



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

# The Swag

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Cover image by Johan Kijne and used with permission.  
*If only humans could be as open integrating into our very selves, polar opposites like this hibiscus - allowing difference naturally without prejudice and the need to protect our learned assumptions about colour, race and privilege, then might our world be more equitable and just and less divided.*

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

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## ABOUT THE NCP

The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Clergy (Bishops, Priests & Deacons) and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians) who join together to support each other in their ministry in the Church. Founded in 1970 in the Spirit of Vatican II, the NCP is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing clergy in the public forum. *The Swag* is published quarterly (March, June, September & December) by the National Council of Priests of Australia as a service to Catholic clergy of Australia, and through them to the Church and the wider community.

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## Paddy Sykes



Since the previous edition of *The Swag*, the Diocese of Wagga Wagga has at last been blessed with the appointment of a Bishop. Bishop Mark Edwards OMI was installed as the sixth bishop of Wagga Wagga on the feast of St Mary Magdalene at St Michael's Cathedral, Wagga Wagga, on Wednesday 22 July.

As a priest of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, I have a particular interest in the appointment of Bishop Mark. The news of his appointment and his initial visits to various parishes has been warmly welcomed by the people of God and the priests of the Diocese. This welcome was plain to see in the ceremony in the Cathedral for his Liturgical Reception. There is an air of excitement around the Diocese as we move out of the desert of Sede Vacante where we have been wandering for the last three years and 10 months. Whatever the Vatican might think, competent Apostolic Administrators and their equally competent Delegate(s) can never fill the leadership vacuum created by an empty See.

When priests get together socially, there are several topics that are often discussed. The current Bishop, or who might replace him when the time comes, is usually one

of those topics. One comment which is often agreed upon at those discussions is that parishes do not really need a Bishop at all. If you only ever see the Bishop at Confirmation (and the priest can be delegated to celebrate that sacrament) and neither priest nor Bishop seek to nurture any sort of mutual relationship, whilst living in your parish cocoon, the demands of parish life can isolate you from the bigger picture of the diocese as you focus on your local parish issues.

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga had the experience of a neighbouring archbishop taking on the role of Apostolic Administrator. He was already the Archbishop of a very big diocese. He was often heard to apologise to the presbyterate about his inability to be with us more often. In the circumstances, this was perfectly understandable. He generously made himself available when necessary.

In the time of the Sede Vacante, important events in the life of the church and the diocese have occurred. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse handed down its final report. The Plenary 2020 Council deliberations have been progressing. On the local scene, decisions needed to be made on candidates for ordination, priestly appointments were limited or curtailed and important decisions in the Catholic School system were required to be made. As time progressed, it became clear to people like me, that the Diocese was in desperate need of a Bishop to provide leadership and guidance to the Diocese. As many of you would be aware, the vacuum caused by a lack of leadership in any organisation is always filled by something or someone!

I would now be a rich man if I had a dollar for every time I was asked by concerned parishioners, "Have we got a new bishop yet?" or "Who do you think will be our next bishop?" The *sensus fidelium* is not

only inquisitive about who is to come but, in their bones, they understand the importance of the bishop – perhaps better than the priests! For me, the experience of waiting so long for a new bishop was frustrating and disappointing. After three years and 10 months waiting for a new bishop, we seem to have an appointment that has been well received by the people and priests. But did we have to wait for so long? Bishop Mark was a Bishop when his predecessor Bishop Hanna retired.

A cursory glance at the NCP publication *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, tells you all the personal details of the hierarchy of the church. Each prelate's date of birth is recorded. This date would also be known in Rome. Why can't the Vatican processes anticipate the retirement of a Bishop and have the selection process of a new bishop complete before the incumbent retires so that people do not have to wait nearly four years for a new bishop? What equivalent commercial organisation would wait for so long to find a new CEO or GM? Wagga Wagga is not the first diocese to experience this delay – Port Pirie is waiting at the moment for a new bishop as the current bishop is well over 75 years. The Catholic church is not a corporation, but we could learn things from the world of commerce and industry. The whole experience has changed my view about the necessity of bishops. I have come to appreciate their role more clearly.

COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc in Australia and around the world. Let us always be aware of the communities and medical teams who are most closely associated with the frontline fight against this invisible enemy.

Let us continue to support one another and remember one another in prayer.

*Shalom,*  
Paddy. ☺

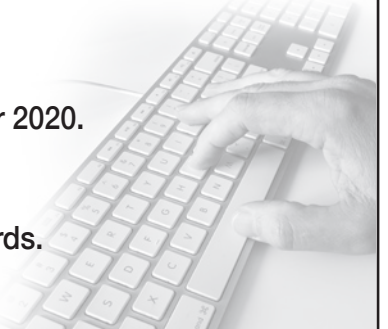
## The Swag Summer Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 26 October 2020.

Please email submissions for consideration

to: [editor@theswag.org.au](mailto:editor@theswag.org.au)

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



# Plenary Council challenges and opportunities



The success of the Plenary Council is seen very differently by various groups taking very different positions on ecclesiology, sacramental theology and

Christian anthropology. Broadly the two contested positions are the belief that Vatican II and the synodal church Pope Francis is promoting is predicated on the equal value of each of the baptised in every aspect of church life including the area of governance. The other view depends on the hierarchical nature of the church and a Pope John Paul II view of the unique role of the ordained to guide and govern.

These are not easily reconciled and indeed may be the death of the plenary council. The fault lines are already surfacing in the writing groups. It may be an extreme example, but it is interesting to note that in the list of those assigned to the group writing the paper on Missionary and Evangelising, Archbishop Porteous appears, but his name is not amongst the contributors on the final paper. We are left to wonder why.

Is it that the group failed to listen to the 'guidance' of the bishop on opening up church governance to lay people, ecumenical and multifaith co-operation, recommendation that women participate at all levels of church ministry including deaconate or the use of the term 'LGBT'?

We don't know what caused the bishop to dissent from the document but it does sit

as a stark reminder of the challenges ahead for those who think the discernment and consultation process is commonly understood by all involved. It is shaping up as a power battle despite the language used generally.

We can get an insight into the Bishop Porteous' thinking from his Catholic Weekly article, Plenary 2020: the creeping clericalisation of the laity (April 1, 2020) where he says:

It is important to note that when a lay person takes on an ecclesial role, it is in union with and under the direction of the ordained ministry. An ecclesial role for the lay person does not exist in its own right.

He goes on: What has in fact occurred within the Church especially over the past 50 years has been referred to as the 'clericalisation of the laity'. This attitude continues to drive current attitudes among some that lay people should assume more roles of ministry and governance within the Church. Focus on this goal blurs the fundamental role of the lay person in the mission of the Church.

And then: The Council [Vatican II] considers that the primary role of the lay person is to be found in the world, rather than within the ecclesial environment.

Bishop Porteous believes the layperson's role is in the world and not in church governance at all. This is in striking contrast with the great majority of the most important identified themes of the 220,000 people involved in the submissions which was analysed by Peter Wilkinson in *The Swag* (Winter 2020).

Will the Plenary Council be reduced to a fight for ideas and the losers walking out

on the others? Will the many thousands of hours of volunteer work by many thousands of lay members be ignored by the ordained at the Council under the Porteous principle that the laity need guidance from the bishops to take their rightful place in the world (rather than within the ecclesial environment)? Let's hope not.

The opportunities are expressed in the many thousands of Catholics still engaged in the process believing their voices are valuable and should be heard. The opportunities are evident in those many women and men who claim their baptismal status as spirit-filled just as at the first Pentecost when the Spirit descended on the whole community and the wisdom and gifts of all were put into service each according to their calling, not their sex, race, culture, language, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Can the Australian church seize these opportunities to re-found itself before it's too late? Time will tell.

In this edition of *The Swag* there are some interesting articles to continue your thinking and reflection on gospel centred prayer and action. Sr Patty Fawkner SGS explores the role of women in the church; Ed Campion reflects on the Hunters Hill meeting 50 years ago from which emerged the National Council of Priests; Richard R Gaillardetz analyses the Australian Church governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia* and Peter Griffin unpacks *Indigenous Sovereignty*. There is much more. Enjoy the journey through articles about faith, love and justice. ✠



## Our Story, Our Today, Our Future, Our Convention

2021 marks 50 years since the first NCP Convention was held in Hunters Hill, NSW.

It will be a time to acknowledge the past, reflect on the present situation of the Church in Australia and imagine what could be in the future.

**Come and be part of this historic gathering, 13-17 September 2021 at The Pullman Albert Park, Melbourne.**

# The birth of the National Council of Priests of Australia

ED CAMPION

**Ed Campion attended the Hunters Hill Convention of priests from across Australia in 1970 which spawned the idea of a national association of Catholic priests that would become the National Council of Priests (NCP) the following year. As NCP celebrates 50 years, Ed offers his reflections on the event first published in *Report* No 46, 22 May, 1970. Reprinted with permission.**



There were some wry comments on last week's National Convention of Priests at St. Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill in Sydney. Widely quoted as Father John McKinnon's (Ballarat) mot: "We came with the answers and we're departing without then." Another version of this came from Sydney Blessed Sacrament Father Tony McSweeney: "We came with answers and were departing with questions," At the final plenary session on Thursday night *Priest Forum* editor Father Val Noone gave a depressive summation to the convention: "This convention may well be remembered as the convention which set up the national association. It is just possible that it will be remembered as the convention which dodged major issues: it dodged the War; it dodged the future of the ministry; it dodged the question of celibacy."

In fact, the convention made several important advances. It took the first laboured steps towards setting up a national association of priests. There is now no doubt in anyone's mind that an association will get going this year, next year, sometime. The national committee elected by the convention to act as midwife to the association has a range of useful talent, Head of the poll was Father Julian Miller of Sydney, the urbane, Oxford-educated historian, who won convention-wide appreciation for his skilful chairing of plenary session. Next was the Melbourne Senate's organisation man, Father John Lanigan, whose expertise on the technicalities of new structures, sharpened by a five-weeks study tour of the U.S.A. last year, will be much needed. A surprise third in the poll was 60-years-old Townsville ex-Serviceman Father John Garvey, who throughout the convention wore his R.S.L. badge even on his overcoat. A member of the Roman old boy net

(Propaganda Fide College), Father Garvey should prove invaluable in convincing older men of the association. The four other members of the national committee are known in their regions as renewalists: Fathers Laurie Hoare (Hobart), Pat O'Sullivan S.J. (Melbourne), Terry Williams (Maitland), John Butcher (Sydney).

As Ursula O'Connor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported, there was unresolved tension in the convention between the centralists and the federalists. Most observers thought the mind of the convention favoured some form of federalist structure for the new association. Also unresolved was the scope of action of the new voluntary body. Was it to be, as priests from the Newcastle coalfields advocated, a trade union style body with plenty of sharp teeth? Reflecting the upward social mobility of the Australian clergy, most priests rejected this line of thinking and spoke rather of a gentler professional association. But whether a trade union or a professional association, the as yet unborn body has plenty of problems waiting for it.

The first of these is the call for a system of conciliation and arbitration in the Australian Church. Following a paper by Sydney curate Father Terence Purcell, the Commission for the Future of the Ministry unanimously recommended that the convention endorse a request to the Australian bishops and the major religious superiors to set up an arbitration system. Such a system, they said, should be available to individuals and groups within the Church for the protection of their rights. They recognised that this was an important part of the English common law tradition but not of the Roman imperial system on which Church canon law is based. English law, they said, "requires substantively that no fundamental right or freedom shall be denied without adequate justification; and procedurally that every individual be accorded certain specific protections in administrative and judicial procedures." In his paper Father Purcell said that history indicates that the English system of government and its body of legal principles were major reasons for the absence of violence and the achievement peacefully of major social reforms in Britain at a time

when continental Europe was rocked by successive revolutions.

Father Purcell said that the Bible nowhere suggests that the ministry of service, given to the Apostles and their successors, necessarily involves a monarchical or quasi-monarchical absolutism. He cited the practical need to use and adapt some of the democratic processes and methods of procedure of 20th-century society. Vatican II's ideas of episcopal collegiality and the logical extension to co-responsibility at all levels seemed to Father Purcell to argue for a system of conciliation and arbitration as already operative in the American Church province of Michigan.

In many minds was the recent summary dismissal of Father Patrick Crudden from the post of Director of Catholic Education in Melbourne. Following the Crudden case *Priest Forum*, whose editors had organised the Coogee meeting of priests last year that led to the national convention, made an arbitration system, sometimes called due process or the right to a fair trial, one of its major expectations from the Hunter's Hill meeting. In the pre-convention issue of *Priest Forum* the editors ran a background article on due process and commented on the Crudden case: "What is clear is that no due process was observed, that any priest can be dismissed from any job if the Bishop wants it. Behind the facade of Episcopal Vicars, Education Boards and Senates still remains an impersonal and unjust system, Young Catholic men thinking of becoming priests will not miss this lesson. Since very few young people these days want to join an institution which may treat them the way it treated Pat Crudden it is no wonder that vocations are dropping. For the forth coming national meeting of priests the lesson is obvious. We have an urgent task of setting up some form of the process and right of appeal in the Australian church to protect priests from arbitrary dismissal."

The Commission for the Future of the Ministry initiated another important resolution of the convention. This concerned greater freedom in the ministry. On the commission a resolution that official approval should be given to experimentation in particular cases was approved by 50 votes to one. A more specific resolution, that a priest should be trusted to take steps that he sees necessary for the fulfilment of his ministry, was approved by only 26 votes to 25. That was the situation when the resolutions came before the final plenary session on

Continued page 6

Thursday night. Because of the weight of business and because time had been consumed by hours of discussion of the new national association, it was proposed that the separate commission reports should be forwarded to the bishops and priests without being debated or voted on the floor of the plenary session.

Two things happened to bring the matter of the experimental ministry before the session. Halfway through the plenary session a French priest-worker arrived as a fraternal observer. He worked on a ship that had docked in Sydney harbour and was brought to the convention by Sydney port chaplain, Father Vic Doyle. He received the greatest single ovation of anyone at the convention. Probably this was mainly from a sense of hospitality. But his presence reminded the Australian priests that there were more ways of being a priest than the Australian parochial set-up. An Australian priest-worker absent from his diocese, who had given up his current job to attend the convention, commented that he did not think he would get quite the reception his French confrere had received.

The second thing that changed the temperature of the water was a petition circulated during the convention by Hobart curate Father Denis Corrigan and Dominican Father Terry Butler. Their petition was signed by some 80 priests. It asked the Church superiors to allow priests to engage in experimental ministries outside the present parish structures, even outside their diocese.

It suggested that priests involved in a reassessment of their role be allowed to remain within the pastoral ministry with the approval of the Church, until some solution was reached. The petition called for greater flexibility in clerical living arrangements: perhaps priests could live away from parishes in communities of similar ages or interests, or in flats or houses as part of the general community.

The final session on Thursday night was running down to a close. It had just approved with acclamation a fraternal reply to 16 ex-clerics who had addressed a letter to the convention asking for greater understanding of their problems. This letter from the ex-clerics was never discussed; although John Yeomans of *The Sun-Herald* later claimed that its discussion was “a high spot of the convention”. Then young Father Corrigan got the call and presented his petition to the plenary session. It grabbed the attention of the weary priests and kept them there until 11.30 pm. It proved to be a useful issue to bring together various poles of thinking and was not without

drama, as when a Sydney Parish Priest denounced an unnamed priest whom he said had been sitting around parishes for five years trying to make up his mind whether to stay—which led to some speculation. In the end the convention resolved to ask the bishops and religious superiors to give urgent consideration to the question of experimental ministries and to draw their attention to the Corrigan/Butler resolutions.

This was not the only issue to stir the convention. On the wings the Vietnam War sat waiting to rush on to centre-stage, but the call never came. As the priests filed into the hall for the plenary session on the first night they were handed Moratorium material by Fathers Val Noone and Tony Newman and others. After the formal proceedings of the night, a low-level discussion of current Church problems emanating from Canberra-Goulburn archdiocese, the Sydney Parish Priest Father Roth Delaney was first to the microphones. He denounced in strongest terms the Vietnam peace priests and suggested that they were members of the Communist Party. Father Delaney then turned to a dramatic presentation of issues confronting the Church which had just been performed. “It was,” he said, “a diabolical, sacrilegious farce. It was clever, but so is the devil.”

Next the venerable Brisbane pastor Msgr. Owen Steele also attacked the proceedings as derogatory of the Church’s best interests. Then Father Darcy O’Keefe of Sydney, a Parish Priest, apologised for his part in the dramatic presentation and attacked those responsible. Most agreed that it was a pretty dull presentation, following absurdly short papers, but this looked like turning the night into a disaster. The tide began to turn, however, with the speech of Sydney TV priest Father John O’Neill, who attacked the Vietnam peace priests and defended the dramatic presentation.

This left the way for Bishop Frank Carroll of Wagga to enter a plea for toleration and a sense of humour. The finest speech of the night came from a Sydney Moratorium marcher Father John Butcher. It was a winning call for tolerating divergent points of view within the Church: “Let’s pretend to love one another”, said Father Butcher. The importance of this extraordinary episode on the first night was that it drew the pus from a lot of conservative wounds. The basic issue was whether a priest should do anything that would jeopardise his sacramental ministry. In a War sub-commission, for example, onetime local R.S.L. president Father John Garvey was proposing that a priest should never take a stand on a public issue if it would keep

people away from Mass and the sacraments. “Why are you wearing an R.S.L. badge then?” he was asked. “That would turn off many of us in the labor movement, since the R.S.L. national president attacked the Moratorium.” This divergence came to a debate on the second day when Father Gavan Fitzpatrick of Geelong put a motion to the Commission on the Secular and Social Involvement of priests: “It is imprudent and unwise for priests to take sides publicly on issues where there is a division amongst Catholic people.” The latter phrase was amended to read “division amongst reputable Catholic moralists”.

Those for the motion instanced the Labor Split of the 1950’s as an example of how public stances by priests can alienate many Catholics. They felt, rather, that a priest’s job was to educate his people in ideas and principles and not to take unfair advantage of the pulpit. Those opposing the motion said that the non-leadership of priests in public issues was a failure of Christian witness. Many people were disillusioned when priests failed to speak out: silence on certain public issues does not mean neutrality but consent.

The motion was defeated in the Commission: 8 votes for, 29 against, 11 abstentions. But such a sectional debate could not hope to heal the rift that was obvious between the Vietnam peace priests and the army chaplains and others who viewed them with real disfavour, yet the convention itself proved to be an occasion of reconciliation. Part of this was because there were ample supplies of drink (Hamilton’s Ewell Moselle and Lindeman’s Pophyry were on the table at the two main meals each day and the bar had plenty of Black and White and Toohey’s Pilsener).

On the last night a white-haired priest stood drinking with younger colleagues: “You know”, he commented, “if someone had asked me about the long-haired radical priests a fortnight ago I would have been livid; yet here I am standing here drinking with you and enjoying your company now.”

Other advances of the convention were less likely to get into the newspapers. The Commission on the Inner Life of the Priest, reflecting on the fact that some members said they felt no obligation to recite the daily Office, called for a modification of the obligation as a way of avoiding harmful psychological effects of a *duty-approach* to the Christian religion. On sexuality the Commission stated that priests’ affections must be allowed to show, otherwise they would come out in deviant ways. In general, they found less dissatisfaction amongst priests than talk of dissatisfaction.

Although “the battlements of Rome are not dismantled in one day”, the Commission on Improving Communications in the Church, attended by Bishops F. Carroll (Wagga), L. Faulkner (Townsville), and H. Kennedy (Brisbane), suggested some things that might speed the process. They wanted dioceses to be sub-divided, so that a diocese would have no more than 150 priests working in parishes. They recommended that “Each priest should be accepted as a mature and responsible person, able to choose his particular area of pastoral activity, and so serious consideration should be given to his preferences when allocation of work was made”. Another resolution reflected dissatisfaction in some dioceses with the

Little Sir Echo role of priests’ senates: “Priests’ Senates should be fully elected, should elect their own Chairman, and allow for a regular interchange of information and ideas between senate and the general body of priests: and that they should acquire the necessary skills of communication, administration and management.”

The In-Service Training Commission recommended a National Pastoral Institute to which priests could go for six-months refresher courses. It wanted to see a band of roving experts at the service of the Australian dioceses. The celibacy question nearly got to the debating stage. The Future of the Ministry Commission decided to conduct a short survey of the

convention on the subject. This was printed and was to have been circulated during the final plenary session. When news of it came out, however, the survey was scrapped for fear of alienating priests and bishops who were not at the convention. As Melbourne’s Father John Lanigan put it: “We all know what the papers are like (applause) – this would be interpreted as the opinions of the whole Australian priesthood.” The opinions of the Australian priesthood, however, will be canvassed in a national survey commissioned by the convention. Probably the single most stimulating suggestion during the whole convention came from Sydney’s Father John Butcher. He suggested a moratorium on all Church law. ☩

## Eucharist: The Resurrection gift

ROSE MARIE CROWE

**Rose Marie Crowe offers a reflection on how we might reimagine Eucharist in light of the recent COVID-19 experience.**

The church is in lockdown. Shamed and fearful, we survey the devastation. Our dreams of power and glory smashed, our followers decimated, our mission blighted, our paucity of spirit displayed for all to see. We are paralysed and poor. We have been brought to our knees. Through closed doors, the risen Lord enters, and says, “Peace!”

### And here begins our Easter story

On the road to Emmaus, two disciples are travelling together. Who are they? Could they be those women who stood at the foot of the cross, who hastened to the tomb to anoint the Lord, who gathered the run-away apostles and brought them back into community?

They are deep in conversation, reflecting on the signs of these catastrophic times. A stranger joins them. Now there are three. He asks them why their hearts are troubled, listens to their grief and begins to explain how the wisdom of God has given them a way to make things whole.

But first, he wishes to remind them that they must acknowledge to one another that God is like a loving parent who is all-holy; that this holiness,

springing from incomprehensible love, is creative and permeates the entire universe and, indeed, their own hearts; that they can assent to join in God’s plan for this love to spread into a worldwide community of compassion, justice and peace; that they have the power to do so; that their commitment begins with forgiveness; that they are protected from despair and from all evil; and that every day God gives them bread and drink for the journey.

The two disciples realise that they are very

hungry. They stop for refreshment and beg their new-found friend to join them. He is happy to do so. He blesses the food, breaks bread into pieces and invites them to eat. Their eyes are opened. It’s the Lord! He lives! He’s here! With us! Brimming over with joy, they run to tell of their discovery; they must share the good news. They find that the Lord has preceded them there.

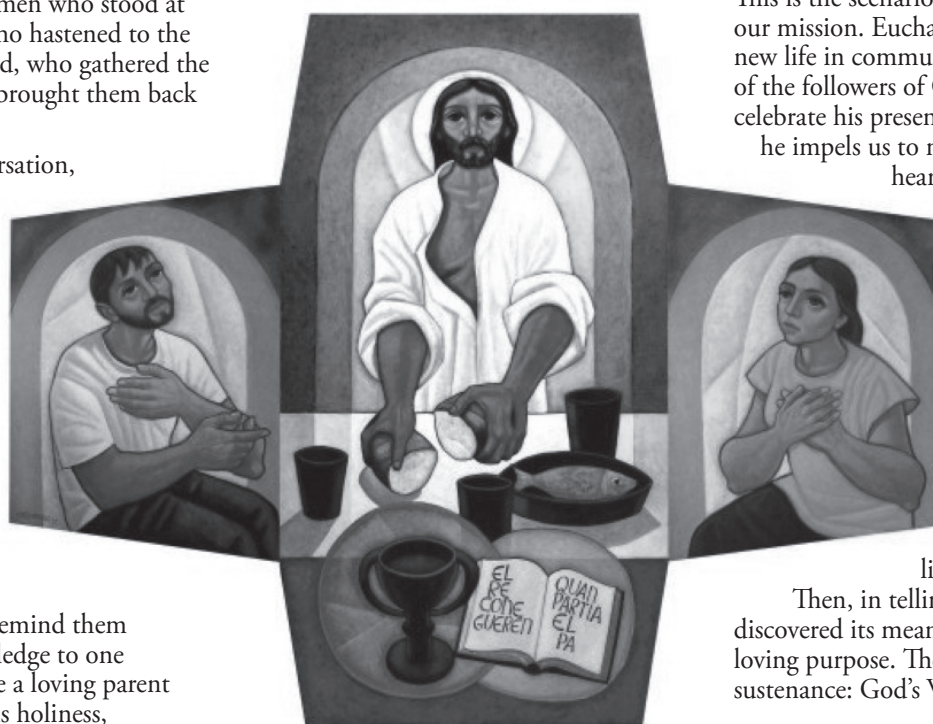
What happens here? They know him in the breaking of the bread. In breaking open the Lord’s word with one another and, by this very act, they can perceive his living presence among them. They receive his healing power so that they can take it to the sorrowing multitudes on their doorstep. They are full of thanks. Eucharist!

This is the scenario that encapsulates our mission. Eucharist is an Easter gift: new life in community. It is the hallmark of the followers of Christ, the way we celebrate his presence among us, the way he impels us to mission. Let’s take it to heart; let’s have a closer look.

### The power of two or three

It needed only two disciples to kick-start this living drama. It was necessary for them, first, to become immersed in the Lord’s purposes by listening to him intently.

Then, in telling their own story, they discovered its meaning in light of his loving purpose. They hungered for daily sustenance: God’s Word: the Bread of Life;



Continued page 8





## TARRAWARRA EUCHARISTIC BREADS



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

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What did they need? A temple? A mansion? Property? Wealth? Silken tassels? Stretch limousines? Status? Pedestals? A hierarchy? A cohort of voiceless underlings? Programs, policies and systems of governance? A hard line? Rules? Regulations? Condemnation? Punishment? Little empires? They remembered that Jesus had warned against these things.

They needed only to go back to the beginning, to the Spirit of Jesus, their founder. They began to remember other things that he had said and done, for example: they remembered that one day, Jesus had a revelation of God's love for him: *You are my beloved child, in whom I am delighted!*

He found this so astounding that he had to go off on a forty-day retreat to make sense of it.

### They remembered

They remembered that, upon seeing the widespread suffering of the poor, the outcasts, and those condemned as sinners, he was moved to pity. He wanted them to know that they, also, were God's beloved children, as he was. He wanted to show them what God is really like: compassionate, forgiving, all-loving. So he walked with them and struck up easy conversations with them. He blessed them, healed them, feasted, laughed and cried with them. He forgave them many times over and patiently tried to teach them to do the same. All the while, he had nowhere to lay his head.

They remembered that his plan of action, his mission statement, was derived after much consideration, not from corporate guidelines, but from the prophecy of Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me! He has sent me to give good news to the poor; to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind, new sight!*

*To set the downtrodden free, and to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.*

For Jesus, the call was imperative and immediate. He resolved to bring others into his mission.

They remembered that, at the last supper, Jesus did not linger at the table. He got up, invited them to do what he was doing; and, singing, set out to give his life.

### Is this our year of favour?

Lockdown has left many fretting for the lack of Eucharist. Somehow, we know that Eucharist is essential, but what is available to us is a private devotion. We long to sit in quiet adoration of the Real Presence contained in the host. We hasten to sign up to attend Mass, leaving others outside the doors. We watch online as the priest goes through the motions of Mass and declare that it is even more edifying. We keep un-consecrated hosts at home so that we can pretend to give ourselves communion. Meanwhile, others of us are afraid to touch the consecrated host with our hands; after all, only the priest is allowed to do this. When he is absent, we go without. Or make a 'spiritual communion'. How is any of this sustainable?

Despite this hunger for Eucharist, there is no movement to ensure its survival. The number of priests is dwindling; parishes are being amalgamated without consulting the people; other parishes are far-flung and many are disappearing. A majority of faithful parishioners are growing old and dying out. In consultations for the Plenary Council, only six out of 28 dioceses considered the Eucharist, and none of them made it a priority. The reason for this is that, even when churches were full, our attendance at Mass was largely as passive spectators. Many are no longer willing to accept this failing model as the status quo.

Shining throughout the thousands of submissions made to the Council, pearls of hope can be discerned: We want the church to heal the hurts it has caused. We want to be authentic and transparent. We want to cut the trappings of privilege. We want to drop the word 'laity', which implies that we are non-professional, though we have been consecrated as 'priest, prophet and king'.

We want men and women to be acknowledged as equal missionary disciples. We want to participate in decision-making. We want to learn from the wisdom of our Indigenous sisters and brothers. We want to reach out to a needy world and an ailing planet. We want to work across the aisle with other

enlightened Christians, and to join in with the many out there who, without wearing badges, are doing God's healing work. We want to be an adult, responsible, communal, caring, joyful, merciful, serving, missionary church. We intuit that these desires can be fulfilled.

But how, with the landscape so bleak and our knees so weak?

### There is a way!

After two thousand years, now is our time to remember: Jesus wanted everyone to know that they are cherished by God. He had a vision of a universal loving community and turned to his followers to help him perpetuate it.

He sent them out two by two. He assured them that they could do it; that they would, in fact, do greater works than he. He would show them how. He promised he would continue to help them.

It would be very simple, a source of great delight: *When two or three of you meet in my name, I am there with you! When two or three of you decide anything at all, my Father in heaven will fulfil it!*

The promise is ours. The invitation is ours. The power is in our hands. And we never knew.

Until now. We're at a world-wide crossroads, a universal pause, an emptying out, when we can review our reason for being, recover our values, discern our discrepancies, and take stock of our communal strengths.

This is our time to realise that the church is, in fact, a community of concentric living cells, two or three in his name, with the Lord's living presence at its core, empowered to carry forward his wish to bring God's healing love and freedom of spirit to all humankind.

### Putting it into action: a proposal for a new beginning

The first step. No fanfare. No official pronouncements. No scrambling to devise programs. No hurry. Rather, we open the Living Word to eat and drink it in together. We devote a long, long period of time humbly contemplating the Gospel message and all that it entails: *Repent! And believe the good news!*

In light of what we are seeing and feeling around and within our present reality, how is God's timeless Word clarifying the road ahead? What does believing the Good News evoke in us? And where is it leading us?

The next step. Start small; all new birth starts small. Begin with whoever is willing. Invite us, women, men, married or not,

Catholic or not, to meet in twos or threes and imitate the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The meeting is intentional; it's not a tea party. It should not take more than an hour. We can have tea and cakes at a different time. Gathering in our homes, we have no need for big buildings or big budgets. Rotating the leadership, we avoid arrogating power to ourselves. Simplicity is the key, humility a safeguard.

Pondering on the Gospel and the daily news together, we see that the Lord's words and actions are ever new, ever fresh, amazingly accurate to the needs at hand, always based on love. We are filled with joy; love and mutual respect grow. We are energised to go out and spread that love where it is most needed. Not preaching, not proselytising; only seeking to demonstrate that each person is loved and holy.

We find that the Lord has preceded us there. We see him in every one we meet on the street, struggling to do the best they can; many working to heal one another and the planet; not knowing, perhaps, that they are, in fact, keeping the one and only rule Jesus gave us:

Love God, yourself, your neighbour and your enemy, as I have loved you!

Often, it is the young who are leading the way, many of them our own children. They will ask one day, When, Lord, did we feed you, clothe you, bind up your wounds?

We come to realise that the Easter power to forgive is a consequence of Eucharist.

Here again, we find that it is a gift available to everyone.

Recently, an Australian medic, traumatised by his wartime experience in Afghanistan, wished to apologise to the children of a civilian murdered by another soldier. The medic had bound up a non-life-threatening wound on this man and was appalled to learn, minutes later, that he had died; it was discovered that he had been trampled to death. For eight years, the medic suffered with the guilt that he had not done enough at the time.

Finally, he was able to have a meeting by Skype with two of the man's young sons. He wondered if they would rage at him, demand compensation. As he spoke, they looked at him intently and then said: Thank you for telling us about our father. Thank you for what you did for him. Now, look after yourself. You have suffered enough.

We come back to our community with stories like these, to pray together for the

needful people we have met, and for our brothers and sisters everywhere.

We begin to realise that what we are doing is Eucharist, because the Lord has kept his promise to us! He is present in a special way when we keep our promise to him, to meet in his name and make well-considered decisions about the part we are to play in advancing his work of love and compassion.

We are learning that we are all interconnected and that, like wind and ocean currents circling the globe, our thoughts and actions go viral, for good or bad.

We seal our commitment in song and with the prayer he taught us, which spells out the substance of all liberating truth. Our participation has been truly 'full, conscious and active' as we know it ought to be.

Gradually, these Eucharistic communities proliferate, like spot-fires catching alight, the Lord's presence flaming all over the world! God's reign indeed seen as universal.

### Does this sound unrealistic?

Improbable, if not impossible? Heretical?

Let's take our qualms to the Lord: How large is his vision? What does he want us to do? How has he equipped us to do it? How trustworthy do we think he is? How trustworthy does he think we are? How brave are we? ☪



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# May the global church discover light from the Southern Cross

RICHARD R. GAILLARDETZ

Part one of an analysis of Australian Church governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, by Richard R Gaillardetz, the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College and the current chair of the BC Theology Department. Reprinted with permission from *La Croix International*, 3 June 2020. Part two is published elsewhere in this edition of *The Swag*.



As the entire world struggles with the challenges, tragedies, and constraints imposed by the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Catholic Church finds itself in the midst of an altogether different kind of global pandemic, one of a distinctly spiritual and ecclesial nature, the clerical sexual abuse scandal.

Although its import is certainly not as dire, the spiritual life and credibility of the Church are at stake. This, too, is a pandemic of global dimensions and, sadly, there is no vaccine on the horizon.

No, this pandemic must be addressed with a kind of comprehensive, ecclesial hygiene: unflinching ecclesial self-reflection and patient, courageous ecclesial reform.

The Church of Australia has been one of this ecclesial pandemic's most public hotspots. Sadly, it was not the Church's own vigilance that brought the pain and scope of the scandal to light, but a government mandated Royal Commission charged with investigating child sexual abuse in Australia.

That commission's report directed sweeping criticisms at the Catholic Church of Australia. It called on the Church to address a series of problems, principal among which was the systemic, institutional

failures in Church governance and management structures. The commission was convinced that these were a major contributing factor in the scourge of clerical sexual abuse.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious of Australia (CRA) instituted the Implementation Advisory Group to respond to the Royal Commission Report.

That group, in turn, created the Governance Review Project Team (GRPT). This team was tasked with crafting, 'in light of Catholic ecclesiology,' a comprehensive response to the Royal Commission's critique of Church governance.

After a year of study and reflection, that team delivered to the ACBC a potentially ground-breaking document, *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*.

The Australian bishops have decided to delay the release of this document for six months while they engage its recommendations themselves. Fortunately, the editors at *La Croix International* have obtained a copy and have asked for a review and analysis of its contents.

This is a remarkable and, in many ways, an unprecedented document. It is impressive in its scope, depth of analysis and detailed recommendations. It is also quite long; including a glossary, bibliography, and appendices, the report comes in at 200 pages and includes 86 specific recommendations.

Consequently, this summary will be selective in consideration of the document's contents and principal contributions, focusing on what might have greater import for the global Church beyond Australia.

## The teaching of Vatican II and vision of Pope Francis

The project takes as its starting point Pope Francis' call for a synodal Church, one marked by *the imperatives of co-*

*responsibility, collaboration and genuine consultation between Church leaders (bishops and others) and the lay faithful* (11).

At the same time, the GRPT clearly hopes the document will contribute to the deliberations of the Plenary Council for the Church of Australia now likely to take place late in 2021 and continue into 2022.

The Catholic ecclesiology undergirding this document draws substantially from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and Pope Francis. It is thoroughly missiological in its orientation.

The Church does not exist for its own sake, but rather for the sake of its mission to proclaim and embody the Gospel (25). All mechanisms for Church governance, the report insists, must be assessed in light of their service to the Church's mission. Christ calls us to a life of discipleship in service of the coming kingdom of God.

The report invokes the council's teaching on the Church's fundamental sacramentality, thereby highlighting the interplay between the Church's divine and human dimensions. This sacramentality extends to the Church's 'structures and forms of governance' which are both mediations of grace and human constructs that can impede God's grace; as such they are subject to reform.

## Mission-oriented and Synodal

The missiological orientation is accompanied by a pneumatology that evokes the work of the Spirit in the life of the Church, a work that unites all believers while affirming that rich diversity manifested so powerfully at Pentecost. The reach of that Spirit is universal, extending beyond the community of the baptized to include 'all people of good will' (27).

This Church lives in history as the pilgrim People of God. As pilgrim, it 'will reach its completion only in the glory of heaven', as the council put it. This frees the Church to honestly assess its own failings.

As the People of God it is oriented toward the world as what the council termed the 'seed and beginning of the kingdom on earth.' And it is here that the report begins to integrate themes central to the present pontificate, particularly Pope Francis's call for a Church that is synodal in character.

Synodality requires that we become a listening Church. All the baptized must be invited into the Church's corporate discernment and mission. This theme runs through the entire document.

## People of God, Body of Christ and the *sensus fidei*

As the body of Christ, the Church is built up by baptismal charisms that play a vital role in matters of Church governance. The report places ordained ministries within this charismatic economy as well. This move is decisive for overcoming the temptation to set the laity and the ordained in a competitive ecclesial relationship.

The report highlights key conciliar texts that consider both the theological integrity of the local Church as more than a mere branch office of the Church Universal and the bishop's vital relationship to his local Church. This relationship requires the bishop to promote synodality in the local Church by attending carefully to the needs, abilities, and insights of his flock.

The report situates issues of parish governance within a Eucharistic ecclesiology. When the faithful gather at the Lord's Table, the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ effects as well the transformation of the gathered community into the ecclesial Body of Christ.

The report recalls the council's teaching that the whole Christian faithful are recipients of God's revelation. All the faithful possess a supernatural instinct for the faith (*sensus fidei*). Consequently, all the baptized participate in the traditioning process of the Church. All synodal structures, but particularly those present in parish life, must be attentive to their witness.

## Church governance and the necessary change of the current ecclesial culture

Beyond reflection on these ecclesiological foundations, the bulk of the report offers a perceptive and informed consideration of Church governance at all levels of Church life: the global Church, the diocese, and the parish.

According to the report, "*governance comprehends the framework of rules, relationships, systems and processes within and by which authority is exercised and controlled in the organisation* (38).

Governance mechanisms always function within a larger ecclesial culture. You can't change 'governance practices and processes without a change in culture' (39). That culture must be informed by key ecclesial principles: subsidiarity, stewardship, synodality, dialogue, and discernment.

The report contends that a consistent application of the principle of subsidiarity is vital to good governance: *At the heart of the*

*principle of subsidiarity is vesting involvement and decision-making as close as possible to those impacted by the decision* (41).

## Checks and balances

Synodality, the report notes, requires that good governance include a robust set of checks and balances. Synodal governance, in turn, depends on the sustained dialogue and participation of the whole People of God in the life of the Church.

Finally, authentic governance presumes genuine discernment, a careful, deliberate and prayerful reflection that is sensitive to the impulse of the Spirit.

The GRPT considered, as well, principles gleaned from healthy civil governance. Of particular note is the report's recognition of the need to cultivate an ethical culture. This speaks to a glaring lacuna in current Catholic governance.

It is rare that one finds clearly articulated norms for professional conduct in the Church. Many who work in the Church labour without clearly articulated job descriptions and few benefit from regular performance appraisals. Indeed, the latter are almost non-existent for clergy.

## Strengthening episcopal accountability

Authentic synodality, the report insists, requires far more developed structures of accountability than can be found in the Church at present.

Episcopal accountability has traditionally presented difficulties for Catholicism since in current Church law the bishop is only accountable to the pope, *who alone can appoint and remove bishops and intervene in the affairs of all particular Churches, including dioceses* (57).

One recommendation for global governance calls for incorporating more robust accountability mechanisms into the bishops' *ad limina* or quinquennial visits to Rome.

The report frankly admits the problematic nature of an exercise of episcopal power that is almost entirely without meaningful checks and balances. This contributes considerably to a pervasive clerical culture.

Clericalism is not only an attitude that denotes a distorted perception of relationships in the Church. It is also a behaviour that fails to reflect the equality of all disciples of Christ, an equality that the New Testament underscores (64).

The only adequate antidote, the GRPT contends, lies in cultivating consistent practices of consultation and co-responsibility, features proper to an authentically synodal Church.

Although canon law affords a bishop many opportunities for consultation before making key decisions, few are mandatory and *[w]ithout the wholehearted embrace of a culture of synodal decision-making, structures will be 'simple masks without heart or a face* (70).

## Selecting bishops, appointing priests

One of the most important contributions of this document lies in its focused consideration of the selection and appointment of both bishops and parish priests.

The Church in Australia (and many other Churches throughout the world) has suffered from 'inordinate delays' in the appointment of bishops (60). Moreover, there is little significant consultation in the current practice.

The report calls for much greater participation of local clergy and laity in both the creation of the diocesan profile that serves as the basis for an episcopal appointment and in the discernment process leading to the appointment itself.

Regarding the assignment of priests to a parish, the document encourages a fuller implementation of canon 524, which allows the bishop to consult the lay faithful prior to making priest assignments.

In current practice, of course, this rarely goes beyond placing a few phone calls. This could be enhanced by allowing select lay persons to participate in meetings of the college of consultors or 'clergy appointments panel' when priest assignments are under consideration.

## Reforming the seminary system

The Royal Commission had singled out flaws in current seminary practice as a significant factor in clerical sexual abuse.

In response, the GRPT strongly encourages a far greater role for lay men – and particularly women – in the screening and formation of seminarians. They should also be included in any final decision regarding the acceptability of a candidate for ordination.

Again, given the historical and pastoral context of this report, the widespread clerical sexual abuse in Australia and elsewhere, it is not surprising that concern for the selection and formation of candidates for the priesthood was given such attention.

The GRPT insists that having an individual charism is not sufficient for ordination. The priest today must be able to work collaboratively, celebrating the gifts and

*Continued page 12*



## FEATURES

contributions of lay ecclesial ministers in ways appropriate to a synodal Church.

Seminarians should be given more time in pastoral placements prior to ordination and have more extended opportunities for communal living outside the seminary.

The document also embraces the Royal Commission's call for the establishment of a National Protocol to govern the screening of candidates for priesthood and religious life throughout Australia.

The GRPT is to be commended for tackling a particularly sensitive pastoral reality for the Churches of Australia (and elsewhere!), namely the role of international priests for ministry in local Churches.

*The drafters call for greater consistency and rigor in the inquiries concerning the history and suitability of international priests for ministry in Australia and attention to their*

*ongoing formation, both spiritually and culturally for service in this country (85).*

### **Pastoral councils and a greater role for women in Church governance**

As the report notes, further development of mechanisms for synodality at both the diocesan and parish levels is clearly required.

The document proposes a change in Church law that makes diocesan pastoral councils mandatory in every diocese and it suggests that the role of these councils in diocesan decision-making be significantly expanded. There is a similar proposal to also make parish pastoral councils mandatory.

Adequate formation should also be provided for clergy and pastoral council members at both the diocesan and parish levels to ensure that the full potential of

these synodal structures is realized.

Finally, one of the most consistent themes in this document is the persistent call for a greatly expanded incorporation of lay women in key governance structures.

The document speaks poignantly and directly regarding the negative consequences that follow from the lack of full inclusion of women in Church leadership, including ordained ministry.

There is much more of value in this extraordinary document, but I have tried to focus on aspects of the document of interest to the Church beyond the Australian shores.

In Part Two [found elsewhere in this edition of *The Swag*] I will offer a broader assessment of the contributions of the document and situate it within the Francis pontificate. ❧



## Vale Noel Connolly SSC

JIM MULRONEY SSC

**Fr Jim Mulroney SSC is the former Editor of the *Sunday Examiner* in Hong Kong. He writes about Fr Noel Connolly's life. Noel died on 6 June 2020. Reprinted with permission from St Columban Mission Society website on 10 June 2020.**

Father John Noel Connolly was a storyteller. Never cavalier in his choice of tales, the Queensland gold-mining town of Gympie, where he had been ushered into this world on 24 January 1945, was a starting point for many a yarn delivered in the classroom, from the pulpit or around the dinner table from which he would pull a poignant insight, salient lesson or obscure gem of wisdom.

Stories of Church life often began with his father's relationship with the parish priest. Experiences as an altar boy, life at the parish school and education at the Christian Brothers' St Patrick's College were not only further grist for his stories but also the foundation of the life that brought him to the Columban seminary at Sassafras in Victoria in 1963.

It was the beginning of a journey from gold-mining Gympie to coal-mining Hambak, deep in the mountainous regions of South Korea, and onwards towards a future not imagined.

As a seminarian at North Turramurra in Sydney's northern suburbs, he delved deep into his lifelong studies of the mysteries that fascinated him.

Although belying the pithy tenet that a tidy desk reflects a tidy mind, his room was

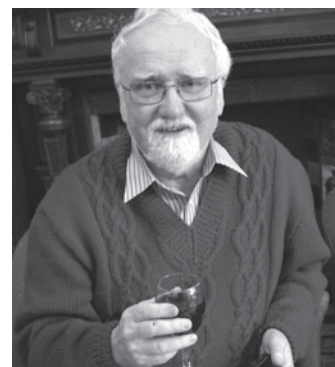
a showcase of the breadth of his interests. A visitor was warmly welcomed, then treated to a knowledgeable dissertation on the art displayed on the walls, aspects of philosophy, literature, history, theology or politics retrieved from notes scattered across his desk and floor, teetering on the bookshelf or strewn under the bed.

On a different bent, but with equal enthusiasm although with a less credible air, he would regale on Queensland's chances against New South Wales in the State of Origin rugby league clash.

In welcoming people, he forsook the gritty aggression he showed in the rugby scrum in favour of a gentility, acceptance and affirmation, which in later life allowed him to drive sometimes unpopular and controversial policies without alienating personal affection or respect from those with whom he disagreed, during his 12-year stint as vicar to the Columban superior general.

Ordained in Gympie by Bishop Henry Kennedy on 8 July 1969, he immersed himself in a life that he described as a vocation to inspire holiness and hope, through witness to the presence and activity of God in human affairs.

The following year he sailed to Seoul in South Korea. His own words describe his



short years there as a struggle against his own ignorance, but also as a time of learning and developing a love of and appreciation for the rectitude of a people born into a cultural and religious environment not his own. It was an experience he carried with him for the remainder of his life and evidenced in his ministry as a priest, teacher, administrator and writer.

In 1974, he went to study moral theology at the Alphonsianum University in Rome, before returning to Australia to teach in the seminary from which he had graduated some six years previously. His disciplined and enquiring mind saw him take further studies in economics, anthropology and business studies, while at the same time becoming a founding father of the Korean Catholic Community of Sydney.

In 1979, he became rector of the seminary and director of the Pacific Mission Institute (later Columban Mission Institute) and at the tender age of 34 was faced with the challenge of organising an institution that would accommodate seminarians, men and women religious, as well as laypeople in an

atmosphere of prayer, reflection, study and recreational life.

It was a daunting task and one for which there was no model, but his leadership qualities came to the fore in an atmosphere that required a combination of strict focus, compassionate reconciliation, flexibility, sociability and conviviality, as well as a tutored imagination.

In 1988, he was elected vicar general of the society and during the following years travelled widely throughout areas of Columban commitment in the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific region.

Commitments to mission education and as regional director of the Columban region of Australia and New Zealand followed, in what transpired to be a build-up to what was arguably the biggest and most difficult challenge of his packed life—promoting a new paradigm for the Church in Australia.

Although he had been struggling against a cancer growing within his body for nearly two decades, he readily agreed to postpone retirement and take to the road as part of the preparation for Australia's fifth Plenary Council.

He listened with patience during his many engagements in the spirit of the listening Church he believed in, and encouraged people to listen to what the Spirit is saying. He spoke with enthusiasm of the sense of faith possessed by the community of souls that make up the Church, quietly explaining the difference between the well-known Church that teaches and the less-known, but more desirable one that discerns.

It was a mission tailor-made for the storytelling missionary. Although the elusive line between fact and fiction in his yarns could rival the best of parables, the poignant insight, salient lesson and gems of wisdom continued to emerge from even the messiest and diverse discussions.

Known as John to his family, he was Noel to the world, but remained the loving son of the late Noel John and Sarah May Connolly, faithful brother to Anthony and deceased sister, Mary, devoted priest and Columban, until his life ended on the evening of 6 June 2020 with his death in Concord Hospital in Sydney.

Noel loved the world and loved people. He believed in the bounty of the blessings received from investing in the truth and above all, he loved God, the trace of whose finger in the arena of human affairs he spent a lifetime discerning.

May he rest in peace. ☪

## A promising roadmap for ecclesial reform and conversion

RICHARD R GAILLARDETZ

**Part two of an analysis of Australian Church governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, by Richard R Gaillardetz, the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College and the current chair of the BC Theology Department. Reprinted with permission from *La Croix International*, 4 June 2020.**

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The Australian bishops have decided to delay the release of this document for six months while they engage its recommendations themselves.

However, *La Croix International* was able to obtain a copy. I have already provided a summary in a previous article, looking at the points that have a value for the wider Church beyond Australia.

Here, in this essay, is my analysis of *The Light from the Southern Cross*.

### Admitting failure and daring to offer a way forward

It is perhaps surprising that we have given so much attention to what is ultimately nothing more than a committee report.

In different times, and in a healthier Church, such a report would have received little attention, largely because it would have been unnecessary to begin with. But today we have a Church wracked by scandal, yet led by a pope with a bold vision for ecclesial conversion.

In this time of ecclesial crisis, *The Light from the Southern Cross* report may offer a road map for key elements of what such a conversion would require.

This report holds considerable promise. It is grounded in sound ecclesiology.

It offers a frank admission of the failings of Church governance at every level, and it dares to offer very specific recommendations for moving forward substantive ecclesial reform.

The drafting team included persons experienced in corporate and ecclesial governance – clergy, lay pastoral ministers, Church and school administrators, and leaders of Church reform groups.

It also included several respected theologians and experts in canon law.

This breadth of perspective and range of expertise paid dividends in the overall quality of the text.

### The path to decentralization and synodality

The document builds on important themes central to this pontificate. Indeed, it represents the most thoroughgoing consideration to date of what healthy Church governance ought to look like in the light of Pope Francis' dream for a synodal Church.

Its frequent ecclesial application of the principle of subsidiarity is particularly significant since both St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI had questioned whether it was appropriate to apply this principle – first articulated in Catholic social teaching – to matters of Church governance.

Yet Pope Francis' repeated calls for the decentralization of Church authority suggest that he has fully embraced the principle.

The Argentinian pope has also insisted that synodality be enacted at every level of Church life. This document offers a raft of concrete reforms that would go a long way toward making that a reality.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the consequences for the pastoral life of the Church if the baptized members of a local Church were given genuine input into the appointment of bishops and the assignment of parish priests, as the report proposes.

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How different would the pastoral life of a diocese look if diocesan pastoral councils reflected the diversity of the local Church and were regularly called upon for input before important pastoral decisions were made?

This would represent not only a check on unfettered episcopal power, it would move the Church well along the path toward becoming a genuine community of ecclesial discernment.

**Sexism in the Catholic Church**

Without ever using the term, the document recognizes the rampant sexism in the Catholic Church and emphasizes, time and again, the need for a much greater incorporation of women in Church governance, particularly at the higher levels of church decision-making.

It briefly mentions the Pan-Amazonian Synod's request for the consideration of the ordination of women to the diaconate and speaks forcefully of the negative impact that has come from the exclusion of women from ordained ministry.

The drafters are to be applauded for a consistent call for the inclusion of women that refuses to rely on Pope Francis' misguided appeals to some 'feminine genius'. It is to the equal dignity of women and to their many gifts and abilities that the document appeals in rectifying this scandalous Church failing.

Some may be disappointed that the document does not push harder in certain areas.

**Cautious and respectful of the law**

One of the notable features of the text is its determination to stay within the parameters of Church doctrine and, with but a few exceptions, Church law.

Regarding the latter, the GRPT does propose an emendation to canon 391 that would require bishops to consult the diocesan pastoral council and the council of priests before making particular law.

A second proposal called for amending canon 513 to grant that diocesan pastoral councils would continue to function when a see is vacant.

There were also calls for changes to particular law, mandating, for example, the establishment of diocesan and parish pastoral councils in every Australian diocese and parish.

The document is clearly much the better for the contributions of not just the ecclesialogists appointed to the team, but also the experts in canon law. Presumably

their contributions helped ensure the document would offer, at every turn, appropriately expansive readings of what Church law allowed and opportunities within current law that had been underutilized.

**Probing the parameters of the laity exercising jurisdiction**

One particular example stands out. The report consistently advocates for greater participation of the laity in Church governance. However, this advocacy has to contend with a school of canonical interpretation insisting that laypersons may not exercise the power of jurisdiction.

The report offers an unexpected excursus on this debate and ultimately sides with an opposing school of interpretation, finding sufficient warrant in the tradition for the lay exercise of jurisdiction. This interpretation would considerably expand the ecclesiastical offices to which a layperson could be appointed.

One can argue that this measured approach to doctrine and Church law has greatly enhanced the chances for its actual implementation. But there are limits to this approach as well.

**The accountability of bishops**

For example, the report simply accepts Church law's claim that a bishop is only accountable to the pope. Unfortunately, current law in fact relies on a problematic equivocation at the Second Vatican Council.

While the report invokes conciliar teaching linking the ministry of the bishop to the local Church, in reality the council's teaching was somewhat ambiguous on this point.

It is true that there are important texts in both *Lumen gentium* and *Christus Dominus* that emphasize the link between the bishop and the local Church. But there are also texts that seem to ground the ministry of the bishop much more in his membership in the episcopal college and his obedience to the head of that college, the pope.

It is the second view that has dominated post-conciliar Church law and custom. Yet those conciliar texts that stress the bishop's relationship to the local Church find considerable support from the ancient tradition. In the early centuries of Christianity, bishops were elected by the local Church and prelates like St. Cyprian of Carthage insisted that bishops were accountable to their local flock.

## The need to engage deeper ecclesiological problems with current law

At some point this ambiguity in Church teaching will have to be addressed if Church law and custom are to buttress the bishop's relationship to the local Church.

Doing so would challenge the current practice of offering episcopal ordination as an honorific for those granted bureaucratic or diplomatic posts. It would also challenge the frequent transfer of bishops from Church to Church or, if you will permit me, from 'See to shining See.' This common practice encourages ecclesiastical careerism and, for that very reason, was prohibited in the early Church.

My point here is that a program for Church reform that is reluctant to engage deeper ecclesiological problems with current Church law will face certain limits regarding the scope of possible Church reform. So, what is the larger import of this document? We will have to wait and see.

## Translating the rhetoric of synodality into an institutional reality

Earlier in the year Pope Francis released his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida*

*Amazonia*. That document can be justly scored for its failure to respond adequately to synodal pleas for a greater role for women and for the ordination of *viriprobat* to the priesthood.

But those failings should not allow us to ignore an inspiring series of social, cultural, ecological and ecclesial "dreams," and the conversions necessary to make those dreams a reality.

Francis has just promulgated a *motu proprio* that would clean up procedures for Vatican procurement of goods and services. It may sound arcane, but this represents a significant achievement in the long-awaited enactment of Vatican financial reforms.

And we are expecting soon the long-awaited apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* on more comprehensive curial reform. Analysis of an earlier draft suggests the constitution may actually have some reforming 'teeth.'

For example, in that earlier draft there was a consistent emphasis on incorporating the laity in Church decision-making, particularly with respect to episcopal appointments.

Although some have raised quite legitimate concerns that the reformist energy of this pontificate may have dissipated, there may yet be substantive opportunities for lasting ecclesial reform. If so, *The Light from the Southern Cross* could make a considerable contribution by offering a blueprint for a much healthier exercise of governance.

However, for that to happen, this document cannot remain simply a committee report.

How will the ACBC and CRA respond to this document? One hopes that it will find its way into the deliberations of the forthcoming plenary council.

And were it to actually implement the bulk of these recommendations, the plenary council of the Church of Australia could mark the beginning of a genuine renewal of Catholicism on the Australian continent.

It might also contribute to translating Pope Francis' soaring rhetoric about a synodal Church into an institutional reality.

Either way, the Australian bishops should be mindful: the global Church will be watching. ☪



## Vale Denis Hitchens

FRANK MARRIOTT

In the mid to late seventies, I convened a small meeting in Heathcote, Victoria to discuss the lack of a current Official Directory of the Catholic Church – the "Red Book". Whatever the reasons, The Official Directory had not appeared. Communications amongst the clergy were being hampered and obtaining accurate information about Church institutions was difficult. It was a time of growth and great changes. Fax machines were on the market!

The late Fr Brian Bainbridge, then associated with the Chaplaincy at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology had been invited to the meeting. Brian knew of a young recently married graduate, Denis Hitchens, who had just been employed by Hewlett Packard in their recently established Melbourne office and reported that Denis knew a thing or two about the new industry of computers.

So Denis was approached and he took the job of designing and getting printed the

first Clergy Contact List – "The Green Book", a challenge he accepted on a pro bono basis, with the NCP funding the essentials.

Over the years the book grew in information. In the beginning getting the basic information from Diocesan sources was not without some drama. The NCP developed contacts in all Dioceses to effect accuracy; in modern terms, a supply chain emerged firstly from the pens of priests and secretaries via the resources of H/P to the Hitchens' living room and then to Australia Post.

Much later a more professional approach was developed when MediaCom took over the printing. As a side line, The Green Book database was able to produce mailing labels and this helped with the distribution of NCP publications. As is said, "Out of little things, big things grow".

Since 1998 The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia has been published by the NCP on behalf of the

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Many are the stories that can be told of that development!

After some years of indifferent health, Denis Hitchens died on 7 July at Olivia Newton John Hospice in Heidelberg, Victoria.

I was able to celebrate the Mass at St John the Evangelist Church Mitcham on 14 July and under current COVID-19 rules a small congregation of 10 attended.

Denis leaves his loving wife Mary and their children Richard, Genevieve, Caroline and Emma and their families to continue to celebrate his life.

The Australian Church owes a great big thanks to this family for their tolerance in days past – often their house was invaded by 3,000 plus copies of The Green Book.

The NCP was and remains grateful for the contribution this enterprise made to its mission of being "A Sign of Unity and an instrument of Peace".

Denis, rest in peace. ☪

## Women – seen and not seen during a pandemic

PATTY FAWKNER SGS

**Sr Patty Fawkner SGS is Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. This article was first published in the May 2020 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-magazine of the Good Samaritan Sisters [www.goodsams.org.au](http://www.goodsams.org.au)**



The female leaders appear to have garnered a high level of public trust and are able to urge their citizens to adopt real sacrifices for the common good. Their strength, compassion and warmth have come to the fore. Who will ever forget Jacinda Ardern reminding her Kiwi citizens that the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy were essential services!

To become a political leader, a woman has to be

exceptional. A female leader endures extra scrutiny and critique far beyond those of her male counterparts. Just pause and ponder for a moment, what the media and public response may have been if Theresa May was still Prime Minister of Britain and had boasted of shaking hands with coronavirus patients as did Boris Johnson, who later contracted the disease and was near death?

In leading the response to the pandemic, women are highly visible – the high percentage of women in the essential services of nursing, aged care and child care, not to mention teachers who, with dedication and innovation, have become masters of teaching in a digital world. It is sadly ironic that these key professions are historically underpaid and undervalued. Let's not forget the working mothers who have added home schooling to their already crammed daily schedule.

Unfortunately, with the increase of domestic violence, women are also bearing a high level of pandemic lockdown pain.

It occurs to me that the welcome growing visibility of women in the public sphere at this time, highlights their near invisibility in the realm of religion.

The image of Catholicism as clerical and male has been magnified during the pandemic. This was especially evident over Easter when virtual community numbers swelled to watch streamed Easter ceremonies. Various levels of social distancing restrictions will be in place for some time and the availability of online Masses will continue.

It is a shame that more attention has not been given to encourage families and communities to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and family Scripture-based prayer services, rather than watching Father “say Mass” online. Christ is present where two or three are gathered in his name. Christ is present in the Word.

A week before the lockdowns in Australia, a group of 20 or so Good Samaritan Sisters came together from interstate and abroad for a weekend gathering. On Saturday evening we conducted a Liturgy of the Word, and because we had a number of hosts in the tabernacle in our chapel, we could have communion. We chose a Sister to lead our celebration. Cometh the moment, cometh the leader.

After the Gospel, which happened to be that wonderful story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well, we sat in silence, and then turned to each other in small groups, sharing our reflection on the Word. We recited the Creed, prayed our Prayers of Intercession, and then picked up the ritual at the Our Father. We received communion; our presider blessed us; we sang our final hymn and departed. It was simple, it was beautiful, and it was nourishing.

When the gifts of women and men – equally made in God's image and likeness – are brought together there are great outcomes as evidenced by the actions of political leaders and health experts during the pandemic. Look at what happens when women have the opportunity to lead.

This last week, I have had the privilege as a member of the Executive of Catholic Religious Australia of attending the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Plenary – 11 Zoom sessions in all. I was highly visible as the only female attendee with 30-plus Bishops! I enjoyed being with these fine men; I was included; my opinion was respected; and I shared their concerns and hopes for our Church.

The recommendations contained in the Royal Commission's final report for the Church to achieve better outcomes for people at risk highlight an increased role for women's voices to be heard. Encouragingly, more and more women are being appointed to positions of real influence in the Church, but from the perspective of the wider congregation, women Church leaders remain invisible and silent. Would that the “new normal” on the other side of the pandemic be otherwise. ☪

Cometh the moment, cometh the leader. Around the world, in Oceania, Asia and Europe, we have witnessed displays of fine leadership in response to the coronavirus pandemic – consider New Zealand, Taiwan and Germany. What do they have in common? They are led by women.

NZ's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen and Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel have contained the pandemic with early decisive action informed by the best that science and medicine could offer.

Here in Australia, New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian has received bouquets for her state's response to the pandemic. The NSW Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant and Victoria's Health Minister Jenny Mikakos have emerged as authoritative, trusted sources of information.

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the French President Emmanuel Macron have been praised for their quick actions to reduce the spread of the deadly disease. Even our Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, has seen a dramatic lift in his approval rating, which had plummeted following the bushfire crisis earlier this year. In a recent Newspoll that asked how well Australia's leaders were handling the coronavirus pandemic, Morrison scored a 68% approval rating.

The leadership of these women and men has been outstanding when juxtaposed with that of the ‘strongmen’ of Brazil, the Philippines, Russia and the USA.

# Indigenous sovereignty and peaceful co-existence

PETER GRIFFIN

Peter Griffin, a member of Pax Christi New South Wales, reflects on the history of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australia on the occasion of Anzac Day 2020.



**W**hat Aboriginal people ask is that the modern world now makes the sacrifices necessary to give us a real future. To relax its grip on us. To let us breathe, to let us be free of the determined control exerted on us to make us like you. And you should take that a step further and recognise us for who we are, and not who you want us to be. Let us be who we are – Aboriginal people in a modern world – and be proud of us. Acknowledge that we have survived the worst that the past had thrown at us, and 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. (Galarrwuy Yunupingu, 'Rom Watangu' in *Final Report of the Referendum Council*, 17 June 2017, p. 53)

*If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*  
(Quote from Lilla Watson).

Every year, the Anzac remembrance gathering at the Marrickville Peace Park (Richardson's Lookout) in Sydney has always included the Frontier Wars. These wars refer to the violent conflicts between Indigenous Australians and white settlers from the earliest days of the colony. It is fitting on Anzac Day to look more closely at the significance of both the physical conflicts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and also their deeper, seemingly endless repercussions.

Acknowledgment of the Frontier Wars is associated with an ineradicable truth, namely that the wars, massacres (on both

sides) and a whole gamut of genocidal practices (dispossession of land including sacred and hunting grounds, devastation from introduced diseases, food poisonings etc.) all occurred on Australian soil. The irony is that none of the wars into which Australia has been drawn via one or other alliance in the name of 'defence' and 'democracy' has occurred on mainland Australia. The fact that the Frontier Wars have been disputed and are still not officially recognised, only adds bitterness to the injustice of denial.

The primary focus of this essay will be on the difficult journey towards the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty from the time of Captain James Cook's landing in Botany Bay on 29 April 1770 to the present.

## Indigenous versus British settler perspectives

Fundamental to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Australia is the divisive issue between those who view the British Crown's claim to the eastern seaboard of Australia as an act of settlement, compared to the First Nations people who see it as an invasion. The Final Report of the Referendum Council refers to a division between 'old' and 'new' Australians.

The invasion that started at Botany Bay is the origin of the fundamental grievance between the old and new Australians. This is a land that was colonised without the consent of its rightful owners. As the Final Report states, 'their land and sovereignty was annexed without consent and without treaty with the country's rightful owners.'

This forms part of the Truth passionately called for in the *Uluru Statement From The Heart*. It is worth noting that the weaponised hostility from the colonial settlers toward the Indigenous people dates from the earliest contact in 1770.

Peter Fitzsimons in his book *James Cook* reveals that in his own journal, Cook records that the entry of a strange vessel entering Botany Bay received an agitated response from the local people. Cook states that he fired three musket shots and one of these shots wounded an Indigenous man in the leg. So, from the very first encounter of 'discovery', the unannounced and mysterious visitors made their intentions known with the force of arms.

Needless to say, none of this reaches beyond archival records to educate Australian children about their country's actual history.

## The Frontier Wars

Much evidence exists to back up the claim that this initial antagonism set the tone and the template for the fighting which first took place several months after the landing of the First Fleet in Botany Bay in January 1788 and ended with the last clashes which occurred as late as 1934.

According to Henry Reynolds, a minimum of 40,000 Indigenous people and between 2,000 and 2,500 settlers died in these wars. The impact of colonisation on the Indigenous population is even more dramatic. Before 1788 there were an estimated 300,000 to 1 million Indigenous people in Australia. By 1920, this number may well have dropped to as low as 80,000. Bruce Elder, in the preface to his book *Blood on the Wattle*, states that *the massacres of Aborigines ... should be as much a part of Australian history as the First Fleet, the explorers, the gold rushes and the bushrangers.*

Indeed, for some years now a large and vigorous contingent of Aboriginal and Aboriginal supporters have been a frustrated (blocked) presence at the annual Anzac Memorial Service in Canberra. Australia is still not ready to accept the truth of its own colonial history. Eventually the Frontier Wars came to an end around 1934.

However as one form of violence and control subsided, governments employed new policies of control and discrimination. As stated in the Final Report, Aboriginal people were herded to missions and reserves on the fringes of white society and the Stolen Generations were taken from their families. This was the policy of assimilation. As emphasised by *Australians*

Continued page 18

*Together, the assimilation approach proposed that 'full blood' Indigenous people should be allowed to 'die out' through a process of natural elimination, while 'halfcastes' were encouraged to assimilate into the white community.*

### White Australia Policy

Coinciding with the latter years of the Frontier Wars, non-Aboriginal Australia had formed itself into a Federation under a Constitution which, among other things, was heavily influenced by the White Australia Policy.

This policy, based upon the assumption of the superiority of whiteness over non whiteness, allowed for the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* which effectively stopped all non-European immigration into the country and contributed to the development of a racially insulated white society.

While this legislation sought to protect whiteness from without, the Constitution sought to protect whiteness from within. From the beginning, white Australia believed that the Aboriginal people were a dying race and the Constitution only made two references to them.

Section 127 excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the Census and Section 51 (xxvi) regrettably gave power over Aboriginal people to the States rather than to the Federal government.

It took 66 years and a referendum in 1967 requiring a majority of the voters in a majority of the States to include Aboriginal people in the Census of their own country. The Aboriginal people and their calls for recognition, in contrast to official and unofficial expectations, refused to go away.

People of particular note who have fought for Aboriginal rights, include William Cooper who was one of eleven signatories to the Malaga Petition in 1887.

During the 1930s, William Cooper and other leaders from the Australian Aborigines' League collected 1,814 signatures and petitioned Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and King George VI to intervene on behalf of Indigenous Australians 'for the preservation of our race from extinction and to grant representation to our race in the Federal Parliament.'

Other Aboriginal activists such as Fred Maynard and Tom Lacey founded the Australian Aboriginal Progress Association in February 1925 which advocated for the right of Aborigines to determine their own lives.

### Lack of a Treaty

Australia is the only Commonwealth nation where a treaty does not exist between the colonisers and the Indigenous people. An Indigenous Treaty was first promised by Prime Minister Bob Hawke back in 1988 after receiving the *Barunga Statement* from Aboriginal elders which called for such a treaty to be concluded. No treaty eventuated. The absence of a treaty is at the very heart of the historical injustice in Australia.

The continued lack of a treaty with Indigenous Australians shows an ongoing denial of the prior occupation and dispossession of Indigenous people and a general disregard for their rights and aspirations. It is a reminder that oppressive colonial attitudes still have not been addressed.

### Sovereignty

In the 1990s, Australia sought to redress its colonial origins by instituting a policy of reconciliation. Reconciliation processes are often criticized for demanding that the victims of state repression relinquish their legitimate claims to justice for the sake of national unity. One notable Indigenous spokesperson, Kevin Gilbert, expressed his view this way: *What are we to reconcile ourselves to? To a holocaust, to a massacre, to the removal of us from our land, from the taking of our land? The reconciliation process can achieve nothing because it does not... promise justice. It does not promise a Treaty and it does not promise reparation for the taking away of our lives, our lands and our economic and political base. Unless it can return to us those very vital things... what have we? A handshake? A symbolic dance? An exchange of leaves and feathers or something like that?*

For Gilbert and many others, the possibility of breaking with the colonial past depends on the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty. But there is an elephant in the room, namely that the legitimacy of the Australian State rests on the presumption that there was no recognisable legal or political organisation on the continent prior to the arrival of the British Crown.

Consequently, the insistence on Aboriginal sovereignty fundamentally contests the basis of the constitutional order i.e. it is the polar opposite of terra nullius. A common misunderstanding from a legal perspective is that the Mabo decision of 3 June 1992 recognised Aboriginal sovereignty.

It did not. [While] the court demolished the concept of Terra Nullius in respect of property, it preserved it in relation to sovereignty ... For 200 years Australian law was secured to the rock of Terra Nullius.

One pinioned arm represented property, the other sovereignty.

With great courage the High Court recognized native title in the Mabo judgment and released one arm from its shackles. The other remains as firmly secured as ever and seems destined to remain there for some time but in the long run the situation will prove unstable. What is more, the resulting legal pose will become increasingly uncomfortable as time passes.

In Australia, critics claim that the formal reconciliation process was a further stage in the colonial project of assimilating the Aboriginal population into the colonizing society. Against reconciliation, many Aboriginal people insist that their sovereignty was never ceded. This claim represents both an assertion of the right to self-determination and a refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the settler-colonial state that has incorporated them as citizens. Henry Reynolds claims that in any discussion about the ongoing evolution of Australian nationalism, the issue of sovereignty is inescapable.

But this discussion comes with a caveat. This common word belies the fact that for each collective, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, sovereignty refers to a reality comprising different values. For Aboriginal Australia, sovereignty predates the arrival of the First Fleet and has never been ceded. According to the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, sovereignty is a spiritual notion, a concept that is unfamiliar to non-Aboriginal Australia. Rather than being a philosophical notion, it is the 'ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature' and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'. And again, as the *Uluru Statement* emphasises, Aboriginal sovereignty 'has never been ceded or extinguished'.

### Postscript

Fiona Nicoll argues that Indigenous sovereignty claims *come less from a desire for European concepts, institutions and values than from a refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the sovereignty in the name of which (the British) invasion was and continues to be justified*. In other words, the quest for Aboriginal sovereignty challenges non-Indigenous Australia to let go of its right to define just what sovereignty is and for whom. This, I suggest, is the reason why the Uluru Statement includes the assertion that Indigenous sovereignty 'co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.' Sovereignty then has a dual character: one that is non-Indigenous and another that is Indigenous. The search for liberation through sovereignty can only be achieved by both sides working together. ☪

# Reflections on an Ordination Diamond Anniversary



ERIC HODGENS

Eric Hodgens was ordained in 1960. Here he reflects on major anniversaries synced with the decades. Eric published *A Golden Anniversary Reflection* in 2010 which you can read at – <https://tinyurl.com/y2jrztjut>

The decades since my ordination might be styled as: The awakening 60s; The exciting 70s; The suspicious 80s; The depressing 90s and The imploding Noughties. Ten years later we have added the Counter-intuitive Teens.

This decade has been notable for unexpected disruptions and reversals both good and bad but all remarkable.

First there was the election of Pope Francis. This brought a reversal of the 45 years of Restorationist policy under JPII and Benedict. Francis brought a pastoral mind and style of conversation which broke the formal kabuki-style image of the papacy. People heard the Jesus message in story and image as Jesus told it. Francis wanted to replace a self-referential church with one that looked outward and dealt with reality as it is. His vision was to replace a juridical institution with a pastoral community of service. His way to get there was *synodal* – with everyone equally walking the Way together.

This disrupted the whole Roman administration and the episcopacy around the world. They were the pope's pretorian guard – but now, the pope wanted them to change tack. Some were delighted. More were alarmed. The culture wars had been going on for decades, but now the leaders of the right swung into action with passive and overt resistance. Francis, though less familiar with Vatican politics, was the experienced veteran of South American intrigue. He skilfully made progress against opposing winds and gradually built up his own team. The opposition continues but Francis, following his own mantras, is still ahead.

After years in pastoral leadership and administration, he had developed four rules of thumb:

- Unity is more important than conflict.
- The whole is more important than the part.
- Time is more important than space – gently, gently.
- Reality is more important than the idea.

He is not an ideologue. Pastoral experience has softened rigidity and dogmatism. He has no time for the hard right, nor for the

hard left. Reality is more important than the idea. Restorationism is over.

A second reversal grew out of the long-simmering problem of child abuse by clergy and religious institutions. Priests and religious had been criminally abusing children and the Church institution had doggedly covered it up. That was old news, but this was the decade secular society decided the Church could not be trusted to clean itself up. Australia, Ireland and the USA were in the forefront. It was the secular state that was calling the Church to account. Post-enlightenment democracies paid greater respect to transparency and accountability than the Church. They, rightly, won the high moral ground.

The Church was shamed and its hierarchy deauthorised. Who can forget the picture of four bishops answering to the Royal Commission – all speechless bar one? Who can forget Chile's Fernando Karadima? Or Mexico's Marciel Marcial? Or the film "Spotlight" and the Boston Globe's expose of church corruption?

Who can forget one cardinal being defrocked while another cardinal became prisoner in the dock? Twelve well-instructed jurors were convinced he was guilty beyond reasonable doubt. The final appeal court judged that they should have had some doubt. But would those jurors be any the less convinced by that finding? Rank and file Catholics reacted variously. Some left in disgust, others organised reform groups, others joined proxy resistance causes such as same-sex marriage.

Catholics started to have second thoughts about the Church during the baby boomer revolution starting in the 60s. Paul VI's condemnation of contraception in 1968 was a turning point. It began the deauthorisation of papal and episcopal leadership. JPII's insistence on conformity to his hard line, especially on sexuality, deepened the divide and set up the culture wars which persist today. Rejection of papal teaching showed in dropping Mass attendance. The next step was disaffiliation which went on relentlessly during the teens decade as attested by census data.

The arrival of growing secularization has made disaffiliation easy. Society in general is more relaxed and many formerly strictly

observed 'principles' look more like Victorian prissiness. Mere habits were often disguised as values.

Finally, the decade has ended with the disruption of a fearsome pandemic. Social distancing plays havoc with communal institutions. Participation patterns are fractured. Will they ever return? Some will, many won't. It may not be the end, but the threat is there.

Meanwhile, as Francis confidently gives the lead, bishops are not to be seen. Synodality energises the pope but seems to hold no attraction for most bishops. Episcopal conferences appear limp when everyone knows they are divided and lack decisive leadership. They are not entirely to blame because conformity, not creative imagination, was a condition of episcopal selection under the Wojtyla/Ratzinger regime. The more reflective component of the Church is crying out for imaginative leadership on the ministry crisis and institutional re-organisation. But episcopal conferences seem paralysed. No imagination limits freedom to move.

Pastors tend to service their flock as best they can with depleted numbers in constricted circumstances. Some stalwart and sophisticated laity maintain hope because of their love of the community that believes and hopes in Jesus of Nazareth and the loving and merciful God whom Jesus calls 'Father'. What shape will the phoenix rising from these ashes take in the coming Twenties? ☞

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# First Provincial Council of Melbourne, 17-24 November 1907

PETER WILKINSON

This is the final article by Peter Wilkinson in the series looking at the various particular councils (provincial and plenary) convened by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Australia between 1844 and 1937. It examines the First Provincial Council of Melbourne held in Melbourne from 17-24 November 1907.

## Provincial Councils

Provincial councils are assemblies of bishops of an ecclesiastical province, convened and presided over by the metropolitan archbishop to discuss ecclesiastical matters and to legislate for the province.

Ecclesiastical provinces emerged in the early life of the Church. Their boundaries were usually co-terminus with the provinces of the Roman Empire.

The Councils of Nicaea I (325 CE) and Antioch (341 CE) initially mandated bi-annual provincial councils. The Councils of Trullo (692) and Nicaea II (787) reduced them to annual. The 4th Lateran Council (1215) reaffirmed this, but it was largely ignored. The Councils of Basle (1433) and Trent (1545-63) mandated a 3-year cycle, but that too was disregarded. In the 19th century, the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide revived provincial councils in the mission territories of Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, and USA, but without Trent's rigour.

Trent gave metropolitan bishops the right and duty to convoke provincial councils, set their agenda, and to preside over them. They were to call all their suffragan bishops to attend as well as those entitled "by right or by custom".

At the council they did not have an overriding voice, and could only adjourn or close the council with their suffragans' consent.

Provincial councils can deal with matters of faith, morals, and discipline, promote the Christian life of clergy and laity, settle disputes and make laws binding on all dioceses of the province. Though individual bishops can dispense from council decrees in their own dioceses, they cannot abrogate

decrees. Provincial councils do not require the Holy See's approval for validity, but normally do seek approval.

## Provincial Councils in Australia

Australia's first two provincial councils were the 1st Provincial Council of Sydney in 1844 and the 2nd Provincial Council of Sydney in 1869.

Until 1874 Sydney was the sole Australian ecclesiastical province encompassing all dioceses, so both these councils had a plenary character with their decrees applicable in all dioceses (12 in 1873).

A third council for the Province of Sydney was planned for 1888, but as three other ecclesiastical provinces – Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide – had been established by 1887, the proposal council morphed into a 'national synodal conference' with bishops from dioceses across the country attending. It was not a plenary council.

## Melbourne Provincial Council

Two years after the 1905 3rd Australian Plenary Council, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the ecclesiastical Province of Melbourne, Thomas Carr, decided to convoke a provincial council for the four dioceses of the Province – Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale – for the purpose of formulating "one harmonious body of provincial laws" to replace "the numerous and divergent decrees" of the 40 diocesan synods that had been held within the Province up to 1906: 21 in Melbourne, 11 in Ballarat, and 4 each in Sandhurst and Sale (Table 1).

These diocesan synods had usually been held after the annual diocesan priests retreat. Until the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*,



Archbishop Thomas Carr

Trent's mandate of annual diocesan synods was variously observed in Australia. From 1887 onwards, Melbourne's bishop held them annually, but other bishops less frequently.

When they were convened by the diocesan bishop, on his own authority, to discuss and decide on matters relating to faith, morals, and discipline in his diocese, he always presided and had the sole decisive vote on the matters under consideration.

Their decrees did not require the Holy See's approval, and once promulgated, bound the clergy and laity of the entire diocese.

## The Province of Melbourne in 1907

In 1907, the 4 dioceses of the Melbourne Province had a Catholic population of 263,710, or 21.4 per cent of the total Victorian state population of 1,232,807. The Archdiocese of Melbourne had more Catholics than the other 3 dioceses combined, but they had more 'districts' (akin to 'parishes'). The Province had 275 priests – 221 diocesan and 54 religious – with an average one priest for every 960 Catholics.

**Table 1: Diocesan synods held in the Province of Melbourne, 1875-1906**

Diocese	Established	Year in which Synods were held
Melbourne	1847	1875, 1885, 1887-1906 (3rd-21st held annually)
Ballarat	1865	1881, 1885, 1889, 1890, 1892, 1894, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1906
Sandhurst	1874	1881, 1888, 1893, 1901
Sale	1887	1898, 1901, 1905, 1906

Sources: *Acta et Decreta* of the various synods; *The Advocate, Summary and Index 1868-1990*; information supplied by diocesan archives.

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**Table 2: Demographic and ecclesiastical data for the Province of Melbourne in 1907**

Diocese	Year Estab.	Catholic Pop'tion	Bishop (Country of Origin: IR – Ireland)	Districts (not parishes)	Priests: Diocesan/ Religious	Relig. Brothers	Relig. Sisters	Catholic Schools/ Students
Melbourne	1847	145,333	Thomas Carr (IR)	56	104/39	50	761	160/24,918
Ballarat	1865	59,488	Joseph Higgins (IR)	31	65/9	17	221	81/4,900
Sandhurst	1874	45,368	Stephen Reville (IR)	22	34/6	6	200	51/4,500
Sale	1887	13,521	James Corbett (IR)	8	18/0	0	61	10/875
<b>Totals</b>		<b>263,710</b>		<b>117</b>	<b>221/54</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,243</b>	<b>302/35,193</b>

Source: *Australasian Catholic Directory for 1908*. Note: The Catholic population for the 4 dioceses in the Melbourne Province published in the 1908 *Directory* was the same for the years 1902-1909. In the same period the total population increased from 1,208,231 to 1,277,022 (+68.791).

It also had 73 religious brothers and 1243 religious sisters, with most teaching in 5 Boys' Colleges, 36 Girls' Boarding Schools, 56 Superior Day Schools, and 205 Parish Primary Schools with a total enrolment of 35,193 students (Table 2).

Just 50 years earlier, the whole Colony of Victoria had one diocese, 60,000-70,000 Catholics, 25 churches, 36 priests and 74 Catholic schools educating 4000 students.

**Convoing the 1907 Council**

Before his appointment as Archbishop of Melbourne by Leo XIII in 1886, Thomas Carr had been vice-president of Ireland's premier seminary, Maynooth College, and Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh.

On 14 September 1907, Carr convoined the 1st Melbourne Provincial Council, calling his three Irish suffragan bishops – Joseph Higgins (Ballarat), Stephen Reville OSA (Sandhurst), James Corbett (Sale) – to attend, as well as 23 priest 'theologians' (17 diocesan and 6 religious).

It was to be held in Melbourne from 17-24 November 1907 with its prime purpose to harmonize the various diocesan laws of the province for administrative, disciplinary and pastoral reasons.

On 16 September 1907, the eve of the Council, all those called met at the

archbishop's residence and all priests were assigned to one of three committees dealing with Sacraments, Discipline, and Education. One suffragan bishop appointed to preside at each committee.

The Solemn Opening Session was celebrated on Sunday 17 September 1907 in St Patrick's Cathedral, with the committees meeting privately on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, followed by two public sessions in the Cathedral on Thursday and Sunday 24th.

The Council produced 112 decrees, with many derived from the previous 21 Melbourne diocesan synods. Most dealt with the life and discipline of priests (e.g. dress, residence, remuneration, etc.) and the administration of property and money (e.g. offerings, debts, special collections, wills, bequests, and inventories); 51 concerned administration of the sacraments; several promoted sodalities and the Catholic Truth Society; and the sole decree on education mandated priests in the 'districts' to make weekly visits to nearby schools and monthly visits to distant schools to teach or supervise the teaching of the catechism and church history. The Council also planned common policy on teacher training, teacher and school registration, and a Catholic college at the University of Melbourne.

The bishops published a *Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Laity of the Province* and decreed that another provincial council be held in 1910, unless they changed their mind.

The Council decrees were sent to the Holy See on 3 March 1908 and examined by the Commission for the Revision of Provincial Councils. Apart from 18 minor amendments and the removal of Decree 33 on reserved sins, they were found to accord fully with the general laws of the Church and the decrees of the previous Australian plenary councils. Pope Pius X approved the decrees on 2 June 1909 and the decree of approval was issued on 12 July 1909.

The Acta et Decreta were printed in 1909, including 27 appendices with various documents issued by the Holy See during the previous decade. The decrees came into force shortly after. ☪

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



## The Swag Summer Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 26 October 2020.

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



# A jubilee wish for the Church

HENRY HUU DUC TRAN

**Henry Huu Duc Tran, Seven Hills, NSW offers a reflection on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee, which was celebrated on 21 April 2020.**

On Tuesday 21 April 2020, the 25th anniversary of my ordination, one of my relatives sent me a text from Vietnam, saying '25 years, what a difficult journey accomplished!' It sounds rather prophetic to me, though I never told him about the challenging side of the journey, which required me to work twice as hard as my local mates.

The first part of my journey discreetly began in Vietnam sometime after Easter 1984 and was happily completed three months later at a small coastal town in the South of Thailand, thousands of kilometers away from the seminary, my last residence in Vietnam. Sandwiched between those three crazy months, taking the twenty-six-year-old me through so many places in such a Wild West-like Cambodia in the early 80s, were days in hiding, Sundays with no Mass, moments of despair, fear and uncertainty, and worst of all, a period of imprisonment.

When the original plan of cutting through the Cambodian jungle by foot failed and prison became the alternative, I was kind of telling the Lord, 'You know what I deeply want, just have my life and take me wherever you like... but Vietnam.' I completely placed my life in the Lord, and simply 'walked by faith' with him, not knowing what was going to happen tomorrow. The Lord, however, was an efficient wheeler and dealer; he mysteriously opened another door for me to enter to meet with people, who were able to smuggle me out of the Killing Fields with their families by boat from the then fishing village of Sihanoukville – known as Cambodia's city of Casinos today.

After almost a year living in three various refugee camps in Thailand and waiting for a chance to start a new life somewhere in the free world, a Redemptorist priest named Patrick O'Neill, whom I met during his trip to recruit vocations for the Australian Church, convinced me that Australia would be the best choice for me, if I was serious with my priestly formation. His was the invitation I said yes to, which initiated the sponsorship process to formalize my re-settlement in Australia. I got through the interview and arrived in Sydney on 8 October, 1985, one and a half years after I left home. The first Bishop of Parramatta became single-handedly instrumental to my association with the diocese, when he

paid his visit to the place called MacKillop House. This was where I was staying to absorb as much of the language and culture of this land as I could, in preparing myself for mark II of my formation journey. He looked and sounded every bit charming and inviting as he truly was, and completely won me over in our first encounter. I eagerly put my hand up for the yes, when he asked for volunteers to go to his young and multicultural diocese, which had still been unknown to me then. I have been always grateful to him, because he cared for and stood by me at numerous occasions, especially when honesty and boldness landed me in trouble with certain Church authorities.

Just a few years ago, I asked him again about whether he remembered the time when he summoned me to his office and tabled my seminary report, which was so venomous, enough to kill not just one single vocation but ten at once, given it fell in the hand of another bishop. In his typical style, he said with a fatherly smile, 'of course, how can I ever forget that document.' Instead of terminating my vocational thirst and kicking me out of the office that day, he gave me a very helpful survival tip, 'Don't get into any trouble with them (meaning the authority) again.' Survived after such a major scare and a few more hiccups later on, I was ordained by him to the Diaconate in April 1994 and then to the priesthood on 21 April, 1995.

I remember, in the book called *The Election of Pope Francis* by Gerard O'Connell, the author mentioned this common feeling among people when they met the Pope both before and after his election, that the man naturally gave the same impression to people talking to him, that they were special and important to him, and the inaugural Pastor of the diocese, I guess, seemed to share the same quality and charisma.

More than just a sincere and humble pastor, he also had the courage to place his trust and confidence in others by allowing and encouraging people to take initiative and be creative and accountable, the very concepts that have just been allowed to re-surface in the Church by Pope Francis recently. The telling example of that spirit was his permission granting freedom to candidates for the Diaconate and Priesthood to arrange the liturgy for

their sacred moment of Ordination according to their wish.

The years following my Ordination saw a shift in the Church landscape in multiple ways, especially when he suddenly left the scene due to unknown reasons. I hope one beautiful day the man himself shall enlighten the people of God in Parramatta the whole truth about this saga.

His departure was quickly replaced up with a new trend in the Church, both local and universal. I smelled it, felt it and shared my concerns with my first Parish priest, who wisely advised me, 'Don't worry about them; focus on our Parish works and preach the Gospel message.'

I followed his advice, but couldn't help to feel frustrated at times, as I was witnessing the ugly side of human nature unfolding before my eyes through people, who were surprisingly capable of adapting themselves to suit the new environment.

I didn't know exactly what it was at first, except the realization that it very much bore elements reflecting the world I nearly paid with my life to run away from, many years before. Elements that the Australian Royal Commission recently detailed as 'a sense of entitlement, superiority, and exclusion, and abuse of power.' In a nutshell, they have a real name called clericalism, and in its name, even a lay person could bark at the Parish priest, 'No, you can't have this hymn for your Installation Mass and I think you'd better go and do a Liturgy course again' – even though this same hymn had been selected previously for his Thanksgiving Mass, and has been sung again and again in English-speaking churches around the world for a long time.

However, the reign of clericalism seems to be over, thanks to the crusade introduced by Pope Francis, despite a strong resistance both visible and invisible from certain pockets within the Church both local and global.

My Silver Jubilee wish is about a true conversion of heart from all Church members, especially from those who have tried to hang on to the vain and insignificant remnants of the triumphant Church of old. My wish is that, consequently, a renewed Church shall be reborn to reflect more authentically the essential qualities of the Gospels, such as the agape love, humble service, compassion, mercy and simplicity – qualities that are the core of the Church's preaching, and that the world is waiting for the Church to put into practice. ☪

## Survivor France – a different kind of pilgrimage

GREG TRYTHALL

**For his sabbatical, Fr Greg Trythall from Williamstown, Victoria, chose a 1,000 kilometre walk through the French countryside. He tells of some of his experiences here.**



I survived 'Survivor France' and I lived to tell the tale! Maybe if you want some danger and adventure (and some stories to tell your parishioners or community) then this could be the one for you! In fact, I don't see why priests should get fixated on walking through Spain especially to Santiago de Compostella when arguably prettier pilgrimage walks exist through France!

There are four main pilgrimage walks in France, usually culminating at the French/Spanish border at St Jean Pied de Port in France: Arles, Tours, Le Puy en Velay and Vezelay. From these routes many long-distance walkers go on to Santiago de Compostella in Spain. Le Puy en Velay is the best I think.

By Wednesday 11th September on my 10th day of walking on the Vezelay – Bourges route, I wanted to beat constant 28 – 32-degree afternoon heat of that particular week, and also needed to wash socks, jocks etc. Accordingly, I pushed hard to end early as only 24.5 km to La Souterraine. It was a mini castle, Chateau Lazat, but no dearer than normal accommodation. Left at 7:45am – arrived

3pm. I found a little hotel open and I asked the waiter where Chateau Lazat was in this town of La Souterraine! He came back 5-10 minutes later and said: It is 10 kilometres away!

He must have seen the shocked look on my face and he said: You could hitchhike! Now as I was going some distance off my intended beaten track when the town was originally listed in Booking.com as La Souterraine, I gritted my teeth and I marched 3 ½ kms on. As I was walking on the outskirts of another town, I said Bonjour Monsieur to a guy raking leaves across the road from his parent's place in a little town called Bussiers Madeleine. He not only replied 'Bonjour Monsieur' but walked very directly across the road towards me and said some things in French, but soon realised the stranger mostly spoke English.

He said to me in broken English: Do you want some water? (I happened to be out of water by then) and after he showed me into his front garden and was about to sit me down he said: Would you like some coffee? I needed that hospitality more than anything. I got more than hospitality! When I had said something to his biscuit request he insisted I keep the whole pack of biscuits, and he not only brought me one bottle of water but 3 small bottles. I journeyed more happily on my way.

On Sept 14th after about 18 kilometres I ran out of water as it was much hotter than expected for that time of year. Added to this there was nothing open in what looked like a big village to me, Le Chatenet-en-Dognon. But like many French villages more than half the homes seem to be unoccupied. I was surprised that nothing was open and as I got to the end of the village I noticed these twin males of about 25 years of age. I said *L'eau, s'Il vous plait?* One of the young French men not only gave me water but brought one jumbo bottle plus filled my medium bottle and said in reasonable English – It is hot; you should pour some of this water over your hat.

That extra water and the water to cool me over the hat made a big difference that afternoon. Just nearing accommodation another 10 kilometres down the road and at a particular time when I was saying to

myself, I wonder how many dogs have barked at me today (there were many) and an older strong Labrador (with a mongrel streak) jumped through an opening in its fence and came straight at me with teeth bared. In preservation for my life like a French fencer, as he came at me, I lunged at him striking my professional steel capped walking stick right into his mouth. He came at me a second time but seemed reluctant to experience 'the stick in the mouth' trick again! I slowly backed up the road towards my intended destination as he was still intent on giving me a nasty taste of his type of French medicine, but luckily the Australian this time was just too illusive! There are many dogs on farms and in little villages along the way – so you have to have your wits about you at times.

Now after 600kms of walking, my steam train is still on its tracks but who knows what is around the corner as several people I pass are having serious problems with shin soreness or blisters. One lady I passed two days ago had decided to terminate her journey as she had 4 blisters on each foot – ouch!

On Wednesday 25th September I travelled 33 kilometres from quite a large town in Mussidan to the once thriving town of Sainte Foy-la-Grande on the magnificent river, La Dordogna. It had been raining and the boots were starting to have a good amount of mud on them. Little did I know in the late afternoon that I would, due to rain mainly, encounter a lucky escape from serious injury.

In my Dutch Association of St James travel booklet, it stated: 'Careful, steep and dangerous descent'! Actually a video could only fully describe the difficulty. Indeed, the descent of 200-300 metres before one entered the town of Saint Foy-la-Grande was more than doubly difficult as not only had it been raining steadily, but the rain combined with the type of rock meant one was aquaplaning when stepping on the rocky surface which formed half of the total of the downhill surface. Twice I sailed into mid-air but luckily my backpack and shorts were the main victims of the physical shaking of one's senses and hurt pride!

Saturday 5th October is a day I am not sure whether I should remember or forget! As it was going to be 35 kilometres to the very pretty and rather extraordinary medieval village of Sauveterre-de-Bearn, I made what I thought at the time was the wise decision to go only 31 km to

Continued page 24

Barraute-Camu – a smallish village just before Sauveterre. After about 13 km there was a major town Orthex with a rather beautiful 13th century bridge to cross. I decided with the beautiful setting to have an early lunch. Unfortunately, 10 kilometres down the track there had been a great deal of rain and I was soon up to my ankles in mud as there were two small streams to cross.

After 30 kilometres I was now approaching my intended destination of Barraute-Camu but 10 minutes later found out that the crossing of a river called *Le Gave d'Oloron* on my map was no crossing at all! I now had to find a way of crossing this very steadily flowing river – 100 metres wide! As I studied the map further, the only way was to go another 4 kilometres up stream to the town I had not intended to go to in the first place, *Sauveterre-de-Bearn*. Here I am approaching dusk, walking the 35 kilometres I had not intended to walk, walking another kilometre over the bridge and town, with a walk back in the same direction over the other side of the river of 4 kms – along a major road with glaring car traffic lights the last 2 kms and trying not to be killed in the process!

After a shower, I had this magnificent meal of a bread baguette I had in my backpack from the day before. I found some jam inside the kitchen in my outhouse accommodation they had for guests. I was the only one there! I enjoyed my shower immensely and I really enjoyed the bread, butter and jam. It was like winning tatts! What a day though: doing 40 kms instead of 30; mud up to my ankles; no bridge over the river as I discovered to my amazement and headlights glaring in your face. All in all one of the main reasons I went to France was for surprise and adventure and I got it!

Monday 7th October – THE LAST DAY! I was able to raise my arms in triumph as I marched through the UNESCO Heritage Gates at that wonderful unique style village of St Jean Pied de Port. Tired but not defeated and 995 kilometres later – Survivor France. I survived and in many ways I thrived. Viva La France! ☺

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

## A sower went out to sow – the voice of God

BRIAN GLEESON CP

**Brian Gleeson, a Passionist priest and Doctor of Theology, explores the parable of the sower.**

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9), more accurately the Parable of the Soil, contains a complaint, a serious complaint. It's aimed at us, at you and me. Jesus is telling us that God's word is often less fruitful, less productive in our lives than it ought to be. It gets trampled underfoot, it dries up, it gets choked, or it does not grow. It deserves to make more difference to us than it does. Too often we fail to see the traces and signs of his presence which God puts into our lives. We do not see, hear, feel, touch or recognise them. Because they pass us by, they cannot therefore change us, change us into better people.

It's deeply disappointing to the heart of God when we fail to recognise the traces of his presence and the traces of his messages. It's far more disappointing than when we either ignore our fellow human beings or fail to notice them. A young man had a misunderstanding with his girlfriend – a very serious one. He tried to phone her, but when he heard her voice, he did not know what to say. So he hung up. He tried to write her a letter. But when he finished it, the letter sounded silly, and so he tore it up. Then he remembered that she liked roses, deep red roses. He bought her such a rose – only one, because roses were very expensive at that time of year. The woman in the flower-shop added some ferns to the rose and wrapped it for him in some crisp tissue paper.

The young man went to his girlfriend's flat. He put the rose down in front of her door. He then hid round a corner, and waited for her to come home. Right on time she arrived from work, looking as lovely as ever. His heart leaped in his throat, and his mouth suddenly went dry. He watched her as she opened her purse, took out her key and turned it in the lock, pushed the door open, stepped inside and closed it behind her. But she did not bend down to pick up his beautiful expensive rose. In fact, she did not seem to even notice it. What a disappointment! What a let-down! What a missed opportunity! What a heart-break! What a tragedy!

Every day of our lives God gives us signs, trying to get our attention. It might take the form of a flower, a thought, a feeling, a dream, a child, a news story, a chance meeting, a friend, a colleague, some pangs of pain or even of guilt. God has all sorts of wake-up calls. God may speak to us in

silence, in sunshine, in rain, on a beach, on a mountain, by a river. God may have something to say to us in a play or a movie, in a song or a piece of music. God may speak to us in the readings at Mass or in the homily about them. It's quite likely that God will speak to us especially in the richness of a loving relationship. As Jean Valjean sings in *Les Misérables*, “to love another person is to see the face of God”.

The messages of God are so many and so different that the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins makes the claim: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God”. But how often do we notice? How often do we see, hear or feel God speaking to us? And if we do, how often do we stop and say back: “Hello, God! Thank you, God! What would you want me to do, God?”

Perhaps all too often we live like those who have eyes but do not see, like those who have ears but do not hear. Not only as far as God is concerned, but also as far as the people around us are concerned. We may be like the first man, not the second, in the famous quip: “Two men looked out from prison bars; one saw mud, the other saw stars” (Frederick Langbridge). As our response to the gospel message of Jesus, it would be worthwhile to ask ourselves a few matter-of-fact questions:

How strongly do we believe that God speaks to us through a series of signs – e.g. through other people? through things that happen to us? through things that are said to us? and through such marvels of nature as “the wonder and the glory of the everlasting stars” (Banjo Paterson)?

How convinced are we that all around us there are many traces of God's loving and caring presence, and that like an electric current flowing through it, “the world is charged with the grandeur of God”?

Do we fully believe that when we get together for the Eucharist, God speaks to us in quite special ways – in the people we meet and greet, in the readings, in the homily, in the consecrated bread and wine, in Holy Communion, and in the priest who leads our celebration?

Next, let us pray: Speak to us, Gracious God, and open our minds and hearts with your gentle love, so that the precious seed of your word may produce abundant fruit in our lives. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ, Your Word and Our Lord. Amen. ☺

# Post pandemic church and the Plenary Council

AENGUS KAVANAGH FSP

**Aengus Kavanagh, Patrician Brother and editor and co-author of *Reset the Sails* (April 2020), reviewed in this edition of *The Swag*, discusses how the pandemic might lead us to greater opportunities for church reform if we grasp the opportunity.**

'Unprecedented' has become an over-used word in recent times. The word was a good descriptor for Australia's long and crippling drought, and an even better descriptor for the prolonged and devastating bushfires. However, if there is a superlative to 'unprecedented' apply it to COVID-19, which has caused such havoc across the world, but simultaneously has provided us with profound questions about who we have become as society.

Never in living memory has our world been so enveloped in fear, anxiety, and sadness as it has since the serious unleashing of the deadly virus from February 2020. The clichéd phrase 'gone viral' takes on a whole scary and sinister meaning in the wake of COVID-19.

Gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions is frequently greeted with the comforting hope of 'getting back to normal'. A more discerning and challenging aspiration however might be a quest for a 'new normal' at a number of levels. There is a growing realisation that the 'old normal' to which we had become accustomed has been a contributing factor to the malaise in which we now find ourselves. And this malaise extends beyond the health ravages caused by the virus, beyond the economic consequences, to our ways of being with each other in the world, within families, within communities, within nations, and internationally.

Covid has put the spotlight anew on leadership, most glaringly so where high profile of some world leaders have exhibited varying mixes of deceit, ignorance, arrogance, denial and self-justification. Wuhan doctor, Dr Li Wenliang, issued a warning about a strange new virus early in February 2020. He was then summoned to a meeting of medical officials and police and forced to sign a statement denouncing his warning as an unfounded and illegal rumour. He died shortly afterwards in front-line service to Wuhan virus victims. Since him, thousands of front-line Covid health workers have died, including at least one hundred doctors in Italy. We are inspired by these beacons of humanity.

A brief recall of links between leadership and countries of highest coronavirus death

tolls is both interesting and chilling. In the USA, Donald Trump has constantly down-played the COVID-19 threat, reaching a new low in his 4 July assertion from the White House that the virus was a comparatively harmless infection resulting in death for only about 1% of the victims, while adding that bizarre dismissal – 'with less testing we would have fewer cases'!

Another one locked into denial has been Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro, describing the pandemic as 'just a little flu'. So too for the UK's Boris Johnson in his cavalier obfuscations. One-time member of the Government's medical advice team and leading epidemiologist, Professor Neil Ferguson, told a committee of MP's, on 10 June 2020, that the introduction of 'lockdown measures a week earlier would have reduced the final death toll by at least a half'.

What anxiety, fear and sorrow might have been spared millions had these leaders like New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, and other national leaders of similar disposition, by their – 'went in early, went in hard', with testing, tracing, treatment and lockdowns? The harrowing statistics tell the story of gut-wrenching pain and sorrow inflicted on millions,

Coronavirus death statistics at July 2020 is USA 140,150, Brazil 74,260, UK 45,210. Almost a quarter of a million!

USA, Brazil and the UK present a current window into a possible impact of leadership characterised by a mix of narcissism, ignorance, intransigence, denial, defence and self-justification. Such leadership shadows leave trails of dysfunction and misery across nations, organisations and institutions. In its global attack on humanity, COVID-19 has invited a global re-embrace of new paradigms, paradigms more focussed on human dignity across boundaries, paradigms anchored in the enduring values of the Gospel.

In the context of the impending Plenary Council it is apt to hope that leadership shadows do not hinder serious address of the 'virus' that so erodes religious faith in our times, that so diminishes the capacity of our church to reclaim a Christian humanism to elevate and make holy our ailing society.

## Time of grace and opportunity for our church?

Is it providential that the whole COVID-19 phenomenon has emerged as a backdrop to the Plenary Council in Australia? At a number of levels it poses invitations to take a closer look at our ways of being church in the world. Its coincidence with the Paschal Season forced church changes in policies and practices always deemed as fundamental to the Catholic celebration of Easter. Closed churches throughout the world ruled out participation in such celebrations. And yet, hasty improvisations by parishes helped to fill the void. Many parishes suddenly became proficient in marshalling the potential of modern technology. Steaming of Masses and of other religious services became popular, bringing spiritual comfort to many and evoking positive responses from unexpected constituents.

British Catholic magazine, *The Tablet*, April 25 (p.28), recounts a heartening scenario: *Shrewsbury Cathedral has recorded the largest congregations in its 170 year history.... On Easter Sunday, 11,446 people watched Mass online, more than 10 times to usual attendance of 1,000 people. The highest number of service views was on Good Friday when 13,594 watched the liturgy.* No doubt many other Catholic churches in a variety of settings could similarly attest to record numbers of 'hits' to their 'streamings' over the Easter period especially. This is not to suggest that digital alone is the way to go. There are a few possible learnings however. These include thirst for the religious and the spiritual is much more widespread than might be assumed from regular church attendance data; that the common manner in which liturgies are celebrated in churches does not find resonance among many of the baptised; that the church is way behind in responding to the signs of the times, and especially in its use of digital technology to bring the message of the Gospel into the lives of many.

Another reflection raising itself in this context is whether as Catholics we have become over-reliant on customs and practices of the institutional church to express and nurture an authentic Catholic identity? It is not a matter of either/or but it is to propose that on a 'compliance-commitment' continuum we may be disproportionately displaced towards to the compliance end?

If this is so it may be a product of a time when priests were far more plentiful, when

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Catholics were less educated and less questioning, and when religion drew more from a consciousness of fear rather than of love? While preserving what is best in a Catholicity that is devotional, sustainability of our church into the future will require more intentional discipleship along with the deepened personal spirituality. In part, this may lead to diminished co-dependence on the institutional church with a consequent up-take of co-responsibility for the true mission of the church.

In April 2020, Teresa Pirola from the Office of Evangelisation and Faith Formation in Broken Bay diocese wrote a timely and challenging article, *The Hour of the Domestic Church Is Now*. Writing in the time of complete church lockdown, she invited fresh thinking and practice: *Think about it: we are living through a moment in history when, in every parish and diocese around the world, the domestic space is the only place where most Catholics can be fully present to one another in celebrating their Catholic traditions. In fact, the terrible necessity of enforced home isolation has opened up an extraordinary opportunity: to call the faithful, family units of every kind and configuration, to rediscover their power to 'be' church, each within their unique domestic context.*

*It is time to move beyond the initial crisis management period (with its focus on the provision of online Masses), to intentional lay empowerment. Our conversations can be less about the pros and cons of 'virtual' Mass attendance and 'private Mass', and more filled with talk of 'home-based spirituality'.*

*The resounding message from our ecclesial leadership, surely, has to be: 'Now is the time for the lay faithful to step up. Your home is a holy place, you are 'priest' in your own home; your meal table is your 'altar'; your family is the church in miniature, the domestic church.*

This compellingly attractive vision proposed by Teresa Pirola, as well as recapturing elements of the early church, is far removed from device-regulated and 'time-poor' families of our times. Besides, there is scant evidence in our institutional church of paradigms, policies, programs and structures which might enable movement towards the scenario outlined.

Many voices are urging us to seize the pandemic's disruption of long-held securities to boldly reimagine a more hope-filled future. Czech intellectual and 2014 Templeton Prize winner, Monsignor Tomas Halik gives a grim warning: *More and more churches will be closed for good in the not-too-distant future, not because of outside forces like the current pandemic, but because of an the unwillingness to reform.*

And, from the preacher to the papal household in the papacies of St John Paul 11, Benedict XVI and now, Francis, Raniero Cantalamessa

OFM Cap: *I believe there is a grace in the current pandemic situation: that of the Eucharist being removed from its worst enemy, which is being turned into just a routine habit, into something we take for granted, or reduced to no more than a pious practice (The Tablet, 30 May 2020). And from The Tablet (8 April 2020), in an interview with Austin Iverleigh, Pope Francis warns: We are now living in a place of metanoia, and we have the chance to begin. So, let's not let it slip; let's move ahead'.*



### The time is right for transformation

The unheralded advent of the pandemic in the midst of the Plenary Council and the consequent postponement of the first assembly could be providential in terms of altered perspectives and added time in the shaping, or re-shaping, of agenda. Most readers will know that the shaping of Council agenda is well underway with the publishing of the work of the discernment and writing groups in their exposition of the six Council themes.

It is encouraging that the President of the Plenary Council, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, in his Foreword asserts that this publication: *is not in any sense the final word on the six thematic areas.* In late June of this year representatives of seventeen groups joined in a Zoom forum of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform to discuss the product of the Council writing groups. A consensus emerging from the forum is less than enthusiastic: *we are deeply concerned that the bishops' discernment papers fail to marshal reform ideas into a framework for a meaning Council agenda.* A writer in the Conversion, Reform and Renewal theme group, Garry Everet, went public (8 July 2020, Pearls and Irritations website), with a dissenting voice: *it has not really successfully addressed what evidence we would accept, that would allow us to know, measure and demonstrate, in the future, that*

*the church is effectively achieving its mission.* Author and leader of the pre-Council Canberra-Goulburn Concerned Catholics' consultation, Terry Fewtrell laments that the papers *lack the courage to break open key issues to enable honest consideration of meaningful reform ideas. They lack imagination, relevance, urgency and cohesion (Pearls and Irritations website, 29 June 2020).*

Besides, there are rumours that, in some instances, the selection of Council delegates, and the composition of writing groups, lead towards a 'dumbing-down' of Council expectations. A best rebuttal of such criticisms would be an inspirational document clearly articulating a range of specific recommendations, authentically reflecting the hopes of the faithful and credibly naming a pathway towards overdue transformation.

In fairness, the Writing Groups faced a daunting task in seeking to identify and appropriately capture the key issues in the 17,500 *sensus fidelium* submissions. Given that, the writing groups have impressively developed underpinnings for each Theme, including an articulation of a Theological Vision and Major Challenges in each case. Perhaps an overall weakness in the document is its lack of courage and clarity in its identification of proposals for change, especially institutional change.

The pages abound in exhortations and aspirations but are light on specific recommendations that do justice to the many heartfelt yearnings of the Listening and Dialogue phase. One could get the feeling that the document is pitched towards a Roman gallery, especially with the reminder thrown in that formation realities need to include 'the influence of the magisterium'. This is a time for the development of a framework, along with policies and strategies, for reform of the Australian church.

With one exception, all theme papers finish with series of dot point proposals but too many of these have a 'somebody should do something' whiff about them. The Inclusive, Participatory & Synodal writing group, while surfacing many proposals in general form, did not give any clear recommendations while adding the disclaimer *all the above proposals are suggestive rather than prescriptive.* Surely this theme, especially in its inclusive/participatory focus could have given multiple recommendations for reform in this area?

An obvious starter might be the elimination of the Nicene Creed's exclusion of women simply by replacing 'for us men' with 'for us'?

Ditto for all other obvious sexist language in liturgies. A plea for greater inclusion of Indigenous Australians is rightly made. With that exception, the emphasis is mainly on a maintenance church, focusing on the faithful remnant. No mention is made of broadening the umbrella of inclusion for the millions of baptised Catholics who remain Catholic at heart, but who now walk in exile. A 'field hospital' model of church is not raised throughout, a model advocated by Pope Francis and seeking to bring Christ to the people in their lived realities, rather than bringing the people to our traditional and secure settings to meet Christ.

Enlightened leadership and a culture conducive to creative imagination would probably come up with many initiatives to broaden the umbrella of pastoral outreach. The Archdiocese of Baltimore in the USA seems to have picked up on one such missionary thrust as testified in a website extract: *The Baltimore Archdiocese has permitted outdoor weddings on a case-by-case basis since 2018. The locations have varied throughout the archdiocese. Nightclubs, bars and casinos aren't allowed, but museums, barns, fields, homes, and high school or college chapels are all acceptable. Since the archdiocese began approving outdoor wedding*

*ceremonies in 2018, the numbers of requests for them have gone up every year. In 2019, 97 different wedding venues were requested and approved. Most of the outdoor ceremonies consist of a Liturgy of the Word with exchange of consent and blessings.*

Throughout the Themes document, formation is mentioned as an essential dimension for improved policy and practice in pastoral ministry at diocesan and parish levels. And rightly so, since it could reasonably be contended that role-appropriate formation is among the top priorities for a church wishing to remain viable into an uncertain future. Yet, the document is weak in specific recommendations to embed a focus on this priority.

On May 1, 2020, *The Light from the Southern Cross* report was handed down. This is a comprehensive 200 page report commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, a response to a recommendation of the 2013-2017 Royal Commission. The Report was written by a mainly lay panel with an external advisory panel of experts: two theology professors, a professor in canon law and a priest with much experience in pastoral ministry. Though the terms of reference point

mainly to governance and management structures and processes in dioceses and parishes, the report is wide in its scope of issues pertinent to a re-culturing of the church. Early on in the report, there are eight pages of recommendations. In general, they are quite specific, all beginning with 'That'. For example No 85: *That each diocese is to have a program of ongoing formation and training for pastoral associates and lay leaders in parishes.*

The report was given to the bishops just a few days before their May Conference and obviously they have not had time for a formal response yet. However, the report is rich in potential for institutional reform and needs to be integrated into Plenary Council agenda.

This is an exciting time in the history of the church in Australia, a time to re-imagine a new normal. Time for shared openness to the many ways in which the Holy Spirit may move the church from beyond mere change, to transformation. Let us imagine Pope Francis addressing the Australian church directly in his plea: *We are now living in a place of metanoia, and we have the chance to begin. So, let's not let it slip; let's move ahead.* ☺

## Spirit musings

CHRISTA MURPHY SSPS

**Christa Murphy SSPs reflects on how the Spirit of God is embodied in each child of God.**

One of the simplest definitions of spirituality is 'the Spirit in our re-ality'. Or, re-stated: the presence and action of the Spirit within us and the realities of our everyday living. And as we grow in consciousness of the Spirit's presence within us, and how her graces work through us, the more we become 'led by the Spirit' in everything. We see this in Jesus' own life.

Jesus stepped into the Jordan, surrendered to the *Yahweh* God he knew, seeking to know his life's mission. He experienced an *Abba* God naming him Beloved Son; and the Spirit, within him from the very beginning of his life, welling up within him, taking total possession of him. He came out a man 'on fire'. Led by the Spirit. Empowered by the Spirit. With the inner authority of the Spirit in all he said and did.

Those who knew him growing up just couldn't believe what they saw and heard. *Where did this man get all this?* they asked, when he returned to Nazareth. (Mark 6:2)

Which actually expresses the basic question for all Christian disciples, doesn't it?

And it highlights the deepest dimension of Jesus' Good News. That the experience of Jesus, our Brother and Lord, is potentially that of every human person. Each of us is breathed into life by the Spirit in our mother's womb. We are each given our own unique share of the Spirit of Life and Love. (1Cor.12:4-7) And that same Spirit continues to grow us as human persons, whether we are conscious of that or not.

Raised by devout Jewish parents, Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people. (Luke 2:52). And saying that he grew in wisdom is the same as saying he was growing in the Spirit. Wisdom and Spirit are inter-connected in Hebrew literature. Until that day in the Jordan, when he experienced in his whole person, *body, soul and spirit* (1Thess.5:23), the Spirit's overwhelming presence and power. And recognised and claimed, his own, and everyone else's, belovedness by



God. Everyone everywhere is God's Beloved Son or Daughter!

What a foundation for believing in the dignity, equality, and destiny of every person ever born! This is the 'Good News' we disciples of Jesus carry in our very beings. Do we really believe it ourselves?

*But it was to us that God made known his secret by means of the Spirit. The Spirit searches everything, even the hidden depths of God's purposes. It is only our spirit within us that knows all about us; in the same way, only God's Spirit knows all about God. We have not received this world's spirit; instead, we have received the Spirit sent by God, so that we may know all that God has given us.*" (1 Cor.2:10-12) ☺

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## Reflections on Religious Education from being a student to a teacher

ADAM CIBICH

**Adam Cibich, Deputy Principal and Religious Education Co-ordinator at Gleeson College, Adelaide, reflects on the impact of Catholic education on students?**

**I**n the innocence of my childhood, I believed that all schools were the same. Learning about God and Jesus was something that was engrained throughout my junior years at primary school. The presence of religion within the home was evident, as it was at my primary school and therefore there was no 'gap' to the customs and teachings of the Catholic faith. Church on Sundays with the family and involvement in the Mass was held in high regard. So was strong commitment attending sports training and games. Life as a young Catholic child attending Catholic primary school led me to recognise the place and presence of God in my life.

Religious education (RE) at primary school was full of religious and joyful experiences. As young children we tended to be free of self-doubt and therefore we joined enthusiastically in singing during Mass, prayerful reflection and prayers for all we loved. There was excitement in taking part in charity events, which provided great satisfaction doing things for others.

These memories return more strongly as I now listen to the experiences of my daughter as she navigates her first year at the local Catholic parish primary school. The opportunity to participate in sacramental preparations and celebrate the sacraments with our classmates was also something that was valued above all things. I may not recall what year I began learning my timetables, but I can recall the years that I celebrated the sacraments, the priest, the teachers and the students involved and the inclusion of my family and friends.

Learning religion at primary school and participating in the traditions and rituals felt safe and familiar and provided a good introduction in theology without really realising that it was theology. Although RE was engrained throughout the curriculum there were those moments in which the subjects were separated as we learnt more about History, Geography, Mathematics, English and Science. It was then that our learning began to challenge our prior learning and literal understanding. For instance, how was the world created in 7 days? What day were the dinosaurs created

on earth and become extinct? Was Goliath really a giant similar to all the fairy-tales we read like Jack and the beanstalk? What kind of whale swallowed Jonah?

Catholic secondary education was seamless and I didn't think much about it. The exception was when the students were new to the Catholic school system and struggled to make the connections that those who attended Catholic primary school could make. This provided evidence that early Catholic faith education assisted parents to teach in the home. RE provided a suitable environment for students to learn more theology.

Teenage years are challenging enough and perhaps even more challenging as things such as self-awareness become heightened, the significance and fear of being judged by peers, the natural desire to challenge our teachers that took place in RE, participating in Eucharistic celebrations and charity events. It was the teachers that assisted us during this time and provided lessons that drew upon our past learnings, our prior knowledge and build upon the connections already made. Our literal understanding of the Bible began to become more spiritual and our values that we had acquired from our families, our education and our religious experience began to form foundations as we entered young adulthood. During high school it was the strength of RE teachers to accept our inquisitive questioning about what we learned and try and re-contextualise our learning to develop meaningful lives.

University was for me without doubt a challenging time. The safety of the school grounds and the familiar faces of students and teachers had gone. Also gone was the classroom prayer to start the day and the school organised Mass celebrations. It was my Catholic education that aided me during my education degree. My goal was to return to Catholic education as an educator. Upon reflection, I realise I am still a student of Catholic Identity, but as an educator, I am creating opportunities for my students to find religious meaning, guidance and presence in their lives.

Recently I was discussing with my wife,

also a Catholic educator, about the successful retreats we had experienced with our students. As significant as they are for our students, a true testament to a successful retreat is that staff connect with the students with authenticity, honesty and spirituality. We love the moments of collaboration amongst the staff and the students, the search and discovery of God in their lives and the success evident when at graduation the students recall their retreat experience as their fondest memory of high school life.

The majority of students will recall that their retreat experience is their fondest memory of their high school life. It is evident that the religious experience of the retreat gave them the opportunity to reflect, to find meaning, to learn spirituality and to invite the presence of Jesus into their lives. It is the experience of Catholic Education that is the point of difference compared to education philosophies in Government and other non-denominational independent schools.

In my 15 years of educating, there has been significant change on the landscape of schools. A quick example is that 6 years ago we were still writing absent student names in a book that was then taken to the front office; today we simply use an online learning platform that not only documents absenteeism but generates data of student movement, records student achievement both academically and pastorally and, as proven significant this year of 2020, an online platform for teachers to present lessons to students remotely. It is the influence of technology and the day to day use of mobile phones which gives more access to emails, messages and social media. This has changed the environment of the classroom and the access to immediate information for students.

The gap between the generations seems to have widened in certain areas in Australia. For example, Sunday shopping, amongst other things, has resulted in religious education being the way students develop their faith. Some students rely on school to provide their church experiences.

When I discuss and lead staff teams in RE, the successful teachers that are confident in leading their students through a faith journey are those who understand the term re-contextualisation, that is having the skill of creating a classroom environment in which students participate in activities, discussions and forms of learning in which they individually and collectively determine the Catholic Identity in their

lives. RE becomes significant when the graduating students, who recall the retreats as their fondest memory, choose a life that continues their faith journey in which they attend regular Mass, although not a popular choice amongst their friends. They then choose a partner and take part in the Sacrament of Marriage and then continue welcoming their children with the Sacrament of Baptism and share this experience with their friends and family, and coming full circle choose Catholic Education for their children.

It is the teaching of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop that we must teach more by example than by word. This has become significant in not only my life as an educator but also as a husband and father. An educator is in a state of delusion if they do not understand the significant example they are to the students in their care. As educators and the experiences we present to our students, we also become an example to our peers.

In 2019 with support from my school, Gleeson College and Catholic Education SA, I had the opportunity to attend Belgium to undertake a two week intensive course delving into Catholic Identity. This is an ongoing journey as a College in keeping our Catholic identity alive in our community and I have been formally working with Katholic University Leuven (Belgium) for 2 years. As a College we took the opportunity to be involved in this study to review and recontextualise for our students the importance of our Catholic Identity.

As I continue my studies in this area, I am continually thinking how we can educate students in religion lessons in a 21st Century context. We need to continue to create meaningful experiences where our students and staff can enter into dialogue, a moment in their growth that interrupts them, a moment to pause and reflect. In dialogue we must tell history, it is an important part of who we are and how we have become the community we are today. Just like we hear the stories during the Month of November about our war heroes we too need to stop and tell our story, the Christian story, the Catholic school Story (depending on the tradition of that school) and our community story.

As our students enter into a complicated world where they are searching and discovering; We at Gleeson College with the support of our families are working with them in order to recontextualise our community. Dialogue with one another is

at the heart of their discovery, with an aim of filling their minds and hearts with wisdom to be students who are deeply connected, thriving people, competent and capable learners who are just, merciful and humble leaders for a world that God desires.

It is truly a privilege to have the opportunity to teach in a Catholic School, but even more so to teach RE. As a teacher I need to be ready to allow students to discover, lead the conversation in lesson so that it allows for open learning that supports open dialogue in a recontextualised way that connects our students understanding of faith, spirituality and God. I feel it is a truly exciting time to be at an educator and part of our faith and spiritual journeys within a Catholic Community. To conclude I can draw upon an example of explaining the Trinity to my students, so that they can visualise and connect to this important aspect of our Catholic tradition. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in the same, for our students, parents and Catholic educators; Home, Church and School are one in the same. ☺



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# Australian Catholic Coalition demand reform in governance and a woman Co-chair for Plenary Council

AUSTRALIAN COALITION FOR CATHOLIC CHURCH REFORM (ACCCR)

ACCCR has recently held two zoom meetings with around 100 participants representing 17 reform movements in the Catholic Church in Australia and thousands of their members. The media releases from these meetings give an idea of key issues they consider important. Here are some key extracts.



Andrea Dean

At the forefront of those concerns are issues of good governance and the culture of clericalism in the church, particularly the need for inclusion and gender equality.

Speaking shortly after the forum, ACCCR Convener, Peter Johnstone, said that the coalition is increasingly harnessing the energy for renewal Australia-wide: Catholics want a Church that lives and models the teachings of Jesus. Catholics are insisting that the now deferred Plenary Council, when it does meet, addresses the real issues of a debilitated Church and failed Church leadership.

Presentations at the meeting included several overviews of the Plenary Council process to date, reviews of the six official discernment papers meant to shape the Plenary Council agenda, and the Implementation Advisory Group's recent governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross*.

John Warhurst, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, was co-Chair of the Coalition's forum.

We trust in the sense of faith of the faithful that has emerged from the submissions, but we are deeply concerned that the papers which have been written for the Plenary Council fail to marshal reform ideas into a relevant framework

for a meaningful Council agenda, Professor Warhurst said.

The most prominent theme emerging from the 17,500 submissions is greater Inclusion for all, especially women and minority groups. But the issue appears to have been sidelined in the discernment papers, he said.

Concerning the recently leaked governance document, it was noted that far from being an 'interim report' as subsequently described in an official response to the leak, this Governance Report was the final contribution of eminent national and international experts who delivered 86 recommendations, many of which could be enacted in parishes and dioceses across the country immediately.

Andrea Dean (pictured), President of Women and the Australian Church and also co-Chair of the forum, said the Governance Report is a progressive, wide-ranging report with implications which reach well beyond the remit of the Plenary Council.

Peter Johnstone said that the attempt to keep the governance report secret is clear evidence of the Church's lack of transparency and reinforces the Royal Commission's condemnation of the Church's governance and culture.

## Catholic bishops urged to appoint a woman as co-chair of Plenary Council

Australia's Catholic bishops must appoint a woman as co-chairperson of the church Plenary Council if they wish the summit meeting to be taken seriously, the ACCCR has declared.

*Women play a leading role in the day-to-day support of Catholic Church liturgies and in running its health, education and social services, but are excluded by church law from executive governance. For there not to be a woman chair of the Plenary and for women not to have equal representation in the preparation of discussion documents for the Plenary would expose the Plenary as an anachronism with compromised credibility and relevance for the Australian community, Ms Dean (pictured) and Professor Warhurst, Co-chairs said.*

A woman co-chair is a matter of justice.

If the bishops were to reject this move, then it would be incumbent upon them to explain clearly why more than half of the active faithful should be excluded from leadership of the Plenary. Exclusion of women in this way would be a powerful symbol of business as usual.

This issue is a matter of urgency given the bishops intend to submit the 'Instrumentum Laboris', the key document that will determine the Plenary agenda, to the Vatican for approval this September. Why are they rushing this? The Plenary has been deferred for 12 months. When would this have been done if the PC had not been deferred from this October?

There also needs to be clarity in the agenda concerning priority for other necessary reforms including the establishment of Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Assemblies before the Plenary. Even though the Plenary has been postponed until October 2021, we wish to give the Vatican, through our bishops, plenty of notice of the reforms we seek.

*The Plenary Council will be judged on whether it ensures future accountability and integrity and listening in the Church's decision making – that can't occur without accepting the equality of women and introducing effective accountability in Church governance, Ms Dean and Professor Warhurst said.*

A woman co-chair for the Plenary Council is essential. ☞

## NCP Convention Melbourne

13-17 September 2021

Further details will be published in the Summer edition.

## The ANZAC Spirit and church mission

GARY STONE

Deacon Gary Stone served for 48 years in the Army and Australian Federal Police, with multiple deployments in seven different peacemaking missions. He now leads the Veterans Care Association in a mission of rehabilitating wounded, ill and injured veterans. Picture: Gary Stone (far right) with sons, Michael, Paul and family.



We celebrated Anzac Day in unusual circumstances this year. The energy and camaraderie of gathered activities was not possible, but the Spirit of Anzac still moved millions of Australians to participate actively in their local streets. The Prime Minister called upon the ANZAC Spirit to be our inspiration in dealing with Coronavirus. Indeed, in laying a wreath at the Australian War Memorial, he called Anzac Day our most spiritual of days.

In a time when both participation in church and interest in vocations show little signs of improving, can we look to the energising spirituality of the ANZACs for a way forward for our church. As it happens, RSL sub-branches and other veterans' groups – bearing that Anzac Spirit – are active in every parish area despite veterans representing a small percentage of Australian society.

### Courage, endurance and sacrifice

Those of us who are veterans of armed conflict would certainly want to inspire the broader community as well as the church at this time through our reflection on the ANZAC Spirit and what it is that energises us. For some people, talk of the ANZAC spirit may conjure up images long past of young men scaling the cliffs of Gallipoli or

the Kokoda track. *Courage, mateship, endurance, and sacrifice* were hallmark qualities that emerged from these times of trial. Our forebears certainly laid a foundation of service, social cohesion and national unity before self, characteristics that blossomed in our nation post-war.

But the Anzac Spirit has continued to develop since then, especially in the past 30 years when more than 80,000 troops have served in *peacemaking* and *peacekeeping missions* in many, many parts of the globe, let alone supporting efforts in recent bushfires and Coronavirus response.

Last year the Australian War Memorial created a new major gallery called, *The Courage for Peace*. Much of the gallery displays video interviews with veterans of recent conflicts. A wonderful 30-minute documentary, titled "*The Courage for Peace*" showing these interviews, is available on YouTube. Both my son Michael and I were interviewed in making this.

Michael, who spent 8 years overseas in his 20-year military service, is recorded as saying (to armed rebels confronting him in Timor) ... *I wouldn't be here risking my life unless I really cared for you ... and in another place: the soldier's role is all about being willing to sacrifice your life for someone you don't know.*

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It's not just about the soldier next to you. It's about being ready to put your life on the line for another human being; in many cases for another human being who doesn't have the power to protect themselves.

That powerful statement ushers in a whole new dimension to the Anzac Spirit. It's not just about being victorious in war, or caring for your mates, important as that is. It's about caring for others, loving your neighbours, especially the defenceless, and seeking to help them find peace. We have a whole generation of peacemakers, who have a lived experience of dealing with the most ghastly of world catastrophes.

Jesus said Blessed are the Peacemakers. And what a blessing our troops have been to hundreds of thousands of defenceless people from the Middle East to the Pacific over the past 30 years! Moreover, many of those veterans, like our Vietnam veterans before us, have gone back to these places afterwards and assisted in their reconstruction, invigorating their peoples' health and wellbeing.

Many of these troops have become wounded, ill or injured as result. But we are transforming our wounds by continuing a mission to those in need.

Our Veterans Care Association has supported many thousands of veterans. It has facilitated over 300 of our most wounded, ill and injured veterans and their partners to participate in two-week rehabilitation programs in Timor, where we have also helped many struggling Timorese veterans and their families. We are even in the process of building a Veterans University! Our veterans are getting healthier by transforming their own crises into opportunities to help others.

## Restoring peace

In the military we dealt with situations by uniting in a common purpose, focussed on a primary mission of protecting life and restoring peace. Personal preferences laid aside, the good of all took priority over any individual freedoms or comfort that we might have desired. Leaders at all levels were actively present in the greatest areas of need, to lead and inspire visibly their troops, and to use innovation to find local solutions to problems.

Indeed, everyone was expected to be a leader using their initiative and taking risks to achieve the mission.

But the mission was always about going out of our way to seek out and save those most at risk.

Underpinning all of this was and is a deep spiritual confidence that God was and is with us in Peacemaking. We just have to do our best and never, never, never give up. This is our Anzac Spirit in full bloom, seeking out and loving neighbours whom we have never even met before, even at risk of death. God blesses such activity, and that indwelling Spirit of God underpinning the Spirit of ANZAC is why veterans today display such camaraderie and passion for peace. Indeed, Easter and ANZAC are partner-celebrations of life, death and resurrection, inspiring and giving us HOPE. More importantly they must inspire us to mission to those in need.

Largely speaking, mission to the powerless and vulnerable in our church has been contracted out to specialist agencies. If we can be truly honest with ourselves, what remains of the Catholic Church in Australia, founded and once thriving with missionary zeal, has gradually become a comfortable church, looking after the people that come to it. Yet every parish area is a mission field where people are seriously in need.

Jesus witnessed to a mission of personal engagement with the needy, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

There's little evidence of him spending his priority time on 'church stuff'. The long-term impact of Coronavirus has opened up a vast mission space. Ironically, we might now grow the church by rediscovering and intentionally re-engaging in the mission it has always had. The 'roaming' and 'not yet' Catholics might join with us if they see us more intentionally engaged in an outgoing mission of mercy. As we have found with veterans, being engaged in mission moves people's hearts.

Soldiers learn that in the midst of adversity we can grow and be blessed with *Courage*, *Character*, *Commitment* and *Compassion* to become better people, and the world and our churches better places for all. The challenge now is to seize this opportunity to be the people and become the church that the world needs at this time. These current crises are presenting us with opportunities to display the ANZAC Spirit in reaching out to those who don't have the power, resources or ability to protect themselves.

We pray Lord God that you will inspire us to seek them out and embrace them.

Soldiers of Christ arise! ☩

## USA priests assembly: our Catholic faith in the political world



The Association of US Catholic Priests (AUSCP) held their assembly via Zoom on June 23-25. Sr Carol Zinn SSJ, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, facilitated a reflection on the first day on the topic Living the Gospel in the Public Square. Sr Carol invited participants to think about the way ahead as a way that must prioritize love over fear, mercy over judgement and inclusion over exclusion.

Sr Carol explored a spirituality that might assist people to engage with the political world. The themes included accompaniment which must resist individualism; mutuality with others not like me; vulnerability – open to all life; hospitality inclusion of all and reverence that welcomes the sacred in everything.

The talks included reflections on presence, effects of polarisation and some responses to it and how to develop relationships. A key point was how to foster transformation. This happens when starting from the present moment, looking to the future and not harping on the past, committing to the journey, embracing the unknown and maintaining openness to new forms of being church to match the new emerging realities of people's lives.

A summary of the strategy for helpful and transformative action was offered: if you have a choice to be right or be in relationship, choose relationship.

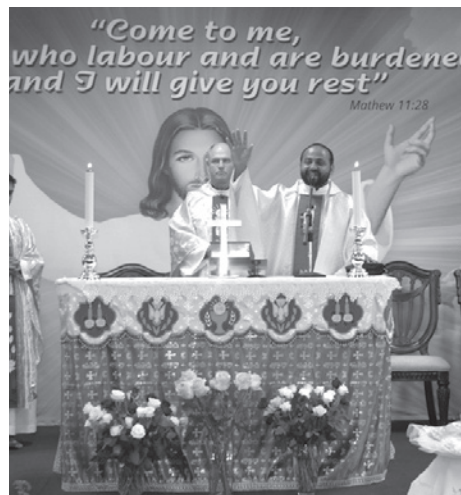
John Carr, the longtime director of the U.S. bishops' domestic and international policy programs and Sr Carol Keehan (pictured), ninth President and CEO of the Catholic Health Association of the United States from 2005 to 2019, spoke on the second day. While Carr concentrated on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, Sr Carol recalled the

challenge of standing up to the powers in the church who opposed the Affordable Health Care Act, so that 20 million of the 40 million without health care coverage might have some coverage. The principle of moving towards a better outcome for the poor must come first. The bishops who opposed the Bill because it included abortion, failed to realise that affordable health care for the poor reduces abortions because the disadvantaged can get support for their sexual health before abortion seems to be their only option.

Sr Carol Keehan and Father Les Schmidt were awarded AUSCP's Saint John XXIII award. Sr Carol received the award "for exercising her baptismal priesthood by promoting affordable health care for every person and serving prophetically as President of the Catholic Health Association of the United States from 2005 to 2019, witnessing to Church and society in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, and Vatican II." Fr Schmidt received the award for his work with workers' rights, mountain-top removal, and criminal justice.

On the final day Archbishop John Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, spoke of priest, preaching and political. He noted that all have a priestly role to participate in the baptismal vocation and all preach every time witness is given and to be political is essential if it means injecting the gospel values into public life, rather than being party political. Bishop Wester offered a few tips for homilists, one being that the use of the term 'you' should be replaced by 'we'. That change alone can invite the people into the human challenge we all share in embodying the gospel, rather than the authority telling the subordinates what to do.

## Pope Francis emphasizes the need for unity and prophecy in the church



On the feast of St Peter and Paul, Pope Francis called for healthy disagreement and prayerful unity reported Gerard O'Connell in America Magazine on June 29, 2020.

In his homily, Francis first spoke about the need for unity in today's church. He noted that Peter and Paul were 'two very different individuals: Peter, a fisherman who spent his days amid boats and nets, and Paul, a learned Pharisee who taught in synagogues.' When they went forth on mission, 'Peter spoke to Jews, and Paul to pagans. And when their paths crossed, they could argue heatedly,' which can happen in close-knit families 'where there may be frequent arguments but unflinching love.'

Departing from his prepared text, Francis said, *complaints are the second door closed to the Holy Spirit: the first is narcissism, the second is discouragement, the third is pessimism. Narcissism leads one to continually look at oneself in the mirror, discouragement leads to complaints, pessimism [leads] to darkness, obscurity. These three attitudes close the door to the Spirit.*

Then in words that appeared directed to his critics in the church, Francis recalled that *those (first) Christians did not cast blame; they prayed. In that community, no one said: 'If Peter had been more careful, we would not be in this situation'. No one! Peter, humanly speaking, had reasons to be criticized, but no one criticized him. They did not complain about Peter; they prayed for him. They did not talk about Peter behind his back; they talked to God.*

Pope Francis then suggested we should pray for one another rather than complain. He went on to speak about the need for prophecy in the church today, saying *prophecy is born whenever we allow ourselves to be challenged by God, not when we are concerned to keep everything quiet and under control. When the Gospel overturns certainties, prophecy arises. Only someone who is open to God's surprises can become a prophet.*

Supporting seminaries overseas Recently, Fr Brian Lucas, National Director of Catholic Mission, had a phone call from Rome from Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso, President of the Pontifical Mission Societies. He began by asking him to pass on to the people of Australia his appreciation for their generous support for the Pontifical Mission Societies. Per capita Australia ranks very well in terms of support for the Societies.

The main purpose of his call was to advise that with the COVID-19 pandemic and the total lockdown imposed by the civil authorities in most countries, many local churches were unable to follow their

Continued page 34

the swag



custom to take a collection for the Society of St Peter the Apostle on Good Shepherd Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter). This Society supports the training of priests in the mission territories. Last year it assisted 23,138 major seminarians in mission countries to an average amount of US\$460. With the dramatic loss of income, the situation in 2021 is likely to be very precarious.

The Archbishop mentioned the special bond between priests and the training of the next generation, and wondered if it might be possible that the clergy in Australia would like to contribute something to assist in meeting these needs. He noted that it is likely that many of the foreign-born priests working in Australia were themselves educated in seminaries supported by the Society of St Peter Apostle.

Through the good offices of *The Swag*, if you were able to make a donation you can do so on line [www.catholicmission.org.au/theswag](http://www.catholicmission.org.au/theswag) or phone 1800 257 296. If you want to discuss this with Fr Brian please call 0419 243 959.

## Vincentians open Divine Retreat Centre on Central Coast NSW

The centre at Somersby NSW was established by the Vincentian Congregation, a Catholic religious order under the patron saint St Vincent de Paul in 2013. The main charism of the Vincentian Congregation is evangelisation to the poor – spiritual, social or economic. The centre is part of the Vincentian global response to Saint Pope John Paul II's call for new evangelization.

Although run independently, Divine Retreat Centre Somersby is a part of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay.

Our main goal is to assist children of God to experience a renewal of life by encountering the love of God. We help people of all faiths live joy-filled, wonderful lives and walk in freedom – only known through Jesus Christ. More than 28,000 visitors have had an experience of the heart at Divine.

The centre runs spiritual programs, events and retreats guided by fathers of the Vincentian Congregation for the spiritual renewal of individuals, couples, families, groups and church parishes. It also offers a charismatic healing ministry as well as targeted ministry for youth and young adults. Our prayer centre is family-friendly as we offer children and teenage ministry at most of our events.

Find out more by visiting the website: <https://divineretreatcentre.org.au>

## Liturgy in lockdown: The Paschal Mystery without a presbyter



A Poor Clare monastery in London celebrated creative liturgies during Easter and resisted engaging presbyters recalled Patricia Rumsey, a member of the Poor Clare Monastery in Arkley (North London, UK) in *La Croix International* (June 22, 2020).

'As a monastic community, liturgy is very important in our life. In fact, it forms the structure of our daily lives' she said.

Having talked about live streamed Mass in community, they decided not to regress to liturgies where participants were reduced to 'observers' of a screen liturgy.

They decide they would concentrate in the Liturgy of the Hours, the community's daily prayer rhythm.

But when Easter arrived they had a new question of how would they celebrate.

They decided to celebrate Palm Sunday with a simple palm blessing and dramatic reading of the Passion. Holy Thursday presented a greater challenge. They celebrated the Word of God and the washing of feet and then gathered for a simple meal where the abbess served each sister broken homemade bread and wine.

While Good Friday was easy to replicate the liturgy themselves, the Easter Vigil was another story. Rumsey noted starting with the fire and candle and then the Exultet. The readings followed and they renewed our baptismal promises.

Easter Sunday began with a glorious celebration of Lauds (Morning Prayer) and then a very festive breakfast!

Rumsey said: *we decided that, all things considered, our celebration of the Paschal Mystery had been extremely satisfactory, and in many ways, the meaning of it all had come home to us perhaps more clearly than ever.*

*It certainly convinced us that a woman could preside at the celebrations just as effectively as a man, she said, and, bearing in mind the role the women played during the very first Holy Week, perhaps even more appropriately.*

## Austrian liturgists argue for 'benediction' of same-sex couples

The Austrian Catholic bishops' liturgy office commissioned a book on gay unions reported Christa Pongratz-Lippitt in *La Croix International* on June 17, 2020.

The book argues for the sacramental blessing of same-sex couples. The first half of the text is concerned with same-sex marriages in Austria from an ethical and biblical point of view. The second half offers liturgical suggestions for blessing celebrations for same-sex couples.

Volgger, a priest of the Order of Germany (or Teutonic Knights), said the decisive question for him is whether same-sex partners who love each other can pursue their baptismal vocation for a life together and receive the Church's official blessing.

He said the Church could show its appreciation of this partnership, which symbolically expresses God's love for human beings, by offering an official blessing – that is, a benediction.

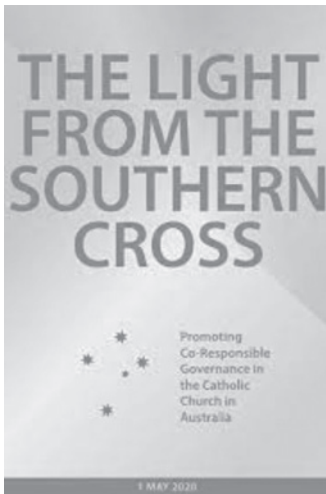
'A great deal of disappointment and suffering would be avoided and discrimination rescinded,' he said.

"If Church teaching respects a same-sex relationship as a common unfolding of our baptismal vocation, this expresses that God is present and works in Jesus Christ. That constitutes the sacramental character of the relationship," he said.

Volgger recalled that Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of Germany's episcopal conference, had only recently said he hoped that there would be coalitions between dioceses who wanted to recognize homosexual partnerships and remarried divorcees.

Among the considerable feedback he's received after the book was published, he said many letters approved of his initiative and emphasized how important it is to discuss and advance this issue with the aim of changing Church law.

## New Vatican instruction on Catholic parishes enshrines clericalism



The Congregation for the Clergy caused a bit of surprise and a whole lot of consternation earlier this week when it issued a new document on 'the pastoral conversion of the parish community at the service of the Church's evangelizing mission' reports Robert Mickens in *La Croix International* on July 24, 2020.

The document deals with the theme of the pastoral care of parish communities, the various clerical and lay ministries, with a view to greater co-responsibility of all the baptized, the congregation said in a press release.

While this new document begins promisingly with the fresh and creative language the Jesuit pope employs with such courage and foresight in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, the text quickly hits the proverbial canonical speed bump. Instead of proposing creative changes for re-envisioning the diocese-territorial parish structure that is no longer sustainable, it actually goes on to reaffirm this Tridentine model, Mickens comments.

The document makes it quite clear that the parish priest is the 'proper pastor' and no one else can take that role including deacons, religious or laypersons. The titles of pastor, leader or co-pastor must not be used for other than the parish priest. Lay people assist but are clearly cast in the role of working in the world as their evangelising mission, while being excluded from any governance reform.

There is nothing new or creative in the document to encourage a Vatican II co-responsibility or synodal approach.

For example, canon 536 says 'a pastoral

council is to be established in each parish', but only if the diocesan bishop 'judges it opportune'. And such a council 'possesses a consultative vote only', Mickens notes. The bishops. The priests. All men. They make the final decision.

I've known of parish priests who have refused to even meet with the parish or pastoral council. And they have also made decisions contrary to the advice of the financial board or council. They boast proudly of their right to do so, said Mickens.

The change called for by Pope Francis, a reform of structures, is missing. The law must be changed. More adequate structures and avenues must be created to favour, encourage and reflect the new mentality. See full article here: <https://tinyurl.com/y59nww57>

## Historic Church Governance Report locked down by Australian Bishops

On 4 May 2020 the Project Team commissioned by the Australian bishops and religious superiors to review the Catholic Church's governance and management structures, presented its 200-page final report. Its 86 recommendations include the need for greater transparency and co-responsibility.

The decision of the bishops to withhold the report from public view for at least 6 months has shocked many Catholics, reported Peter Wilkinson, a missiologist, in *Pearls and Irritations* ([johnmenadue.com](http://johnmenadue.com)) on May 26, 2020.

The report is part of the Catholic bishops' response to the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. 'The Commission finally grasped that 'clericalism' – a belief by priests and bishops that they are superior to the lay faithful – and systemic dysfunctional governance on a massive scale were at the root of the problem' said Wilkinson.

An Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) was set up to *conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, consultation and the participation of lay men and women* (Royal Commission Recommendation 16.7).

The IAG identified the essential elements of good governance as integrity, transparency, accountability, risk management, culture and ethics, consultation, inclusiveness, and the participation and genuine responsibility of men and women.

The 200-page report, titled *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, was handed to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) on 4 May 2020. It contained 86 recommendations and according to the ACBC, makes a 'substantial and comprehensive contribution with far-reaching implications for the Church's life and mission. It identifies, according to ACBC president, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, *key principles of good ecclesial governance, such as subsidiarity, stewardship, synodality, dialogue, discernment and leadership [and] offers important ideas on how the Church might enhance the leadership role of lay people and ensure appropriate co-responsibility at parish and diocesan levels.*

This decision to withhold this important document is *the antithesis of everything recommended in the report on transparency and co-responsibility. It is a failure to recognize and accept the new paradigm from the word 'go', and a renegeing on Coleridge's earlier pledge that 'business as usual' cannot continue,* reported Wilkinson.

## Two new Bishops – Wagga Wagga and Sale



Bishop Mark Edwards & Bishop-elect Greg Bennet

On 26 May 2020, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Mark Stuart Edwards OMI, who had been serving as Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, the sixth Bishop of Wagga Wagga.

Pope Francis also appointed Monsignor Greg Bennet, a priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, as the 10th Bishop of Sale.

Bishop Edwards was born in Balikpapan, Indonesia in 1959 and moved to Australia in 1962.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree at Monash University in Melbourne. In 1980 he entered the Novitiate of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, studying at the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne and the Melbourne College of Divinity.

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He was ordained a priest in 1986. He obtained a Doctorate in Philosophy and a Baccalaureate in Literature and Education. He has worked in schools, as Novice Master and Professor at Catholic Theological College in Melbourne.

In 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2011 he was elected Provincial Councillor of the Australian Oblate Missionaries Province.

He is a Member of the Committee for Catholic Education for the Australian Bishops Conference.

Bishop Edwards was installed on Wednesday, 22 July 2020.

Bishop-Elect Bennet is currently the parish priest of St Joseph's, West Brunswick. He has held several leadership positions within the Archdiocese of Melbourne, including as director of Ministry to Priests and later as inaugural director of the Office for Evangelisation. After additional parish ministry, he served as vicar general from 2012 to 2019.

Bishop-Elect Bennet was born in April 1963, and after working in banking for several years, he entered Corpus Christi College in 1986 and was ordained priest in 1992.

Following a number of parish appointments, Bishop-Elect Bennet undertook postgraduate study, gaining a master of science in pastoral counselling from Loyola College in Baltimore and a licentiate in sacred theology from the Angelicum University in Rome.

## The Vatican decrees financial reform



In an apostolic letter, issued on June 1, Pope Francis promulgated new rules for its financial accountability including: *sustainable use of internal funds, ... ethics in the orientation of economic choices, ... programming and rationalization for expenditures, ... competitive tendering, ... transparency of tender procedures, ... which must be objective and impartial, ... equal treatment and non-discrimination of candidates, ... combating conflicts of interest and distortions of competition...*

There is now a genuine public procurement code based on common principles and Catholic social teaching, reported Nicolas Seneze in *La Croix International* on June 2.

It covers awarding public contracts with ethical integrity and greater transparency.

## White privilege and systemic racism

In an article, *The assumptions of white privilege and what we can do about it*, published in the *The National Catholic Reporter* June 1, 2020, Bryan Massingale, priest and theology professor at Fordham University in New York, argues that while privilege is embedded in us and we all know it and know how it works either in our favour or against us depending on race and colour.

Massingale takes the case of Amy Cooper, who called police saying her life was threatened because a black man had asked her to leash her dog in Central Park, New York as the law requires.

Massingale argues that Amy Cooper knew she would be believed because of the way white privilege works in dominant white America. He notes that she knew what she was doing. And so do we. Why did she act as she did? Massingale said:

*She assumed that her lies would be more credible than his truth.*  
*She assumed that she would have the presumption of innocence.*  
*She assumed that he, the black man, would have a presumption of guilt.*  
*She assumed that the police would back her up.*  
*She assumed that her race would be an advantage, that she would be believed because she is white. (By the way, this is what we mean by white privilege).*  
*She assumed that his race would be a burden, even an insurmountable one.*  
*She assumed that the world should work for her and against him.*  
*She assumed that she had the upper hand in this situation...*  
*She assumed that if he protested his innocence against her, he would be seen as "playing the race card."*  
*She assumed that no one would accuse her of "playing the race card," because no one accuses white people of playing the race card when using race to their advantage...*  
*She assumed that a black man had no right to tell her what to do...*  
*She assumed that Christian Cooper could and would understand all of the above. (And she was right. He clearly knew what was at stake, which is why he had the presence of mind to record what happened).*

Where did Amy Cooper learn this, where do we all learn this? Massingale argues it is absorbed through the reality of living white privilege.

He says: *That's the reason for the grief, outrage, lament, anger, pain and fury that have been pouring into our nation's streets. Because folks are tired. Not only of the individual outrages. But of the fundamental assumption that ties them all together: that black lives don't matter and should not matter – at least not as much as white ones.* Read the full article at: <https://tinyurl.com/yb42yvye>

## US Catholic priests' group tells voters to create society based on Jesus' values

Do not be afraid to confront reality and vote to bring our country leadership that reflects our faith, says Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) reports *La Croix International* (June 17, 2020)

AUSCP has come out in support of Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington for saying that a political candidate should not misuse worship places, and has also pointed to how Catholics should vote in November, said the report.

Archbishop Gregory criticised the use of holy places for partisan political purposes. AUSCP statement said: *Gregory's brave and prophetic witness to the truth when needed, especially during this most challenging political year, is worthy of our support as priests and friends throughout the United States. Thank you, Archbishop Gregory for the strength of your commitment to racial justice, your care for social justice and your courage to speak out to our church and society.*

It recalled that in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, U.S. bishops stated that Catholics often face difficult choices about how to vote. This is why it is important to vote according to a well-formed consciences.

*As we look at our society, racism (white privilege), sexism, immigration, climate control, COVID-19 testing availability in all neighbourhoods are all violations of human respect and dignity leading to abuse of government authority and public violence, the statement said.*

*It went on: If we do not take the time to promote our Catholic social teaching, rooted in Christ, and vote, our country will continue to move toward more inequality through white privilege, more climate deterioration, more sexism, more fear, all leading to violence and race riots in our streets.*

## Vatican document views laity as having no role in governance

A 22-page document, titled *The pastoral conversion of the parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the church*, was promulgated by the Congregation for Clergy on 20 July (<https://tinyurl.com/y4nvm65l>).

Its purpose seems to be to dismiss any notion that reform of structures and governance in the church would include lay people, and thus women.

The usual arguments are put forward that the ordained priest has jurisdiction over parishes and the rights and responsibilities of pastoral care are solely under the pastor.

To underline the distinction and the power relationship, the document is very clear about roles and appropriate terms noting: *it is the responsibility, first of all, of the diocesan Bishop and, as far as it pertains to him, the Parish Priest, to see that the appointments of deacons, religious and laity that have roles of responsibility in the Parish, are not designated as "pastor", "co-pastor", "chaplain", "moderator", "coordinator", "Parish manager", or other similar terms [141] reserved by law to priests, [142] inasmuch as they have a direct correlation to the ministerial profile of priests.*

## Supporting seminaries overseas

Recently, Fr Brian Lucas, National Director of Catholic Mission, had a phone call from Rome from Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso, President of the Pontifical Mission Societies. He began by asking him to pass on to the people of Australia his appreciation for their generous support for the Pontifical Mission Societies. Per capita Australia ranks very well in terms of support for the Societies.

The main purpose of his call was to advise that with the Covid19 pandemic and the total lockdown imposed by the civil authorities in most countries, many local churches were unable to follow their custom to take a collection for the Society of St Peter the Apostle on Good Shepherd Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter). This Society supports the training of priests in the mission territories. Last year it assisted 23,138 major seminarians in mission countries to an average amount of US\$460. With the dramatic loss of income, the situation in 2021 is likely to be very precarious.

The Archbishop mentioned the special bond between priests and the training of the next generation, and wondered if it might be possible that the clergy in

Australia would like to contribute something to assist in meeting these needs. He noted that it is likely that many of the foreign-born priests working in Australia were themselves educated in seminaries supported by the Society of St Peter Apostle.

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## Christianity more than doctrine, says Pope



‘Christianity is not only an ethic. Yes, of course, it has moral principles, but one is not a Christian only with an ethical viewpoint’ the Pope said in his homily on May 7 during his early morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, reported *La Croix International* (May 7).

Christianity is not a set of moral principles, but is the story of God’s love for his people, Pope Francis said.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the day’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles in which Paul preaches at the synagogue about Jesus by recounting the history of salvation, beginning with the Israel’s exodus out of Egypt. In choosing to begin his preaching of the faith in this way, the pope explained, Paul emphasizes that Christianity is not just a doctrine, but ‘a history that carries this doctrine, which is God’s promise, God’s covenant, of being elected by God.

‘Christianity is not only an ethic. Yes, of course, it has moral principles, but one is not a Christian only with an ethical viewpoint,’ he said. ‘It’s more than that. Christianity is not an ‘elite’ group of people chosen for the truth.’ Despite being ‘a sinful people,’ he added that true Christians carry ‘the scent of being a chosen people.’

## 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Laudato Si*

‘If life’s events, with all their bitterness, sometimes risk choking the gift of prayer that is within us, it is enough to contemplate a starry sky, a sunset, a flower... in order to rekindle a spark of thanksgiving’, Pope Francis said during *Laudato Si* Week, May 16-24, a celebration of the 5th anniversary of the encyclical. He made an ‘urgent appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet’, reported Robert Mickens in *La Croix International* (May 22).

The pope said: *The first page of the Bible resembles a great hymn of thanksgiving. The narrative of Creation has a rhythm with refrains, where the goodness and beauty of every living thing is continually emphasized. With his word, God calls to life, and every thing comes into existence. With his word, God separates light from darkness, alternates day and night, interchanges the seasons, opens a palette of colours with the variety of plants and animals. In this overflowing forest that quickly vanquishes the chaos, the last one to appear is man. And this appearance inspires an extreme exultation that amplifies God’s satisfaction and joy: ‘God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good’ (Gen 1:31). Very good, but also beautiful: the beauty of all creation can be seen!*

The Pope’s encyclical invokes the image of St Francis of earth as sister and our common home. Francis noted that ‘this sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her’.

*The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change, Francis says in the encyclical.*

*Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions,”* Francis acknowledges in the encyclical.

## Should Protestants receive Communion at Mass?

David Knight, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Memphis (USA) recently wrote in *La Croix International* (July 23) looking at the tradition of the who can receive communion. He said: *the simple truth is that it is not against Catholic doctrine for Protestants to receive Communion at Mass.*

All baptised Christians are in the ‘state of grace’ by virtue of their baptism. This is clear from many church statements and

Continued page 38

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practices. For example we do not re-baptise Protestants; Pope Pius X wrote in December 20, 1905: *No one who is in the state of grace and comes to the table of the Lord with a good attitude and devotion can be prohibited from receiving Communion; Pope John XXIII said: We address, then, as brothers and sisters all who are separated from us, using the words of Saint Augustine: "Whether they wish it or not, they are our brothers and sisters. They cease to be our brothers and sisters only when they stop saying 'Our Father' (Ad Petri Cathedram, 86)",* noted Knight in the article.

How can we deny Protestants, our brothers and sisters in Christ, a place together with us at our table?

Knight says that while there are official policies that seem to deny Communion to non-Catholics, Bernard Häring, one of the greatest moral theologians of modern times, when reflecting on a Mass as army chaplain noted that: *on the eve of the outset of the Russian war, I took it upon myself to celebrate the Eucharist and grant general absolution to soldiers of all faiths, most of whom participated.* He went on to note it would have been unthinkable and abhorrent to do otherwise.

Then Knight points out instances where Popes have offered communion to non-Catholics: John Paul II gave communion in the Vatican to Tony Blair, Prime Minister of England, while he was still an Anglican. At John Paul's funeral, Pope Benedict XVI gave Communion to Brother Roger, a Presbyterian founder of the ecumenical monastery of Taizé.

Knight asks how can we ban from the table those who are accepted as brothers and sisters by the Catholic Church and children of the same God.

Denying Communion to our Christian siblings goes against theology of baptismal status but also against Vatican II statements on unity. Knight says we can focus on the mystery of the shared communion in the body and blood of Christ or we can focus on doctrinal expression and disciplinary practice.

Knight says: *Which of these two perspectives would make us more aware of the mystery of the Mass: going up to Communion with others who are not Catholic, but who have become the body of Christ by receiving the divine life of God through the mystery of Baptism; or going up segregated and leaving our doctrinally confused brothers and sisters behind as if their Baptism had never happened and God's life is not in them?*

Knight concludes his reflection with Pope Francis' comment: *We are sinning against*

*Christ's will because we continue to focus on our differences, ... our shared Baptism is more important than our differences.*

You read the full article here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y5ewmh2k>

## **Pope Francis finally makes bishops accountable for cover-ups**

Kieran Tapsell in *John Menadue – Pearls and Irritations* (July 24, 2020) comments on the advances the Vatican has made with the manual published on July 16 to deal with allegations of child sexual abuse against Church personnel.

Tapsell points out that in Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* on 7 May 2019 made some changes to canon law over child sexual abuse to be applied universally throughout the Church but made no mention of the pontifical secret being abolished, and did not impose mandatory reporting to the civil authorities outside the Vatican City.

On 17 December 2019, Pope Francis abolished the pontifical secret for child sexual abuse so that bishops were no longer prohibited by canon law to report to the civil authorities.

The new manual for dealing with child sexual abuse allegations against Church personnel says: Even in cases where there is no explicit legal obligation to do so, the ecclesiastical authorities should make a report to the competent civil authorities if this is considered necessary to protect the person involved or other minors from the danger of further criminal acts. (clause 17) and says: subject to civil laws, the Church authorities are to respect the wishes of the complainant not to report (clause 48). This reflects the exception under the New South Wales and Victorian Crimes Acts on mandatory reporting.

Tapsell notes that this is probably enough to make a bishop accountable for a cover up.

The manual indicates an interesting change of culture because canon law for the last 100 years was more concerned about providing immunity for abusive priests than the welfare of children.

Even the "repressive regimes" excuse was based on concern about priests being harshly punished and not about the welfare of children. Full article can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5locpdc> ↻

## Australian bishops should resign

The Autumn issue of *The Swag* contained four interesting articles on the upcoming Plenary Council in relation to the recommendations contained in the report of the Royal Commission.

In the first, on the implementation of these recommendations, John Warhurst refers to the need to 'focus to rebuild trust and credibility' in the conduct of our Church leaders.

In the second, in his article on Catholic formation, Greg Crafter, a former SA Minister for Education, refers to the sexual abuse scandal that has engulfed the Church, which he states has 'weakened the community standing of our bishops'. He notes the high public recognition and support that our schools, hospitals, and aged care services enjoy, and laments that such is not the case for the Catholic Church as an institution. In his opinion we are at 'a low point in our history' and the standing of our leaders is suffering. He struggles to see the Church in Australia rebuilding itself without a much greater participation of competent, committed, and deeply formed laity. He rejects the notion that our present lot of bishops are our 'lead public advocates'.

In the third, in his article (which is in a similar vein to Greg Crafter's), John Scanlon states *the clerical sexual abuse crisis has caused a massive reduction in the level of trust that our fellow-Australians are prepared to place in Catholic institutions and their spokespeople*.

In the fourth article, Chris Geraghty accuses many of our bishops and archbishops of living in 'a parallel universe' and he recommends the Plenary Council passes a motion of profound gratitude to former PM, Julia Gillard, for initiating the RC. His most stinging criticism is, however, reserved for 'not one bishop or archbishop took the time to attend the final, solemn session of the RC'. He describes this omission as 'a disgrace'.

I agree with the sentiments expressed in these four articles. The credibility of our bishops has been shot to pieces. I find it amazing that there is not already a universal cry for all of them to resign. Even so, for all of them to resign simultaneously would probably be a bit much. My idea is for all the archbishops to resign, and for all but seven of the remaining bishops to then follow with their resignations.

The 'seven' could be determined by the current group of 23 by some exhaustive ballot process. The papal nuncio definitely should be excluded from this process and all relevant vicars-general should follow

their respective resigning bishops. If Rome did not accept any particular resignation, the continuing bishop should appoint a vicar-general on the advice of his presbyters and go on indefinite sick leave or some other concocted leave.

Such a mass resignation approach would certainly grab the public's attention and demonstrate that the Church finally is serious about regaining its lost credibility.

The suggested high proportion of resignations will reflect how seriously the crisis is being taken.

My other point is that the near complete absence of the role of women in the Church's leadership is also a disgrace and should be urgently addressed. The starting point ought to be the ordination of women, married or unmarried, to the diaconate. The question of their ordination to the priesthood should be held in abeyance and left to a future pope further removed from Saint John Paul II. This is what a fresh start should look like. With women in leadership positions a solid platform will be in place for further reform, if required, over the coming decades.

**Ted Fennessy, Balnarring Beach VIC**

## Women's roles in ministry now

The time is now. Recent parish discussions have vigorously reiterated the long overdue case for women in church life. We know worthy, talented Catholic women are repeatedly denied a seat at tables of church power, tables where the big decisions are made. We know that even at local parish level, worthy women are denied opportunities to serve, despite ever declining number of priests and men entering the seminary. We know amongst us, there are many generous devout women able to take positions of leadership, preach, provide pastoral care to fellow parishioners.

Passive acceptance of the status quo is not an option. But the question remains – what can be done now, bottom up from local parishes, given the slow momentum of change, top down from Rome? What small reasonable steps can parishes take?

Do parishes have courage to step boldly into a fairer future for our women in church life? Longer term, ordination of women priests is desirable to maintain vigorous parish life. But realistically, this may not happen for a very long time.

At St Joseph's Malvern, thanks to our enlightened Parish Priest and Parish council, inclusion of Women is a "hot button issue", and has been for quite some time. We aim to "walk the talk" to the extent we are able to. Inclusion of women is a topic at our monthly Parish council

where new opportunities are sought and implemented.

At St Joseph's Malvern our investigations into greater roles for women activities (are) include:

1. Sunday sermons delivered by women – in progress: women deliver Sunday mass sermons quarterly (with increasing frequency after Covid restrictions lifted).
2. Worship activities led by Women in church (awaiting lifting of restrictions): Communion services for women and men; Adoration – women leading prayer whilst the Blessed sacrament is exposed; Bible Study and Prayer Groups for other women.
3. Funeral services conducted by women (under consideration).
4. Seminars/women's interest groups run by women (under consideration). On topics of interest to other women, on line, or face-to-face.
5. Pastoral Services by women to other women (under consideration): support for women seeking pastoral care from women.

To better equip laywomen and men for greater involvement in church life, some theological training and knowledge, we believe would be very useful. St Joseph's is examining training options currently.

These are essentially, little steps taken by St Joseph's Malvern, to bridge the gap.

If other parishes can take similar small, meaningful steps to promote meaningful involvement of their women in parish life, would that not eventually, collectively, harness a groundswell of support, loud enough, that Rome would take notice? Let's us pray for courage and boldness to take action.

Eventually our goal is to lead more people to God. But without an open and inclusive approach, our beloved Catholic Church, with its unique theology and traditions would struggle to endure into the future. The time to act is now.

**Ms Nalis Miranda, Malvern VIC**

## There is no distinction between male or female

My name is Father Rex Hackett of the Diocese of Lismore NSW, now retired from parish responsibilities. I was ordained in 1966 in Grafton. I experienced the Latin Mass from 1941 and I was in the Seminary at Springwood and Manly from 1960 to 1966, during the Second Vatican Council.

I would like to share with you an insight which I received in 1986, when attending a three month sabbatical at Notre Dame

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University in Indiana USA attended by 50 other priests from around the world.

The first module was presented by a bi-ritual priest who made the statement that the Pope would never allow women to be priests because in the Eastern Rite Church the icon of the priest stood in 'persona Christi': the Person of Christ.

In the last module on Saint Paul the presenter made the following statement: the ordained priest could never be a woman if he stood in 'persona Jesus of Nazareth' who was a man.

However, Saint Paul in Galatians 3:28 says, 'in **The Christ** there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, slave or free, male or female....for all of you are one in Christ Jesus'.

So the ordained priest stands not in 'persona Jesus of Nazareth' but in 'persona Christi' in whom there is no distinction between male or female according to Paul in Galatians 3:28.

Therefore, the obvious conclusion is that a woman could be an ordained priest or deacon in 'persona Christi'.

I wonder if this opinion would ever see the light of day should the question of ordaining women as priests or deacons arise at the Plenary Council?

*Rex Hackett, Diocese of Lismore NSW*

### Vatican II, Dorothy Day and the NCP

Waiting for my chiropractor, I started reading *The Swag* (Winter 2020). I was deeply moved by Peter Maher's editorial especially his insightful reflections as he undergoes treatment for cancer. I couldn't but be inspired by his beautifully poetic statement: My values have been pared down to concentrating on my health, dancing with a playful God who darts in and out of my consciousness through things known and unknown... letting go and sorting things out so others can take up where I am no longer able. Isn't that superb? Realism merged with humility and wisdom.

But that was just the start! Next I read Eric Hodgens' personal reflection on *The reception of Vatican II in Australia*. It blew my mind out of the park! I've never come across such an expansive and in-depth analysis of how Vatican II impacted the Australian church. Admittedly Eric was in the right places at the right times especially as Director of Pastoral Formation in the great Archdiocese of Melbourne at a crucial period in its history. Eric's brilliant mind, pastoral vision and linguistic skills are on full display. I love his incisive statement:

*We had been through five decades: The awakening 60s, The exciting 70s, The suspicious 80s, The depressing 90s, The imploding noughties.* It's fascinating, enthralling and absolutely essential reading.

Later that day I had a delightfully surprising visit from the prophetic Dr Val Noone OAM, historian, social activist and former Melbourne priest. Val's latest book is *Dorothy Day in Australia*. He was so pleased that I ordered multiple copies of his book that he personally delivered them to me.

Val was co-editor with Garry McLoughlin of the pioneering magazine *Priest Forum* 1968-1972, in conjunction with Ted Kennedy. Val and Garry convened the first independent meeting of Australian Catholic priests at Coogee on 6/7 October 1969 which in turn led to the national conference at Hunters Hill in May 1970 and the formation of the National Council of Priests.

The church of Australia should rejoice in its many heroes with abiding gratitude. I thank our Creator God for the depth of humanity, faith, dynamic vision and pastoral energy of prophetic leaders such as Peter Maher, Eric Hodgens and Val Noone.

*Kevin F Burke, Sandringham VIC*

### Missed opportunity?

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324 we read: *The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.* The quote of course, comes from the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*. In his response to this document, Dr. Albert Outler says that it (LG) may rightly be regarded as the masterpiece of Vatican II (Walter Abbott S.J. edited the publication in 1966). In the intervening half century popes, priests and lay people in books, homilies and other addresses have used these or similar words to describe the Eucharist.

To the person in the street, what is most likely to identify a Christian as Catholic is his or her attitude to Eucharist, to God's presence therein. Since COVID-19 resulted in the closure of churches here in Australia and around the world, technology has been used to an extent as never before in live-streaming and recording the celebration of the Mass.

Though a poor second-best so to speak, there are multiple options available to us to watch and 'join in' when one or a small number of the ordained say Mass. Many of us have gratefully taken advantage of this opportunity. In fact, a whole range of resources to nurture our faith has quite quickly become available (or been

publicised) through the internet and specifically via YouTube. And yet at a time in our history when church attendance has significantly decreased – and in my experience, so has knowledge and understanding of the faith and certainly of the rituals – I wonder if there has been a missed opportunity?

I wonder if this painful separation from the Eucharist, from Jesus present as human and divine, might not be an occasion for renewed teaching on the mind-blowing reality of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity? This was an important part of Jesus' teaching. The gift of Jesus' presence in Eucharist is most wonderful. No less so is the gift of our God's presence within us, loving, sustaining, enabling. Since living in rural Queensland and privileged to minister to those in remote areas of the diocese for whom celebration of the Eucharist even if regular, is far from weekly, my own appreciation of the great mystery of the indwelling Trinity has deepened. While daily Mass is no longer possible, this awareness is a source of joy and confidence in the challenges of everyday living.

*Mary Farrelly SM, Central Western Queensland*

### Vatican II revisited

I have just read Eric Hodgens' reflective article on the reception of Vatican II. It took me back a long way. I was a teaching religious from the early '50s.

It was in 1960 that I attended some courses run by local priests in Sydney on catechesis being developed as a result of Vatican II. I had been trained by the best catechetical trainers of the time but it was largely based, of course, on the Catechism. This new approach opened my eyes and I loved it.

I bought myself a Bible, the Jerusalem Bible. I had never had a Bible! When I went into the Training College as a young teenager, my father had given me a New Testament. I have just checked that edition. It was printed in 1919!

Admittedly, it has a few references in footnotes to both Old and New Testaments, but nothing in the order that my new Bible had with its marginal references.

Interestingly, as a teenager in the Training College, there was a Bible in the library in a section where there were books that one had to get permission to read. On a particular occasion, I wished to check a Biblical reference I had come across in a scientific book. I got permission to look at this Bible. The reference was to one of the Psalms. I looked up that particular Psalm

but it did not seem to be the same as the quote I had read. I put the Bible back mystified.

Had I looked at the very next Psalm I would have found the quote.

But, back then, I knew nothing of the differing psalm numbering in various Bibles.

In the '60s and 70s, I used the Bible extensively in my catechesis. I loved reading to the students of the Capture of Jerusalem by David that we find in 2 Samuel and the later buying of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite by David in order to build a temple to God. It was some years later that I entered Hezekiah's tunnel linking the Spring of Gihon outside the walls to the Pool of Siloam within the walls of Jerusalem. Not far in you see the blocked tunnel that David had used to enter Jerusalem and I was able later, also, to look down into this tunnel from the other end.

I also enlightened the students on the true nature of the creation account.

This wonderful development of Catechesis continued on in the '70s. But Eric well capsulates the progress in his article where he writes:

We had been through five decades:  
The awakening 60s, The exciting 70s,  
The suspicious 80s, The depressing 90s,  
The imploding noughties.

How sad that so much wonderful work was being undone by conservatives, who were frightened by God's attempts to open our minds to the wonders of Scripture by gracing so many wonderful exegetes.

And what is happening now? Pope Francis has attempted to open the wonders of Vatican II to us once more but there are too many conservative Cardinals in the Vatican and his attempts are being stymied. I wonder what lies in our future.

I can look back on the wonders of what Vatican II did for Catechesis. The later imploding, as Eric puts it, didn't affect my Catechesis, but if the implosion has affected our Training Colleges and our Seminaries, I fear for the future. I don't like the look of some of our newer priests these days who seem to live in a culture of clericalism, about which I wrote in an earlier edition of *The Swag*. What does it say about the leadership in the Church these days? Hopefully, the upcoming Synod may help us see the error of our ways and bring us back to what the Fathers of Vatican II saw as important. May the Spirit be with us.

**Laurie Bent, Goulburn NSW**

## Something beautiful for God – a new missal

When the new transliteration of the Missal was promulgated, I used to enjoy going to lectures and listening to the liturgists attempting to defend the indefensible. I suspect that the hope of the translators was that tarting up of the text with obscure and holy words would lead to an increase in mass attendance. The jury has returned its verdict on that one with their feet.

Students of language talk about the various Englishes we have now; English English, American English, Indian English, Australian English to name a few. Those who were asked to produce a mass text which was suitable for all the speakers of different kinds of English were obviously on a hiding to nothing from the beginning.

Lewis Delmage, a Philadelphia Jesuit wrote insightfully on translation back in 1978: *The novice at translation is limited, say, to his experience of elementary language courses and thinks of translation as transliteration and especially of cognate substitution as 'accuracy.' However, the choice of words and phrases depends on the context, sometimes the total context, even the historical context, plus the total context into which the translation is being made. Oftentimes too, it is not a matter of choosing the best word but rather of recasting the entire sentence.*

Our faithful little brand of mass goes has suffered enough. It is time to end their pain. It is time to produce an elegant mass text in Australian English. We need people who understand that liturgy is theatre. We need people who understand words that have to be said not read. We not only need linguists but also poets, actors and theologians on the team.

All languages are in constant flux so our texts will need to be revised every ten years. The new order will be totally digital of course and I regret to say that those expensive altar missals will have to go the way of the maniple. It is time we did something beautiful for God.

**Harry Moore, Kyogle NSW**

## How many Masses can ya do?

Margaret Callahan (*The Swag*, Autumn 2020) disparages Permanent Diaconate as further evidence of misogynist clericalism. I acknowledge her pain at the sidelining of 'women's ministry', and I eagerly anticipate the day when women will join me in diaconal ministry. Margaret seems soured by the church's failure to recognize and promote responsible roles for women in the church, but it's a bit much to blame this on Deacons. Deacons are fellow casualties of half-hearted church reform

rather than contributors to women's displacement. The problem is not too many deacons but rather too few.

Vatican II emphatically recognised all the baptised as fully responsible members of the People of God with a direct apostolate of preaching the Word of God and reframed the role of the priest as fully men, not separated from the people but with them in life and work. (*Apostolicam actuositatem/ Presbyterorum ordinis*)

And they restored to the church the ancient and neglected order of diaconate to address its modern needs (Gooley, A. *Deacons Today*, Coventry Press 2019). The leaders of the embryonic church (*Acts 6:17*) laid hands on the first deacons, gracing them with that particularly diaconal characteristic of identifying and addressing otherwise unmet needs. *Many of the (Vatican II) bishops saw that the ministry of deacon could be a way of doing something new and inserting the Gospel into new situations* (Gooley, A. *Deacons Today*, Coventry Press 2019).

Pope Francis recently reiterated that deacons are called to 'be faithful in service to the Word and to the poor, not as second-level priests' but as part of the clergy living *their vocation in and with their family. They are dedicated to the service of the poor, who carry within them the face of the suffering Christ. They are the guardians of service in the Church* (*Vatican News*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020). The deacon's ministry is complimentary to rather than displacing of presbyteral and lay ministries.

Vatican II challenged us to embrace our primary baptismal call, to de-clericalise the priesthood and to enlist the restored diaconate, particularly in the gaps. We might ask how well we Australians have taken up the Vatican II torch over the half century. Unfortunately, much of our Australian church still sees ordination as being about maintaining Eucharistic supply to the faithful masses (pun intended) rather than bringing the gospel to the margins! That may be at the core of Margaret's problem with diaconate (a perspective she shares with not a few priests and bishops).

Of course, even in Australia, there are many exceptions. Some Australian bishops and their consulting priests (and their congregants) have embraced the three-fold orders as envisaged at Vatican II. Nonetheless, we markedly trail the US in fostering diaconal vocations. On average all US parishes have a deacon assigned to them whereas Australian parishes have a one in ten chance of a diaconal appointee.

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*The ordination of deacons contains a sacramental grace for the life of the Church* (Gooley p57). By far the fastest growing area of formal ministry, in those parishes and dioceses where the diaconate is embraced in the spirit of Vatican II restoration, it flourishes.

Beyond parish ministries lie many other roles, niches and functions, not exclusively but particularly diaconal. Graced with ordination as deacon, my years of diaconate have given me insight into the diaconate's unique and liberating characteristics. Freedom from the total parish responsibilities of a parish priest I have been able to minister in chaplaincy, youth ministry, emergencies ministry, various ecumenical endeavours, RCIA, men's prayer groups, choir and communion breakfasts and encouragement of men into parish ministries. Deacons and bishops have a particular symbiosis (1Tim 3) and I have been able to represent the bishop on a number of diocesan, provincial and state wide bodies. Deacons are a plus for the whole church!

Margaret doesn't deny the efficacy of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and I assume she distinguishes it from the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation so she isn't suggesting all the baptised be ordained. So her issue is one of gender unfairness, with which I sympathise. Certainly, ordination of women to diaconate seems to remain in the balance. It is said to be a strong theme to be put to the first session of the Plenary Council. All people do need grace in the performance of their work, yet the church mediates a special grace to those in ordained church ministries. Before the Holy Spirit we might all pray for a more equitable manner of dispensing that grace.

**Deacon Mark Kelly, Diocese of Sale VIC**

### Good viruses

Some advertisements would give the impression that bacteria equals bad. Most bacteria are not harmful at all. There are bacteria in our stomachs that play a vital part in digesting our food for us. Remove them and we'd be in big trouble. One of the big baddies is E-coli. There are various E-coli bacteria. One is harmful, causing diarrhoea. It gets into our system usually through contaminated water or food. But there is another E-coli that plays a *needed* role in our bowels.

Viruses are much smaller than bacteria, about 100 times smaller, the smallest living creatures, although, for a technical reason, some scientists don't classify them as living. They are only ever mentioned in contexts of harm; so it is easy to think that Virus equals Bad. There are man-made viruses created to do damage inside our

computers. The intention of their creators is always bad, ranging from mischievous to malicious, so these viruses are bad news, and, of course, they aren't living.

I was told recently that COVID-19 is man-made. That would mean that scientists deliberately engineered changes in the genetic code of some virus or other, to produce this damaging product.

As a matter of fact, I received an e-mail purporting that COVID-19 was created by Chinese scientists so as to throw the rest of the world into turmoil, and the question was asked: how come it has done no damage in China itself, apart from Wuhan? In other words, the email alleged that it is germ warfare. That email belongs to the same class as those that reveal that 9/11 was jointly engineered by the CIA & Israelis.

In regard to COVID-19, the many scientists who have studied its genetic make-up are quite certain that it is the product of a natural mutation from another virus.

It is a product of evolution, not ingenuity.

Still, we never hear of good viruses.

So, here we go again. We have protective viruses in our bodies. They are part of what is generally referred to as our immune system. That term covers a lot of different actions our bodies engage in to protect us from outside invasion. One of these are some of our white cells known as killer cells. Some varieties of the Herpes virus help these cells identify cancer cells and cells infected by pathogenic viruses.

Bacteriophages are viruses that eat up and destroy dangerous bacteria. We have such viruses in the mucus membranes (mucus is a thick jelly-like material that provides a physical barrier against invading bacteria) that line our digestive, respiratory and reproductive system. Some viral infections when we are young help us to develop our immune system. There are beneficial viruses in our gut, skin and blood.

In the future, we may be looking for viruses to help us defeat bacterial infections that have, because of misuse, and especially over-use – feeding antibiotics *holus bolus* to farm animals – become immune to many antibiotics. Antibiotics, by the way, are used to treat bacterial infections. They are not used to treat viral infections. Recently in the UK, a teenager who was close to death because of serious infection by a bacteria that was immune to all antibiotics available, was saved by being bombarded with bacteriophages, viruses.

Just about everything I have written here, I found out by googling Good Viruses and then following up various leads. It is not the result of genius at work, at least not my genius. I started wondering 'Are Viruses All Bad?' by thinking about 'Where is God in all

this?' *God saw all that he had made, and found it very good.* But viruses seem to be all very bad. They are *not* all bad.

Last year after Notre Dame lost its roof to fire, I was asking God to just give that great cathedral a new roof himself, thus telling all the atheists to put that in their pipe and smoke it. Obviously, God refused to do as I ordered. Well, for a while I was asking God to step in and overcome COVID-19 with one fell swoop – the same kind of request. In the major church in Rome called St Mary Major, there is an icon of Our Lady with Jesus called 'Salus populi Romani' - Saviour of the people of Rome. Soon after the virus hit the north of Italy, Pope Francis went to St Mary Major to pray before that icon. Did his praying make any difference? For the Vigil of Easter in St Peter's, Rome, Francis had that icon brought from St Mary Major and placed near the small altar where he celebrated the Vigil Mass. Did that change anything? Doubtless, when the virus that is holding the world to ransom has been overcome there will be plenty of stories to be told of God or his saints stepping in to help, sometimes in the form of small miracles, especially miracles of grace. We can't though, ask God to sweep it all away by magic, as I asked, because we have to live in faith, and that means God leaving us free. God can't intervene in such a way as to remove all possibility of the human race doubting him from then on.

But we can ask: Why did God allow the Coronavirus to get going in the first place? One of the Catholic bishops in Switzerland announced that Coronavirus was God's punishing the world for its faithlessness. The rest of the Catholic bishops in Switzerland jumped on him very quickly.

Earlier this year, a priest in outback New South Wales announced to his people that God had sent the bushfires to punish NSW for extending the circumstances under which abortion is de-criminalised. His fellow-priests didn't jump on him, because they didn't hear about it. I learned of it from a bemused parishioner. It is foolish of us to be attributing to God what we might like to do.

The only thing we can say is that any suffering that comes our way is part of God's good purpose. The suffering of his Son had a good outcome; and any suffering God allows us to endure can make the person within a better person. You will find when the Coronavirus is history, that many human beings became better human beings through it. Most of all though, God is with us in all our sufferings, whether little or great.

**Patrick J Flanagan, Red Cliffs VIC** ☪

## Resetting the sails on the Australian church

*A Call to Reset the Sails, Plenary Council 20/21, Australian Catholic Church (2020). Aengus Kavanagh FSP, An initiative of the Province of the Patrician Brothers. Published privately. To order – email: resetsails20.21@gmail.com indicating number of copies required. Include your full postal address. \$25 per copy plus postage. Reviewed by Peter Maher.*

This handsome looking volume filled with wisdom, image and poetry opens the reader to a wealth of meanderings and pathways along which to dream and imagine ways the church might undertake transformation rather than mere change.

The book is co-authored by a delightful and well experienced range of Catholic thinkers: lay, religious and clerics from Australia and New Zealand. The main body of work is written by Aengus Kavanagh.

Many of the authors have written for *The Swag*. I guess that conflict of interest is now declared by me, the editor of *The Swag*. Therefore, you won't be surprised to know the basic stance of this book is progressive.

That declared, it is very balanced – three bishops are among the authors, Cardinal John Dew, Bishop Vincent Long and Bishop Bede Heather, along with writers Anne Benjamin, Kevin Treston, Leone Pallisier and Tania Rimac. Being locals, they are eminently qualified to comment on the way forward to the Plenary Council 20/21.

I was taken by the image quoted in a box, *Change versus Transformation*, which I feel captures the underlying method Kavanagh has used to draw his writers together to fashion a delightfully engaging discussion on a wide range of topics and perspectives

that might have us looking to the future for a while to come.

The quote is by Sr Carol Zinn, director the Leadership Conference of Religious Women in the USA. She says: *Change is typically that kind of activity where you stand in the present moment, and you look to the past and you make some changes. Transformation is that process where you stand in the present moment but look to the future. You look to something that doesn't have a shape or image, or something that cannot be defined, but you commit to moving in that direction and knowing that whatever is going to happen in the future, if it is result of transformation, it will be a new form and a new function.* (p.9)

What Kavanagh has brought together in this book plays at ways of transformation – a chance to set sail again and form a future church where form follows function. There must be new forms of being church because everything is change in the real world and a relevant church must engage in dialogue and compassion with this ever-changing world opening us to a church we cannot imagine now, it emerges from the life source of the universe imbued with the divine. It's coming if we let it in; but in ways we don't dare to imagine.

Imagination however is the tool for opening and forging the way; for navigating the unknown seas ahead; for



sailing bravely into a world not made by us but shaped by the way the world interplays with the Jesus of the gospels. If we don't expect something surprising or totally unexpected, we will miss what God is calling forth in the Australian church, the first question of the Plenary Council process.

Leone Pallisier OSU in her article *Woman Called to Sing a New Song*, (p.40) quotes a poem by Kate Compston from *Bread of Tomorrow*:

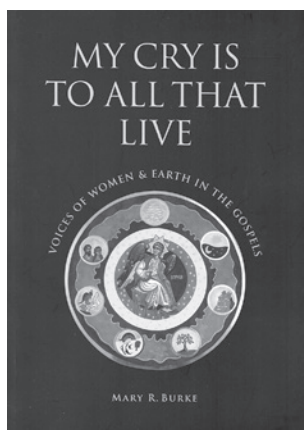
*O God, who am I now?  
Once I was secure in familiar territory  
in my sense of belonging  
unquestioning of the norms of my culture,  
the assumptions built into my language,  
the values shared by my society.  
But now you have called me out and away  
from my home  
and I do not know where you are leading.  
I am empty, unsure and uncomfortable.  
I have only a beckoning star to follow.*

That is the spirit of transformation and it is the sail setting for the reader of Kavanagh's book. Enjoy but expect to be in for an unsure, uncomfortable ride. But what a glorious adventure arriving at a new place still strangely familiar! ☺



## Gospel women find their voice

*My Cry is to all that Live, Voices of Women and Earth in the Gospels, Mary R Burke, Coventry Press, 2020. Reviewed by Peter Maher.*



Like the pilot in Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* said, 'sometimes when a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey'. How do we face the mystery of Jesus in the gospel as he barges his way into dismantling the social and cultural norms of his day? For most in the two thousand years since, scholars, spiritual writers, preachers and ordinary Christians have chosen to domesticate the text in favour of shoring up the status quo and thus obscure the mystery altogether.

This is not the case in Mary Burke's book.

She dares not disobey the mystery presented in the gospel, egged on by a host of feminist scholars and writers carefully crafting their exegesis of the texts containing women characters with a healthy dose of a hermeneutic of suspicion.

The bibliography reads like a list of the best feminist scholars on the planet. Writers include Elizabeth Johnson, Amy-Jill Levine, Barbara Reid, Sandra Schneiders, Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Elaine Wainwright. These, among others, form the background for a canvas carefully crafted by Burke. The reader need not be a scholar because Burke's gift is to use this library and translate their work into

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a language that invites the reader into a spiritual moment of grace in everyday language. She uses story, imagination, poetry, icons and play to give all access to the liberating spirit of a modern feminist reading of the gospel texts.

I have used the chapter called *The Call of the Mother-in Law of Peter* (p80-85) for a project I am doing. To give an example of the way Burke is able to make available the mystery of this moment in the life of Peter's family, she invites the reader to explore what has laid up the widow in bed; how does she feel when there are guests and she is unable to be hospitable; what calls her to life; how does she find a voice; what happens when Jesus assumes the

woman's role of hospitality; what happens when Jesus breaks the boundaries not just of personal space but of the way women are called from being hidden and laid low to ministry. Peter's mother-in-law is taken by the hand and called forth, not to serve afternoon tea, but to serve Jesus and the community. She is the first disciple Jesus called to serve, just as Jesus did when he says he came to 'serve, not to be served'.

This book is full of colour, imagination, storytelling and reflective exercises. It is beautiful to look at and it even feels luxurious. There are full colour icons throughout, many painted by Mary Burke.

And if you think this is a women's

spirituality book, think again. This book will engage every reader in a series of ground-breaking liberating moments of joy and challenge as it works to bring insight to women and men equally so that we may grow as a faith community. This book will benefit the whole faith community that is seeking a pathway that leads to all God's giftedness being recognised, honoured and daringly practised.

'Sometimes when a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey'. Immersing oneself in this book will bring you face to face with the mystery in a way you will not want to disobey. There is a call to new insight that will liberate us all. I can thoroughly recommend this book. ☺



## Rethinking the mission of the Church

*The Struggle For Justice*, Kate Dempsey, Coventry Press (2020). Reviewed by Peter Worland retired Executive Director, Uniting NSW/ACT.

If you are tired of looking at empty pews and being told the church is irrelevant and that's why young people in particular aren't coming, then this book might be for you. How it can help may not be immediately obvious, so permit me to explain.

First you may need to look past the fact that it's published by a non-Catholic Christian denomination and that its format involves a series of conversations between an agnostic social researcher Kate Dempsey and an ordained Uniting Church Minister, John Bottomley.

It analyses Bottomley's 40 years of extraordinary service and the constant struggles he has had with Christian notions of justice and work. It commences with concepts and theory from Socrates to St Augustine then it dives into lived experience and practice. The latter includes a wide variety of experiences from working at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard to heading up the Creative Ministry Network where he spent many hours grieving with families of those who had died or had been injured at work.

At the end of each chapter there is 'gold' to be found by anyone wishing to lead a study group or retreat. A series of questions that dig deeply into the reader's personal responses are ready made for challenging discussion and transformational thinking.

That's the set up, but what of the book's content? How do conversations about justice and work in the context of Christian faith tick the relevance box?

Well, have you heard of the Brene Brown

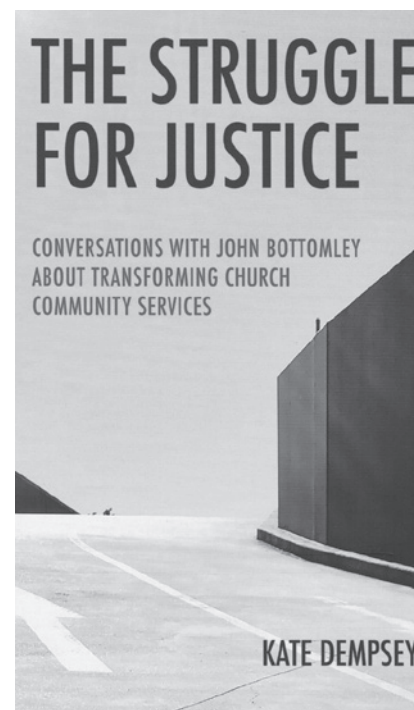
phenomenon? Her Ted Talk on 'vulnerability' has had 45 million views. She is one of only a hand full to have reached these heights in the history of social media. So, in the mind of the average millennial this represents relevance with a capital R. What's she on about that makes her such a draw card?

Brown's research has led her to identify a narcissistic malaise in our everyday lives. She calls it 'a shame-based fear of never feeling extraordinary enough to cultivate a sense of purpose.' Millions are hungry to put purpose into their lives but find it disappointingly difficult and so are flocking to Brene Brown. The narcissistic epidemic she describes cannot continue without serious consequences. It's making people sick. Credit Swiss Wealth report shows Australia to be the third richest population in the world behind NZ and Switzerland yet we are amongst the highest per head consumers of anti-depressants in the world. We are wealthy – but – we – are – not – happy.

So what are our churches doing about this yawning chasm in peoples' lives – this loss of 'purpose'?

What is the biggest church which educates 25% of Australia's young doing about it? More particularly what are Parish Priests doing about it?

Bottomley's thesis is that we've been 'sold a pup' in that most of us find our purpose primarily in our work, believing hard work will win for us the promise of a 'good life'. Yet for many this 'idol of hard work' as he calls it, is false. Those who lose their job



finish up feeling they are failures.

Bottomley suggests true purpose will never be found at work but rather in following Jesus' example of fighting for the rights of the poor. He is critical of churches for losing their nerve and asks the reader to consider ways each of us can put ourselves forward and personally challenge the status quo.

Harvard philosopher, Michael Sandel, has tens of millions of viewers logging into his course on 'Justice', so he too passes the relevance test here. Sandel's contributions are acknowledged in *The Struggle for Justice*. His seminal work *The Moral Limits of Markets* laments the fact that many institutions have outsourced their core purpose and so have lost their direction. Churches have not escaped. In the call to

help the poor many of us have provided monetary donations instead of offering ourselves, thus outsourcing Christ's compassion to others. In doing so we have negated the positive feedback we receive from acts of grace and also sadly squandered our own sense of purpose.

The really pleasing aspect of the questions for discussion after each chapter in this text is the personalised nature of the challenges presented. There's no ducking it. There's no room to obfuscate. Each of us is charged with changing the world as Jesus should have us do.

This point is well exemplified in chapter four which references Pope Francis: *saying he does not think the parish is an outdated institution if it is capable of self-renewal and adaptation, but it has to ensure it does not become a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. Importantly he also notes it has capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church can be renewed.*

In response to this the reader is asked directly: is this call to mission for churches from the Pope something you can relate to? What does it mean for you? What do you feel about the need for adaptation in either your personal sense of mission or in your work environment and why?

Returning to the current malaise that Brene Brown alerts us to – the paucity of purpose infecting our western world – how willing might Parish Priests be to take Pope Francis' advice and adapt, follow some different approaches? Could facilitating local Parish study groups to focus on issues of work/justice/purpose be an appropriate adaptation?

From first to last this text engages the reader's mind on issues that the world says it cares about and is hungry to feed on. What's the purpose of my life? What's a sustainable and reasonable approach to work? How can I play a part in bringing justice to our world? These are relevant and

compelling issues the church can help with.

For example, in the first chapter, there are a series of probing questions about how to navigate big changes in our work lives. These are of serious concern given the real possibility that in a post COVID 19 world there may be many who will lose their jobs.

We are not left daunted or abandoned however. In the final chapters we are introduced to methodologies that have proved the test of time. Amongst these readers are tutored in how to embrace St Ignatius of Loyola's Reflection Cycle and to follow his example by engaging in deep contemplation prior to taking action in the world.

If your community of faith needs such an opportunity to rethink these profound questions of our time maybe *The Struggle for Justice* is for you. ☺

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## Liturgies for the planet's survival

*Cosmic Sparks*, Margie Abbott RSM, Coventry Press 2020. Reviewed by Robyn Worland.

Following the Papal encyclical *Laudato Si*, we find in Margie Abbott's *Cosmic Sparks* a series of liturgical rituals which call us to reflect on and contemplate our place, as humans, in our relationship with the Earth.

The format of the book is very accessible and deceptively simple, but cleverly and thoughtfully constructed as it draws on and utilises a wealth of resources, including biblical, indigenous, poetic and musical ones, to enhance the personal participation called for in each liturgy.

Opening prayers and other stimulus ask us to reflect upon ourselves and upon the Earth and its sacred place in the cosmos. Participants are also urged to reflect on our role in having caused it great damage. We are called to lament. We are called to

action through the many and varied thoughtful and consciousness-raising activities which are often grounded in everyday actions and thoughts. Users are asked to 'get in touch with the Earth, breathe it', 'focus on the sacredness of creation'; 'weep, and wonder why'. The four elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water serve both as points of reference for keeping participants in touch with the wider Earth community and as headings for separate sections of the text.

A contemporary, imaginative and flexible book, *Cosmic Sparks* would suit both personal and group use as it draws on our physicality, intellect, inner feelings and thoughts. It throws us one of the great challenges we Christians cannot ignore: we are part of the Earth, we will return to the Earth and we must enter into a nurturing,



physical relationship with the Earth, which is, above all else, sacred.

We need to be ignited and this may well be the fuel. ☺

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## Meditation resources

*Sayings for the Soul: Now I have put My Words in Your Mouth, Jeremiah 1:9. Themes for Personal and Communal Meditation*, Kevin Treston (2020). Creation Enterprises. Available: [kevintreston@gmail.com](mailto:kevintreston@gmail.com) \$12 plus postage. Mob: 0408 192 123. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Kevin Treston has produced many resources, mostly in adult faith education. On this occasion he has produced a small book to guide those who wish to develop their meditation practice.

This book of just over 50 pages provides an introduction to meditation in the Christian meditation tradition and a few pages on the mantra method. Treston then offers a large range of resources for meditation.

He offers 160 biblical texts and sacred writings to use as mantras or entry points to meditation and then a wide range of references to articles, websites, songs and videos that will support those seeking to know more about meditation and its practice. A useful volume especially for beginners and meditation groups. ☺

Continued page 46

## Bullying gays in Catholic schools

*Fourteen* by Shannon Molloy (Simon and Schuster, 2020) is a memoir of the author's experience of bullying as a 14 year old boy in a Catholic school. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

When Shannon was 14, he lived in Yeppoon, a Queensland regional town, where he attended the all boy's catholic school. He was different and that meant he was a prime target for the other boys to mock, bash, vilify, humiliate and to call names. While the young Shannon was still coming to terms with his sexuality, he was branded with all the nasty schoolyard names for gay kids.

He was routinely bashed and set up by the boys for humiliation and treated with unprofessional callousness by the teachers, the school counsellor, the principal, doctors and others in the school that should have known better. A note written by the bullies about his sexual activities with men and signed in Shannon's name was passed to a teacher, who proceeded to read it out aloud in front of the class to the jeering crowd who had written it. Shannon also sat through a class where a boy asked the religion teacher if homosexuals go to hell whereby the teacher replies in the affirmative. The same boy then asks will Shannon go to hell because he is gay. The teacher reaffirms all homosexuals will go to

hell. Shannon goes home in tears not just humiliated by the experience but now knows God doesn't love him either. This is not in the 1950's, this happened in 2000.

I know some Catholic schools and churches have come some way to being more pastoral to LGBTIQ kids. I work with young LGBTIQ people and I can assure you it is far from a safe place for many kids. The church's teaching on sexuality is still taught including the 'intrinsic evil' and 'objective disorder' of homosexuality, while failing to underline the catechism teaching that there is to be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

We do need to change the church's teaching, or if you like, the way it teaches on sexuality, especially homosexuality because the two teachings are confusing and dangerous to LGBTIQ kids, and adults for that matter. This book is a classic real-life example of the serious religious, spiritual, emotional, relational and psychological damage these teachings can cause in the hands of some people we

entrust to young lives in the name of the church.

Shannon comments at one point that he liked the bible stories about God's love and especially the Jesus stories that showed he cared about the outcast and the hurt. But he could not square that with the treatment he received by the 'educators' and 'formators' in his catholic experience and so found religion not only no longer helpful but he realised he needed to protect himself from those entrusted with his religious education because of the resulting on-going trauma.

This book is a painful but exhilarating read. Shannon survives. Advice from a couple of friends and his mum reassures him that things will get better and they do, not due to his religious upbringing but due to caring people from his family, the entertainment world, his house mum when boarding with a family, gay youth forums and counselling services. For the Catholic church this book is a wake-up call – we need to do better for LGBTIQ kids in Catholic families and in Catholic schools.

This book is recommended reading for all catholic pastoral carers, educators, formators, priests and bishops. ☺



## The reforming Pope Francis

*The Outsider, Pope Francis and His Battle to Reform the Church*, 2020, Christopher Lamb Orbis. Reviewed by Fran Spora.

My husband, John, and I were introduced to *The Tablet* by our friend Helen Jagoe. At the time Helen was editor of our diocesan paper. She frequently shared pieces from *The Tablet*, which led to my taking out a twelve-month subscription as a birthday present for John.

Having looked forward to its arrival week by week over a year, there was no possibility of doing without it. Twenty-five years on, we still enjoy the arrival of the magazine. We particularly appreciate the window on the universal Church. Spoilt for choice, a column we enjoy, and discuss, is Christopher Lamb's *View from Rome*.

This year Christopher Lamb has published a book, *The Outsider, Pope Francis and His Battle to Reform the Church*. And what a battle!

The book opens with a description of the reaction of the crowd in St Peter's Square

in March 2013 when Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, the outsider, was elected pope. Lamb says: My book seeks to tell the story of this pontificate. It is one that examines why a prophetic and bold pope, widely considered to be the Catholic Church's best asset in helping repair its battered credibility, has been the subject of bitter and sustained opposition.

Austin Ivereigh, author and contributor to *The Tablet*, writes of *The Outsider*: Christopher Lamb has fast earned a name as one of the sharpest chroniclers of the Bergoglio era.

*The Outsider* is everything his readers have come to know him for: shrewd analysis, accessible reportage, great stories, theological literacy, and a sense of the absurd. Dispassionate, but never detached, reminding his reader through judicious Gospel quotes what's really at stake, Lamb's

survey of Francis's reforms and his colourful opponents is hard to beat.

As the Church in Australia prepares for the Plenary Council, this book provides insights into the universal Church. In our Dubbo parish our parish priest, Fr Greg Kennedy, has printed out the six discussion papers for distribution prior to group discussion.

Our hope is for fruitful discussion, balanced against our understanding of governance from Rome, a sense that we may be one with the universal Church, and indeed beyond Church. As I write I am reminded of a report from a bishop's synod in Rome, where Cardinal Basil Hume reflected on the difficulty for legislating for a universal church.

He reflected on the situation whereby in some developing countries women are treated as chattels, whereas in the UK their prime minister was Margaret Thatcher, a woman! God's Foolishness by Brian Gallagher msc ☺

## Prophetic Spirits explored

*God's Foolishness – A Spirituality of Heart*, Brian Gallagher MSC, 2020, Coventry Press. Reviewed by Khoi Doan Nguyen MSC

**G**od's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength (1 Cor 1:25). Between human and God, there is no competition to prove who is wiser and who is foolish, who is strong and who is weak. Only among humans do we need to divide, compete and distinguish between this and that, what is good and what is bad, what is wise and what is foolish. This book is a reflective attempt, not to distinguish, divide or compete, but to discern God's ways in human life.

I find most of Brian's books accessible and succinct but also delicately pointed and insightful. This book is no exception. It is accessible to all kinds of reader and it serves different purposes of reading, whether for information, curiosity or reflective exercise. I recommend reading in all of these ways in order to absorb the depth and beauty inside the book.

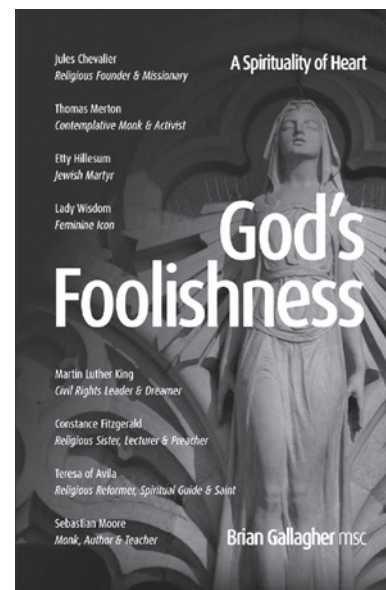
I enjoyed the book in many respects. Firstly, the author embarks on the journey of exploring and discerning God's Foolishness through stories – his own and the stories of other prophetic women and men whose writings have impacted his experience of God. Brian tells the stories selectively in order to illustrate how God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are

our ways God's ways. (Is 55:8)

Secondly, though the book is technically and academically not a systematically theological book, the way the topic of God's Foolishness is approached is purposely thematically systematic. Brian explores different dimensions of God's Foolishness, all in the context of God's foolish 'self-bestowing' love.

Thirdly, when I read the book as a whole, not as a collection of stories, I noticed a spiritual development in me personally. My expectation about the book, prior to reading it, differs from my conclusion about it after encountering it. My initial expectation had been an illustration of God's foolishness through the prophetic figures discussed, but my reading the book became an invitation. There is a personal invitation in this book that readers can explore and discern for themselves.

I enjoyed savouring the striking richness and depth of the book in many places. I particularly feel drawn to where the author aligns the restless, wrestling and deeply dividing sentiment of Teresa of Avila with Augustine's classic confession of his inner torment. This is a dilemma in human nature of which the mystics have always been aware.



Overall, the book is experientially humane – from the way it is presented to the content and message it is endeavouring to contribute to human discernment on the experiences of a genuinely biblical and 'everyday' God.

Only an artist can recognise the beauty hidden in the painting. Only a prophet can see another prophet wrapped in foolishness. But the grace to see is God's pure gift. This book is the climax of a life-long experience of reading and reflecting. Reading the book is to encounter this experience. ☺

## Irish monk in the Kimberley

Val Noone, *From Roscrea to Beagle Bay*, Dan O'Donovan, priest and hermit, 2020. To order copies and pay by EFTPOS contact [valnoone@iinet.net.au](mailto:valnoone@iinet.net.au) Cost \$10 + \$5 post/packing.

**T**his slender volume is a tribute to an Irish monk who has lived much of his life in Australia.

Born in Berlin in 1934 of Irish parents, Father Dan O'Donovan joined the Cistercian order of monks at Roscrea, County Tipperary. He then went to Tarrawarra Abbey, Victoria, and in 1972 he responded to a need in the north of Western Australia from the Benedictines of New Norcia.

Dan then lived and worked for 47 years as a Cistercian monk and later, a priest of the Broome diocese. Dan lived and worked as a hermit with Indigenous communities at Lombadina and Beagle Bay.

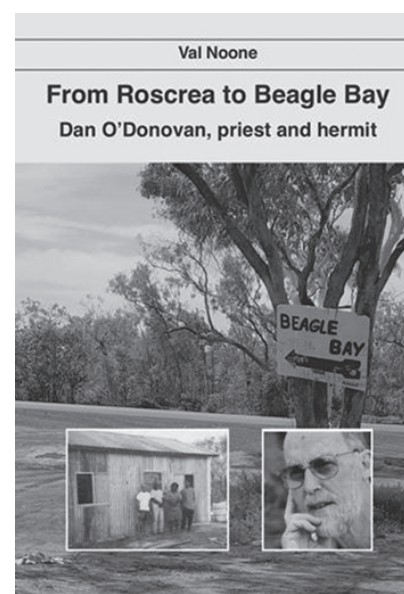
This rather handsome book is a tribute to Dan who is now retired and living in

Broome. Val Noone, a friend of Dan, records Dan's story with text and pictures. It records aspects of Dan's life, prayer and work.

Much of the book is about Dan's life in Western Australia exploring his relationship and life with Aboriginal communities. Dan somehow married his hermit life style with effective and impressive pastoral relationships with Aboriginal people.

Dan was formed by his monastic tradition, the desert mothers and fathers and his Celtic spirituality.

This little book makes good reading for all interested in a spirituality and pastoral practice deeply embedded in the Australian context and in relationship with first



Australians. Reading it is an uplifting spiritual experience. ☺

# Returned to God

## WAYNE BYRON-SQUIRE

27/03/1951 – 20/06/2020

✠ Wayne Squire was born in Adelaide. His parents Leslie and Ruth Squire had five children but sadly only Wayne and his sister Carrie survived. He was raised as an Anglican but the age of 19 he was received into the Catholic Church on 3 July 1970. Wayne worked for some years with the Immigration Department in the passports section and because of his interest in cooking ran a catering business for some time. For a number of years Wayne expressed an interest in becoming a Catholic priest. He entered St Francis Xavier Seminary and was ordained priest in St Francis Xavier Cathedral on 29 January 1994. He served as Assistant Priest in the Cathedral parish where he remained for four years and was then appointed Parish Priest of Strathalbyn. Due to ill health he left Strathalbyn at the end of 2002, returned to live in the Cathedral parish until 2005 when took up residence in the Southern Cross Care where he remained for the rest of his life.

At some stage while exploring his family background he discovered that on his mother's side he was a descendant of Lord Byron and as the last living relative he was entitled to adopt the title of 'Lord', and attach the 'Byron' to his name, which explains why on his Funeral booklet he had the title Rev Fr Lord Wayne Byron-Squire.

Wayne died in St Andrew's hospital and his funeral Mass was celebrated in St Francis Xavier Cathedral on 1 July 2020. A good gathering of fellow priests joined in the concelebrated Mass and according to Wayne's wishes, the funeral Mass was followed by cremation.

*May he rest in peace.*

## ARTHUR JOSEPH HACKETT

09/08/1931 – 24/05/2020

✠ Arthur, who was ordained in Rome on 7 December 1954 for the Diocese of Port Pirie, ministered in the parishes of Port Lincoln, Hawker, Quorn, Cleve, Jamestown, Loxton, Inland Mission, Whyalla West, Kadina, and Gladstone. From the time of his ordination until his peaceful passing, Arthur was a loyal priest to his God and to his people. He remained faithful to the gifts he received. (Pastores Dabo Vobis). Sr Bernadette Corby remembered this much loved priest of the Diocese of Port Pirie. "Arthur was ahead of his time in his openness and large-heartedness in his ministry, as a priest and a parish leader. He was able to work closely with women and men who made up his community of faithful followers, using the gifts they were willing to offer.

He was a good listener, able to be flexible, adaptable, a compassionate and generous pastor. His humour and capacity for enjoyment in the company of others was infectious. Above all, Arthur was a man of prayer – who had a relationship with his God and Mary that enabled all of the above qualities to be lived out."

*May he rest in peace.*

## LEO (PATRICK) HARNEY OCARM

26/03/1921 – 17/07/2020



Today the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste are mourning the loss of Fr Leo (Pat) Harney who died peacefully in the early hours of 17 July. He was 99 years old and had been a Carmelite for 73 years and a priest for 68. Born in 1921 in Elmore (Victoria), Pat was the second of eight children. He remembered his home life as filled with daily rosary, morning prayer and Sunday Mass. "Our faith was just part of our lives," he once recalled. It was this faith that led Pat to decide to become a priest.

At 25 years of age, Pat started his Novitiate and by January 1952 was ordained in the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bendigo (Victoria). As a Carmelite, Pat served communities near and far across Australia and New Zealand as Pastor, Prior, Assistant Novice Master, Chaplain at Sacred Heart College, Glen Innes, in New Zealand. He also served for 16 years as Chaplain at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne (Victoria). "I've been everywhere, man!" he loved to quote from the famous song, when asked about his many places of ministry. Pat was not only well-known but much loved by so many people and communities, having served at every parish the Carmelites ever held in Australia and New Zealand and having filled in for priests who were on leave.

Pat's journey in life was intrinsically connected to his faith and love of God. "Throughout my life, the hand of God has guided me in a remarkable way and still does." Not one for slowing down even after retiring from active service in 2010, Pat continued to celebrate morning Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Middle Park (Victoria) until the COVID-19 restrictions forced the suspension of daily mass.

*He will be greatly missed.*

## TERENCE KELLY SJ

1935 – 03/07/2020



An alumnus of two Jesuit schools, St Louis in Perth and Xavier College in Melbourne, Terry Kelly joined the novitiate at Loyola College, Watsonia in 1954. He remained there for his philosophy studies. From 1959 to 1964, interspersed with teaching, he studied science at Melbourne University, before undertaking theology at Canisius College, Pymble in Sydney. He was ordained a priest in St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne, by Archbishop James Knox, on 9 December 1967.

Terry's love of science, teaching, sport and priestly ministry grounded his Jesuit life. On the one hand, he was the quintessential "schools man", teaching for nine years at Xavier College in Melbourne as a young priest, and then for over forty years at Saint Ignatius' College Senior School in Adelaide, where he became the longest-serving Jesuit

member of staff in the College's history. On the other hand, he brought to these roles rare gifts of scientific knowledge and the ability to explain it and to relate it to the religious world in entertaining and practical ways. A voracious reader, Terry produced a number of books on science and religion, notably Reason and Religion in an Age of Science (used as a school textbook); Stars, Life and Intelligence: Being a Darwinian and a Believer; and The A-Z of People of Faith and Science.

Terry had a great rapport with students and staff, who were touched by his kindness and compassion, responded to his humour and were taken by his topical, imaginative, thought-provoking homilies, which he took great care over. Indefatigable in making himself available for weekend Mass supplies around South Australia, he later became a mainstay of the Athelstone Eucharistic Community, where he is much missed. He reached out to Catholics away from the mainstream, enabling them to come together for worship and maintain their connection with the Church. On a lighter note, he had a playful, mischievous side, ever ready to devise limericks and mimic Jesuits past and present. Blessed with a prodigious memory, he delighted in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, whose lyrics he could perform at length well into old age.

Growing ill health forced Terry to leave the schools ministry towards the end of 2018. He died peacefully in Melbourne at the age of 85.

**DESMOND CHARLES MOORE MSC KBE**

**12/05/1926 – 02/06/2020**



Desmond Charles Moore, MSC Priest and Bishop Emeritus of Alotau-Sideia, Papua New Guinea, was born in Thebarton Adelaide on 12 May 1926. It was his "desire to go to foreign missions", and the constant presence of MSCs throughout his childhood, that drew him to the MSC order. After ordination in 1957, he was posted to Douglas Park as assistant to the novice master and Bursar of the monastery. His first overseas posting in 1960, was to Post Moresby, PNG, where he worked with the Bishop and the parish priest for a year before becoming the Superior of the MSCs there. He was then posted to Milne Bay and in 1970, was appointed Bishop of Sideia diocese and there he ministered for the next 31 years.

In 1996 Bishop Moore was knighted for his work in Papua New Guinea. Bishop Moore was a man without any pretensions to be anything else but himself. A dedicated shepherd who cared personally for all his sheep, his house was always open to anyone in need and he was always available on the mission radio network. Quoting a priest in his fold, "I have never met anyone so charitable and so witnessing to God's love in his life-style. He was a man of definite opinions, but he had a remarkable tolerance for those who disagreed with him".

*Well done good and faithful servant of God.*

**JOHN BERNARD O'KEEFE CM**

**09/04/1932 – 19/06/2020**



In his early education John found himself in Penshurst, Hurstville, Coolabah, Barmedman and Cowra. His secondary education took him to St Stanislaus College Bathurst. He joined the Vincentians in 1950 and was ordained in 1957 at St Stanislaus College Bathurst by Bishop Norton.

He worked initially in the Vincentian's College in Bendigo, the last four years as President of the College and Superior of the Community. He then undertook the role of Spiritual Director in Seminaries, first at St Charles Seminary, Guilford in Western Australia, followed by St Francis Xavier Seminary, Adelaide, South Australia. He then spent a decade at Holy Cross College Mosgiel, New Zealand.

1986 is a significant year for John. He took study leave and went to Nicaragua. The experience changed him. The compulsion to see something of the Third World had been growing within John, to see something of the poor: "I was convinced that the Word of God was enfleshed in the poor, and needed to be heard". What John saw and the people he met set John on a life time's quest to sift through the Faith he had inherited and to find its most authentic articulation. John spent his later years working among the poorer or struggling parishes both in Diocese of Geraldton, Western Australia, and in Western Queensland in Barcardine. John retired in 2002. John died in the sixty-third year of Priesthood. He will be sadly missed by his family, friends, his Vincentian confreres and colleagues.

*May he rest in peace.*

**KENNETH PETERSEN OCARM**

**17/09/1938 – 13/06/2020**



After 58 years as a Carmelite and almost 52 years as a priest, Ken died peacefully in the early hours of 13 June. Ken served the Province and the People of God in the parishes of Coorparoo (QLD), Hilton (WA) and Middle Park (VIC), in formation ministry, as Lay Carmelite National Chaplain and as Prior Provincial before establishing the Sancta Sophia Meditation Community at Warburton (VIC) with Sr Kathleen Murphy OP in 1996.

Sancta Sophia Meditation Community was founded to promote Inter Religious Dialogue, social justice and human dignity through the practice and teaching of meditation, days of prayer, retreats and spiritual counselling.

In the words of Fr Paul Cahill, Prior Provincial, "Fr Ken died in the same peaceful manner as he had lived his last days, completing a life dedicated to peace and justice. Throughout his life, Ken both rejoiced in and generously shared his experience of God's spirit at work in his own life and helped others recognize it at work in theirs and others. We commend him to the God of mercy, love and peace.

*May Ken now flourish in the eternal embrace of God's love.*

Continued page 52

## RETURNED TO GOD

### JOHN NORMAN RASMUSSEN

01/07/1938 – 10/01/2020



Kindness, gentleness and generosity were the hallmarks of John Rasmussen. A delightful man with whom to spend time and considerate to a fault. He was a priest to his back teeth, always available to those in need in his parish. A man of simple faith and with bags of good humour.

John was the fifth of seven children of Catherine and Arthur Rasmussen of Mackay. After primary school at the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers in his home town, John went to boarding school at St Joseph's College, Nudgee in Brisbane. He was an exceptional athlete, setting records in the Mile and 880yds. His times were better than John Landy's at his age! He became School Captain in 1956 and then went to Banyo Seminary. He was ordained in St Patrick's Church, Mackay on 28 June 1963.

All John's appointments were around the Rockhampton diocese, except for one year at Burleigh Heads in 1976. He helped start the Credit Union Movement in Rockhampton in the 60s. He was a chaplain to the CMF for eleven years and Administrator of the Cathedral Parish during its completion in the early 1980s. John did a sabbatical at Nungalinga College in Darwin and served the Aboriginal community at Woorabinda alongside Fr Mick Hayes. John was a member of GROW and a supporter of Dignity, a group that works to support homosexual Catholics.

John loved the ocean. On his holidays and whenever he could he was out on the water. He spent his retirement at Eimeo Beach near Mackay and would be seen walking the beach collecting shells every day. His last three years were spent at St Francis Home, Mackay, in the care of the Franciscan Sisters. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote what John Rasmussen believed at the core of his being: Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God.

### GERALD SCOTT CM

28/01/1931 – 19/01/2020



Following Ordination and studies in Rome, Gerry began his life's work of teaching in seminaries across Australia: St Joseph's Seminary, Eastwood, Holy Cross College Mosgiel, New Zealand, St Charles Seminary, Perth and St Francis Xavier's College Adelaide. He held many different positions in these seminaries including that of Rector in Perth and then in Adelaide.

One of the great joys of those years, apart from his teaching, was his interaction with other priests in the local Archdiocese. As a keen golfer, Gerry quickly became friends with many priests who thoroughly enjoyed his company through the eighteen holes and especially on the nineteenth. These men and his students who were ordained as priests became his friends for a lifetime and in his later years Gerry would enjoy nothing more than travelling

back to NZ, Perth or Adelaide and enjoying the company of so many clergy. Gerry was in many ways, a priest's priest.

Gerry loved belonging to a community of priests; the Vincentians whom he had known from his childhood in Ashfield in Sydney. In 1982 Gerry was elected to take on the most difficult role in the Province, that of Visitor/Provincial. He served in this role for nine years. They were tough years, but he entered into them with enthusiasm enjoying the company of his Brother Vincentians here and throughout the world.

Gerry loved sharing his faith through homilies at Mass, proclaiming the message of God. He would prepare well taking every opportunity to adapt the message of the Scripture to the Congregation. His homilies were never frivolous but they were often filled with little asides or light moments. The people of Ashfield lovingly recall the occasion when suddenly in the middle of giving a homily he heard a mobile phone ring. Realising that it was actually his own phone, he quickly 'answered' and said, "Oh, it's you, Jesus. I was just talking about you!!"

Gerry died whilst he was attending Mass on a Sunday morning at St Anthony's Marsfield. Well planned – with his beloved People of God, whom he had served so faithfully all his life.

#### Returned to God, we hold them in prayer.

† Antony Campbell SJ (Jesuits).....	02/08/2020
† Neville Dunn MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart).....	25/07/2020
† Donald Hughes OMI (Oblates).....	20/07/2020
† Joseph Kearney SAC (Pallottines).....	15/05/2020
† Wilfred Plunkett (Diocese of Wagga Wagga).....	07/06/2020

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

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Lord, may your love and light shine in and through me today  
in a way that no mask can hide.  
May my eyes dance with laughter and joy,  
replacing my hidden smile.  
May my actions of care and concern  
speak louder than my muffled voice ever could.  
And may the generosity of my heart  
radiate out through who I am  
and how I respond to the world around me,  
so that others may not see my mask  
but your image shining out,  
moving in and through me today. Amen.

*Written on the first day masks became compulsory in Metropolitan Melbourne, by a teacher on bus supervision, who noticed how much is lost from our encounters when our faces are hidden.*

