



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

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ABOUT THE NCP

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

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

James Clarke



Pope Francis has told us that we are no longer in an era of change but that we are in a change of era. His pontificate is a testimony to this statement. Since assuming the “Office of Peter”, Francis has demonstrated his desire for change in line with the reforms of Vatican II. His answer to a question about homosexuality, “Who am I to judge”, sparked off a storm of criticism which stopped short of declaring him to be a heretic. His non-judgemental attitude has extended to other areas of the Church. Including a willingness to expand the priesthood to suitable married men, in the face of a shortage of celibate males, to ensure that the Eucharist is accessible to all people, especially those in remote areas.

His reform agenda has also extended to bringing women into roles of governance within the Church. His appointment of three women to the Congregation of Bishops is ground-breaking. The power

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

of governance is no longer the purview of the ordained. In spite of this, the Holy Father’s reform agenda continues to be resisted. This fact was evident during the final session of the Plenary Council when the Bishops, who have the deliberative vote at the council, refused to ratify the motion on the equality of women and men within the Church.

The reaction from the “floor” was visceral. A silent but respectful protest ensued demonstrating the depth of feeling this decision elicited. Both Francis Sullivan and John Warhurst wrote of their dismay and disappointment at the action of the bishops. Sr Patty Fawkner, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, was more respectful and generous in her description of the event.

This action by the bishops runs contrary to the statement from Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane who has stated that it cannot be business as usual.

A retraction of the original decision ensued after further discussion and an amended version of the original proposal was passed.

However, the question still remains, why did the bishops vote in the way they did? No doubt there were bishops who voted in favour of the original proposal, but they were in the minority. Why does the hierarchy fear the influence of women? We couldn’t operate as effectively without the women who work tirelessly within our parishes as well as within the numerous dioceses and Church organisations across the country.

Perhaps serious discussion surrounding the essence of ordained ministry needs to happen. Instituting a female diaconate is being discussed. What the implications or ramifications of this will be we do not know.

One thing is for certain, we should not be afraid to discuss issues or engage in a robust exchange of ideas. As the late U.S. President, John F. Kennedy said in his inauguration speech, “We will not negotiate out of fear, but we will not fear to negotiate”. Dialogue is and has always been the key.

An era of change and a change of era for NCP



Pope Francis’ statement also relates to the NCP and the future of our organisation.

On the 14th December, Sally and Chris will be retiring from full-time employment after 25 and 19 years’ service. They have generously agreed to continue in 2023 for one day a week while a decision on the future direction of NCP is decided.

In 1998, under the leadership of Gary Russell and Denis Minogue, NCP was entrusted with the annual publication of *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*.

Twenty five editions later, we have now sadly made the huge decision to hand the publication of the directory back to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge the outstanding contribution Sally and Chris have made to our organisation, the Church and its people over the past 25 years.

They have been the driving force of NCP and the publication of *The Official Directory* is a testimony to their skill and dedication to the mission of the Church.

Yours in His Priesthood

James Clarke ☪

Women save the Plenary Council

The event that topped the news from the Plenary Council, especially in the secular press, was the defeat of the motions



pertaining to the recognition of women's equality and inclusion to the full extent permissible. It was striking that these motions, passed by the full assembly, were defeated by more than a third of the bishops and thus were not passed. This was surprising to the Assembly and led to the outpouring of shock and pain. Women and men allies were simply distraught in disbelief.

Unlike the reports in some press articles, these people were not protesting or walking out on the Council. According to those present and standing at the back of the hall supporting one another in shock and grief, they chose to continue to offer support to those visibly upset.

The bishops decided they must respond, and to cut a long story short, they put together an alternative method to decide on these motions that were born of an overwhelming number of submissions and a significant majority of the Council members.

This resulted in a redrafting of the motions to clarify some points and they passed the bishops' vote with very few dissenting.

Without a decisive affirmation of women's ministry in the Catholic church in

Australia and a call to embrace the ministry of women at every level available including ordination to the diaconate, when possible, the entire Plenary would have failed the credibility test not just for women but for all the other good work that the Plenary achieved.

Thus, the women and their allies saved the entire Plenary Council. The fact that the bishops responded with good sense was also crucial but the leadership came from the women and their allies.

The motions that pertain to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and promoting the Uluru Statement, renewal of ministry and liturgical life, governance and faith formation at every level of church life are impressive in their intent. I guess we will see what happens when it comes to implementing these ideas once the final Plenary document is promulgated.

The directions and decisions of the Plenary are not just suggestions. Canon Law requires all dioceses in Australia to implement the duly proclaimed outcomes of a Plenary Council.

However, the way many of the motions are worded, it may be that some dioceses will choose to deem some developments recommended in the Council motions as not "appropriate" or "possible" for them "at this time". This kind of language appears regularly in the document and may lead to limited implementation in the dioceses and parishes.

Council proceedings unmasked the failure of leadership in the Australian

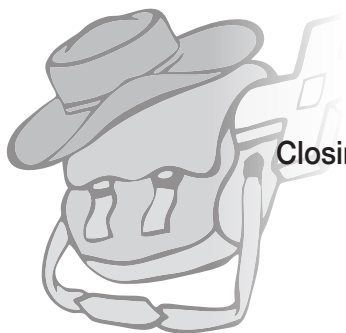
church. Bishops' reluctance to vote for women's equality has left many women and men are saying 'enough is enough'. They are moving on from institutional church which often means the parish. The already diminishing supporters in a parish will only increase. This becomes a further burden for priests who face resignations of volunteers and staff.

Women as a disrupting presence goes back to Jesus' time. His meeting with the woman at the Pharisee's house (Lk 7/36-50) is just one such occasion. The woman was cast as a sinner by the Pharisees but Jesus casts her as righteous (one who has shown great love).

Jesus must have known the woman for her to gain access to the meal. Jesus accepts her care and hospitality without judgement. But the Pharisees experience her as a disruptive influence. She makes them feel uncomfortable. Is it her mere presence, what she is doing or Jesus' ease at being in the woman's company? It is clear they are upset. The woman however never speaks – her silent presence and 'noisy' action is a witness to how to be a disciple of Jesus.

The text reminds of the prophetic role of the women in grieving for Jesus prefiguring his death; the priestly role in anointing him and the royal role in identifying with Jesus who is also a disruptive figure in this story. The manner of women's inclusion in the gospel often underlines the central import of the motions on women and men's equality in the Plenary Council.

☪



The Swag Summer Edition

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editor@theswag.org.au

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Major Features: 1,400 words.



Synodus locuta

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

Massimo Faggioli writes about how the synodal process is speaking through local Churches all over the world. How will Rome respond?
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The relationship between the centre and the peripheries has always been critical in Church history. That's even truer now in the context of the "synodal process". A number of interesting decisions the Vatican has taken recently shows how delicate this moment is for Pope Francis' pontificate.

The first came on June 2 when Bishop Dominique Rey of Fréjus-Toulon announced that the Holy See had suspended this year's ordinations in his French diocese. The Vatican had Cardinal-designate Jean-Marc Aveline of Marseille carry out a "visitation" (inquiry) of the diocese in 2021 and after he submitted his report, it called for the "ordinations to be suspended".

This extremely rare decision was taken at the end of May during a meeting between the prefects of four Vatican dicasteries: Cardinals Marc Ouellet (Bishops), Kevin Farrell (Laity, Family and Life) and João Braz de Aviz (Religious), as well as Cardinal-designate Lazarus You Heung-sik (Clergy). There was concern over Bishop Rey's longstanding practice of ordaining seminarians trained outside the diocese and coming from traditionalist groups and communities.

Reining in the movements

The second decision came on June 10 when Cardinal Farrell sent to a letter to Communion and Liberation (CL) warning them against distorting the charism of the movement. It was the latest chapter in tensions that have been mounting between this post-Vatican II

group and the Argentine pope who, paradoxically, is culturally closer to CL than to any other of the new ecclesial groups and communities.

The next big Vatican decision came on June 15 when Cardinal Braz's office published a rescript that Francis had approved during a February 7 meeting with the cardinal and his deputy, Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo OFM.

It changed Church law so that from now diocesan bishops must obtain a "written license" from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life before establishing pious associations of faithful. It is another step to rein in new religious groups in the Catholic Church after their unregulated proliferation in recent decades led to abuses in governance that allowed spiritual and sexual misconduct to go unchecked.

And the most recent significant Vatican move came on June 15 when Cardinal Farrell's dicastery published a 103-page document (for now only in Italian and Spanish) called "Catechumenal Itineraries for Married Life".

The difficult transition to a synodal Church

What do all these steps have in common? They show how difficult the transition is from a monarchical and centralized model of the Church to a synodal one. The suspension of the ordinations in Fréjus-Toulon shows that Rome will no longer turn a blind eye to dioceses who are offering a safe haven to individuals and groups with traditionalist tendencies (parallel universes that have often damaged the communion of the local Church).

At the same time, it also shows a paradox: the Vatican's willingness to intervene to protect a healthy and safe dynamic in the local Churches and in lay movements. Rome has been given more powers as a result of the sex abuse crisis, and it is not afraid of using them.

But these cases also demonstrate how

difficult it is to apply synodality to the day-to-day relations between the Roman and clerical centres of the Church and the non-clerical, non-Roman parts of it.

The "Catechumenal Itineraries for Married Life" is a case in point. This document is the fruit of the reception of Francis' 2016 apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, which followed the Synod of Bishops' assemblies in 2014 and 2015. But it's not clear how or if it reflects the views of these who participated in the Synod assembly of 2018, which focused on "Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment".

Either the young people who attended that gathering were not listened to, or they were listened to very selectively. There's also the possibility that the youths who were invited were not representative of their peers who are Catholics, former Catholics, and non-Catholics.

When and how does Church authority intervene?

Synodality is about listening and walking together, and the question posed by these latest decisions that Rome has made is this: when and how is the episcopal or papal authority supposed to intervene and make the final discernment?

The Vatican's current handling of the spiritual and ecclesial movements repeats the playbook followed for centuries, and it is not clear how synodality can change the relationship between centre and periphery. We are in uncharted territory with synodality, and we're still exploring how we can create a proper synodal dynamic in the Catholic Church.

In his conversation with the editors of the European Jesuit periodicals, published on June 14 by the Vatican-vetted *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Francis made an eyebrow-raising joke about the German "Synodal Path".

Keeping it Catholic

To the president of the German Episcopal Conference, Bishop Bätzing, I said: "In Germany there is a very good Evangelical Church. We don't need two", the pope told the editors. "The problem arises when the synodal

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path comes from the intellectual, theological elites, and is much influenced by external pressures,” he warned. But then he added: “There are some dioceses where the synodal way is being developed with the faithful, with the people, slowly.”

The German “Synodal Path” has become – also in the eyes of Pope Francis – the symbol of an uncontrolled way to go about synodality that risks becoming non-Catholic. The fact is that what the members of the “Synodal Path” have discussed and voted in favour of in Germany is not entirely different from what is being discussed and approved in other countries where synodality is finally taking off.

Just look at what both lay people and the bishops are discussing in Australia, France, Spain and India.

It’s not the same as the German synod, but not entirely different, either. The issues are the same – the role of the laity, the ministry of women, the formation

of the clergy, etc... No doubt, the proposals may differ. But they do not diverge dramatically.

However, some of these proposals might not please the pope.

What will Rome do with the synodal responses?

The increasingly globalized composition of the College of Cardinals, the consistory of the end of August, and the reform of the Roman Curia are important developments for the path of the Church in the near future.

But the real question is what Rome will make of these synodal movements that have been inspired by Francis himself. Which proposals will it accept and allow to be applied at the universal level (the whole Catholic Church)? Which ones will be allowed in this or that country? Which ones will be ignored or prohibited?

The Vatican will have to engage with

these proposals at some point – either at the next assembly of the Synod in October 2023 or later. As the old adage goes, *Roma locuta, causa finita* – “Rome has spoken, the discussion is over”.

But synodality could change this in ways that we cannot clearly see at this point. The early centuries were in some sense the golden (and often romanticized) age of synodality. Synods and councils spoke with more authority than Rome. The current “synodal process” has given the local Churches an opportunity to find their voices again. Some places have already begun to find theirs; others will do so sooner or later.

The future of the Catholic Church in entire countries will be decided by Rome’s response to the synodal events. This will be even more consequential than the outcome of the next conclave, whenever that will be. But it could make a big difference whether Rome’s response rests with Francis or his successor. ✨



Benedictine sister challenges Catholics to step up and speak up!

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AUSTRALIA

Sister Joan Chittister OSB visited Australia in July and offered a day in Parramatta for religious and priests.

This report is reprinted with the permission of Catholic Religious Australia.



“You have to stop sitting there with your jaw loose, hoping that somebody else will say something important... You must speak up.”

With a tremendous buzz in the air, Joan Chittister OSB unfurled her call to action to 160 Religious and clergy who gathered in Parramatta (NSW) for her presentation, “Roots and Wings:

The Emergence of a Synodal Church”, an event co-sponsored by Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) and the Diocese of Parramatta.

Sr Joan is an American Benedictine nun, theologian, internationally renowned author and speaker. She is also an outspoken advocate of justice, peace and equality, especially for women worldwide, and has been one of America’s visionary spiritual voices for more than 30 years.

That visionary voice was in full flight at Parramatta as she worked her way through the major themes and documents of the Second Vatican Council, citing the liberating movements, so long overdue, that were unleashed by the authority of a General Ecumenical Council and the Holy Spirit.

“People do not belong to the Church, they are the Church”, Chittister reminded her audience, impressing on them that the believer has both the right and a duty to use their gifts in the Church.

In a similar vein, she described how Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation unleashed the energy of Scripture on what had become an overly ‘catechetical’ Catholic landscape. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy moved us from attending “Father’s Mass” to participating in the worship of the community.

Other Council documents called ordained ministers to be deeply ‘familied’ rather than set apart, to be mature leaders and not ‘altar boys’. Teachings such as the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Decree on Ecumenism, and the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, moved us from being a Catholic ‘ghetto’ to being a Church engaged with society’s multi-cultural, multi-faith and myriad other

complexities, seeking healing, justice, reconciliation and unity.

Again and again, Sr Joan circled back to the central challenge for her audience. Synodality, she insisted, requires your voice and experience. “You must speak up! You are the angel carriers [of the Council’s dreams and plans.] If you don’t do it, not only will it not be done,

you will have been, this time, at fault.”

“Joan doesn’t pull any punches,” commented Anne Walker, CRA’s National Executive Director. “Her speaking circuit these past weeks has provided a fitting stimulus for Catholics in this time of synodality consultations and Plenary Council discussions.”

In Sr Joan’s use of imagery, we the Church

need “roots” (tradition, rather than traditionalism), just as we need “wings” – the courage to take initiative and move forward with the developments that the Church itself mandated nearly 60 years ago. She added, “At Vatican II, the Church told us what the Church wanted to be. And told us to make it so.”

May we make it so! ☺



What is it about women and the Church?

PATTY FAWKNER SGS

Patty Fawkner SGS, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, was a member of the Plenary Council. She reflects on the experience of women and the process of the Council. This article was published in the July 2022 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-magazine of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and is republished with permission.



the equal dignity of women and men, and so enhance the role of women in Church leadership and governance.

On the third day of the Assembly, the vote on Part 4 of the Motions and Amendments document, Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men, failed to reach the required two-thirds majority. This evoked in many women and men, lay and clergy, feelings of shock, disbelief, anger and frustration. These weren’t my feelings.

I felt a profound visceral sadness.

I was deeply saddened by the fact that it was mostly women who spoke against suggestions for a more inclusive role for women. Any talk of greater engagement of women in leadership and governance roles was interpreted as a push for ‘power’, a push for ordination. The use of the ‘o’ word, in any context, spooked some Members.

Over the days of the Assembly, no-one, I repeat no-one, lobbied for women’s ordination to the priesthood. A proposed amendment that it merely be recorded that Members had heard the frustration and disappointment about women’s exclusion from ordination was too much for some. A simple acknowledgement of women’s experience was expunged.

I was also saddened by the realisation of the untold damage that the failure to endorse the introductory statement in the motion on Witnessing to the Equal

Dignity of Women and Men would cause to many people, and to the reputation of our Australian Church.

Bad news for women and men

To leave the Plenary Council without any statement on women would have been a monumental mistake.

Bad news travels fast. Within a few hours of the failed vote, I received numerous messages of disbelief from international friends.

Even though an eventual positive Decree on women was enthusiastically endorsed on the last full day of the Plenary Council, this hasn’t cut through in some quarters. As is often the way, the subsequent good news has been, and may continue to be, drowned out by the initial outrage.

Much has been written about the ‘protest’ following the Bishops’ deliberative vote on Part 4 and the morning tea break. Various media reported that some Members walked out, had colluded in initiating a protest and had done so with disrespect. Not true. It was more of a spontaneous reaction of ‘we’ve got to do something’ that took off as Members began returning to the hall. More than 60 of us stood in respectful silence at the back of the hall and took our seats once invited to do so.

Like the bewildered Emmaus disciples, “we had hoped” (Lk 24:21) but ...

A decisive moment for the Council

This protest was the moment, the precarious and pivotal moment, of the Assembly.

Those leading the process that day did exactly that – they pivoted. They knew

Throughout the Second Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Australian Catholic Church, we learnt from experience that synodality is not for the faint hearted, writes Patty Fawkner SGS.

During the Assembly, which was held in Sydney from July 3-9, the response by Members to the cry of our Indigenous sisters and brothers was uncompromised and magnanimous. The response to the cry of those abused by the Church was heartfelt and generous. The response to the cry of the earth was a forward-looking commitment.

The response to the cry for women to be treated with equal dignity in the Church? This was confused and lukewarm.

What is it about women and the Church?

In previous editions of *The Good Oil*, I have spoken about women and the Church, and expressed hope that the Fifth Plenary Council would endorse

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FEATURES

we couldn't proceed with business as usual. With agility and flexibility, they suspended the agenda – a brave move in an already packed schedule.

The process was changed to adopt (dare I use the buzzword?) a more 'synodal' process, a more collegial and intentional walking together process. Various meetings occurred over lunch, the results of which were reported back to the Assembly, a writing group was commissioned to rework a motion on women, and, significantly, more time was spent on consensus building before proceeding to a vote.

From a depressive and despondent mood in the morning you could feel the communal spirit lift as the afternoon wore on.

The resulting Decree on the equal dignity of women and men, though not vastly different in intent from the original motion, had in many ways been strengthened. The Church committed itself unequivocally "to enhancing the role of women in the Church, and to overcoming assumptions, culture, practices and language that lead to inequality".

The inclusion of the words "culture" and "language" was balm to my wounded spirit.

What was achieved

Women's "frustration and disappointment" that there were barriers to them offering "their gifts in service of the Gospel" was finally acknowledged. The contentious motion of admitting women to the diaconate was bolstered to say that the Australian Church would not merely consider this, but would "examine how best to implement it", should 'Rome' so authorise.

Members agreed that women be "appropriately represented in decision-making structures" at all levels of Church life. "Appropriately" allows some concerning 'wiggle room' as I'm pretty sure that it won't be women who will be the arbiters of appropriateness! However, my overall assessment is that the final Decree on women is neither confused nor lukewarm.

That notwithstanding, some will view the Decree as giving women a few crumbs from the ecclesiastical table, or the Church playing catch-up with the norms of society. However, I believe that the Decree Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men is truly significant for both the Australian and Universal Church. Obviously, as was often repeated, there is more to be done, but the Plenary Council has developed

a positive agenda upon which to build.

It occurs to me that if the issue of women had not been satisfactorily resolved during the Second Assembly, a polarised Australian Church was on the cards.

New thinking required

In his wonderful book, *Let us Dream* (p77-78), Francis says that "our main task ... is not to disengage from polarisation but to engage with conflict and disagreement in ways that prevent us from descending into polarisation. This means resolving division by allowing for new thinking that can transcend that division."

Thus, the 'winner' from the Australian Catholic Church's Plenary Council is Pope Francis and his commitment to synodality. Members of the Plenary Council learnt from experience that synodality is not for the faint hearted and that real tensions are inherent in a true synodal journey.

They also experienced the traits of synodality: collaboration, inclusion, listening to all the voices, and consensus building. Above all, the Members 'dared to dream'. ☺

It didn't have to be so painful

JOHN CROTHERS

John Crothers, retired Sydney priest, comments on the motions on women's contribution at the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council.

The Australian bishops showed their true colours on Day 4 of the Plenary Council when they scuttled two motions dealing with the equality and dignity of women in the Church. Both motions received the necessary two thirds majority in the consultative vote (all members, excluding the bishops), but neither received a two thirds majority in the bishops' vote.

The result was greeted with shock, anger and tears, so much so, that a group of women (supported by some of the male Council members, including two bishops)

staged a silent protest by refusing to take their seats at the start of the next session.

As a result, a decision was made to revise the motions, so that a second vote could be taken. There was no substantial change to the content of either motion, but thankfully the two revised motions passed with a two thirds majority in both the consultative vote and the bishops' vote.

The bishops didn't give any reason why they failed to pass the motions the first time, or indeed why they changed their vote. This was unfortunate for two reasons.



Firstly, it reinforced the perception that the bishops lack transparency in their dealings with the broader Church. After the Royal Commission there was a growing sense that the hierarchy would be more open and accountable. But it appears that nothing has changed.

The other unfortunate consequence of the bishops' silence is that we have no idea why they changed their position.

If they had been willing to share their concerns, it could have been a catalyst for dialogue and understanding. Sadly, all we can do now is guess.

Did the bishops who initially voted against the motions have an overnight conversion experience? Or was it just a pragmatic decision so that the Council could move on with other business? Or was the media attention, both locally and internationally, a factor? We will never know.

What we do know, however, is that the bishops' negative attitude towards women's greater participation in Church ministry runs deep, even to the point of not supporting an initiative of the Pope. (The second motion asked the bishops to be open to the introduction of women deacons, should the Pope allow it.)

I have often wondered why this negativity exists, and why our bishops can't be more supportive of women in their quest for full participation in the

life of the Church. Surely it is something to celebrate, not begrudge.

In my 37 years as a priest, I have heard many talks and homilies given by bishops. I have been involved in many discussions with them at clergy conferences, seminars and elsewhere. But never once have I heard a bishop advocate on behalf of women. Never once have I heard a bishop support greater involvement of women in ministry.

I do understand that where there are theological or doctrinal issues involved, the situation is more complex.

But at the Plenary Council the two motions in question included no issues of this kind. It was a perfect opportunity to show real support for the dignity of women and their role in the Church, especially as the rest of the Council members, both lay and clergy, had given their overwhelming support to both motions.

Of course, in changing their position,

the bishops did make an important statement, joining the other Council members in expressing support for women's greater participation in the life of the Church. I don't wish to downplay the significance of that in any way.

But it didn't have to be so difficult. It didn't have to cause so much hurt to so many people. It didn't have to make so many women feel even more excluded than they already do.

It could have been a moment of healing, a moment of true synodality, with laity and clergy 'walking together and listening to each other,' as Pope Francis likes to put it.

While we may never know for sure, perhaps the whole saga has had a positive effect on the bishops. Perhaps it was indeed a moment of conversion. Perhaps in the change of vote, there was also some change of heart.

I hope and pray it was the case. ☪



A suggestion for the Liturgy of the Word

PETER CULLINANE

Peter Cullinane, first bishop of the Diocese of Palmerston North, NZ. Now retired, he continues to be a respected writer and leader of retreats and is still busy at local, national and international levels. He writes to suggest a more engaging way to celebrate the Word that touches people's lives. Reprinted with permission. First published in www.cathnews.co.nz June 16th, 2022.

We have come a long way since the liturgy of the word was that part of the Mass we could miss and still fulfill our Sunday obligation! It was the next part of the Mass that mattered because the presence of Christ in the Sacrament was so special.

But nearly 60 years after the Second Vatican Council, have we fully taken on board its teaching that "when the scriptures are proclaimed in the assembly, it is Christ who is speaking to his people" (SC.7).

Would I be looking around for a seat during the readings if I really believed Christ was speaking to me? Wouldn't that stop me in my tracks?

Take heart: the difficulty is partly due to the way the scriptures are presented to us in the Mass – as a set of "readings".



They can seem unfamiliar, and not 'us'. Even the Gospel comes across as another "reading", about what happened a long time ago.

Presented as 'readings', the scriptures cannot have the impact on us they are intended to have. People, often parents, tell us that the liturgy of the word isn't "connecting". But we just carry on.

Is there a case for doing things differently?

The first need is for on-going formation concerning how the scriptures speak to us.

They invite us to see how God has been present in other people's lives – in their joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments.

And because God's ways are not our ways, we learn to expect the unexpected – God turning ordinary human history into salvation history.

Having learned how to notice God's presence in other people's lives, we find it easier to notice how the same God is present in our own lives – salvation history continued. When we see that, we live with a hope that is greater than every set-back.

Noticing how God is present, and making connections, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearers of God's word.

But the Spirit is also working through the readers. Readers are not reading a mere record of things said and done in the past, but are fronting a live presentation.

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We need to transition from the idea of 'reading' to the idea of 'speaking' – "Christ is speaking to his people".

How do we read the scriptures?

So, it is for the readers to bring the scriptures to life by the way they read – engaging those present and drawing them into the scenes depicted in the readings. It requires of readers a sense of the wonder and the drama of God among us.

However, even the readers' best efforts do not easily engage a congregation. Something else needs to happen for the hearers. There is too big a gap between how the liturgy is meant to function and where many in the congregation are 'at'.

The need to bridge that gap justifies other ways of drawing people into the scriptures; more personalised ways of learning how to 'notice' God's presence in the scriptures and in their own lives. There is a way this could be done, even if only on an interim basis – until people are more practised in knowing what to look for.

So, first a word of assurance to any who might be concerned about seeming departures from the rubrics.

Development of liturgical practice

Moral theology and personal moral development come into this. Changes that deflect from the meaning of a given part of the Mass are not acceptable.

But adaptations that better bring out its meaning actually help to fulfil the purpose intended by the rubrics.

At the early stages of our moral development, we depend mainly on the letter of the law because we have not yet grasped its underlying purpose. We gradually grow to understand what the law is intended to achieve.

Whether by following the rubric, or by appropriate adaptation, we fulfil the law by fulfilling its purpose. We fail to fulfil the law if we obscure or hinder its purpose, even if this is done by rigidly putting the letter of the law above its purpose, its intent, its "spirit".

As for due reverence, there are, of course, different kinds of reverence: eg. the reverence proper at a grave-side; the reverence proper to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, etc.

The kind of reverence proper to liturgy is that which deepens the more we become alive to Christ's real presence – in the congregation ("where two or three are gathered..."); in the word (where "Christ is speaking to his people" – present tense); in the ministry of those ordained to act in the name of Christ; and especially in the Sacrament (Second Vatican Council, SC. 7).

These different manifestations of Christ's real presence invite different ways of responding. The appropriate way of responding is the appropriate way of being reverent.

With these assurances, we can now turn to how we might enable the liturgy of the word to more effectively achieve its purpose.

We encounter Christ in both word and sacrament

There is a paradigm for this in St Luke's Easter story about the two disciples "on the road" who were "talking about all that had happened" and were down-hearted, (Lk 24:13-35). Then Jesus "drew near" – his presence was real, but seeing him was different now: "something prevented them from recognising him".

Then "He explained the meaning of the scriptures to them."

Later, they would say "were not our hearts burning within us as He talked to us on the road".

But that was after their encounter had deepened: "their eyes were opened and they recognised him... in the breaking of the bread".

St Luke is telling us that, through word and sacrament, they discovered He was alive and present to them. That is the discovery his disciples today need to make.

Our celebrations of Eucharist bring together word and sacrament: "... as once for his disciples, so now for us, He opens the scriptures and breaks the bread" (Eucharistic Prayer, Various Needs, 4).

So how can we make our liturgy of the word more like the discussion on the road in which He drew near and explained, and they knew He was there with them? Somehow, the bigger the congregation the less it feels like that!

How can we make our celebrations of Eucharist more like the experience on the road to Emmaus?

A new way to celebrate the Word

In a post-covid world/Church – and with much-needed liturgy formation – we could slightly re-format the liturgy of the word.

After a short penitential rite and opening prayer to give unity to the gathering, the congregation could turn – with minimal noise and movement – to those around them, (preferably on chairs facing in towards each other) where the scriptures for the day would be quietly and carefully read, prayerfully listened to, reflected on, and applied to our present lives.

After approx. 20 minutes, the small groups would form one group again for the "breaking of the bread", starting with the Creed.

(The rubrics allow omission of the homily for a sufficiently good reason; the need being addressed here give us that reason. We still have readers: on these occasions the readers are many.)

Although this formatting of Sunday Mass is a very minor "change", some Catholics might find it too unfamiliar. It need not be done at every Mass, or It could be done on alternate Sundays.

Importantly, this is not "discussion groups". It is the congregation actively tuning in to the scriptures: after the scripture is read, each individual has the opportunity to name a phrase or sentence that "spoke" to them.

Further comments would be limited to what can be said in less than one minute so that everyone would spend six to ten times more listening than speaking. And when speaking, it is to name how we feel encouraged, or challenged, by the scriptures we have just now heard. Through our personal witness, the word is being echoed. Pauses for silence are OK! Initial awkwardness would gradually give way to ease.

Many parishes have parishioners who have skills in adult learning processes, group facilitation etc, who could further advise on how to prepare parishioners for this form of breaking open the word.

Even shy parishioners could be encouraged by realising that this way

of opening the scriptures makes it easier to relate them to each one's life than can be managed from the lectern. It is a way of actively tuning in that accords with the purpose of the "readings".

A deeper real presence

The on-going discovery of how Christ is present in our lives doesn't stop with ourselves: "On their arrival (in Antioch), Paul and Barnabas assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them..." (Acts 14:27).

What Paul and Barnabas did in their assemblies is what we would be doing in ours. Sharing how we have known God's presence in our own lives deepens our relationship with one another (builds up the body of Christ); and develops our ability to speak with other people about how to work for a better world (mission).

My hunch is that those Catholics who find Sunday Mass "boring" would be less likely to do so if they discovered Christ the way the disciples on the road to Emmaus discovered him.

Meeting Christ is the experience that changes everything, and without which nothing changes! If we can 'do' the liturgy of the word better, have we any right not to?

There is an element of inconvenience involved in this suggestion.

So, it is also my hunch that this proposal will be popular with those who want to get more from the liturgy of the word; and unpopular with those who want to get the Mass over.

(To the credit of both, they are present; by definition, liturgy involves community and our own real presence. Virtual presence can help our private devotion, but does not substitute for liturgy.)

In the meantime, it would also help if readers honoured the difference between reading and proclaiming.

The previous English translation taught them to say "This is the word of the Lord" (which could mean, a record of what He has said – past tense).

The current translation requires them, after pausing long enough to get attention, to say: "The word of the Lord!" (i. e. hark! The Lord is saying this to us – present tense). ☪

Eric Hodgens Vale

JOHN HANNON

John Hannon, Parish Priest of St Therese's Essendon, Archdiocese of Melbourne, shares memories of Eric Hodgens, Melbourne priest, who contributed regularly to *The Swag*. Eric died on May 25, 2022 aged 86 years.



In my distant memory, when in 1960, I was a grade 2 student at St James's Primary School in Gardenvale, I have a vague recollection of a newly ordained priest coming to visit the school and talk to us. I also have a similar recollection from 1959, in Grade 2, when Michael Parer likewise had come back to his old parish. The first mentioned must have been Eric Hodgens, although I couldn't remember his name that far back. At the time, Paul Willy, of YCW fame, was the parish curate, and much later Brighton postman! I certainly can remember his friendly and engaging nature, coming to talk to us, and giving me a kick of the footy at Elsternwick oval, as I had no interest in violent engagement of contact sport, being one of the smallest in the class!

My first personal encounter with Father Eric Hodgens was only by phone, in late 1969, when I had just turned 17, having completed Matriculation. I expressed to my concerned parents, a wish to enter the diocesan seminary at Corpus Christi Werribee, in order to study for the diocesan priesthood. Mum had recently done a primary catechist's course in the parish, and she suggested I talk with the priest who had given the talks, as she thought he made a lot of sense, and could perhaps talk me out of going into the seminary at such a young age.

And so I rang Eric, who, believe it or not, was about to embark on his first, but certainly not last, overseas trip, so he passed the buck to his companion Father Tom Doyle, as both were sharing a house in Flemington, whilst pursuing fill-time studies at Melbourne University, with the approval of then Archbishop James Knox.

I met with Tom, and he firmly recommended I gain some broader experience by attending Melbourne University at least for 1970. With some reluctance, I recall, I agreed to do so, and completed the first year of a science degree. During that year, I met up with Eric and Tom at their home, after lectures, and helped as a St Vincent de Paul volunteer at Ozanam House, next door.

A pastoral heart and an intellectual

Eric recommended me to do some wider reading, and my eyes were opened to the complexities and intrigues of Church history, the book being *The Papacy in the Modern World* by Karl von Aretin. Meanwhile, I remember complaining to him about what I considered an unfair mark in a Psychology I lab report, as he was a tutor in the department at the time. No change was made!

From there, Eric completed his Arts Degree and Diploma of Criminology, then obtained an MA in 1972, the title of his thesis being *The Discipline of Priestly Life*, wherein he examined the changing priesthood in the post-Vatican II Church, with extensive research of diocesan and religious order priests throughout Australia. It was also a sociological project, looking at the broader Church as well, and the changing attitudes of Catholics, engaging with the modern world.

Meanwhile, I had entered the seminary in 1971, spending 2 years at Werribee, before the new regime was instituted at Corpus Christi Clayton, the objective being two-fold, to engage students being two-fold, to engage students preparing for priesthood with a less

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monastic regime, and with increased pastoral involvement in parish life along the way, as well as an opportunity being provided, for students to pursue an Arts degree at nearby Monash University. And, coincidentally, Tom Doyle was appointed first academic dean at Catholic Theological College, newly established, and attached to the seminary campus, with Father Kevin Mogg, also recently deceased this year, as the first diocesan priest rector.

Parish priest

Having completed his university studies, Eric was a mobile curate, being moved from West Preston to Elwood to East Melbourne, in short time, prior to being appointed the founding parish priest of what was to become Holy Saviour Parish, North Glen Waverley, in January 1974, at the age of 39, 14 years after his ordination in August 1960. He was given the task of building a parish community, with 9 acres of vacant land, and residency in the Glen Waverley presbytery. He purchased a house within the new parish in Crusader Crescent, and the action took off from there, building first community, and then planning for a primary school, then presbytery and parish facilities with Mass centre.

Eric consulted his new parishioners, researched demographics, and then proceeded with plans to establish a vibrant and thriving faith community, school being opened in 1977 at what was then More College, then moving to the new facilities on the parish site later that year.

A mentor

On a personal note, I had completed a Science degree from the seminary, and had decided to take a year off to consider my future in 1976, when I completed an Honours degree in Chemistry, living back at home with my family. It was at the end of that year that I ran into Eric, who suggested I come and work with him at Holy Saviour, if I was to continue to priesthood, which I ultimately decided to do, given I hadn't found a potential partner and chemistry was too dangerous for me!!

And so our friendship and working relationship developed over that year of 1977, where he had me organising a parish youth group and also, of all

things, a parish choir, even though I couldn't sing, but could play the piano!

The parish centre was opened officially in November 1977, and I was ordained a deacon there a week later. In that year, Eric gave me great insights into pastoral care, general ministry and preaching. He had the primary school staff meeting with him regularly, to discuss church history, art and the like, to broaden their vision as well. The parish continued to thrive and grow, almost exponentially, as the school population exceeded something like 600 by mid-1985, expanding with portable classrooms beyond the central core, as Eric had projections of the changing demographics all through, always planning for the future.

During that time, in 1977, Eric was also appointed as Director of Pastoral Formation for Priests in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, a task he took to with energy, flair and determination. From 1977 to 1983, he co-ordinated in-service training for priests, engaging the top scripture scholars from around the English speaking world, well known names from the Scripture commentaries. To name a few, they ranged from Eugene Laverdiere to Jerome Murphy O'Connor to Raymond Brown; then there was Ron Lewinski, an expert in the field of RCIA, the Champlin brothers, in the field of marriage preparation and parish renewal. The seminars organised were run over 2 weeks, and provided much appreciated input for the local clergy, who learned much from these conferences, as well as the camaraderie which went along with it all.

Encouraging involvement of all

Eric also revelled in the field of IT, even writing his own parish database programs, and was at the cutting edge of computer technology, as it rapidly developed through the 1980's and 1990's. He engaged, encouraged and delegated his parishioners all the way through his parish life. In particular, he encouraged capable women to step up in their roles in parish ministry, and for many to pursue further studies in theology and ministry, such that up to 10 parishioners graduated with Theology degrees over the years he was there.

In January 1993, after nearly 20 years of building the parish community at

Holy Saviour, Eric accepted a move to St Bede's Parish, North Balwyn, where he continued parish pastoral ministry until his retirement in 2007. Following this, he continued to read widely and write regularly on contemporary issues relating to faith, life, and the Catholic Church and its place in the modern world. He was always thoughtful and challenging, speaking truth to power, as they say, without fear or favour.

Coincidentally, along with some encouragement, I accepted appointment as Eric's successor at Holy Saviour on 17th March 1993, and for the next 5 years, worked at keeping up the spirit of engagement and involvement of parishioners, while I continued lecturing in Canon Law and working in the Melbourne Tribunal. The way in which Eric had set up the parish and enabled parishioners to take responsibility for many and varied ministries, meant that I could continue to enable others to support me, as Eric had, in providing pastoral and sacramental preparation and care.

Eric had an engaging personality and a great sense of humour, but could be a little abrasive at times, particularly when it came to dealing with lack of common sense, refusal to be open to change, or resistance to knowledge, interpretation and subtlety!

Further interests

Skiing and travel were passions of the younger and older Eric as well. It was he who led me astray on the ski slopes of Vail, Colorado, in January 1989, where I did a head over heels tumble to snap my ACL, a la AFL footballers! The hip replacement came later in 2004!! All thanks to Eric, and his enthusiastic encouragement, but all worthwhile too!! He came to my doctoral defence in Canon Law in March 1986, in Ottawa, Canada, as a support, not to forget the fringe benefit of snow skiing there as well!

Eric was a great long term friend and mentor to so many, in addition to being a loving brother, brother-in-law, uncle and great uncle in his own family. Farewell, Eric, faithful servant of God, as priest, pastor and friend. Thanks for the many happy memories, good times and the friendship and fun throughout a life lived so well. We won't forget you!
☺

As Christians we are called to create a community of radical inclusion

PATTY FAWKNER SGS

A “preferential option for the other” is at the heart of the Gospel, and what it means to be Christian, while also offering a fresh way of thinking about love, writes Patty Fawkner SGS, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. This article was published in the May 2022 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-magazine of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Republished with permission: www.goodsams.org.au



On a recent Zoom session on Interculturality I encountered the phrase “preferential option for the other”. I was familiar with the notion of “preferential option for the poor”, a key tenet of Catholic Social Teaching, but had never heard of “preferential option for the other”, and neither had Google so it seems when I did a search!

I contacted the presenter and discovered that the phrase was coined by missionary anthropologist Anthony Gittins in his book *Living Mission Interculturally*. Gittins builds on the notion of “option for the other in their otherness” developed by German theologian Johann Metz.

A “preferential option for the other” is at the heart of the Gospel, and what it means to be Christian, while also offering a fresh way of thinking about love.

Caring for the foreigner and stranger – the “other” – is a basic tenet of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

The Hebrew people are constantly reminded that they who were once strangers in a foreign land, now have an obligation to generously welcome the stranger (Deut 10:17-19). And Jesus invites his followers to be neighbour to any stranger or foreign other in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Christian theology asks us to see Christ in the stranger: “I was a stranger and you invited me in”. You did this whenever you did it for another (Matt 25: 35, 40). However, Gittins says that there is more to Jesus’ teaching in welcoming the stranger. “To show hospitality to the stranger is to identify the other as stranger and oneself as host – a position of superiority and control,” he says.

Christian theology also invites us to see Christ as the stranger, the one “came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11).

Recognising God as stranger to us, helps us resist the temptation to domesticate God, as St Augustine reminds us, “if we have understood – then what we have understood is not God.”

God is always Gracious Mystery and Intimate Other

While Gittins is specifically concerned with the “otherness” experienced in intercultural missionary communities, it occurs to me that a “preferential option for the other” has principled and pragmatic implications for any communal setting such as family, church, or workplace. Gittins says we experience community in three different ways: a community of invitation, a community of inclusion, and a community of radical welcome.

An example of a community of invitation is a country which welcomes migrants who are expected to fully assimilate and adopt the cultural norms of the host country. The onus is fully on invitees to adapt and change.

An invitation to be part of a community can be readily withdrawn if the invitees do not fully inculcate the cultural norms of the host; non-conformism will result in marginalisation.

Of course, some people will never be invited to join a particular community,

because “we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come,” and if you come by boat, the invitation will never be yours.

A community of inclusion may honour diversity and, in terms of the Australian community, be committed to multiculturalism. In practice, however, the norms of the dominant culture prevail.

Whoever is not mainstream can be forced out eventually

I heard a story of an international student from Saudi Arabia who studied in the US. Having finished his studies, the student visited the program co-ordinator and handed her a locked suitcase and key. The student said that he was going back to Saudi Arabia later that day and he wanted the co-ordinator to open the suitcase after he had left.

Opening the case later, the co-ordinator was shocked and saddened to find that the case was filled with Saudi Arabian gifts which the student planned to give when he was invited into an American home. During the five years of his studies, he never received one invitation!

A further heartbreaking example occurred recently on the Ukraine/Poland border, where it was reported that people of colour were denied the right to cross to safety. Polish officials have denied this as “fake news”.

There are always lines in the sand in communities of invitation and inclusion. You are included if . . .

Any minority group lives under a cloud of potential exclusion

Fr Ronald Rolheiser OMI says that “For all sorts of pragmatic reasons, political, social, economic, and security, we can perhaps justify not welcoming the stranger; but we can never justify this on Christian grounds.”

Gittins’ third type of community is a community of radical welcome where each is host and each is “other”. I realise that if I am mutually open to the “other” and enter their world, my world will inevitably change. The burden of change, of conversion, rests on all members of the community.

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What might a community of radical inclusion look like? Writing in the 6th Century, St Benedict gives us some descriptors. In chapter 72, the penultimate chapter of his Rule, Benedict is at his most inspired. Members of the community, he says: should each try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behaviour, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else. (Rule of Benedict 72:4-7)

If I wish to create a community of radical inclusion, I must embark on a journey of conversion which is a pathway of love.

How would it be if I thought of love as a "preferential option for the other"? True love is beyond infatuation and beyond romanticism. True love requires a de-centering of myself and my own preference. As Liberation Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez says, rediscovering the other means moving beyond a "world on inward-looking absorption with self" and entering into the world of the other.

This is truly radical and truly an ideal presented to us by Jesus. How can I live up to this ideal? I can't on my own. I am only able to have a preferential for the other, because of the grace which flows from the Eternal Word who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7) for us. Perhaps I can live up to the ideal by preferencing one other at a time.

A "preferential option for the other" is the hallmark of a community of radical inclusion. In such a community, love will always mean saying sorry. In such a community, sure, I will back self-interest, but equally and mutually, I will back the interest of the "other". ☺



Making Census of our new found non-belief

PETER DAY

Peter Day, Canberra priest, reflects on the de-coupling of society from its Christian roots. Beware the civilization that stands on the trampled corpse of its foundations and boasts how tall it is.

"God is dead, God is dead!"
A new Enlightenment has dawned.
Bow to its three pillars:
Reason, Science, Humanism.

"God is dead, God is dead!"
Science is the Way, the Truth,
and the Life.
All reality is material – cast away
the transcendent.

"God is dead, God is dead!"
No more Christmases: Reason is
now the *reason for the Season*.

No more Easters: only Science can
be raised and exalted, not a man.

"God is dead, God is dead!"
No visiting the sick in the name of Christ.
No washing the feet of the poor in the
name of Christ.

"God is dead, God is dead!"
No more mystics. No more poets.
No more miracles. No more Soul.

"God is dead, God is dead!" Amen.
Amen. (*apologies to Friedrich Nietzsche*)

Slowly but surely Australia, like all western countries, is de-coupling itself from its Christian roots. Our latest Census (2021) has revealed that 40% of citizens recorded no religious affiliation – that's up almost 30% on the 2016 Census.

Whatever about our personal belief systems, ideologies, political leanings; since Emperor Constantine's embrace of Christianity in the 4th century, the West has been soaking in a Judeo-Christian marinade. And while its flavours are certainly not to everyone's taste, to deny its pervasive and transformative reach and impact is at best careless, at worst ideological disinformation and propaganda.

C S Lewis's critique of post-World War II Europe seems germane. Writing in the *Abolition of Man* he lamented that Western society was denying the sources of virtue and wisdom while expecting people to go on being virtuous and wise. "We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful," he quipped

Similarly, the overarching narrative today, especially within the humanities and the commentariat, is to treat our Judeo-Christian heritage with disdain while assuming that the virtues it has produced will endure. This is not to say, of course, that our heritage doesn't have its pathologies; all human enterprises do. Nor is it about hankering for the so called "good old days!" But while none of us can 'live in the past, the past sure



lives in us'. And, while the West, like the individual, can tend towards tyranny and sin – think institutionalised slavery; it also has the capacity to self-correct, to repent and redeem – think the abolition of slavery.

So, as we stand tall on the corpse of our Judeo-Christian heritage celebrating the death of God with wine and song, we now find ourselves paying homage to new gods promising utopia, Social Justice, the end of oppression. These gods, like Trojan Horses, have been welcomed into town as a cultural gift, all the while housing an army of Critical Theory ideologues (infused with a neo-Marxist cum post-modernist mindset) seeking to erase the western liberal project – and, of course, God.

The lyrics of this ideology can be traced back to the playbook of the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who in his Prison Notebooks mused: *In the new order, Socialism will triumph by first*

capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches, and the media by transforming the consciousness of society.

“Houston, we have a problem!” Simply, Liberalism and Critical Theory just don’t mix: Liberalism espouses accurate categorization informed by reasoned skepticism and empiricism; Theory blurs boundaries and scraps categories (think “man”, “woman”). Liberalism values individual and universal human values (think Martin Luther King: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”); Theory embraces group identity and identity politics (think the tribal emphasis placed on gender, sexuality, skin colour). Liberalism focuses on human dignity; Theory on victimhood. Liberalism encourages dissent and debate in order to get to truth; Theory rejects these as reinforcing dominant and oppressive discourses, insisting there

is no objective truth, just “our” truths. Liberalism accepts criticism of itself and is, thus, self-correcting; Theory cannot be criticised.

What is emerging under the Critical Theory canopy is, among other things, a self-loathing of the West exemplified, for instance, by those elected officials who refuse to stand in front of the nation’s flag, or seek political power in order to, as one Australian Greens’ senator said recently, “To infiltrate... and renew the nation.”

This Trojan Horse infiltration of Critical Theory has all but rent America in twain, and if we’re not careful, we too will fall prey to its cynical ideology that reduces society to two warring tribes: the oppressed v the oppressor.

Indeed, Mr Chesterton, “When men stop believing in God they don’t believe in nothing; they believe in anything.”

A new way of being together

VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN OFMCONV

This reflection was delivered by Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFMConv, Bishop of Parramatta, during the Refugee Week prayer service hosted by two offices of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference – Justice, Ecology and Peace and the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, on Monday 20 June. Bishop Vincent was speaking in his capacity as the Bishops’ Delegate for Migrants and Refugees.



We have witnessed one of the most interesting elections in years, if not decades. For me, it is not simply the fact that Australians voted for a change of government. It is also evidence of a strong desire to build a new future for the country which is based on community participation and the common good.

The pandemic made many of us realise that there was something fundamentally flawed with a system that neglects the care economy. It cannot be business as

usual in terms of the big picture issues like diversity, equity, justice and sustainability. There is a sense in which we have arrived at a threshold moment which demands our courage to move into a new way of being together with one another and with the planet.

Shaping a future

We gather tonight as people of faith and commitment to shape the future of this country in accordance with the kingdom vision of Jesus. Inspired by the Gospel, we join our fellow citizens in working towards a just and equitable society, one that is characterised by respect for its first nations peoples and fair treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

It’s in our DNA as Christians to reach out to fellow human beings in need. It’s in our DNA to treat the stranger with dignity and hospitality. The Bible and

particularly the example of Jesus is neither silent nor unclear on how we are to welcome the marginalised and the stranger. It’s part of who we are. It’s the texture of Christianity.

Pope Francis in his message marking Migrants and Refugees Sunday makes a passionate appeal for solidarity with those who are forced to flee like Jesus. Against the tide of anti-refugee sentiments across the world, particularly during the pandemic, the Holy Father says that it is not a time of forgetfulness. Rather, he continues, “it is a time to recognise Jesus in those faces, we will be the ones to thank him for having been able to meet, love and serve him in them.”

Mercy, inclusion and human solidarity

We are challenged to be an alternative community of mercy, inclusion and human solidarity. Instead of the label of “queue jumpers”, we can help the world see people seeking asylum as our fellow travellers who like us are in search of justice, freedom, dignity and opportunity.

Each of us can become critical yeast for a critical time by virtue of our commitment,

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dedication and shared leadership. In this way, we can create a movement and a coalition of concerned citizens that challenges the inaction of the political class from above or the apathy and compassion fatigue from below.

As Martin Luther King Jr reminded us that the arc of justice is long but it tends inescapably to justice. We must not give in to the myth of the futility of our resistance. The Biloela family is proof that love does win over cruelty in the long run.

The example of the early Christian community spurs us on. For they understood the significance of being fundamentally counter-cultural in how they lived, how they related, how they welcomed outsiders and shared resources with the disadvantaged. It was a community that supported and cared for the most vulnerable. It was a community of unity in diversity, radical equality and inclusion where old boundaries were transcended. They showed to the world that it was possible to live with fraternal concern, compassion and communion.

Confronting fear and division

The Church today must honour this founding memory by its radical outreach and witness. We are inspired to be a kinder, more inclusive, more caring alternative society under God's rule. The kingdom vision of Jesus guides us as we endeavour to be a community that serves as an antidote to the politics of fear and the culture of self-protection and exclusion in our society.

I am particularly encouraged by many Catholics young and young at heart who have a heightened consciousness of social justice and solidarity with the marginalised. I am confident that you will work together and turn the tide in favour of justice and compassion. Let us reclaim the welcoming and generous spirit that has shaped this nation. In the words of Pope Francis, let us endeavour to replace the culture of fear and indifference with that of encounter and acceptance

With the men and women of goodwill, let us build a better Australia and a better world. May our endeavour be brought to fulfilment in accordance with God's vision of the fullness of life for all humanity. ☪

Second Assembly, a personal reflection

JOHN WARHURST

John Warhurst, Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn and a delegate from the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn for the Plenary Council, reflects on his key moments of the Council.

The Second Assembly of the Plenary Council was an intense experience for me. It included my small table of eight members, one of thirty such tables; the plenary sessions of the 250 members in the hall plus the twenty-odd others joining online.; and the interactions in the corridors and dining rooms. Important elements of the week also took place in the media rooms, the library, and other common spaces. Only on the last couple of days, after the rain stopped, could we relax on the roof garden. My home base was the Sydney Boulevard Hotel, 5 minutes away, with 170 of the members who made it to Sydney. As members fell ill with Covid they joined the online table from their hotel rooms.

First impressions

The gathering was especially diverse, though my table only included two women, a lay woman and a young religious sister. The others were a Latin Rite bishop, a Ukrainian church bishop, a Maronite vicar, another layman and the head of a male religious order.

The daily welcomes to Country by Indigenous members and the regular liturgies, prayers, and music were outstandingly presented and heart-warming. We were also blessed with professional facilitators for our Spiritual Conversations each morning.

The Opening and Closing Masses were major celebrations. Ironically, they portrayed the segmentation within our church between the ordained and the non-ordained. Most of the ordained, led by the bishops, concelebrated Mass, which led to them being grouped together. This image remains with me; an integrated congregation would have provided better optics and sent a more synodal message.

The Spiritual Conversation method pays dividends but must be conducted with skill, balance, and awareness of time to avoid limiting frank discussion. It does

rightly emphasise listening and allows each member equal time to speak. On our table it was applied flexibly and respectfully with not too much attention to the formalities.

I also acted as one of eight scrutineers, which meant I was regularly away from my table. This enabled me to widen my experience by mixing with another group of members. The online scrutineering was quick and easy, but scrutineering the bishops' voting meant distributing, collecting, and counting paper ballots. Unfortunately, I missed the two talks each morning by periti.

Emotions

I began with high expectations but some anxiety. The votes were an emotional roller-coaster. My days began at 6.00am and ended around midnight, because I was also writing a daily blog and being interviewed for Plenary Tracker and several podcasts. Many others, including committee members, were committed to similar tiring regimes.

The small group work was patient, spiritual and often deeply personal. The plenary sessions were more like a normal meeting and Interventions were well prepared and often powerfully delivered. They were sometimes confronting, especially on controversial issues such as the dignity and rights of women and minorities. The motivations behind these various Interventions sometimes left me bemused and even shocked. Sometimes conservative interventions took offence on behalf of the ordained, as if seeking systemic change was personal. I was also dismayed by various misrepresentations of what those seeking change stood for, such as opening preaching to the non-ordained or having women deacons.

I was informed, supported, and encouraged by many members who shared my views. I introduced myself to as wide a range of members as possible, making some wonderful new acquaintances and renewing old ones.

Voting

There were two types of voting, consultative or advisory votes by all members, including all the women, followed by a deliberative or final vote by the bishops alone. All motions and amendments must achieve a two-thirds majority rather than just a simple majority of 50% +1. To complicate matters further there are three voting options: Yes (Placet), Yes with reservations (Placet Juxta Modum), which counts as a No, and No (Non Placet).

Two-thirds support is a high bar, 35% of the membership effectively possess a veto. This cut both ways. It protected some progressive elements, such as allowing LGBTQI+ Catholics to remain in the original text, but it made it harder to achieve reform on other issues, such as lay preaching.

There was also a simpler method which involved raising a red or green card. Initially this was used for procedural motions, such as accepting the agenda on the first morning. After Wednesday it was transformed into a mechanism for 'straw' votes and rough indications of satisfaction with the text as Bishop Shane Mackinlay, the Vice-President, took us slowly through the text paragraph by paragraph. This improved the process, making it more participative and avoiding nasty surprises in the final voting.

The agenda and timetable

It was a tight timetable, with eight substantial parts to be dealt with two per day. The timetable imploded and was reshaped when Part 4 on "Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Men and Women" failed to be passed by the bishops on Wednesday morning.

The eight main parts were: Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts and Choosing Repentance-Seeking Healing (Day 1), Called by Christ-Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples and Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men (Day 2), Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World and Formation and Leadership for Ministry (Day 3), and At the Service of Communion, Participation, and Mission: Governance and Integral Ecology and Conversion

for the Sake of our Common Home (Day 4). The church language sometimes obscured the precise content.

The final three sections covered the crucial Implementation phase, the formulation of the formal decrees and the closure of the council. There was also a finely crafted, two-page document called "A Final Word from the Second Assembly".

What was achieved?

We should all take a deep breath before trying to weigh up what was achieved. There was so much paper flying around that it was often hard to keep up.

There were swings, roundabouts, elation and disappointments. The special interests of members were quite varied leading to upsurges of energy from various parts of the room at different



times. Formation in all its aspects, lay and clerical, drew considerable attention. Younger members gained their voice during the week. Eastern Rite members reminded us of their distinct status and practices, calling for greater mutual understanding and cooperation. Rural, regional and remote members pleaded for greater recognition of their often-parlous situation.

The first and last sections on Reconciliation and Indigenous Spirituality and Integral Ecology and our Common Home provided strong bookends to the week. Our church will be changed for the better, even if the cry of 'too little too late' resonates with those who have striven for years in these spaces. My personal aspirations for governance reform, based on my

participation in The Light from the Southern Cross team, were only partially met; having to call once again for diocesan pastoral councils seemed like re-inventing the wheel.

There were bothering commissions and omissions. A cautious rather than transformative tone allowed for too many weasel words like 'where appropriate and/or practical' and too many working parties, shopping lists (usually of the marginalised) and further research.

Top of my list of omissions was any serious discussion of clericalism and any adequate inclusion of LGBTQI+ Catholics and the divorced and remarried. Also absent were any serious attention to our reliance on foreign-born priests, falling church revenue, and parish closures and reorganisation.

Women in the Church

Much has been written about the memorable events on Wednesday July 6th which transformed the assembly and will go down in the history of the Church in Australia. I won't repeat the story of Part 4 here, because it has been covered well from various perspectives already, but just add some reflections.

The stand-off was led by lay and religious women, with the support of some laymen, clerics and two bishops. Some reports misrepresented the role of Francis Sullivan and myself. We were supporters rather than leaders. The force of the initial emotion in the room was voiced by women and the organisation of the lunch-time meeting and the later reporting back to the whole assembly was conducted by women.

Most bishops, but not a two-thirds majority, supported the motions first time around. Many of them were just as shocked by the outcome as the wider assembly. Their collective response back to the assembly focussed on process issues, including possible confusion around the matter of voting YES with reservations, but entirely neglected the question of why certain bishops objected to the motions. In answer to a question from me from the floor, Bishop Mackinlay replied that the advice to the bishops was that their privacy overrode the need for transparency. This is unacceptable and must be sorted out. No bishop took

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the opportunity to explain their reasons for voting No.

The problem was predictable. The implication of a potential conflict between consultative and deliberative votes was raised several times by members during PC Coffee Conversations before the First Assembly, but brushed aside by authorities as unlikely to be important. The same occurred before the Second Assembly and I took the issue up then with Bishop Mackinlay without resolution. We just crossed our fingers and hoped that the two votes would not diverge, because, if they did, it was always going to be a bombshell.

Implementation

The formal implementation motion passed late in the Council with little discussion. Yet it will be crucial. A broadly representative national synodal roundtable to 'foster, assess and report periodically on the development of synodal leadership across the Church in Australia' is the new element. Initiating this synodal process will be the ACBC, Catholic Religious Australia and, the new kid on the block, the Association

of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons. To get off to an acceptable start there must be wide consultation and transparent communication.

There will be periodic interim reports and a final review report in 2027. The Church must hold the process accountable, or it may become just another ACBC task to tick off. Adequate resourcing may be a problem, but it would be a major mistake to try and do it all on the cheap.

The bigger future

I was greatly taken by this section of the draft "Final Word" statement.

Some moments of this second assembly have been calm and harmonious, others tense and difficult. But every moment has been blessed; the entire week has been grace-filled, though never a cheap grace. The Holy Spirit has been both comforter and disrupter. Throughout the assembly, diverse views and approaches were named, occasionally appearing to be irreconcilable. At a pivotal juncture in the assembly, some of these differences helped move the

Council from having a process to being-in process; from following an agenda to following the Holy Spirit into the unknown. Not only did this moment overturn the time-table, and the order of proceedings; it also meant that we had to address strongly-felt emotions. The days that followed established new patterns of listening and dialogue, which are nascent but real. We trust that the God who overturned our smooth predictabilities and led us into new territory will continue to open up the pathway before us.

The implementation must take place in a wider environment of co-responsibility to successfully capture the best of this Plenary Council. The Synod on Synodality offers further opportunities up to October 2023. There is some forward momentum, but much still hangs in the balance. The new patterns of listening and dialogue are real, but nascent and still fragile. If they are to be embedded in the culture of the church, there will be more difficult and tense times to come. ☪



Changing moods and changing moments

MICHAEL ELLIGATE

Michael Elligate, Melbourne priest, reflects on moments of hope and sadness in the life and death of Sarah-Jane Elizabeth Tidey, Melbourne lawyer and writer, who died on February 22, 2021.

Teachers often say that a windy day makes children distracted and not really focused on the task presented to them.

Just picture a stately entourage arriving for Sarah and Michael's wedding at St Carthage's University Parish Parkville. The bridesmaids stepped out into a gentle afternoon breeze and instantly they were ratty! Here were Sarah's close girlfriends from school days, university years and now holding responsible positions in the international corporate world. They had all rushed home from diverse points across the globe for the wedding. The rush meant that there had been little time to catch up and share stories.



Maybe a couple of toasts back at Middle Park had enhanced their excitement or was it the wind? Sarah smiled as familiar voices giggled and hugged late-arriving guests. No one at all seemed to sense that the presiding priest was struggling to prepare the bridal party ready to enter

the church for the formal procession to the altar. Somehow with quick adjustments to bridal gear and last minute swapping of positions in the procession, the ensemble was ready to go.

Children

With the arrival of three delightful children we gathered for baptisms and the celebrations of new lives.

Pledged to be nurtured and raised in values of goodness and love, baptisms are much more low-keyed events than Weddings. When they take place happiness and hope abounds. These days people prefer to wait awhile after the birth of their children. Many are exhausted after months of pregnancy.

Extraordinary adjustments happen as couples become parents when days and nights become crowded with extra needs and expectations. Sarah and Michael did not fuss but grandparents were given their special place. I remember Nick

was very happy to be declared an uncle. Whatever the church ritual declares, couples are not too preoccupied with a baby being a gift from God, but to them this is a precious product of their own love life.

Illness

I clearly remember hearing news that Sarah had been undergoing medical tests and treatment. Everyone hoped that this highly professional woman, a happy partner with Michael and dedicated mother would beat this monster we name as cancer. God knows what went through her mind and heart at this time.

When the observations indicated that Sarah would not survive this illness, her lovely parents suggested the family priest would be a possible means of support. Sarah would make her call when the time was right. At this stage various surgical procedures brought relief and extended a little more the time that Sarah could be with us.

I remember calling into the Epworth Hospital in Richmond to see Sarah. Neither of us expected to exchange pious thoughts or even prayers, but the strong sense of honesty and trust was what we shared together.

Again I recall no hint of anger, but a sense of disappointment that Sarah would not be able to share many years with Michael and proudly watch their children grow towards adulthood.

Sarah also told me that her parents did not drone on with advice and what others may refer to as spiritual direction. As the weeks and days moved on Sarah was spending more time at the Cabrini Centre in East Prahran.

She indicated it was time for my return to see her. She was calm and accepting that she was dying. No dramatic declarations followed and certainly no words about praying for the grace of a happy death were even considered.

Saying goodbye

We smiled at one another and I said 'for someone dying you look bloody good!' The smile of the happy bride was there again! She asked did I have the holy oils that we use at the time of anointing the sick, often referred to as 'the last rites'. She was calm and at peace as I anointed her hands and forehead finishing with a

simple prayer for all those who loved her.

A gentle kiss and we paused in silence. I did not stay long after that, but I felt it was a privilege to be with her at this time and in the other times leading to this moment.

A brief holding of hands just spontaneously happened and my last words were a rather cheeky line I knew she would enjoy: 'See you in heaven!'

The funeral day arrived and St Mary's Church East Malvern was crowded. Beautiful flowers rested on her casket. The framed design of her favourite dress was placed where we all could see it. We were told that this dress was the one that she chose for her final journey.

What struck me was the enormous crowd of Sarah and Michael's friends who gathered in the church to say goodbye. I put aside the usual prescribed introduction to the Requiem Mass, and spoke words of welcome to people who had little need of church practice for many years.

Here is mystery that bites at us. Love lived until the end. There are theological formulas usually uttered on these occasions, but they were unnecessary.

Those bold bridesmaids from decades back were all there focused and in tears.

There was a party that followed around at The Gables in Finch Street, Malvern.

Those who chose to only attend this gathering and not the church ceremony were also told that was more than acceptable. Everyone was invited to be part of the sharing of memories over fine wine and food, truly a banquet of life.

I did not attend the gathering as I was exhausted. The drive home provided that necessary space that gave me time to piece things together. The next morning just the family attended the gathering at the small crematorium chapel at Springvale cemetery.

We listened to a quiet piece of music, and we came forward and touched Sarah's casket and let her go.

At these times I recall the words of the seventh century monk from the monastery at Cluny: 'When our mortal body lies in death, we dare to believe life has changed not ended.' ☪



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Beings alive in the Spirit – Who are we really?

CHRISTA MURPHY SSSP

Christa Murphy SSpS explores the mystery of the human person as beloved by God.



This paper presupposes the reader is either a ‘believer’ in some kind of supreme higher being as the origin of creation as we know it or has an inner thirst or quest for the deeper answers to existence.

Who are we really? What is the origin and the purpose of our existence? After lots of sharing, study and prayerful reflection on the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions in particular, I offer the following considerations.

Everyone of us comes into existence because our loving Creator Spirit God breathes the breath of life into us. That ‘breath of life’ is God’s own creative energy, who is the Spirit. The Hebrew word *ruah* translates as *spirit, breath or wind*, words used interchangeably in different biblical interpretations.

Made in God’s image

Genesis 1:26-27, God says: *Let us make humankind in our image and likeness... God (the Great pre-existent Spirit), created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.* And Genesis 2:7 tells us: *Yahweh formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.*

Each of us is born with our own unique share in God’s Spirit / breath. Each of us

is a beloved son or daughter from the very first moment of our existence in our mother’s womb. We are not just body and soul, but are body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*), with the Spirit of our loving Father/Mother God pulsating through us with every breath (1Thessalonians 5:23).

For you love everything that exists... You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living. For your immortal spirit is in all things. (Wisdom 11:24-12:1).

The only true ground of our being is our basic human dignity, equality and destiny

I sense in this truth the deepest reason for God becoming one of us in Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary. Our God longs for us to know who we really are, in the deepest level of our being, recognising and claiming the Divine Spirit within us. Even Jesus himself, as truly man, had to come to full consciousness of this. A devout worshiper in the synagogue at Nazareth, there was nothing too remarkable about him before he ‘went public’ at 30. *Jesus grew both in body and wisdom, gaining favour with God and people* (Luke 2:52/GNB).

At age 30, Jesus has his great awakening. He realises that his God is calling him. But for what, where, and how? He follows his inner prompts and comes to see John, the accepted prophet of the time, who is preaching a baptism of repentance. Jesus listens. He touches his own vulnerable humanity and desires for forgiveness, affirmation, guidance and strength. He surrenders himself and his future to Yahweh, the God of his life and of his people.

Jesus steps into the Jordan and is baptised by John

Coming up out of the water, *he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven ‘You are my beloved Son. I am pleased with you.’* (Mark 1:10-12).

In these moments, the Spirit within Jesus, there from the very beginning of his life, takes total possession of him. He hears the voice of a loving Abba (*Daddy*) God claiming him as Beloved Son. He is overwhelmed by this loving power and discovers his life’s mission...to set people free of all the wrong, binding images of God in the Old Testament, so they could discover and claim the Inner Freedom of knowing I am a beloved child of Abba.

He is to be, in his humanity, the embodiment of Abba God’s boundless love and respect for every person and their uniqueness; to reveal in his every action and utterance the overflowing compassion, mercy, forgiveness, patience, generosity of this awesome, tender God of Life and Destiny. Jesus’ Abba God wanted *mercy, not sacrifice*, and showed it ceaselessly. (Matt.12:7; Hosea 6:6)

Impelled by the Spirit, Jesus goes about doing good. Even more than preaching the Good News of love and kin-ship, Jesus lived it. This so-called prophet from Nazareth, son of Mary and Joseph, went around totally up-ending the official image of the Lord God, and who and what is holy.

He challenged the religious leaders every time they criticised him, and usually won. And he didn’t have to be God to know what kind of death he would face if he kept shaming them. A nobody from Nazareth could expect a cross.

Yes, Jesus did die because he loved us. As our brother and our Lord, he longed for us all to know, claim, and live out of who we really are – beloved sons and daughters – beings alive in the Spirit from the very beginning of our existence. This was his life’s mission, and he died on a cross because he accepted it.

And then, the seemingly impossible happens! Jesus is experienced as *alive again / truly risen / no longer bound by earthly barriers*. And his resurrection sheds new and deeper light on the human story, and God’s dealings with us. Discipleship of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, begins historically attested to in the pages of the Christian New Testament.

Our story and Jesus' story

It is in coming to know Jesus' story that we come to know our own in all its rich possibilities.

Grace and truth have come to us through Jesus, our brother and Lord. He reveals to us the Truth about ourselves, breathed into existence as a beloved son or daughter by the Spirit of our loving Creator. Carried through life by that God, who has given us free will, respects our choices, but never disowns us, no matter what. We are not born under the curse of original sin, doomed to struggle ceaselessly. We are originally blessed. Our DNA is divine! (Richard Rohr).

His Good News tells us that we are all grace-filled persons. *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace* (John 1:16). Sanctifying grace is the abiding presence of the Spirit within us. Actual grace is the workings of the Spirit within us day by day. *The Spirit is with you. The Spirit is in you* (John 14:17). And in the Spirit (as Jesus himself discovered), we can be amazed at what can happen. We are not created to face life's challenges alone. Someone greater is within us.

Many of us may never become conscious of this – but our God doesn't hold that against us. And there will be times when we will sin (fall short of the mark – or worse). But God never

cancels our deepest identity. Jesus' life assures that his Abba God judges us on the fruits of our lives. Anyone who keeps trying to lead a life of goodness is *moved by the Spirit*, and God's arms are open to *all people of good will*. (*The Church in the Modern World*, par. 22 / Vatican II Documents).

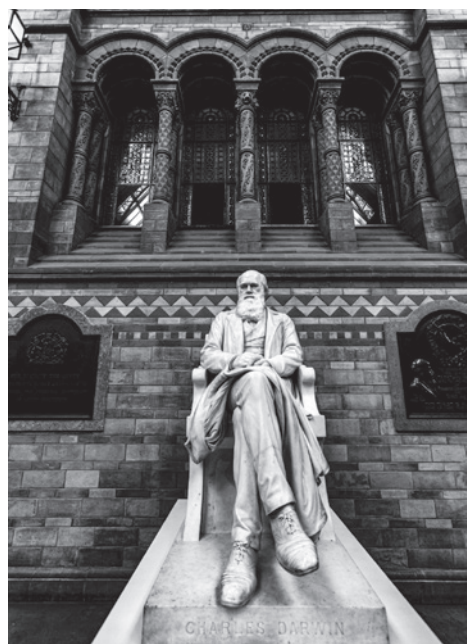
Thank you, God, for becoming one of us in Jesus, our brother and Lord. Thank you for revealing our amazing dignity, equality, destiny as your beloved daughters, sons, brothers and sisters in the human family and the kinship of all creation. Thank you for Your Spirit, breath of life and love, source of all good within us. ☺



Sing a new song Psalm 95

JOHN RYAN

John Ryan, Canberra priest, discusses the spiritual experience of engaging in the new era we are now in.



stories morphed into dogmas/doctrines. One of the most proliferated, Original Sin, took centre stage. The flow froze and with only small adjustments the doctrinal stance was regained through Aquinas, Trent and beyond into the understanding of religious history in present time. The events of the Renaissance and the Reformation remained untouched by our consciousness. Efforts to modernise were strongly resisted as the credibility of the church increasingly suffered.

It was the explosion of Charles Darwin and his followers that brought evolution and with it the evolution of our stories back to prominence, but the dogmatism and the dogmas persisted within the Magisterium and amongst the laity. Even now the catechisms retain their resistance.

Augustine's thought embraced a tangle of issues that intertwined each other, involving sin, desire, sex, death etc with a predominance around sex and libido. Such was the influence of Augustine that breakthrough is still coming slowly. Reactions for and against evolution came without adequate understanding and the music struggles on.

A new song is evolving and believe it or not, we call it by the name of "evolution."

In spite of the coming new world and the coming of the signs of the times the Magisterium remained static and as Church we "know it all" even before the questions are raised.

Embracing the new song

The story has been told and there was no music for the singing.

Of course, our Biblical scholars were humming in the background along with the Moral scholars who with them came under attack from those who remain unchallenged.

In general terms it was through the men and women who followed the inspiration of Teilhard de Chardin that the break came. It was time for the singing of a new song, and I heard it in the noise generated by the discussion of Original Sin.

I have mentioned the tangle of issues that came through the impetus of Augustine and once Original Sin came under attack, the pack of cards began to fall. Ideas of salvation, redemption, grace, and who knows what, came to notice. My research began with Original Sin and took a long diversion into the fascinating and mind-blowing world of evolution; what a revelation is found there.

That "tangle of Augustine" as I dare to call it, made it seem to be too impossible to address. However, the talks of original blessings, of the cosmic Christ, the

Continued page 22

We live within a story which unfolds from a series of experiences. Spiritually there were many versions for me. I came on board with the texts of Genesis, and I was not aware of the experiences that have gone before.

The series of traditions flow along up to the time of Augustine when theology came to prominence and his rational genius predominates. In Augustine the

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freshness of Teilhard and his ideas offered the possibilities of hope. In questions raised by The Plenary Council contributors I hear the possible sounds of new music for new stories. Indeed, a song has been penned already, the promise of “a new Pentecost coming in ways we have not seen coming” (Archbishop Coleridge) has been promised.

Of course, the old sounds have their places and the sounds of “both/and” not “either/or” which is so much part of our recent history have to be addressed. I look to a future that dares to leave no question untouched, for each question must be addressed if the tangle is to be unravelled.

I would like to share a thought from Jack Mahoney, who has inspired me over the years.

In his book *Christianity in Evolution, An Exploration*, he writes: *In 1988, Pope John Paul II put the following questions to the participants of a conference held in Rome to study the relationships between evolution and religion.*

Does an evolutionary perspective bring any light to bear upon theological anthropology, the meaning of the human person, as in Imago Dei, the problem of Christology – and even upon the development of doctrine itself? The Pope was obviously aware that pursuing these and similar questions raised by the development of evolutionary science could stir the depths of Christian theology and required serious dialogue between theology and science.

Engaging in such study, he observed, could provide a much-needed ministry to people ‘struggling to integrate the worlds of science and religion in their own intellectual and spiritual lives’. But such dialogue with evolution, he observed disappointedly ‘has on the whole been lacking among those engaged in theological research and teaching.

This book, Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration, is one attempt to provide answers to questions such as those raised by Pope John Paul II that concern the implications of evolution for Christian beliefs. (Introduction)

At the end of that book, he wrote: *I have sketched a theology of evolution within the context of modern science and against the background of what appears reluctance to*

take evolution ungrudgingly into effective account in the Catholic Churches theological reflection and teaching. This project will inevitably have involved mistakes, misunderstandings, and errors. My hope, however, is that the broad lines that I have developed here may prove basically acceptable and may encourage others to respond to the pope’s challenge to consider how the Christian religion can provide a welcome to the scientific advancement of human understanding, and find generous room for it, making the Christian gospel appealing, attractive and lifegiving to modern generations (p. 168).

In an earlier work, *The Making of Moral Theology*, I found true inspiration.

A change in era

Today is the 27th of June, 2022 and as I try to put these thoughts on paper, I’m aware it is an historic moment here in Australia as we launch our first rocket into space, with two or three to follow within a couple of weeks.

As I write this, two statements or words/songs I could call them, rise up to embrace me. The first is the prophetic statement of Pope Francis concerning “era changes”, and the second is the prophetic statement by TS Eliot that wants to link both the beginning and the end.

As I struggle to unpack the story, I am hoping to speak to my story and its connection to the story of the universe. Here, let me introduce you to Kevin Treston. In case you’re not aware of him, Kevin is about 86 years old and has graced us with one of his latest gems.

As a teacher of good news his work, *Telling Faith Stories* is a must read. Much of what I hope to say in this article comes from Kevin, and of course, at the same time it comes from my story and a lifetime of stories of those have touched me over the 86 years of my life. See review of this book in the reviews in this edition of *The Swag*.

The present era involves everything

As I turned to Pope Francis’s words concerning our “era” at first his words puzzled me until I plugged into the phenomenon of consciousness and came to see that in our world history we are in a new era of consciousness, a worldview. Until now, I have understood our human

development through stages of reward and punishment onto law and order. In my story, I see myself frozen, and our popular world view as frozen, including politics, Church and everything.

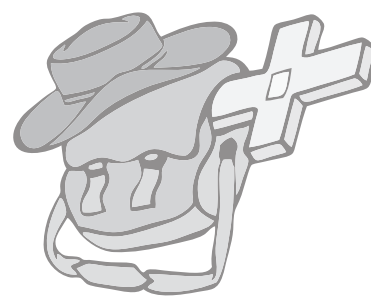
I see us poised at the age of love and compassion. Here I see ourselves in an era of change that involves everything. We are into a new world that has evolved and as TS Eliot would have it: *We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.*

As I pen “evolving”, I have to note that we are all evolving. As I write we are becoming alive.

All of this is crazily simple. And at the same time, it moves us into a dimension of our story that reminds us of new eras elsewhere, eg quantum physics!

For more on this let me refer you to Kevin Treston’s book, with apologies for what I have said that may be confusing.

If you are keen to pursue this thinking, Ken Wilber has videos on YouTube about Integral Theory and spirituality. Teilhard de Chardin noted that *the future is more beautiful than all the pasts.* ☺



The Swag Summer Edition

Closing date for letters
and articles is
Monday, 17 October 2022.
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Plenary Council – affirmation, scrutiny, challenge

AENGUS KAVANAGH FSP

Aengus Kavanagh FSP, Patrician Brother, Ryde, NSW explores how the process has developed and the challenges it poses.



By the time this article is published the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council, in Sydney, will have been completed, bringing PC progress to its next iteration. Nevertheless, reflection on the process so far, converging of themes, emerging of fault lines, and remaining possibilities, may yet be worth consideration.

May 2022 marked an important milestone in the Plenary Council journey, with the release of the *Framework for Mission* document.

This document seeks to condense the work of the Council over almost four years, especially as configured in the First Assembly, into eight broadly-based themes. Each theme is given a rich theological and pastoral underpinning, leading to concluding motions, proposed as articulations of desired outcomes.

Given the multiplicity of aspirations that have been expressed since the inception of the Plenary Council process, and given the wide variety of ecclesiology perspectives of Council members, the writing parties charged with pulling it all together and shaping the trajectory, deserve credit. In his introduction to the Framework document, Council President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, makes the brave assertion: *We have listened deeply and respectfully to each other, trusting the Lord will help us recognise the call of God's Spirit emerging from the many voices.*

Reality check

Would that it were as Archbishop Costelloe describes. Predictably, all are not marching to the President's drumbeat and many sirens in the public forum reflect vibes that are less trusting, less hopeful. Among those are the following, whose views are probably shared more generally than just the two quoted. Phillipa Martyr, a long-time Sydney Catholic Weekly columnist displays a nefarious attitude in her reaction to the Framework document: *I am very disappointed in the huge gusts of hot air that hit me when I opened it. There are sections that could power entire wind farms.* And, referring to the proposal to advance leadership at a number of levels in the Church through a National Catholic Roundtable, she cynically cheers – *Hooray! lots of interstate travel and good hotels for these lucky Catholic professionals.* That's a voice of a practising lay Catholic.

Archbishop Julian Porteous from Tasmania gives a voice from the hierarchy. Following are some extracts from a statement released by Archbishop Porteous on 11 April 2022 in response to the Working Document for the July Second Assembly – *This working paper is inviting members of the Plenary Council to embrace a number of proposals that are inconsistent with authentic Catholic faith and would simply hasten the demise of the faith in Australia... The language used in the document at times is more akin to that of a secular report than of an ecclesial document... The text is like a modern office block in comparison to a cathedral: functional but lacking that which elevates ... One senses in this document a Church that has become tired and has lost its sense of purpose; a Church that has surrendered to the surrounding cultural ethos.*

It is reasonable to assume that, in varying degrees, similar levels of dissonance are more widely shared. It would be a worry however, if such dissonance has had a disproportionate impact on the shaping of the *Framework For Mission* document,

thus diminishing the authenticity of the document in accurately reflecting widely and deeply held yearnings? Some would contend that such disillusion does prevail and may be a reason why there seems to be little appetite to engage in the lead-up to the Synodality synod, Rome in 2023.

One could interpret the pockets of dissonance as a plea for a return to the glory days, when dialogue and discernment were not vogue concepts, when most Catholics happily lived their lives in faithful adherence to the teachings of the universal Church, and when the popular certitudes diminished a role for personalised faith.

It is understandable that efforts at institutional change evoke resistance. Such resistance can be helpful in the refining and consolidation of outcomes. There was a vocal minority among participants in the several stages of the Second Vatican Council spanning from October 1962 to December 1965. It is of interest though, that the pivotal Council document – *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church in the Modern World, was approved by an overwhelming majority of 2,309 to 75 votes at the concluding assembly in Rome on 8 December 1965. This is the most resounding affirmation of the Church's teachings in the history of its Councils—Trent (mid 16th century) fewer than 300; Vatican I (1869-70), about 800.

Sadly the renewal momentum of Vatican II that permeated the late 1960s and the 1970s, was considerably dissipated under the papacies of Popes St John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In declaring 2025 a Holy Year for the universal Church Pope Francis urged a reclamation of the *aggiornamento* spirit of Vatican II in his recommendation that reading and discussion of that Council's documents be included in the lead-up preparation for Jubilee 2025 – whose motto is: *Pilgrims of Hope*. Almost 60 years later, Francis is again seeking to bring the Church into conversation with 'the modern world', so that the Church may more fully embrace its true mission, to be the continuing and transforming presence of Jesus in the world of today. Sadly again, this initiative of His Holiness may cause those of a restorationist bent

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to wearily sigh – ‘Wake me up when this pontificate is over’.

Framework for Mission OR Framework for Minimalism?

Acknowledging the general pastoral awareness and theological underpinning the *Framework for Mission*, it nevertheless seems to fall into a genre of many Church documents, high on rhetoric but low on specifics, the indicators inviting action and accountability.

In Theme 5 – Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World, Motion 68 decrees: *That dioceses promote widespread exercise of the ministries of Lector, Acolyte, and Catechist*. Hardly wildly reformist in the Australian context? In Theme 5 again, Motion 75, there is a half-hearted plea that the Pope might approve, for special occasions, the availability of the Third Form of the Rite of Penance. Surely the fact that only a minuscule number of faithful and practising Catholics avail of the First Rite as currently offered, warrants an unapologetic request for the urgent review and reform of this sacrament so poorly ritualised, and yet so needed in our world of broken relationships.

Motion 46 – Catholic schooling, is another trite motion. It lacks currency in its recycling of aspirations that have been the norm in diocesan and school vision and mission statements for decades. In Theme 7, dealing with Governance, Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) is mentioned as though it is a common structure in the Australian Church. There were quite a few DPCs in the late 60s and early 70s. Damian Gleeson’s comprehensive study of Pastoral Council in this country (released in September 2021) asserts that no Archdiocese currently has a DPC and that there remain only 5 active DPCs in Australia now. The Vatican Council documents approved in 1965 supported the establishment of DPCs. Canon 511 states: *In each diocese a pastoral council is to be established*. So, why does this item of ‘church teaching’ remain so neglected? Could it be that it is a litmus test of Church leaders’ capacity and willingness to set up a structure giving the unordained a platform to share in the development and implementation of pastoral policies and practices within the diocese? Anyway, circumstances and the ardent

Papal advocacy for a synodal Church surely call for a PC motion along the following lines: *That the Australian Bishops’ Conference shall prepare a document outlining the purpose of a Diocesan Pastoral Council and giving guidelines regarding its composition and areas of responsibility. Each diocese in the country shall have a functioning Pastoral Council by the end of 2024*.

Our hopes for the future might be otherwise, but statistics and trends compel us to confront reality. We have been praying earnestly for priestly vocations for decades now, but ordinations of Australian-born priests have slowed to a tiny trickle.

Can we continue to depend so heavily on priests from overseas? National week-end Mass attendance hovers around 10% of the baptised, with a notable absenteeism of younger generation Catholics. Jesus exhorted shepherds to leave the 99 and go in search of the 1. In our context then, Jesus might suggest that we ‘leave’ the 10%, the faithful remnant, and reach out to the 90%. Such reaching out was a hallmark of the ministry of Jesus. He did not sequester himself in institutional trappings and security but travelled throughout the land encountering people in their lived realities, making people with special needs his main focus.

Moving to missionary mode

Hence the crying need to transform our Church from its mainly maintenance role to a truly missionary mode. Missionary mode entails more than occasional charity or social justice outreach initiatives. It entails a change in mindset from ‘bringing them back to church’ as the criterion of evangelisation, to a widening of the umbrella of ministry in bringing the Jesus to them. The untapped force needed to facilitate such a shift resides in the baptised Catholics at heart. At no time in the history of the Catholic Church in Australia have there been more lay Catholics with graduate and postgraduate qualifications in theology and Scripture than the present. There remain the next steps however – reculturing, invitation, formation in discipleship, and training for outreach ministries.

It is timely to expand and develop our traditional understanding of vocation within the Catholic faith community. As a priority for survival then a Motion of the following thrust is called for: *Configured and resourced as suits local circumstances, each diocese shall have a centre for Adult Faith Formation and Ministry Training. This centre will have as a primary goal the transformation of the diocese into a missionary Church, consciously reaching out to the alienated in a diversity of modes*.

A surprise feature of the last general election was a rejection of the two main political parties and the emergence of a new group of independents under the TEAL banner. These successful candidates shared a number of common features: all are professionally successful, youngish, intelligent and articulate women. Active response to global warming along with integrity and accountability of government are their main priorities.

Well may we ask, where do we find women of this calibre in leadership roles in the governance and pastoral life of our Church? In the winter issue of *The Swag*, a poem by a Melbourne academic and member of the Plenary Council, Dr Nimmi Candappa, was published. The following extract from the poem titled *Imagine*, gives a window into feelings of exclusion felt by many Catholic women;

*Imagine explaining our Church to God,
The servant Church that buried its talents
for fear of the Master
Imagine encountering courage, openness and
wisdom when seeking to re-ignite our
Church. Not rigidity and indifference,
territorialism and fear*

Towards a re-vamping of the Framework for Mission ?

The *Framework for Mission* was released in May. By the end of June a number of amendments had been made. No doubt the Second Assembly held in Sydney will also commission significant overhauls. Such openness to change is a positive feature of the Council process. Ideally, a final version of the Framework will exude a more bold and confident commitment to institutional reform. It will invite greater scrutiny and adaptation of aspects of Church law,

formulated in very different social milieus and no longer attuned to wholesome realities of the 21st century society. Above all, it will stimulate Church to find fresh ways of giving expression to the enduring message of Jesus, a message our confused world so desperately needs.

In this quest, the Plenary Council can be emboldened in the knowledge that it will be in synchrony with the vision of Pope Francis for a transformed Church. His passion for a synodal Church invites major re-culturing at many levels in our heavily hierarchical and doctrinal policies and customs, towards ways of being Church that are more inclusive, more pastoral. His encyclicals and Apostolic exhortations, as well as his many addresses, are rife with pleas to bring the sacred and the secular into conversation. Time to ease up on the adversarial stances of a militant Church and to become better known in the public arena because of what we are for, rather than because of what we are against.

Pope Francis was elected Pope in March 2013. Eight months later, his first Apostolic Exhortation, – *Evangelii Gaudium* was released. It is telling that the first chapter in this Exhortation is titled: The Church's Transformation for Mission. Following is but one of the many quotes from EG that give an insight into the Argentinian's vision for a changed reality: *I dream of a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of to-day's world rather than for self-preservation.*

The hope is that the Plenary Council may provide the catalyst to address the inertia that has blocked any evidence of Pope Francis's dream being realised in a majority of Australian dioceses and parishes since 2013. ☪

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

Synodality – A culture of sharing

JOSEPH O'SHEA

Joe O'Shea, retired priest, Archdiocese of Melbourne, discusses the importance of sharing of resources and ideas in creating a synodal church that fosters biblical spirituality.

Basically synodality is walking together on the same road discovering what the Lord expects of us (The Swag Vol.29, No.3 p15, Synodality high on the agenda of Pope Francis by Nihal Abeyasingha). I would contend that, in the Catholic Church at the moment, we are not 'walking together' but rather standing apart. I propose that we need to promote a culture of sharing in all we do. The Catholic Church needs to become a community of sharers. We can't just turn on sharing for the purpose of a Synod or a Plenary Council or a renewal of Parish Structures, it must be the foundation of who we are.

One of the objects of The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP) is "To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas". The NCP does this through *The Swag* and through its Conventions. COVID-19 has severely limited our coming together to share but perhaps it is time to build up a culture of sharing among priests as a foundation for our post Pandemic priestly ministry. Like a virus, we can infect our brotherhood of priests by sharing our faith, our faith resources and our faith experiences. We need to make a priority of spending time in sharing (cf Martha & Mary). Following the setup of the Ministry to Priests in Melbourne, I remember Archbishop Little urging priests to make number one priority for time spent in sharing in groups of priests.

There have been many Renewal processes proposed to the people of the Melbourne Archdiocese. But I have found the input to these processes were unsatisfactory and the resulting renewal was illusive. People were not in the habit of sharing their faith and, when they did, their thoughts were severely watered down by the process. In the RENEW program, I remember people came to sessions and met people of their Parish that they did not know were Catholics because they went exclusively to parish Masses of different times. They were Catholics 'standing apart' not walking together.

Renewal requires sharing

Looking back, I have experienced a resistance to sharing in these areas. Or, if not resistance, then this sharing was not on the agenda of things to be doing.

This may have arisen from the historic experiences in our Archdiocese. We were encouraged to work independently in our parishes. This working model was set up when postage and the telephone (landlines) were the extent of telecommunications. Also the interpretation of the bible was restricted to the clergy who did that seldom. The clergy preached on moral matters with limited connection to the Scriptures. Communication possibilities have especially expanded and the wealth of the Bible has been opened up to everyone since Vatican II. However, we still work alone in our Parishes and the Bible is still not cherished by the people. We need to have a new working model based on sharing.

If we are a Church of sharers, then when a renewal program is proposed there will be an intensified and focused sharing providing a foundation for the proposed program. If we attempt a renewal program before we have a culture of sharing in our Church then the foundation will be flawed and prospects of success doubtful.

It is surely important that we are reaching out and the whole Church is engaged in evangelization. However, what are we offering to those we are reaching out to evangelize? We offer the Mass, the source and summit of our Christian lives. But what do we offer by the way of the life of a community for which the Mass is the source and summit? Surely the life of our communities needs to be based on a culture of sharing. Those who would join with us would expect a community which knows each other and is living a life based on the teaching and understanding of the Gospel. Could individual members of the Church

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explain what the Good News is? Maybe not. But our Church communities should be vibrant and living examples of a community living out the Good News. New members should expect to be infected with the graces of the Good News when they join in the life of our Church communities. Do we put in the time and commitment to get to know Jesus and the Good News he bears? Are we Martha's to the exclusion of Mary's?

The Holy Spirit is moving amongst and empowering the people of God in the Church. But, without a culture of sharing, his workings in the Church are obscured and hard to humanly determine. Individually, people can recognise and name the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But, we need a mechanism to reveal the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church. I propose that a culture of sharing is the mechanism that we have and that we must urgently revive.

I think the way ahead is to share: our faith, faith resources and faith experiences. And thereby creating a culture of sharing.

Sharing is the work of the Spirit

I think priests and bishops should lead the way and start mutual sharing straight away. We should share about how the Holy Spirit is moving in our lives and in our parish communities. If we have resources or experiences that are working, i.e. where the Holy Spirit is active, we should share them and not expect others to find them on their own. If we don't share we are impeding the activity of the Holy Spirit.

I chose to become a priest when I realized that we need each other in life; we need to share. This is a basic message that Jesus presents, and as a priest within the Church, I could help to proclaim. I learnt this message as I rode through the Nullarbor on my pushbike. I thought I could ride from Melbourne to Perth (1979-1980) by my own efforts. But I became aware that I needed the passing strangers to share food and water with me if I was to get through the 2-week ride alone through the Nullarbor. It is an illusion that we do not need to share with others!

Sharing with one another, i.e. community, is an essential character of the Catholic Church. Community through banding together against perceived oppression,

is doomed to fail. Community based on a love of the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church, is sure to succeed.

In my priestly ministry, I grew in love of the Word of God in my preaching, in composing, sharing and praying Lectio Divina, in leading Scripture Rosaries, in celebrating Holy Hours, in conducting Stations of the Cross, in composing Stations of the Lives of Saints and in designing Litanies. Presenting these activities made me grow in understanding and love of the Word of God. I have many resources in these areas that I have composed and I want to share.

I am already sharing Lectio Divina texts that I compose with parishioners in my former parish of Dromana. These can be accessed on the Dromana Parish website: <http://perpetualhelp.org.au>

Any activity that involves us deacons, priests and bishops in reflective sharing of our faith will help promote a sharing of faith among the laity.

We can create new activities but we should not discard traditional activities; they have their place too.

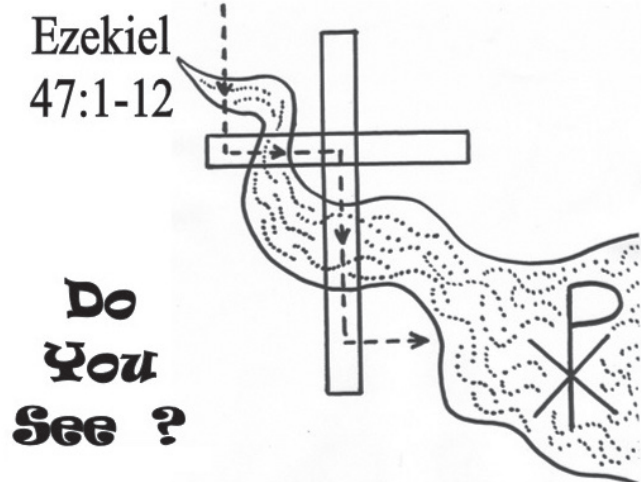
I think it is opportune to use Lectio Divina; it is a way of prayer (leading to contemplation) that develops a love of the Word of God and is most powerful in a sharing setting.

Importance of the laity sharing

The laity have their own experiences of faith worthy of sharing with others and their parish priests. They must not leave sharing about our faith to the clergy. How can deacons, priests and bishops understand how the Holy Spirit is working among the people of God if the Laity do not share their experiences with them?

In our present situation we can feel that we are backed into a corner. But we are people of hope. We can rely on the Holy Spirit surprising us, as is his way!

I share a story for your consideration:



The Uruguayan political prisoners may not talk without permission, or whistle, smile, sing, walk fast, or greet other prisoners; nor may they make or receive drawings of pregnant women, couples, butterflies, stars or birds.

One Sunday, Didasko Pérez, school teacher, tortured and jailed "for having ideological ideas," is visited by his daughter Milay, aged five. She brings him a drawing of birds. The guards destroy it at the entrance of the jail.

On the following Sunday, Milay brings him a drawing of trees. Trees are not forbidden, and the drawings get through. Didasko praises her work and asks about the coloured circles scattered in the tree tops, many small circles half-hidden among the branches: "Are they oranges? What fruit is it?" The child puts her finger to her mouth: "Sssshhh."

And she whispers in his ear: "Silly. Don't you see they're eyes? They're the eyes of birds that I've smuggled in for you." (Eduardo Galeano, Memory of Fire: Vol III, Century of the Wind, 1988)

The Plenary Council's final statement in regard to synodality notes: "Embedding these practices of listening and discernment ... has only begun." Surely this means that a Culture of Sharing is foundational to our life as believers. We must grow from expressions of Synodality to living Synodally i.e. living a Culture of Sharing. What has 'only begun' needs to continue and be embedded in the Church's life! ☺

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

GREGORY MOSES

Greg Moses, retired priest and academic of Cairns Diocese, unpacks the notion 'change of epoch', used by Pope Francis in *Veritatis Gaudium*, through the work of Italian philosopher, Augusto Del Noce.

In a recent document entitled *Veritatis Gaudium* (December 2017), Pope Francis has called for a “radical paradigm shift” in our way of doing the theological sciences, as necessitated by the “change of epoch” that we are presently undergoing (*Veritatis Gaudium* 3). Of course it might be more than our way of doing theology that requires such a shift. This paper endeavours to make a further small contribution towards the necessary prior work for understanding that “change of epoch”.

This connects with a concern I have had for most of my academic life, but which received explicit expression in two papers which I took to conferences in Bangalore, in 2005 and in 2019. The Editor of *The Swag* was kind enough to publish a revised version of the 2019 paper in *The Swag*, Volume 27, No. 1, Autumn 2019, pp.34 – 37, entitled “Where are we, how did we get here and where to go from here?” This present paper firstly recalls the line of argument in the 2019 paper before adding a few further notes, mainly but not only by way of a few themes from the recently translated work of the Italian scholar Augusto Del Noce.

As I noted at the beginning of the 2019 paper, I was stimulated into asking these questions with new urgency in the course of a personal attempt to come to terms with the gay marriage debate in Australia in the latter half of 2017 and how the common sense of a whole nation has shifted or been shifted in the space of about ten years, on something so vital and central to human life and culture. Is this, and all the sexual orientation and gender identity stuff that goes with it and such like so called woke phenomena the consequence of some kind of Neo-Marxist plot, like a lot of people seem to think; or is it rather something coming out of the main line of Western Capitalist culture, just the latest stage of Late Capitalism in the West? Maybe the kind of thing that is only to be expected in the

circumstances in some such form, at least looking back?

It could be both of course, but I came quickly to the conviction that it was certainly the latter, this at least as a working hypothesis worth exploring. The argument got quite complicated at a certain point, but the conclusion I came to at the end of it was that this way of thinking seemed to have a fair bit going for it and probably has the advantage over some contrary interpretations.

As I noted in the 2019 paper, if true, this would have some very interesting consequences. For example it would mean that the Greens, most of the Labor Party and other Centre Left parties like the Democratic Party in the US are without knowing it in some ways just expressions of the spirit of late Capitalism. Or, just as interesting, that so called Moderate Liberals and their inner city and leafy suburb Independent colleagues on both state and federal level and other people said to be economically conservative (i.e. Neo Liberal) but socially progressive, like the good people of Wentworth or Warringah, are just being consistent.

Fairly obviously this also makes sense of the fact that this kind of so called progressive rhetoric is strongest in those economies and those parts of society which are furthest down the late capitalist road, inner city and leafy suburb elites and such like, also in the developing world.

As I said, the argument got quite complicated. I concluded along the following lines: I am finding the logic of our present situation very complex and difficult. It probably is objectively so. By way of suggestion possibly something like the following might work. The true backlash is Trump, Brexit, populist parties, supposedly Far Right but also Far Left with some overlap on some issues. The main line multicultural identity politics is an extension of the culture and mores of the economic side

of life into the rest of life, aided by the detraditionalisation and individualisation which has been on the road for centuries but also promoted by neoliberalism and intensified by the internet. The Centre Left and Left find this very useful politically, get into it with great gusto, for the sake of getting and keeping power, having given up on the main game in the neoliberal consensus.

Of course, lots of them truly believe it, perfectly natural, and on some things they may be right. This is just a causal analysis. The moderate wing of the Liberal Party and e.g. the good people of Wentworth and Warringah in Sydney meanwhile are just being consistent. Or something like this! The only thing I would speculatively add is that the backlash is infected by the new context. An example might be the fact of allegations of ‘fake news’ being made by both sides. Truth itself and the value attached to it, it seems, have also been ‘liquified’, one of the more subtle consequences, I think, of the lack of transcendence.

By way of summary and in order to bring this section to a close, back in 2019 I concluded this section with something which sounds crude and simplistic but might still be illuminating, along the following lines. Since the advent of commercial television if not a lot earlier, segments of our population young and old, but starting with young children as soon as they start watching television or nowadays get their first iPad or smart phone, have been churned out as individualistic consumers of goods and services. This has spread potentially to the whole population rich and poor and with massively increasing intensity as time and technology have gone on, but there has also been a massive progressive increase in the kinds of ‘goods and services’ apparently on offer, until these have come to include almost the whole of human life and even death and dying.

Thus the 2019 paper for a conference in Bangalore, republished in *The Swag* Autumn 2019, more or less. But, before going on to Augusto Del Noce, I would like to add a couple of extra paragraphs.

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The current trend in advanced capitalism

While I haven't gone into this a great deal myself: this individualistic consumerist spirit, the only Master Narrative left in advanced capitalist societies, melds only too well with what other people, e.g. Pope Francis, have called the 'Technocratic Paradigm' (*Laudato Si*, also his Dec. 2020 book, *Let Us Dream*).

This has been with us since the Agricultural Revolution when we ceased to be more or less creatively interacting parts of nature as in First Nations societies and started to become its master. It has usually been held within limits by other features of prevailing culture, but in late capitalist societies these limits have almost entirely disappeared. As Francis also remarks, not content with being masters of nature we want to be masters of humanity and of all aspects of human life as well. If it were possible we would like to decide our own conception and birth! The latest incarnation in contemporary politics might be the mantra of "Can-Do Capitalism", which is supposed to save us from the environmental crises and climate change etc., in spite of this way of doing business being the very cause of the same!

And so, in Charles Taylor language, we seem to have gone from porous selves more or less comfortably embedded in country, community, the world of spirits and the numinous, all the way or almost all the way to just about totally buffered selves in and of ourselves almost totally dis-embedded. Or going back a lot further to the early days of modern philosophy: we are like Cartesian Egos playing around in the flesh with, it appears, no necessary connection to anything, including our own bodies, let alone country or community or transcendence.

The until recently neglected contributions of Augusto Del Noce

The first thing I have to say is that I came up with the above before even knowing about Augusto Del Noce, let alone reading his work. He seems to have come up with similar or better analysis forty or fifty years ago, with greater analytic sophistication and

depth, solving some of the remaining academic problems along the way.

Augusto Del Noce (August 1910 – December 1989), was an Italian philosopher and political thinker, well known and important in Italy it seems, but not much outside. Francis X. Maier, *The Most Important Thinker We Don't Know* (2018), gives us a taste of Del Noce's contribution: *At the height of Soviet power, Del Noce predicted with stunning accuracy the collapse of Marxism-Leninism. He foresaw the sexual revolution in its weirdest forms, including the*



transformation of the political left from advocate of the working classes to defender of sexual "freedom". He explained the link between the fierce rejection of traditional morality in the 1960's and the same decade's ferocious moralising for radical change. And he described in great detail the fundamental totalitarian nature of the West's emerging tech civilisation.

For this paper I would like to pick up on just two themes, namely where Marxism fits in, and understanding the new totalitarianism.

Marxism as a transition to a purer form of Capitalism

This is beautifully expressed in a few paragraphs in the last thing Del Noce wrote, in 1989, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, about a week before his death, in an essay entitled: *Marxism Died in the East Because It Realised Itself in the West.*

Marxism has fully realised itself, but disproving its premises and promises. It did not do so due to mistakes or to betrayal by its leaders, but by the nature of its necessity. It has not expressed the radical alternative between the thesis represented by capitalism and the antithesis represented by the proletariat, it has not been the creation of an entirely new humanity. Instead, historically, it represented the transition from one stage of the bourgeoisie to another, the ulterior and definitive stage.

Marxism has been the culture of the transition from the Christian-bourgeois society ... to the bourgeois society in its pure state. We could even say that Marxism represented the "transition to the worst" in the sense that, through Marxism, bourgeois society has shed every residual moral and religious sense, unburdened itself of all "impurities" that still tied it to traditional society, thus presenting itself as full materialism and full secularism. The West has realised everything in Marxism, except its messianic hope. "Socialism" Veneziani writes, "has not inherited capitalist society, but has become included, entangled in capitalism itself; in many respects, it has been the intermediate stop on the journey from capitalism to neo-capitalism.

Therefore we can say ... It is Capitalism that absorbs Communism, using it to erase religious sacredness and national sacredness, a goal it could not have reached in any other way.

So it is all a Marxist Plot after all, but Marxism denuded of its revolutionary potential and co-opted into the service of a pure bourgeois Capitalism, opening the way to a "perfectly bourgeois" society. There are activists hard at work making sure we all stay in line. But they are not the vanguard of the working class, they are vanguards of the bourgeoisie in its purified form.

The people of Wentworth and Warringah were just being consistent, as are the so-called moderate Liberals and their Independent counterparts, like I said above. It is important to understand this, and in our mutually critical dialogue to try not to be just the plaything of exactly the same historical forces.

Augusto Del Noce on the New Totalitarianism

This is the title of an article by Carlo Lancellotti, Del Noce's English translator, and reflects a concern of Del Noce with various forms of totalitarianism for most of his scholarly life. The second paragraph gives a taste which resounds sixty years later (substitute or add in the allegation of various phobias and the almost universal generalised reference to 'science' to be found in contemporary "progressive" debate):

According to Del Noce, the telltale sign of totalitarianism, which he had observed firsthand as a young man in the 1930's and 40's, is the "negation of the universality of reason, so that any form of opposition to established power ... supposedly does not express rational concerns but conceals interests of class (according to Communism) or race (according to Nazism)." In other words, totalitarian systems monopolise power by affirming that rationality itself is political. They claim that their ideological narrative coincides with rational discourse and thereby exclude *a priori* all forms of criticism.

In the 1960's, Del Noce recognised a reappearance of this phenomenon in the tendency by the advocates of the sexual revolution to deny the rationality of their opponents by attributing their stances to moral or psychological conditions such as "repressed psychology", "bigotry", "hatred", "prejudice", "animus" etc. Del Noce observed that the politicisation of reason was now being conducted in the name of the human sciences that had gained new prestige since the end of the war: psychology, anthropology, sociology, and psychoanalysis. This latter, in vulgarised form, underpinned the program of sexual liberation, viewed as a "struggle against repression" and the "breaking of taboos". Del Noce argued that this trend was just one manifestation of a broader and deeper phenomenon: a new nameless, "quiet" "totalitarianism.". Whereas older totalitarianisms politicised reason on the basis of a philosophy of history (Communism) or a mythical racial narrative (Nazism), the new one does

so through the ideological invocation of "science" in a very broad sense. The result is, nevertheless, a "subordination of culture to politics," which to Del Noce is precisely the defining characteristic of totalitarian societies, and is also perfectly compatible with the preservation of the formalities of democracy.

It is not just culture which is subordinated to a certain species of politics, so is ethics, and even the search for truth, in the sense that any attempt at contestation is ruled out *a priori*, nowadays by deplatforming, a cancellation of the person and a million bully tweets, with the help of a correction apparatus a hundred times more effective than the Holy Inquisition ever was, even if not as bloody! (This bit of course is not Carlo Lancellotti.)

The only contrast left, it seems, is "progressive" versus "conservative", these as defined within the ideology itself.

Carlo Lancellotti concludes the above paragraph with the comment "His argument is interesting and deserves to be elucidated", which he does under three headings:

1. Scientific Totalitarianism: which runs into similar problems as logical positivism. In so far as the statement that science exhausts the sphere of rationality is itself non-scientific it can only impose itself by banishing everything else, and which therefore relies on the mythology of science versus religion long past its use by date;
2. Absolutisation of Politics: the flip side of the politicisation of reason, every aspect of reality is interpreted and evaluated in terms of the new political narrative, law, education, medicine, the family;
3. A Totalitarianism of Disintegration, society undergoing a slow process of decomposition possibly from the early sixties, slowly consuming the reserves of meaning received from the past, until they run out; followed by a brief.

There is plenty just in this article, which is readily available online. I won't go into Del Noce any further, however, the above being just by way of a taste. My project for the rest of the year is to read and study Del Noce in some depth,

starting with *The Crisis of Modernity*. From the little I have seen mostly online, it might well be worth the while. It does seem to fit well with previous research and reading, adding considerable depth and sophistication on a number of points, and seems like it will deftly solve some of the remaining research problems.

At the very least, for anyone interested in where we are right now, how did we get here and where to go from here, as Carlo Lancellotti said, "His argument is interesting and deserves to be elucidated..."

Where to go from here?

There are some suggestions about this in the previous paper, which I then followed up in further work kindly published in various editions of *The Swag* but with versions collected for convenience on my personal website: <https://www.gjmoses5.site/>

Australian Catholic Theological Association 2022 Conference is entitled *The Radical Paradigm Shift of the Church in Australia* and is billed as a response to the challenge put forward by Pope Francis referred to in the first paragraph above.

It is meant to be live, Covid permitting, in Melbourne, July 14th – 16th. And of course we await with more than interest on what the Spirit might have in store for us from the second session of our Plenary Council.

However, we resolve our theological and church transformation problems we still have to minister, to minister to people where they are with kindness and sensitivity, love and respect, to help them get to the next step in their journey whatever that may be.

But might I suggest, given the above analysis, in the midst of doing that we try not to jump overboard into the prevailing progressive rhetoric. Or at very least that we push the pause button on this for a while, until we have done some more of the hard work to understand where it is coming from, to discern the spirits at work, trying hard not to be just the plaything of the same historical forces, whatever they may be! For God's sake and the sake of our culture, let's try to find our own way. ☪

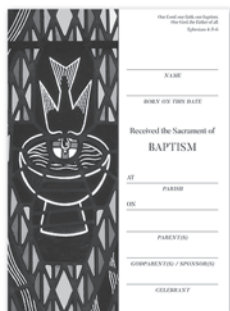


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Easter liturgical reminiscences

PATRICK FLANAGAN

Patrick Flanagan, retired priest, Maryborough VIC, recalls liturgical experiences in his ministry.

Ash Wednesday

I was pastor at Donald for 13 years. During that time one of the principal's at my Primary School was Tony Capurso. He suggested that it would be good if, after receiving the ashes on their foreheads the children recited a prayer committing themselves to keep Lent faithfully. I suggested that he write the prayer. This is what he came up with:

*In this time of Lent, we pray:
Marked with the ashes,
Guided by your Holy Spirit,
Our hearts filled with compassion.*

*In this time of Lent,
We pray to serve your people,
to do your work.*

*We pray to give from our hearts,
to share our bread.*

*We pray to go without things we like,
to share with the poor
their having to go without,
With Jesus Christ your son, our Lord,*

Holy Thursday

I thought it would be good, if, after the washing of the feet, the parishioners said a prayer that would involve them in the meaning of the footwashing. It would also refer to Project Compassion which is brought to the Sanctuary together with the bread and wine at this Mass. A point to note about this prayer. According to Raymond Brown (in the second volume of his commentary on the Gospel of John) among the Jews, even a slave did not wash people's feet. It was regarded as too demeaning to their dignity as belonging to God's chosen people. But, what slaves did not do, Jesus did, and insisted on doing. This is the prayer:

*Father, we drink the Cup Jesus asks us to drink,
the Cup that Jesus Himself shrank from,
the Cup that is His Blood, poured out for us,
the Cup that is bitter suffering -
the suffering that is part of Loving,
the Cup that is death, the Cup that is life.*

*We know we are half-hearted; we know we will fail;
but we know that You will not fail us.
Father, we wash one another's feet,
the washing that You do not expect even*

*from slaves, the lowliest of people,
but only from Your sons and daughters,
the washing that is pouring ourselves
out in love,
the washing Your Son did because You are love.
And now, with the bread and the wine
for your Son's sacrifice,
we bring our gifts for the poor, whom
you love.*

Marking the end of Eastertime

In the Tridentine Liturgy, after the Gospel for Ascension Thursday had been proclaimed, the Paschal Candle was extinguished. At the end of Mass it was removed from the church. So, it had the relatively weak symbolism of the forty days during which Jesus Risen was with his disciples. It was not used at Baptisms, Funerals or for any other occasions.

In the Liturgy of Paul VI, the Easter Candle is in a prominent place in the Sanctuary for the whole of Easter-time. After the fifty days of Easter are completed, the Candle is transferred to the Baptistry.

I devised a simple ceremony of extinguishing the Candle to mark the end of Eastertime. In our Diocese of Ballarat, the priests involved in preparing the children for Confirmation confer the Sacrament. Naturally many of us minister the Sacrament that gives the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday. After the Prayer after Communion, the children confirmed are called to the sanctuary to receive their Confirmation certificates. We turn to the Paschal Candle and a server extinguishes it. I then addressed the people saying, *With today's feast, the season of Easter is once again complete. But the Holy Spirit, the supreme gift to us from Jesus Risen, is always at work in our hearts; and has no season; and though the cold of winter [comes] [has come] upon us now, and sometimes cold sinks into our hearts, still our world has been forever kindled by the Fire of Easter.*

*Bow your heads to pray for God's blessing
God of mercy, let the mystery we have
celebrated in this time of Easter bear fruit
for your people in every season through
Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

Tarrawarra Irish connection

FRANK O'SHEA

Frank O'Shea, Melbourne, member of the editorial team of the free online monthly www.tintean.org.au devoted to Irish-Australian matters, recounts his visit to the Mount Mellaray Abbey.

I can't remember his name, but I recall that he worked as a shoemaker in a local shoe store. All the girls in town were secretly in love with him, which was no wonder because he was tall and handsome and always well-dressed. In a football-mad town, he played at centre halfback on the local team and was in that position the year they were beaten in the championship final. The following week he disappeared.

It was assumed at first that he had gone "on the batter" and would turn up in a few weeks. Others said he had gone home to look after an aged mother, but then it was pointed out that he was an orphan and had spent his youth in an orphanage, which was where he learnt his humble trade.

Finally, the truth came out. He had gone in to Mount Mellaray! Only a few of his friends knew and they were the kind who didn't take part in small-town talk and were quite happy to let the truth come out in its own time.

For those who don't know, I should explain that Mount Mellaray is a Cistercian monastery in the foothills of the Knockmealdown mountains in the South East of Ireland. I don't know what the situation is now, but in those days, the Cistercians were among the strictest of all religious orders of men.

Mount Mellaray Abbey

The monastery in Mellaray was completely self-sufficient: all fruit and vegetables were grown in their own fields; milk, butter and cheese came from their own herd – the cattle were quite safe since the monks were vegetarians. They dressed in a coarse woollen habit, white with a black scapular. They spun their own thread and wove their own cloth and made their own clothing and footwear.

But above all, they went about their daily work in complete silence from one end of the year to the other.

Their superior was an abbot, which is the same rank as a bishop and all the monks said the full Office every day – matins and lauds and compline and vespers and I can't think of the others. It was a life completely given over to prayer and contemplation.

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

When I was in secondary school, one of our outings each year was to Mellaray. It was always in one of the cold months of the year – November or February perhaps – no doubt, with the intention of highlighting the great hardship and hence the sanctity of the monks. I assure you that snagging turnips on the slopes of the Knockmealdowns in November is nobody's idea of an idyllic existence.

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

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

The monastery tour

He showed us the refectory with its plain wooden tables where the monks ate and one of the spartan cells where they grabbed a few hours of sleep before

rising at some unearthly hour for the Office.

We saw the dairy and bakery, the bleak well-pruned orchards and the cold turnip fields; we saw one monk weaving at his loom and another fixing harness for the horses. There was a blacksmith and a tailor, a shoemaker and a carpenter. My friend worked in the fields, because as part of his sanctification he had not been assigned to the trade at which he had worked in his footballing days.

At some time in the afternoon, all the monks traipsed in cowed silence to the chapel where they sat in rows facing each other for their prayers, chanted in beautiful Latin plainsong.

At a conference at Shore School in Sydney recently, I sat in the choir and it brought back the memory of those splendid isolated figures offering their lives and their work to God every day. People don't do that any more I suppose, and Vatican II has more or less decreed that those who dedicate their lives to God should be involved in some service to his people.

There was a boarding school attached to the monastery. It has since closed down, but the Cistercians still operate a college in Roscrea, about 100 km from Mellaray. It numbers many well-known athletes and public figures among its alumni, the best known being two succeeding Irish Foreign Ministers, Dick Spring and David Andrews, both of whom visited Australia during their tenure in that post. The Tarrawarra monastery in Melbourne is a daughter-house (if that is the correct term) of Roscrea, just as Mellaray has a foundation in New Zealand.

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

When we hear of the other, darker side of the servants of the Church, it is well to remind ourselves that for every one of them there are many, many priests, brothers, monks and nuns, who spend lives of dedicated service and fulfilment.

☪

Renewing the breviary

I once said to Cardinal Pell that the breviary should be re-done, to which he replied, "Oh, that would be a big job". Not the psalms, nor the prayers or intercessions and some of the OT readings – I was thinking of the second readings which daily feed our spiritual lives. Some of them are OK: Augustine on ecumenism ("While we say the Lord's Prayer, we are brothers, though separated"), or Vincent of Lerins on development, or Pope Paul VI in Manila, or pages from Vatican II. What about getting rid of the dead wood and adding some moderns, say, Mary MacKillop, Dorothy Day, Yves Congar, or more Newman?

Ed Campion, Paddington NSW

Ordination promises

Recently I joined the many chuffed laypeople, bishop and fellow priests at the ordination of our Aussie deacon to priesthood. Placed on the Cathedral sanctuary with the warm morning sun wandering through the heavenly bound windows, I settled back as a relaxed participant. Until I was distracted by the memory of what this thirty-year-old faithful man had to promise publicly the night before.

"I fully know all the objections and everything else connected with this Sacred Order..." Really!

"I declare that I fully know the full meaning of the law of celibacy". Having recently celebrated fifty years of priesthood, the incoming rays of sunshine led me to contemplate that this devoted young man was a wiser, better-informed man than myself.

"I will obediently serve my Ordinary and his successor and I shall maintain the observance of all ecclesiastical law especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law". He was then to continue "I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings of the Pope and bishops **even if they do not intend to proclaim their teachings by definite act**". (My emphasis).

The beautiful voice of the solo singer probably led to further clerical distraction, however no mention of 'scriptural obedience', or any indication

of one's heart resounding with the others. Just a Putinism – 'either get on the train or stay at the station'. Canon Law obviously has precedence over Gospel input and its interpretation.

Is it ethical to treat a man who has faithfully managed seven years in the seed bed, often surrounded by some fellow students intent on Latin and 'dressups', with such condescension, moral nonsense and casuistry?

As I travelled south that afternoon to my nephew's fiftieth birthday, I wondered whether the language used would mean anything to him? Let alone to those invited to proclaiming the Good News in an upper room two thousand years ago.

Anyone else wonder why sensible young Aussies don't step forward for priesthood?

Des Welladsen, Echuca VIC

Confirmation a Sacrament of adult faith

Harry Moore (*The Swag*, Winter 2022) shared challenging insights into the theology and evolution of the sacrament of Confirmation.

Despite my suggestion to revisit the pastoral practice of Confirmation in Australia such an invitation doesn't appear in the Plenary agenda, so *The Swag* has become my forum for an issue I have observed in parishes and schools over many decades.

Phonetically, confirmation means to affirm a decision or, as Harry says, it should be 'an intensification through a meaningful ritual of an adult commitment to the person and vision of Jesus'.

As such, I suggest the following:

1. It is not desirable or even valid to confirm the faith commitment of pre-adolescents who, while well-intentioned, are usually naive about the real-life implications of such a commitment.
2. Consequently, Confirmation should be a sacrament for adults who have consciously chosen to follow Christ as was the case in the early Church when it was really a 'sacrament of initiation'.
3. Such an adult confirmation of belief and practice could, or should, be

preceded by some form of catechesis or adult faith formation and accompaniment with fellow pilgrims in faith.

Such a program, like the RCIA, would enrich both individuals and parish communities. While acknowledging the power of the Holy Spirit to nurture seeds long-planted in soil that has become less fertile my hope is that our bishops would seriously reconsider what is the appropriate age to be Confirmed in faith.

Kim Crawford, Springwood NSW

What if the creation story is just a story

In 1988, Pope John Paul II issued the following challenge to theologians 'Does an evolutionary perspective bring any light to bear upon theological anthropology; the meaning of the human person as the Imago Dei, the problem of Christology – and even upon the development of doctrine itself?' JP II was concerned for scientifically literate Catholics 'struggling to integrate the worlds of science and religion in their own intellectual and spiritual lives.'

If Thomas were here, he would have the discoveries of Darwin, Einstein and Max Planck incorporated into a coherent theology. Oh, for a new Aquinas!

In the Jerome commentary, first published over fifty years ago, Eugene Moly does the commentary on Genesis, and he opines, "No scholar today would hold that Genesis presents history in the modern sense of the term." So, no mud man without a belly button called Adam, no tissue cloning of Adam and calling her Eve, no sneaky talking snake, and no original sin. Paul and Augustine obviously did not know that there were about ten forms of hominids. They obviously did not know that Neanderthals appeared a third of a million years ago and disappeared about 40,000 years ago, and that Jesus himself may have had traces of Neanderthal DNA in his genetic makeup just as many of us do. If there was no first Adam where does that leave Paul's theology about a second Adam. If there

was no garden, no temptation, and no original sin, where does that leave Augustine's soteriology. If there are no original fruit trees and no original sin, then where does that leave the eighth of December. If the eighth of December is problematic, then where does that leave the dogma promulgated at the First Vatican Council of 1870.

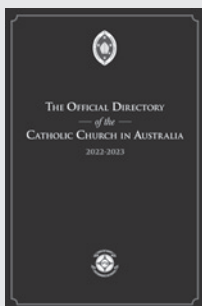
When I was a kid, there was a lot of talk about men from Mars and I used to muse: what if there is intelligent life on other planets, would the members of the Trinity have to take it in turns to become one of them.

My childish answer to myself was that God did not become man qua homo sapiens, God became homo sapiens qua creation but I still struggle with the question – why?

Perhaps there is a modern-day Thomas out there who could take up JP II's challenge and write an easily accessible article in the mighty *Swag* and help poor strugglers like me.

It's all very confusing. I think I will just shut my eyes and pretend that St John Paul II never issued his pesky challenge and then it might just all go away. ☺
Harry Moore SM, Kyogle NSW

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Church reform is systemic not personal

Discussions within the Australian Catholic Church's Plenary Council showed deep fault lines between reformers and those wedded to the status quo, said John Warhurst, a Plenary Council member, in *La Croix International* (July 23, 2022).

Warhurst was commenting on the problem experienced at the Council where comments by reformers were interpreted as personal attacks or disrespecting of others rather than a discerned researched strategy for the church to respond to current problems and issues.

When reformers seek the equality of women in governance and ministry those opposed to change see disrespect towards lay men and male religious as well as to other women. Many, perhaps most, occupants of these positions do not see it that way just as many men do not see the advancement of women as devaluing their position or role within the church, Warhurst said.

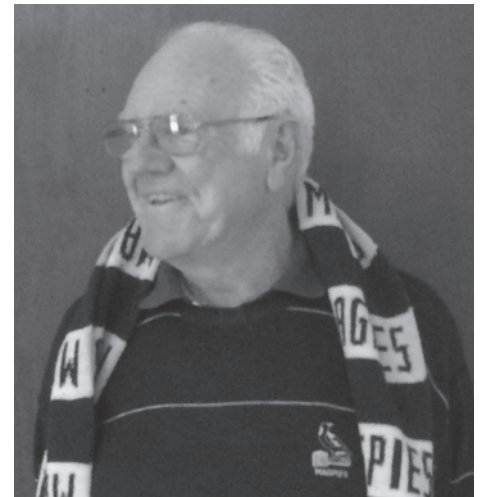
Commenting on Part 4 motions at the Council, "Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men", Warhurst noted that this Part was about promoting women's participation but some saw it as disrespectful to men.

The deep division between those reformers who concentrate on the systemic aspects of the church and those who take proposals to change the church as a personal affront also permeated discussion of clericalism at the Assembly, said Warhurst. Pope Francis' call to combat clericalism was taken by some as an attack on the dignity and role of priests. This was not the case but those hoping to keep the status quo were very concerned.

These responses expose deep sensitivities towards what is seen as a personal attack among those opposed to reform. The point should be repeated. Reformers are not 'playing the man', but are seeking systemic and structural change within the church, said Warhurst.

You can read an article by John Warhurst on his experience of the Council elsewhere in this edition of *The Swag*.

NCP Priest receives Order of Australia



Mgr Frank Marriott, Diocese of Sandhurst and a past NCP Chairman, received an OAM for his work on the Bendigo Interfaith Council. The formation of the Bendigo Interfaith Council has been recognised as an important peace and harmony building achievement, earning a special mention in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Pope calls for liturgical formation



Pope Francis has issued an apostolic letter on the liturgical formation of the people of God, titled *Desiderio Desideravi* (I have earnestly desired).

The pope wants to promote a better understanding and practice of the liturgy as mandated by Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy which called for full, conscious, active and fruitful participation of the people. He wrote: "I simply want to invite the whole church to rediscover, to safeguard and to live the truth and power of the Christian celebration,"

Continued page 34

“We cannot go back to that ritual form which the council fathers, ‘cum Petro et sub Petro,’ (with and under Peter) felt the need to reform, approving, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and following their conscience as pastors, the principles from which was born the reform,” he wrote. He wants to bring the whole church into line with the post Vatican II liturgy pointing out that the suppression of the Tridentine form of the Mass in the *motu proprio Traditionis custodes* (Guardians of the Tradition) is to promote liturgical participation and unity.

“As I have already written, I intend that this unity be re-established in the whole church of the Roman rite”. The pope is calling for liturgical education and formation. “We are in need of a serious and dynamic liturgical formation,” he said. The full text: <https://tinyurl.com/5d2ymja8>.

Pope reforms Roman Curia

The apostolic constitution on the reformed Roman Curia, *Predicate Evangelium*, went into effect on June 5 after being promulgated on March 19. The reform of the various Dicasteries is important but the major change in practice is at the level of governance.

The document notes that any qualified Catholic can head a dicastery. This is a radical change from the tradition that dicasteries are headed by ordained clergy, typically bishops and cardinals. How this works out in practice is yet to be seen. However, the ecclesiology is clear that Pope Francis is embodying Vatican II’s vision of church as the people of God where all the baptised are responsible in ministry.

The structures of the Curia are now more in line with a synodal approach. There is a clear move toward a less hierarchical approach seeing the dicasteries as in service of the church rather than directing the church. There are now limited terms for clergy and the emphasis is now on being a structure of evangelisation rather than oversight.

The removal of the term ‘Congregations’ and establishment of ‘Dicasteries’ has brought about more equality of the offices of governance. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has become

the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith making it equal to the new Dicastery for the Service of Charity.

The full text: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8nb4zb>

After Roe v Wade where is compassion for those who have experienced an abortion?



The landmark decision of the US Supreme Court has affected women across the USA and further afield. While the decision is about access to abortion, it has affected woman who have experienced abortion as it can trigger trauma. The judges who created the majority decision are known to be Catholic, so it may be that Catholic women and men who have experienced abortion experience rejection and isolation from the church and/or God.

The Catholic church will hopefully be able to support pregnant women and mothers of new born babies in many ways. Compassion must also reach out to those who have experienced an abortion and need some healing from grief and loss. How might they find reconnection to and/or reconciliation with their faith, the church and/or God?

Rachel’s Vineyard Ministry is a Catholic ministry designed to offer a healing space for women and men who have experienced abortion. The ministry offers a confidential helpline, a weekend healing retreat, spiritual direction and counselling and some online sessions and resources.

These services are provided by non-judgemental trained practitioners

and are subsidised where required. The services are available in Sydney and Melbourne.

The retreat is a chance to understand each person’s abortion experience, what happened and what has been happening since. Retreat exercises allow women and men to engage with their experience supported by a loving Jesus and a trained team as participants seek healing and hope for the future.

There is a trained person on our dedicated confidential phonenumber who can support people seeking information and options for help after an abortion. Before and after a retreat there is support through the services of trained spiritual directors and counsellors. Recently there have been developed some online sessions for individuals or groups.

For further details:
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Holy Year 2024



Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who Pope Francis to coordinate the planning of the Holy Year, said the event will focus on the four constitutions issued by Vatican II in 2023; and on prayer in 2024. The theme is *Pilgrims of Hope*.

The four Vatican II constitutions are: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium); Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium); Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum); and Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes).

Archbishop Fisichella said a series of user-friendly resources, written in appealing language, are being produced to arouse curiosity in those who have no

memory of the council, which was held 1962-65.

Details about the 2024 year of prayer and spiritual preparation for the jubilee are still being worked out, the archbishop said.

Pope calls families to be missionary



Pope Francis spoke to the World Meeting of Families in June. He challenged families to become: missionaries in the ways of the world! Do not walk alone!

Announce with joy the beauty of being family! Be you who "sew" the fabric of society and of a synodal Church, creating relationships, multiplying love and life. Be a sign of the living Christ, do not be afraid of what the Lord asks of you, nor be generous with Him. Open yourselves to Christ, listen to Him in the silence of prayer. Accompany those who are most fragile, take charge of those who are alone, refugees, abandoned, he said.

Pope Francis went on to encourage families to be the hope of a more fraternal world, the welcoming face of the Church. He concluded: May Mary, our Mother, come to your aid when there is no more wine, be a companion in the time of silence and trial, help you to walk together with her Risen Son.

Sharing the Word eLibrary – resources for ministry

The Sharing the Word eLibrary provides full text and free online access to a wide array of English language resources in the areas of Catholic faith, living and spirituality, history and culture.

While set up as an information and self-education resource for all, it specifically addresses the information needs of theological students,

seminarians, clergy and pastoral workers by providing an integrated access point to the spiritual and intellectual riches of the Christian heritage.

The material can be read on screen, downloaded to your e-devices, often in various formats, or be printed. This growing eLibrary, started in 2014, provides direct links to the full text of over 14,000 open source (i.e. freely available) ebooks, periodical titles, periodical articles and essays, Church documents, theses, podcasts, etc. as well as major relevant websites.

Sharing the Word is a project of the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle (POSPA) and is led by Catholic Mission (Australia).

You can access the resources at: <https://sharingtheword.intersearch.com.au>
For further information email: sharingthewordhelpdesk@gmail.com

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Those whose portfolios demonstrate reflective capacity may then take part of the training programme.

The supervisor formation comprises 5 two-day Modules on Transformative Learning, Ethical Practice, Theological Reflection, Theory and Practice, and Contextual Supervision, along with small group supervision practice. The next Portfolio of Learning Day will be held, on Zoom, on Friday October 7th 2022.

For further information contact the registrar, John Collins: john.collins@parracatholic.org

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find
you?

If you move, please let Sally and Chris know, otherwise you may not receive your copy of the next edition of *The Swag*.

Becoming adult Catholics

Telling Our Faith Stories – My story and your story within the great story of the universe. Kevin Treston, Creation Enterprises, 2022. \$25 plus postage. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Hans Küng tells the story of a journalist who asked if he believed in the resurrection. Küng's answer was that, as a Catholic, he believed in the resurrection, but the real question is not whether he believed in the resurrection but rather what does the resurrection mean.

Küng's point is that we are no longer in a world where doctrinal affirmation or legal regularity rings true to people trying to understand and navigate the modern world and the existential angst and confusion of the world of quantum physics and an evolving universe. We live in a new world where change is the existential reality in which we make meaning.

Treston is making much the same point in this book. In the 21st Century, the gossamer truth of gospel spirituality and practice expressed in a genuinely Catholic way will enshrine the gospel values and Catholic tradition but will need to be articulated and expressed in today's cultural and historical context. Things once relevant to Catholic life in the 12th or 18th Century may be expressed and lived in different ways in the 21st Century. Change has always been a constitutive element of Catholic tradition.

This may apply from ways of expressing doctrines like the Trinity or why Jesus died on the cross to more historically conditioned practices like mandatory clerical celibacy or women in ministry and governance.

Sometimes ways of expressing beliefs and practices will change according to new scientific knowledge. Some practices and ways of articulating morality will change because we have a new universe story, new insights in science and anthropology and developing theology and scriptural studies.

Treston is a good academic in theology and education with a string of qualifications and experience in both disciplines. He is also a ground breaker in Catholic Adult Education across

Australia and beyond. This background has equipped him to offer a very valuable reflection on current theological trends and how they intersect with our story. Treston's methodology of offering a dialogue between this theological/spirituality story, his own personal story and the bigger universe story has created what makes this book unique and very valuable.

We can only live our faith in the context of our lives and in the world in which we find ourselves.

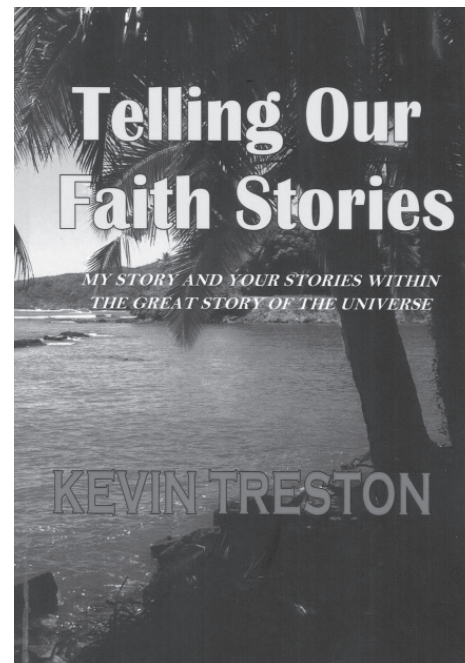
There is no such thing as disconnected expression of reality or faith. They occur in a historical cultural and personal context. In the current world, this creates unique challenges for a church used to expressing things in universal permanent truths.

Like Pope Francis, Treston elevates the value of personal story and existential reality to be a normative player in the task of making meaning and engaging in personal transformation within the Catholic tradition. If we are to remain relevant to the meaning making practices of humans we must reformulate and, in some cases, change what we say and/or how we say it.

As Treston points out in the personal challenges he has experienced being an authentic adult educator in the church, this important work of practical theologians and pastoral practitioners is not always welcomed and sometimes seen as a threat.

This book will be seen as a threat by some and yet the 'new' ideas explored here have formed the basis of thousands of submissions to the Plenary Council and the Synod on Synodality by ordinary Catholics as well as theologians and pastoral practitioners.

The special value of this book is that the methodology of using personal story and non-academic theological language, has masked the depth of theology and experience Treston brings to the way to be Catholic in the 21st Century.



You don't need a theology degree to feel at home in the pages of this book. Treston understands theology and adult education and thus writes to inform and inspire and to enhance people's lives and enable Catholics to better be adult Catholics rather than graduate out of the church altogether.

This book should be received as a gift to the church as it offers a way for any Catholic to understand some difficult topics Catholics face.

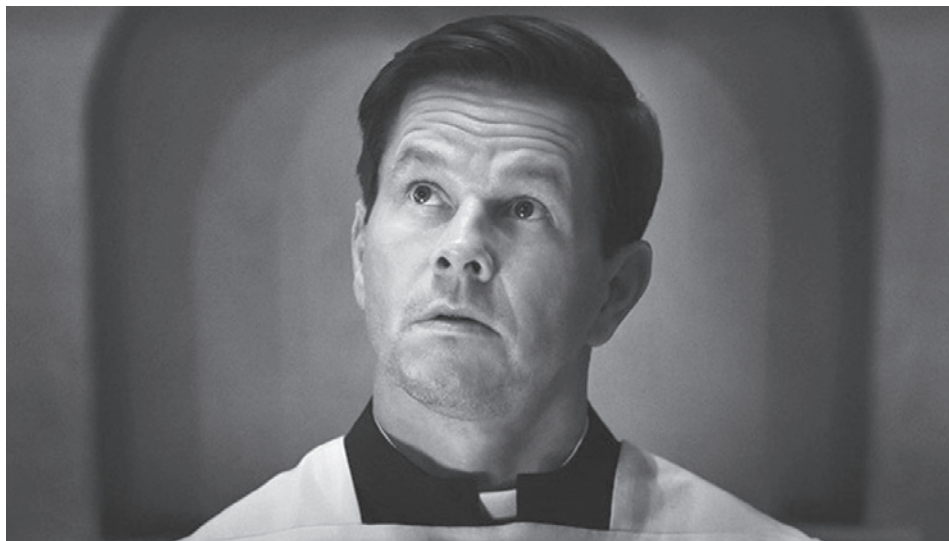
This book is highly recommended for all adult Catholics. It will be of particular value to pastoral practitioners who want to better serve those seeking care and understanding in an increasingly demanding world and church.

Order: kevintreston@gmail.com or 66 Antill St Wilston Qld 4051. ☞

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

An ordinary priest

Father Stu is based on a true story about a boxer who became a priest.
Reviewed by Peter Malone MSC.



To get the best value out of watching this film, this reviewer suggests that, if you do not know anything about Father Stu, don't look up anything, go to see the film and share the complexities of Stuart Long's life and life choices. You will have mixed emotions along the way. But the ending will be credible. For many audiences, quite moving.

The film is based on a true story and, as with many of these films, there are photos and video clips of the central character during the final credits. And, given the story, it is helpful to see these clips and listen to Father Stu's comments.

The project has been a labour of love for Mark Wahlberg who invested his money in the production. He has also invested a great deal of personal energy in his performance, probably the most demanding so far in his career. And he is persuasive in the very different stages of Father Stu's life. And, in support, he has Mel Gibson (always a strong screen presence) playing Bill Long, a negligent father, a drinker, labourer, putting down his son. And there is Jacki Weaver, full of emotions, as Stu's mother. Both parents are grieving the death of their other son, aged six.

And here is another caution, especially those who have high sensitivities concerning what classification

authorities name "coarse language". There is a lot. However, it reflects so much of everyday language these days, and is typical of the characters and their emotions (a priest in confession actually giving the advice to Stu to clean up his language). But, sharing Stu's journey means accepting that this is his life, that this has been his language.

The early part of the film, as expected, especially for audiences who know that he began life as a boxer, focuses on his career, its coming to an end, his not having any particular post-boxing aims in his life, deciding to go from his home in Montana to Los Angeles for an acting career. It doesn't work out that way at all. Although he does get to appear in a commercial for a mop, to his mother's dismay. He works in a shop selling meat, tries to charm customers, clashes with people, gets into fights... Not much prospect here.

Stu comes from a family with no religious background, something of an antipathy towards a cruel God with the death of their son. And Stu doesn't seem to have many clues about religion but is attracted by Carmen (Teresa Ruiz) who teaches children in the local parish. Stu sets his eye on her – and who would believe the road that this attraction would open up?

And, for a religious audience, this is where the film comes into its own.

And, it is interesting that a non-religious audience, who can readily identify with Stu and his life and stances, will be challenged about the mystery of God, the mystery of suffering, especially in the Catholic context.

There is an interesting character, Monsignor Kelly, played by Malcolm McDowell. And Aaron Moten as Ham, a sympathetic friend and seminarian, and Cody Fern as a rather prim and pious seminarian (but the screenplay does not neglect some resolution for his character). Audiences will find the seminary sequences more than interesting.

So, Mark Wahlberg, has to play boxer, cheeky young roustabout, attempted charmer, aggressive fighter, experiencing a deadly motorbike accident, having to discover more meanings in his life than he would ever have dreamed.

This is a film that many audiences will have to be patient with, maybe not the kind of film they are expecting, but sharing the life of this "ordinary" man and his struggle to find fulfilment in his life, his struggle with illness and death – and his continual reference to Jesus on the cross for the meaning of our suffering.



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Returned to God

JAMES ADAYADIEL SDB

1932 – 22/06/2022



James Adayadiel was a member of the Australian province of the Salesians of Don Bosco. He was a pioneering priest and missionary in Samoa, which was known as Western Samoa when he arrived there; and New Zealand known or Aotearoa in its Māori name. As one comment on the St Mary's Parish Avondale Facebook page said, after news of his death, "You, Fr James, were God's servant, chosen to spread his love and teachings amongst us, may he place you with joy in his kingdom of love and peace. Your words of wisdom and your preaching will last in our minds."

James was born in Poonjar-Changanac, Kerala, India in 1932. He made his first profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco on 24 May 1954 in the Bangalore Province. It is understood he was raised in the Syro-Malabar Church, an Eastern Catholic church but was obliged to become a Latin Catholic when he joined the Salesians. James professed in perpetual vows on 24 May 1960 and was ordained a priest by Bishop David Maryanayagam Swamidoss Pillat SDB on 8 April 1964

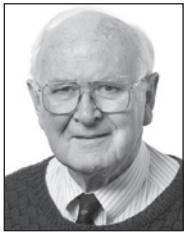
James worked for many years in education and in the area of formation, including a term as rector of a Salesian seminary. After applying to become a missionary, he came to Samoa in 1979 to start some works with young people. The Provincial of what is now called the Australia-Pacific Province (Australia, New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji) Fr Will Matthews called him "a master builder who established some churches in Samoa." James worked on the two main islands of Samoa, Upolu and Savai'i. Under the leadership of the late Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u SM, Archbishop of Apia-Samoa, James served as the Chancellor of the Archdiocese for five years.

After that he came to the Diocese of Auckland in 2009, to establish a Salesian presence in New Zealand. Then on 31 January 2010 the feast day of St John Bosco he became the first Salesian parish priest at St Paul Parish Massey assisted by other Salesians. After working at St Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Avondale for nearly eleven years James moved into a clergy retirement home at St John Vianney House in Ponsonby, Auckland in 2021.

He entered eternal life at on 22 June 2022, aged 90 years of age. James was a professed Salesian of Don Bosco for 66 years, and a priest for 56 years.

NORMAN FORD SDB

31/07/1935 – 25/06/2022



Norman Ford was a Salesian priest, scholar, lecturer, researcher, author and bioethicist. The Provincial of the Salesians in Australia, Rev William Matthews described him, "Being a highly academic and a simple consecrated person, Norm spent most of his life in tertiary education and research particularly in the fields of philosophy and ethics. He served as a Master of the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne, and continued to teach philosophy for many years. He has won world-wide recognition for his scholarship in the field of bio-ethics, has an outstanding publications record, and is a regular participant and invited speaker at international conferences. Norm also was the Foundation Director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics in East Melbourne."

Other honours in academia were: appointment as an Emeritus Professor of the University of Divinity in 2016; appointed a Senior Fellow of Catholic Theology College, East Melbourne in 2005; was President (1991–93) of the Melbourne College of Divinity; Master of Catholic Theological College (1986–91) and as an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Philosophy and Bioethics at Monash University. Norman was born in 1935 in Ballarat, Victoria and educated at De La Salle College, Malvern. He entered the Salesian novitiate in 1952 and professed temporary vows in 1953. At the time it was the practice of sending Salesian students in Australia for philosophical studies and post-novitiate formation to India. Norman along with numerous others from Australia studied at Salesian College Sonada in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal state, at an elevation of about 1873 metres. He once said that given the chance he would have remained a missionary in India.

Brother Norman returned home and taught at Salesian College Sunbury late 1955 to 1959. Then as was the practice he studied theology overseas at the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum in Turin, Italy. He was ordained a priest by Bishop Giuseppe Cognata SDB on 9 February 1964 at Valdocco, Turin. Norman undertook further studies in philosophy and wrote his doctoral dissertation on the work of English philosopher Peter F Strawson. Norman's ethical thinking evolved, his writings were criticised by other scholars including Catholics, yet he remained faithful to the teachings of the Church and published articles explaining the Catholic approaches to human reproductive technology, embryonic stem cell research, and other areas of medical ethics.

Norman contributed to the Salesian mission and community life as director of novices, principal, rector, bursar, and censor deputatus. He was a member of the Salesian Community in Brunswick, Victoria in recent years, though spent the last few years at Mercy Place in East Melbourne. Paradoxically for one who used his mind and reason to think about moral issues, Norman experienced the loss of mind and memory towards the end of his life. He departed the world peacefully – a professed Salesian of Don Bosco for 69 years and a priest for 58 years.

NAZZARENO MICHAEL GATT

13/02/1938 – 19/05/2022



Nazzareno Michael Gatt, (known as Michael) was born in Zebbug, Malta, to Philip and Michelina – the sixth child of nine children, five boys and four girls. Two of his sisters are religious.

Before entering the seminary Michael served in the RAF from 1957-1959. After studies at the Maltese General Seminary Michael was ordained to by the late Archbishop of Malta, Sir Michael Gonzi, on the 30 March 1968, at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta.

He did his pastoral training in London from June-August 1970 and arrived in Perth on 29th July 1971.

Michael became an Australian Citizen on 14 January 1982. His appointments included – Maltese Migrant Chaplain since 1971 and RAAF Chaplain since 1984. He was also Chaplain of Hollywood Repatriation Hospital from 1971-1982.

Michael served as Parish Priest at Swanbourne (1974-1979), Victoria Park (1979-1982), Moora (1982-1984), Gingin-Chittering (1984-1990), Manning (1990 -2000) and Osborne Park from 2000-2015.

For three decades Michael ran a 24/7 Christmas help-line during the month of December, known as the 'Gattline'. Michael was loved and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

ERIC HODGENS

23/12/1935 – 25/05/2022



Eric Hodgens, a regular contributor to *The Swag*, grew up in Gardenvale, VIC and was ordained priest on 24 July 1960. He was assistant priest at Burwood and Seymour, where he was also part-time Army chaplain. Eric then attended Melbourne University full-time, where he completed an Arts Degree and Diploma of Criminology, then obtained an MA in 1972, the title of his thesis being *The Discipline of Priestly Life*.

Having completed his university studies, Eric was a mobile curate, being moved from West Preston to Elwood to East Melbourne, in short time, prior to being appointed the founding parish priest of Holy Saviour Parish, North Glen Waverley, in January 1974.

He was given the task of building a parish community, with 9 acres of vacant land. He then planned for a primary school, then presbytery and parish facilities with Mass centre. The parish centre was opened officially in November 1977.

During that time, Eric was also appointed as Director of Pastoral Formation for Priests in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, a task he took to with energy, flair and determination. From 1977 to 1983, he co-ordinated in-service training for priests, engaging the top scripture scholars from around the English- speaking world.

Meanwhile, he engaged and delegated his parishioners all the way through his parish life. In particular, he encouraged capable women to step up in their roles in parish ministry.

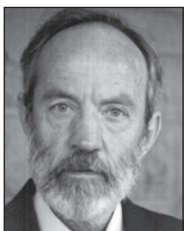
In January 1993, after nearly 20 years of building the parish community at Holy Saviour, Eric accepted a move to St Bede's Parish, North Balwyn, where he continued parish pastoral ministry until his retirement in 2007. Following this, he continued to read widely and write regularly on contemporary issues relating to faith, life, and the Catholic Church and its place in the modern world.

He was always thoughtful and challenging, speaking truth to power, as they say, without fear or favour. Eric was a great long-term friend and mentor to so many, in addition to being a loving brother, brother-in-law, uncle and great uncle in his own family.

Farewell, Eric, faithful servant of God, as priest, pastor and friend.

IAN DAVID HOWELLS SJ

14/02/1931 – 23/04/2022



Born in Melbourne in 1931, Ian Howells was in some ways the embodiment of the academic Jesuit. Coming from a highly academic family, he was dux of Xavier College and the top student in the State in 1948 and went on to obtain a doctorate in Applied Mathematics from Cambridge University before entering the Society of Jesus in 1960. Nonetheless, he wore his learning lightly. While highly knowledgeable, Ian was modest in the extreme. A very spiritual, introverted, gentle person, he would, however, always be welcoming. He had a great love of music and a fine baritone voice and conducted the choir at Loyola, Watsonia for five years of his formation.

Ordained on 9 December 1967, Ian devoted the whole of his priestly life to the tertiary apostolate, lecturing and researching in Mathematics at the Universities of Melbourne, Adelaide and Queensland. He was Catholic chaplain at the last two, where he was very much at home working as part of an ecumenical team, especially in Brisbane. He resided in the Jesuit University Colleges in Melbourne (Newman, 1969-71), Adelaide (Aquinas, 1974-82) and Brisbane (St Leo's, 1983-2003 except for 1989)

Continued page 40

RETURNED TO GOD

and was Rector at Aquinas for 6½ years. The last 40 years of his life were largely spent in Brisbane, where he was a much-revered member of a remarkable group of senior Jesuits, all of whom he outlived. After the Jesuits withdrew from St Leo's, he lived in the Jesuit parish at Toowong for twelve years, while continuing his chaplaincy work at the university, and then at St John's Aged Care, Toowong for his last six years. He died with Covid-19.

Ian's combination of intellectual brilliance and strong faith was salutary for his university colleagues, while his pastoral commitments also included being chaplain of the St Luke's Guild in Adelaide and director of the St Vincent de Paul's conference in Brisbane.

In 1989-90 Ian was engaged in a very comprehensive study of Faith in Australia, which he compiled with two other Jesuits at the behest of the Provincial, Fr Peter Steele SJ. The result was a two-volume workbook for community, personal and pastoral use by Jesuits and their co-workers.

MICHAEL FRANCIS MULCAHY PE

22/06/1941 – 26/04/2022

✠ Michael served the Church in a very positive and pastorally enriching manner, giving fine example to both his brother priests and the community for over 52 years. The Archdiocese is most grateful for his untiring service to the Church of Melbourne.

After his ordination at St Patrick's Cathedral on 31 May 1969, Michael was appointed temporarily as Chaplain to the Repatriation General Hospital, Heidelberg before going to Bell Park Parish (1970) and then to Melbourne Overseas Mission in Venezuela in 1974.

On his return in 1980, Michael served as Assistant Priest at South Melbourne Parish (1980) and Flemington Parish (1981) before becoming Parish Priest of Lilydale (1983) followed as Administrator of Hadfield Parish (1989).

He undertook work as Chaplain to Community Services Victoria from 1990 and in 1993 was appointed Parish Priest of Kensington. Due to ill health, Michael moved to Preston East Parish in 2000 as priest in residence, undertaking supply work and in 2005 was appointed Pastor Emeritus.

Michael died at Justin Villa, Balwyn, where he had been lovingly cared for by the Sisters and his family.

PATRICK NEIL O'SULLIVAN SJ

19/03/1931 – 31/05/2022



Patrick O'Sullivan was one of the finest spiritual directors the Australian Jesuit Province has produced. His final book, *I Call You Friends: Friendship with Jesus in Daily Life* (2018), was described at its launch as "one of the finest spiritual guidance texts you are ever likely to have experienced".

Born in Brisbane and educated at St Joseph's College, Nudgee, Pat moved to Melbourne in 1948 to reside at Newman College, Parkville and undertake an Arts degree at the university there. After graduating, he entered the Jesuits in 1951 and advanced through the usual program of formation until his priestly ordination on 3 January 1962. In subsequent years he worked at three Jesuit Residential University Colleges: Newman in Melbourne, St Thomas More in Perth and St Leo's in Brisbane, where he began a doctorate in philosophy at The University of Queensland (granted in 1973).

Pat's perceptiveness and rapport with young adults equipped him well to be the superior of Jesuit students at Campion College, Kew during a time of ferment. His fresh, imaginative outlook served him well for his next role as Provincial (1973-78), when he became a torchbearer for the renewal of the Society of Jesus under Fr General Pedro Arrupe and in the aftermath of General Congregation 32. He encouraged Jesuits to experience the life of the poor and marginalised and promoted ministries that reached out to them.

Pat greatly revered Servant of God Pedro Arrupe and was able to observe him at close quarters when he moved to the General Curia in Rome to be Secretary for Christian Life Communities (1979-86). Upon returning to Australia, he continued to animate CLC, edited the spiritual magazine *Madonna*, directed the retreat house at Campion in Melbourne, instructed Jesuits in the final stage of formation and served as Rector at Canisius College, Pymble. Once free of those commitments, he was able to work for some months at the Mwangaza Retreat Centre in Kenya (2006). Previously he had assisted Jesuit Refugee Service in Ethiopia (1995).

In 2007-13 Pat was spiritual director at Corpus Christi Seminary, Carlton, where he also resided. Thereafter he retired to Campion House, Kew, but continued to serve as a spiritual father to seminarians and engage in the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises, which had been central to his life since 1989.

A master of the striking quote and bon mot, Pat made an enduring impact on those he formed in the spiritual life. He endeared himself to all with his sense of humour, wonderful storytelling, approachability and deep humanity.

JOHN JOSEPH PATRICK READMAN**23/09/1926 – 25/05/2022**

John Readman made a significant contribution to the Catholic Diocese of Sale in his lifetime particularly by fostering Catholic Education. Ordained in 1956, he served in a variety of parishes over the journey.

He founded the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians in Narre Warren in 1980 and the first parish school was named Don Bosco, after the founder of the Salesians.

Born in the Mallee, then living near Berwick, John moved to Brunswick aged 14 and lived in a Salesian hostel. He became life long friends with the Salesians but after completing his high school studies Bishop Ryan accepted him for priestly studies for the Diocese of Sale. He attended Corpus Christi College, Werribee.

His work in education is his greatest legacy – as Inspector of Schools (appointed 1959) and later as Diocesan Director of Education (from 1969). From 1977 he was a member of the Diocesan Education Advisory Council and Director of Religious Education from 1987 to 1993.

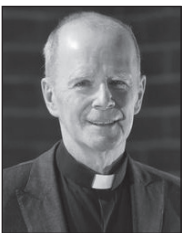
When he was director, the education office was a collection of manila folders in a box in the boot of his car.

As times changed the Whitlam government started to give significant funding to Catholic schools. John saw the need to employ people with vision, professionalism and a deep faith. That led to the appointment of Terry Synan, who played a huge role in the development of Catholic education in the diocese. In order to take on the role of inspector of schools John studied education and qualified as a teacher.

He arranged faith development programs and many teachers, parishioners and priests benefitted. He encouraged many with his gentle humour and his appreciation of their efforts.

When retirement came in 1997, John went to live in a converted cowshed at the Salesian property at Lysterfield, later to Narre Warren, and finally to Shanagolden Village, Pakenham.

In retirement he visited people he knew, mowed lawns, took people shopping or to medical appointments and made himself available for supply work.

JOSEPH FRANCIS WALSH**26/01/1952 – 01/02/2022**

Joseph was born in Tuam, Co Galway, Ireland and ordained in Dublin on 13 June 1976. He served the Archdiocese of Perth for 46 years in the parishes of the Cathedral, Leederville, Osborne Park, Northam, Gingin-Chittering, Nollamara, Subiaco and All Saints Chapel in the city.

Our paths first crossed at the Cathedral, as young assistant priests together with Fr Bryan Rosling former parish priest of Yangebup. We were a formidable trio and RPH chaplaincy was our chief task.

Joe having no classmates in Perth, joined the 1974-1975 ordination group.

Joe returned to Ireland in 1984 to undertake the position of Vocations Director and fund raiser for All Hallows Seminary. He returned to Australia in September 1990 and served at Gingin-Chittering before taking a sabbatical. In 2021, after an eight-year term as PP at Nollamara, Joe was appointed PP of Subiaco, where he beautifully restored the church and presbytery.

He also created a 40-year nest egg by replacing a small parish hall with a medical facility and underground parking bays.

He served as Chaplain to the RAAF and Western Australian Prisons and was a constant visitor and source of comfort to patients at St John of God Hospital, Subiaco. Joe was a very effective chaplain and established youth groups and a vibrant Sunday youth Mass in the Subiaco church which attracted young people from all over.

While he was PP of Subiaco he contributed to the heritage of this State by honouring Bishop Salvado. He established a Camino that has gained popularity – a walking tour from Subiaco to New Norcia. As part of the Camino project he commissioned a prominent life size statue in Salvado Road Subiaco, of the pioneer Benedictine Abbott who was committed to the welfare of our indigenous people.

Together with 1,000 family, friends and parishioners, I attended Joe's funeral at St Joseph's Church, Subiaco.

In the past three years Fr Rosling, Emeritus Archbishop Hickey and myself have regularly hosted an evening meal to which we invited Joe and other priests. I thought I knew Joe as a result of these gatherings but at the funeral I discovered how little I actually knew.

I discovered so much more about Joe by listening to his friends at his wake. The first was a young man of Indian background, Rod Pereira, who told me that back in his university days he and a small group of student friends decided to do something for the hungry people of Kolkata (Calcutta).

RETURNED TO GOD

They formed a committee, sought Joe's help and in no time had raised \$80,000. Rod then travelled to Kolkata and sought the help of the Daughters of Charity to set up their project of feeding the hungry.

His efforts fell in a heap and after three days of despondency he rang Joe who responded immediately, travelled to India, came to the rescue and guided the tricky establishment of the ambitious project. Since 2005, 100,000 people have been fed.

Another person I listened to was Denis Glennon, the father of Claremont serial killer victim, Ciara Glennon, who told his story of how fellow country man. Joe visited Denis and his wife Una after the tragic abduction of their daughter back in 1996. Joe brought a meal to that first meeting and continued to support the family over the next 27 years.

A one-time prisoner, Troy Mercante, told me that when Joe was first charged by the police, he kept in regular daily contact with him. Troy also appointed himself Joe's 24/7 Uber driver. To him it was pay back for the countless visits Joe made on a fortnightly basis while Troy was behind bars and in solitary.

Prisons are all on the edge of suburbia and take up at least two hours of travelling time, but Joe would even drive Perth-Albany in the one day to make a visit each month to his friends in prison.

The last five years have been dotted with sad and troubling events happening among the Catholic priests of Perth, Australia and the world. The *Fr Joe Saga* was one of them and is extensively documented in the media. Who would want to navigate 'the barque of Peter', as the Church is affectionately known, in these troubled times? (*John Jegorow*).

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

† Francis Arnold (Archdiocese of Melbourne).....	11/07/2022
† Gerald Dullard OSA (Augustinians).....	30/05/2022
† Joseph Hitti (Maronites).....	03/02/2022
† Kevin O'Grady (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	27/06/2022
† Anthony Ryan SJ (Jesuits).....	05/06/2022
† Raymond Weaver (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	16/04/2022

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

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

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

The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia

The Official Directory – the official and historical record of the Catholic Church in Australia which NCP publishes on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as a service to the Church.

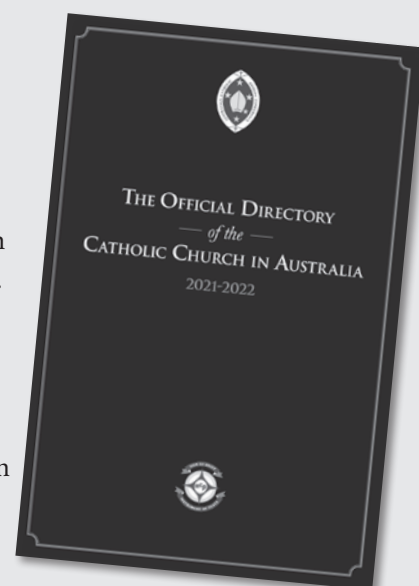
The Directory, a 1 July publication, gives the rich picture of the Australian Church, listing all ACBC Committees and Secretariats; Diocesan information – parishes, schools and organisations, as well as Religious Orders and Catholic Organisations.

It is an essential resource for all working under the Catholic Church umbrella – priests, pastoral associates, administration staff, principals, school librarians, CEOs etc.

With over 50,000 changes made annually, \$90.00 is a small price to pay for up-to-date information.

For the complete picture of the Australian Church and to keep connected... contact the National Office.

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It is up to each one of you to let Sally and Chris know when any of your contact details change.

Don't risk missing out on your copy of *The Swag* or other NCP news.

The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)

The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Clergy (Bishops, Priests & Deacons) and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians) who join together to support each other in their ministry in the Church.

Founded in 1970 in the Spirit of Vatican II, the NCP is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing clergy in the public forum.

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

- To promote a spirit of fraternity among members and other clerics of the Catholic Church in Australia.
- To devise ways and means for members and others to better serve the people to whom they are called to minister.
- To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to promote the spirit of ecumenism and to establish ecumenical links.
- To effect a liaison with other national bodies of religious women and men and with national bodies of laity.
- To maintain contact with similar associations.
- To be a consultative body to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.