the cold turnip fields; we saw one monk weaving at his loom and another fixing harness for the horses. There was a forge and a tailor shop, a shoemaker and a carpenter.

My friend worked in the fields, because as part of his sanctification he had not been assigned to the trade which he had worked at in his footballing days. We had no doubt that the story we had been told at school of the obedient monk who planted cabbages upside down was quite true and might well have happened here.

At some time in the afternoon, all the monks traipsed in cowed silence to the chapel where they sat in rows facing each other for their prayers, chanted in beautiful Latin plainsong. At a service in Westminster Abbey a few years back, I sat in the choir for a service that seemed extraordinarily like a Catholic Mass, and it brought back the memory of those splendid, isolated figures offering their lives and their work to God every day. People don't do that anymore I suppose, and Vatican II has more or less decreed that those who dedicate their lives to God should be involved in some service to God's people.

I often think of that young man who tidied up all his affairs before the championship final and then went off to spend his life in cold silence and contemplation. He may well be still alive and working with the same humility and cheerfulness that I recall. ☺

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find
you?

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

Parting comments by Timothy Radcliffe OP to the Synod on Synodality

Timothy Radcliffe OP who began the Synod offering a retreat to participants also offered some concluding comments. "In a few days' time, we shall go home for eleven months. This will be apparently a time of empty waiting. But it will be probably the most fertile time of the Synod, the time of germination. Jesus tells us: 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how'.

We have listened to hundreds of thousands of words during the last three weeks. Sometimes we have thought: 'Too many!' Most of these have been positive words, words of hope and aspiration. These are the seeds that are sown in the soil of the Church. They will be at work in our lives, in our imagination and our subconscious, during these months. When the moment is right, they will bear fruit.

This is profoundly countercultural. The global culture of our time is often polarised, aggressive and dismissive of other people's views. The cry is: Whose side are you on? When we go home, people will ask, 'Did you fight for our side? Did you oppose those unenlightened other people?' We shall need to be profoundly prayerful to resist the temptation to succumb to this party-political way of thinking. That would be to fall back into the sterile, barren language of much of our society. It is not the synodal way. The synodal process is organic and ecological rather than competitive. It is more like planting a tree than winning a battle, and as such will be hard for many to understand, sometimes including ourselves!"

Profiles of 1230 Catholic parishes across Australia have been published

The National Centre for Pastoral Research has released these profiles following information gained from the last Australian census of 2021. Gabrielle McMullen, chair of the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research, says "It will be a valuable tool to help

parishes understand their local communities." Trudy Dantis, the director of the ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research, said the reports provide statistics on a range of demographic measures, including age, sex and country of birth, that present the evolving nature of Catholic parishes. They also contain important information on the language people speak at home, the makeup of their families and households, their income levels, occupation, and employment status. Data on educational background and attendance at educational institutions are also included.

We would all be aware of the changing face of Australia, and the changing face of our faith communities. The numbers of overseas born priests serving these diverse communities has also increased markedly over the years. It may be helpful to have these statistics available as well.

The UK National Conference of Priests is no more

We are not sure when the demise happened. However, Ruth Gledhill, an assistant editor of *The Tablet*, recently noted that she often attended meetings and conferences including "the now defunct but rather wonderful National Conference of Priests." At one such conference she interviewed Mother Teresa. She noted that NCP meetings invariably gained lots of wonderful column inches in *The Times* and hoped the Catholic Bishops might open up their conferences to the Press. She soon realised this was never going to happen.

Rapidly shrinking church causes burnout among Dutch priests

The Netherlands is one of the most secularized countries in Europe, and for years the number of practicing Catholics has been in steep decline. Although about 3.5 million nominal Catholics still live in the 17.5 million-strong Western European country, the number of active churchgoers has fallen from nearly 400,000 to less than 100,000 over the past two decades, according to figures from Nijmegen University's KASKI Institute.

Therefore, in the seven dioceses in the Netherlands, a radical process of parish mergers and church closures has been underway in recent years. This is causing unrest among parishioners, but the process is also taking a heavy toll on priests. Several priests have experienced burnout. Common denominators in their stories are a high workload due to parish mergers and the feeling of being made the bogeyman in church closings.

Research captures a fractured, distrustful priesthood in America

Brandon Vaidyanathan, associate professor, and chair in the department of sociology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, gave a presentation at the university Oct. 19, 2022, on the findings of a national study of Catholic priests. He described a "fractured" priesthood in that, individually, priests are doing well, but their assessment of the institutional Church "is not very good." His research also indicated a striking deficit in the trust priests feel in their bishop, but also a significant generational mistrust priests have in each other. This stems from differing theological and political alignments. Young priests view older priests with suspicion and vice versa. The younger priests are more conservative, and don't see the older priests as part of the same program.

This analysis emerged from "The National Survey of Catholic Priests," which was published in October 2022 by CUA's Catholic Project. The survey, the largest of American Catholic priests in over 50 years, got responses from 3,516 priests across 191 dioceses/eparchies. The survey also included interviews with more than 100 priests selected from respondents, and a census survey of U.S. bishops receiving 131 responses. The number of priests who consider themselves either "conservative/orthodox" or "very conservative/orthodox" has increased with every ordination class since 1980. In terms of political orientation, the real trend is that the percentage of priests describing themselves as "somewhat liberal" or "very liberal" has steadily become smaller and smaller.

Continued page 26

US priests' group in tune with Pope Francis

La Croix reported (Nov 15, 2023) that the Association of US Catholic Priests highlighted the similarities between Pope Francis' remarks and its 2018 White Papers on Priestly Formation and Clericalism.

Holy Cross Father Stephen P Newton, executive director of the Association of US Catholic Priests, appreciated the pope's synodal intervention when he referred to clericalism as a "scourge," and its own 2018 recommendations for changes in priestly formation.

The AUSCP which has around 1,200 priests among its ranks is the largest association of priests in the United States. It was founded in 2011 as a support group for priests who are inspired by the teaching of Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and its continued implementation and has become a "pastoral and collegial voice of member priests," following the call of Pope Francis to synodality, open to the participation of all the members of the People of God.

Pope Francis told participants at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops October 25 "When ministers overstep in their service and mistreat the people of God, they disfigure the face of the church with chauvinistic and dictatorial attitudes." The pope said, "Clericalism is a whip, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord's bride, the church. ... "It enslaves God's holy and faithful people."

Later, the Pope in a November 11 written speech prepared for a group of rectors and staff members of seminaries in Latin America, said the mission of a seminary "is not to form 'supermen' who pretend to know and control everything," but to help seminarians become priests who are humble servants of the communities.

***Laudate Deum*: a patchwork of conviction, faith and alarm**

Arnaud Alibert, an Assumptionist priest and *La Croix's* chief religion editor, noted in *La Croix*, 6 October, 2023, that eight years after *Laudato Si* the

Pope's new apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, demands an urgent collective conversion of cultures and mentalities.

Pope Francis chose the October 4th feast of St Francis of Assisi to publish *Laudate Deum*, an apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis.

By the end of the year the news broke that 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded on earth. Pope Francis is convinced that there can be no reversal without conversion, both at the personal and collective levels.

Alibert concluded the article with this paragraph: "*Laudate Deum*, a shorter and more political document than *Laudato Si*, is embedded in biblical references because this message derives from the Gospel. This does not make it a prayer book, but it certainly makes it a book to read. Humanity has resources. They are spiritual. Used wisely, they are our most unshakable reason to hope."

Pope decries arms industry profits for pulling 'puppet strings of war'

Jon Queally of *Creative Commons* noted that Pope Francis condemned the global arms industry for its role in the ongoing slaughter in the Gaza Strip and called for peace worldwide during his Christmas blessing from Vatican City, mourning the children killed and displaced by war, which he called the "little Jesuses of today," in occupied Palestine and elsewhere.

The Pope told his Catholic followers that war is "an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly" and that "saying 'no' to war means saying 'no' to weaponry" provided to humanity by the global arms industry.

"The human heart is weak and impulsive; if we find instruments of death in our hands, sooner or later we will use them," he warned. "And how can we even speak of peace, when arms production, sales, and trade are on the rise?"

Francis compared the global expenditures on weapons, which according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reached upwards of \$2.2 trillion last

year, with the failure of governments to fund social goods like efforts to fight hunger, homelessness, and poverty.

Bob Maguire gets a posthumous AO award

Among the Australia Day honours was a posthumous award given to Bob Maguire. We featured Bob in the Spring edition of *The Swag* last year by reprinting the homily that Archbishop Mark Coleridge gave on the occasion of Bob's State Funeral at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. The recent Australia Day honours named him an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO). If Bob was still alive, I'm sure he would be chuffed by the honour. ☺

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Eugene Stockton: Blue Mountains Hermit

Edited by William W Emilsen and Peter J Smith.

The Blue Mountains Education and Research Trust have honoured Fr Eugene Stockton, a scholar and priest of the Mountains, with the publication of this book, coinciding in the same year, 2023, with the Diocese of Parramatta celebrating the 65th anniversary of Fr Eugene's ordination to the priesthood. After retirement from a busy pastoral and academic life, he made public profession of vows to assume the eremitic state, retiring to a simple hermitage near the parish church at Lawson in his beloved Blue Mountains.

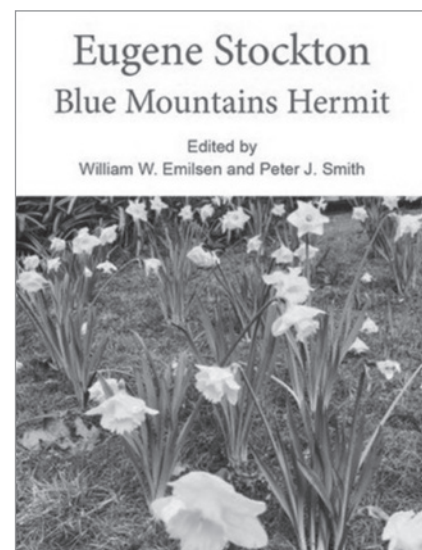
The editors have produced a highly readable collection of chapters outlining Eugene's life and work as an extraordinary scripture scholar, biblical and Aboriginal archaeologist, teacher, bush theologian, and Blue Mountains Hermit. The academic and pastoral spirit of this hermit of the Blue Mountains is reflected in the many anecdotes told in these pages

by his friends, colleagues and associates who collaborated with him in various arenas over his long life.

His deep interest in the Aboriginal history of the Blue Mountains, and his future professional biblical archaeological research, began in childhood identifying different Aboriginal artefacts close to where he grew up, and to where he was to retire. His affection for Aboriginal culture and spirituality led to his appointment by Cardinal Gilroy as chaplain for urban Aboriginal people, while he was lecturing in Scripture at St Patrick's College in Manly.

The penultimate chapter, written by Peter Smith, one of the editors, details Eugene's own research into the eremitical life, the Church's current canonical understanding, and a description of Eugene's hermitage and his daily timetable.

The last chapter of the book is an extensive bibliography of the writings of



Eugene Stockton which clearly indicates his expansive interests. It lists his theses on the gospel and letters of John, his archaeological research in different areas of the Holy Lands, articles on Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Aboriginal archaeological surveys and investigations of the Blue Mountains and other places around Australia. The book is available from the Blue Mountains Education and Research Trust. Email: contact@bmert.com.au



The case against the sexual evolution: A new guide to sex in the 21st century

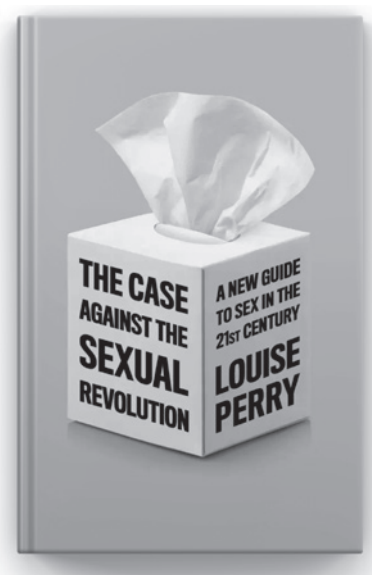
Louise Perry (2022); Polity Press, Cambridge UK: ISBN-13:978-1-5095-4999-3 (pb).

I have just finished reading this important secular book, her first. She is an anthropology and journalism graduate from the University of London, is a feminist, married to a policeman and wrote the book whilst she was pregnant, completing it when her son was six months old.

She returns to her experiences working in a rape crisis centre throughout the book and dedicates this important work "For the women who learned it the hard way"; the many "cool young women" hurt, damaged physically and emotionally, whilst trying to live according to the current, post-modern, sexually liberated lifestyle.

The book opens with the fact that Hugh Hefner (Playboy owner) bought the burial plot next to Marilyn Monroe

(first centrefold in 1952) for \$75,000 and is buried there. This image increasingly demonstrates "that when men's sexual desires are normalised, accommodated and commercialised, women pay the costs and eventually all come to grief". He a multimillionaire and she an addicted young woman who suicides; forty years later he dies a lonely, rich, pathetic, dirty old man. Perry quietly, clearly, and persistently demonstrates the harms caused by casual sex, 'hookup culture', prostitution and pornography with data and often, sad vignettes. She confronts the extreme feminists who espouse "having sex like a man" under the guise of liberty, freedom, agency, and independence and that "anything goes, as long as 'consent' is present" in sexual interactions between people. Women, young women,



and poor, vulnerable young women especially, pay the price and men become numbed, detached and addicted. We, as a society also pay the price, especially children, the victims of divorce and the absence of fathering.

Instead, she documents the importance of respect; acknowledgement that men

Continued page 28

REVIEWS

and women are different; the need for restraint; that violence is not love; that people are not products for sale and indeed, that monogamous marriage is in fact good for individuals and society.

It was given to me by one of my sons who has not long ago been through the annulment process after his divorce, nearly a decade ago. This book is a

must for all young women (and men) as it avoids all the religious arguments, sticking to well researched data and is in fact quite persuasive on its own. As a starting point for discussions about sexual relationships, virginity or the spirituality of the couple, it is extremely useful as it is not easily dismissed. Middle and senior high school students should all read this and teachers and

parents would be wise to do so also. Priests and pastoral associates should all be familiar with this up-to-date presentation on current data about sexual relationships. It accords strongly with the deep respect Christ had for people, especially the woman taken in adultery and the woman at the well.

Dr Rene Pols 10.1.2024



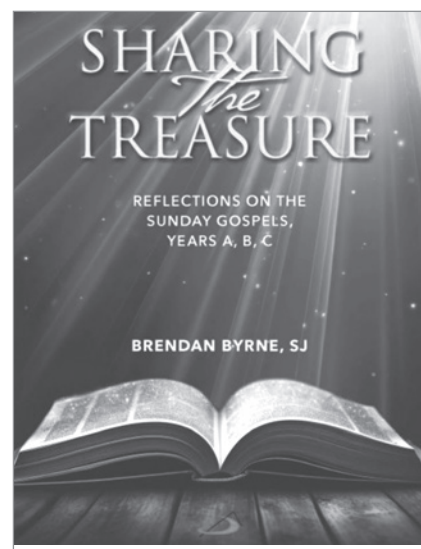
Sharing the treasure: Reflections on the Sunday Gospels, Years A, B, C

Author: Brendan Byrne SJ, Publisher: St Paul's Publications 2023.

Over many years Fr Brendan Byrne SJ has written pastoral reflections on the Sunday gospels and for the first time they are published in a single volume of some 200 pages. Fr Brendan is a former member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and is well known to many of us through his four marvellous commentaries on the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and to others who have had the pleasure of sitting at his feet in lectures and seminars around Australia.

Each of the reflections in this book are relatively short, from 250 to 300 words each. But they would provide an excellent starting point for any priest sitting down to ponder a homily for the following Sunday.

Every Sunday of the three-year liturgical cycle, and every major feast, is included in this volume. This volume would greatly benefit not only priests preparing homilies, but also secretaries and pastoral associates and others involved in preparing parish bulletins where a word about the Sunday readings is included.



Our Stories. Our Lives. Our Mission: Catholic Religious in Australia

Published in 2023 by St Paul's Publications, in conjunction with Catholic Religious Australia.

This 132-page A4 size book offers a condensed story of the charisms, and history of some 60 different Religious communities present in the Australian Catholic scene. The book is well set out with, on one page, details of the name of the religious community and facts about their founder and their beginnings in Australia, and on the facing page, in greater detail, we read their story and place in the wider church. Richard Lennan, Professor of Systematic Theology at Boston College (and a priest of Maitland Diocese) writes the foreword in the publication. He notes the concern of many religious

communities discerning the movement of the Spirit since Vatican II. He writes, "Vatican II illuminates Religious Life as inseparable from the Church's existence as a pilgrim community. This pilgrimage looks towards the fullness of life in Christ but takes place within the ever-changing history of humanity, which is as complex and unpredictable as the people who compose it." Each Religious community has its own particular charism and history, and each continues to enrich our Australian church in so many different ways.



The Letter – A message for our earth

Pope Francis, Aroune Kande, Ridhima Pandey, Chief Cacique Odair, Greg Asner, Robin Martin. Directed by Nicolas Brown (US, 2022, 82 minutes).

In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical letter on ecology and the environment, using the title of his now a-namesake, Francis of Assisi, his *Canticle of the Sun*, Praise be. The significant thing was that it was addressed to readers beyond the church, to people of all faiths, secular and none. (At the opening of the film, we can hear some dissenting voices, that the Pope should not be political, that he was doing a disservice to theology.)

How to communicate, publicise, this letter and its message? A film, YouTube, stories, visuals, and Pope Francis himself.

The Letter is a film for all audiences, telling the story of Francis and his writing *Laudato Si*, but the writer-director, Nicolas Brown (noting that he is agnostic but was impressed by Francis and his encyclical) takes his audience into a meeting, what might seem an ordinary day for the Pope, but he has filmed it to make this day and the meeting readily available for the whole world.

The occasion is an encounter with Pope Francis with chosen representatives coming to the Vatican to discuss environmental issues and commitments.

The film introduces us to the representatives, introducing them,

Aroune Kande from Senegal, Ridhima Pandey from India, Chief Cacique Odair from Amazon, Greg Asner and Robin Martin from Hawaii. They tell the audience their stories and commitment. We see letters from Rome, written, posted, stamped, received – and the surprise of each of them to get a letter from the Vatican. And the group are representatives chosen to represent refugees, environment, youth, wildlife. We see lives and issues through stories and images.

Araone thinks of leaving Senegal, a refugee, but, as we see, flimsy boats, full, capsizing and refugees drowning. He decides to be active in his home country. Ridhima Pandey is 13, confident, outspoken. In the Amazon, the chief explains the destruction of the forests and the dire consequences. (He is striking in his large feathered headgear, which he wears around Rome and for the papal meeting). Greg and Robin work in Hawaii with technology, gauging wildlife, especially underwater.

We sit in on the meeting with Francis (close-ups to see his emotional facial expressions, speaking in Spanish to express himself personally). He bonds with the delegates as they speak to him, as they commit themselves to the causes.



We also join the group as they visit Assisi, join in the spirit of Francis, suddenly interrupted as Aroune receives text and video from Senegal, his friend's school completely flooded and the children having nowhere to stay. Some comfort for him from the group who have now bonded as a family.

The Letter is very easy to access and free. Go online, Google The Letter Pope Francis Movie – click and the film will come up. (An indication for a short Google clip appears at the end – worth having a look at, what the representatives have been doing since their meeting.)

A film for all audiences.

Peter Malone MSC 




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 2024 NCP Membership Renewal or other NCP news.

Returned to God

ROBERT FRANCIS AITKEN PA

25/05/1929 – 11/11/2023

 Robert Aitken was born at Goodwood SA on 25 May 1929. Educated at Sacred Heart College he began his studies for the priesthood at St Francis Xavier's Seminary, and completed his studies at Corpus Christi College, Werribee and was ordained in Adelaide on 22 July 1952.

His first appointment was as Assistant priest at Croydon where he remained for five years before moving to the Cathedral parish, and this is where he spent most of his years of ministry. He began as Assistant Priest in December 1957 and ten years later he was appointed Administrator – a position he held for thirty years.

Throughout this time he was well known for his hospitality to local and to visiting clergy and many happy clergy gatherings were held at the Archbishop's House at West Terrace. While at the Cathedral he was well known for his excellent preparation of couples for marriage, especially instructing those who wished to join the Church. On the recommendation of Archbishop Gleeson he began a series of lectures in the faith. These began in 1965 and continued right through until 2019 – well into his time of retirement.

Fr Rob had many other appointments while at the Cathedral – he served on the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, was a Diocesan Consultor for nearly 20 years. He was Vicar General for many years and also a member of the Council of Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. In July 1980 in recognition of his services to the Church Robert Aitken was appointed a Protonotary Apostolic with the title of Monsignor.

In 1997 Mgr Rob was appointed Parish Priest of Dulwich/Burnside where he stayed until his retirement in September 2004. But he continued active in ministry, celebrating many Masses for the different communities of Religious sisters and of course his lectures on the faith.


In May 2021 Mgr Rob's health was failing and he moved into care at the Southern Cross Nursing Home at the Pines. He died on 11 November 2023 at the age of 94 years.

Concelebrated Requiem Mass, attended by a great crowd of the faithful, was celebrated in SFX Cathedral by Archbishop O'Regan. His mortal remains were interred at Centennial Park Cemetery in the same grave as his mother.

May he rest in peace.


KEVIN BATES SM

13/08/1946 – 31/01/2024

 *(See article page 23 in this edition.)*

MICHAEL EDWARD DOHERTY

13/10/1934 – 18/11/2023

 Michael Doherty was born on 13 October 1934, the son of Kevin and Monica Doherty. He grew up close to his cousin Mgr Rob Egar and were close friend throughout life. His studies for the priesthood began at St Francis Xavier Seminary and then at Propaganda College in Rome. He was ordained in Rome on 21 December 1957.

Back in Adelaide Fr Michael served in the parishes of Woodville, Pinnaroo, Stirling, Strathalbyn, then after some mental health problems he served at Assistant priest a Tranmere and Hectorville and then some time in the Cathedral Parish. With improved health in May 1999, he was appointed Parish Priest of Virginia/Two Wells where he remained for ten years until he retired in 2010. Unfortunately, while at Virginia he was assaulted, bound by intruders and robbed. They stole a chalice and ciborium from the tabernacle which they made him open, and then stole his car which they later destroyed.


While at Stirling Michael was elected a member of the Senate of Priests and a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

In retirement Michael spent 13 years at Murphy Villa, but also served as chaplain to the nearby Southern Cross Nursing Home, and this is where he spent his final days before dying peacefully on 18 November 2023. His Funeral Mass was celebrated in St Raphael's Church Parkside where he was baptised and received the early sacraments. His mortal remains were interred in Centennial Park Cemetery.

May he rest in Peace.

GERARD PATRICK DOWLING OAM DE

30/08/1932 – 26/11/2023

 *(See article page 21 in this edition.)*

WILLIAM ALLAN MULLINS

26/03/1924 – 16/11/2023

✠ William Mullins was born in Petersham NSW on 26 March 1924. Educated by the De La Salle Brothers in Ashfield, at the age of 14 he decided to join the Congregation. He was a gifted scholar and went on to gain a BA, MEd, MA and PhD. He taught in schools in Victoria and NSW before being appointed in 1969 to the Congregation for Catholic Education in the Vatican.

In 1974 he resigned from his Vatican post and returned to Australia. No doubt influenced by his friendship with Archbishop Gleeson of Adelaide he began studies for the priesthood at St Paul's National Seminary in Sydney, and at the end of the following year at the age of 51 he was ordained a priest for the Adelaide Archdiocese by Archbishop Gleeson in Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Kensington NSW on 1 November 1975.

Back in Adelaide he served as Assistant priest in Hectorville and Mt Gambier and on the staff at St Francis Xavier Seminary. However in June 1979 he was called back to Rome, this time in the University section of the Congregation. He remained here until his retirement in 1990. He was made a Monsignor in 1986.

Returning to Australia he was invited by Cardinal Clancy to be an assistant Secretary in the Chancery. He was incardinated into the Sydney Archdiocese in 1997. He was very popular with Chancery staff and continued working there until he moved to lighter duties in December 2000. In retirement at Watsons Bay he continued some administrative work for the Archdiocese, often celebrating the 9.00am Sunday Mass in the Cathedral. He maintained these activities until he was 98 years old. He died on 16 November 2023 aged 99 years.

Requiem Mass was celebrated in St Mary's Cathedral on 5 December 2023 and his mortal remains were interred in the Rookwood Cemetery.

JOHN FRANCIS O'KEEFE

27/01/1931 – 17/09/2023

✠ John was born in Murwillumbah on 27th January 1931. He was a seminarian at St Columba's College, Springwood and St Patrick's College, Manly, and was ordained to the priesthood on 25th July 1954 at St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore by Bishop Farrelly.

He served as Assistant Priest at Guildford (1954), Enfield (1959), Manly (1962), Liverpool (1966), Bankstown (1969), Rydalmere (1972), and Westmead (1973) before being appointed Parish Priest of Georges Hall (1973). He then served further terms as Parish Priest of Daceyville (1989), Miranda (1995) and Summer Hill (2001) before retiring in 2003. John died on 17 September 2023. His funeral was held at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Catholic Church, Toukley, 27 September 2023. He was 92 years of age and will be sadly missed. ☩

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

- ✠ John Alt (Archdiocese of Sydney) 27/10/2023
- ✠ Kenneth Sargent (Archdiocese of Sydney) 28/10/2023
- ✠ Gerard Diamond (Archdiocese of Melbourne) 10/01/2024

Please email obits to: editor@theswag.org.au

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

Digital photos not less than 300kb 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 Priests and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians).

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.