



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

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NCP CONTACTS



Chairman

Rev Patrick Sykes
103 Fernleigh Road
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
P: (02) 6925 2111
chairman@ncp.catholic.org.au



Secretary

Rev Mark Freeman
44 Margaret Street
Launceston TAS 7250
P: (03) 6331 4377
secretary@ncp.catholic.org.au



Treasurer

Rev Brian Mathews
Hutchison Street
Cooper Pedy SA 5723
P: (08) 8672 5011
treasurer@ncp.catholic.org.au



Committee

Rev Boni Buahendri SVD
100 Albion Road
Box Hill VIC 3128
P: (03) 9890 0065
committee1@ncp.catholic.org.au



Committee

Rev Gregory Barker
33 Lake Street
Forster NSW 2428
P: (02) 6554 6304
committee2@ncp.catholic.org.au



Editor

Rev Peter Maher
Unit 30, 63-69 Bonar Street
Arncliffe NSW 2205
P: 0439 460 779
editor@theswag.org.au



Executive Officer

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



Administrative Officer

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



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.

NCP NATIONAL OFFICE

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

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:

E: editor@theswag.org.au

ALL ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

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

DESIGN

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ABOUT THE NCP

The National Council of Priests of Australia, founded in 1970 in the spirit of Vatican II, is a voluntary association of bishops, priests and deacons. It is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing all clergy in the public forum. The NCP is acknowledged by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

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Paddy Sykes



Holy Week 2019 will always be remembered as the week that saw the destruction by fire of the famous Parisienne cathedral, Notre Dame – named in honour of Our Lady. The people of Paris, France and the whole world have been moved by the destruction of this beautiful neo-Gothic cathedral. It has stood in the heart of Paris for 850 years. Some of its beautiful art and other items were saved but much of the important items in the cathedral have been lost forever. Millions of people have admired the beauty of this building as it attempted to inspire people and lead them closer to God.

The response by people both inside and outside of Paris, both inside and outside of

France has been swift and generous. The President of France has said that the cathedral will be rebuilt, and that the international community would be asked to help with this project. The Cathedral can never be rebuilt to the way it was – raw materials used in the first cathedral are no longer available and tradesmen these days would struggle with some of the demands of the rebuild if it were expected to be the same as the old one. The architects and others associated with the rebuild will need to work out what is useful from what has been left behind after the fire and work out new and contemporary ways to create the same aura that the old cathedral was able to inspire in its worshippers and pilgrims.

The Catholic Church too has had a fire burning through it in recent years. The sexual abuse of children and others in the church – which was criminal and covered up – has ignited a fire that has been burning for years. Just when you think – surely there could be no more – there is yet another case of abuse comes to light. The structure of our old catholic church has burnt down. It is the task of all of us to work out what is worth holding onto and what needs to be put aside. Then and only then, can we as a church move on. Like Notre Dame, we have to sift through what remains and hold onto only what is important from the past. We have to then work out how to restructure the church to bring people closer to God using a different

praxis. There is much work to be done.

The death of Jesus on Good Friday must have seemed to that early group of disciples to be something akin to a destructive fire. They had high hopes for where their leader would lead them, but he finished up on a cross. The disciples would have felt like the people of Paris over the last week; they would have felt like the members of the Catholic Church at this time. But the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday gave those men and women the inspiration they needed to overcome this difficult and sad situation. Christians are, if nothing else, people of hope. We have to be people of hope like those who immediately called for the Cathedral to be rebuilt. The church has Jesus Christ as its centre and heart and so we need to proclaim that.

For our church, the old ways are going, and a new era is being ushered in. No matter how challenging that might be for many to accept, it is a powerful example of the circle of life. As we celebrate this Easter, may we always be open to the work of the Spirit who is always moving us to renewal.

My hope is that all the readers of *The Swag* have encountered the Risen Christ again this Easter.

Easter blessings to each one of you.

Shalom,
Paddy. ☺

NCP Elections

Mark Freeman and Boni Buahendri SVD will each complete six years on the committee at the end of 2019.

NOMINATIONS ARE HEREBY CALLED FOR TWO COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

- The term of office for both committee positions is three (3) years: 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2022.
- The person being nominated and the proposer must be financial clergy members of the NCP.
- The person being nominated must counter sign the nomination form.
- Nominations close at **midnight 30th September 2019.**

The successful candidates must be available to attend the annual face to face meeting at the National Office in Belmont (Geelong) – Tuesday 11 February and Wednesday 12 February 2020.



A paradigm shift for the church



The powerful symbols of Easter are still fresh in our memories. The movement from darkness to light, death to life, disillusionment to hope and despair to meaning hang in the air. This is

good news for us living in a church mired in darkness and struggling to make sense of what's happening to us.

We are being invited to undertake a paradigm shift in the church, not unlike the move from Newton's to Einstein's physics. The movement from a doctrinal to a pastoral paradigm encouraged by Pope Francis is calling us to move from looking at the church being like a fortress to being more like a field hospital. This movement suggests we look at the modalities by which the church is embodied through a pastoral lens rather than a doctrinal lens.

This is explored in an article by George Dennis O'Brien in *Commonweal Magazine* (April 16, 2019) called *The Risks of History, Does The Church Do Paradigm Shift?* In this article O'Brien argues that paradigm shifts occur because the realities around us mean that a shift is needed to remain true to the God revealing the God-self afresh in our age. This is not only necessary to remain true to the living God but to remain relevant to the time and to communicate

with God's people. This paradigm shift began with Vatican II which emphasised the pastoral and the need to stay in dialogue with the world.

Those who resist this paradigm shift risk rendering the church irrelevant. Is this not precisely what we are feeling at the moment? More and more we are being challenged to see how the church fits in with the current reality of the 21st century. O'Brien concludes his article: *The attraction of a doctrinal church is that it appears resistant to the changes and chances of history. Rejecting a doctrinal paradigm seems to lead inevitably to ethical relativism and doctrinal division ... A pastoral paradigm accepts the chances, changes, and risks of history. For the pastoral church the risk of relativism is offset by the risk of irrelevance. Doctrine is not timeless truth but eternal mystery, to be unfolded in the history of the People of God.*

The implications of embracing the pastoral paradigm include changes in governance, embracing church as people of God, accepting inclusion and synodality. In this edition of *The Swag* you can read how Catholic thinkers and believers are embracing the new paradigm. Christine Burke's article explores how the new realities of feminist and ecological theologies change the way we might act and live in the church. Mike Ryan, pastor at Seattle Cathedral, writes to the parishioners to help them try to make sense of the church in the wake of the sexual abuse crisis. Our regular columnists, Eric Hodgens and Peter Day, comment on

the failure of the monarchical church and how to respond positively to the mire of bad news respectively. Paul Collins comments on the challenges facing the bishops as they head to their ad limina visit in Rome. Thea Ormerod and Mike Yates offer perspectives on environmental sustainability and whether the church is still able to maintain a connection to the world.

Berise Heasly and Nihal Abeyasingha offer two perspectives on the sexual abuse crisis and its implications. There are a number of interesting book reviews. One of the books, by English lay canon lawyer, Paul Robbins on care for divorced Catholics, reviewed by John Scanlon who has experienced this situation in his own life, offers some very good insights into the process. It has a particularly good chapter on the internal forum solution which priests and laypeople might find helpful.

An edited version of Alex Nelson's submission to the Plenary Council offers insight and a gentle call to reform. Bernadette Wallis, a Missionary Sister of Service, offers a marvellous reflection on John Wallis, priest and founder of the Missionary Sisters and her uncle. She has edited a book of his letters to his parents from the seminary through to the foundation of the Sisters. This is a perspective not often seen. The article and book recall the work of the Sisters on the 75th anniversary of their foundation.

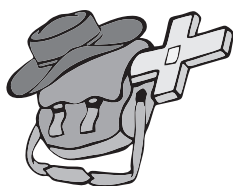
There are many more articles and letters in this post Easter edition. Enjoy. ☺

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The Swag Spring Edition

Closing date
for letters and articles
Monday 29 July 2019.

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

Articles: 700 words

Major Features: 1,400 words.

NCP Bursaries 2020

Bursaries are offered to members (financial for 5+ years as per NCP policy) to assist with further study in Australia or overseas.

Application forms are available at:
nationalcouncilofpriests.com.au or
by contacting the National Office.

Bursary applications will be addressed at the February 2020 Executive Meeting.

Values, leadership and integrity

CHRISTINE BURKE

Christine Burke, an Australian IBVM (Loreto) sister with a background in theology, lives and teaches in Manila. Taking responsibility for life and faith is going to require searching with others to find the best way we can respond to what lies ahead of us. Reprinted with permission from *La Croix International*, 15 April 2019.



Clericalism and consumerism might seem quite different problems, but it can be argued that they share a common root: power without accountability. Accountability to the people the leaders 'serve,' or the planet that the greedy destroy, has been absent.

In recent months awareness of the abuse crisis within the church and what it implies about values, leadership and integrity have fuelled people's disillusion, anger and dismay.

Pope Francis sees the root of this problem as the clericalism which has allowed those set apart by priestly or episcopal ordination to have privileged status and an entitlement to blind trust.

This misuse of 'power over' others is also at the base of his call to a new spirituality of partnership with the whole of creation.

50 years after Vatican II, most of the laity have not lived up to the challenge of accepting that baptism is the sacrament which gives everyone the responsibility to BE church and to bring God's message to our world. Now we live with the shame that our church has failed so utterly to live out Jesus' key command.

Our head in the sand refusal to change our perspective also continues in our choices which indicate we still believe the resources of our planet are inexhaustible.

The need for a paradigm shift from a clerically dominated to a participative and missionary church can be named by Pope Francis, but by the very nature of what he is calling us to accomplish, it cannot be enforced by him.

He is trying to decentralize, so he cannot do it by diktat from on high. People struggle to imagine a synodal church, because for so long Catholics have looked to the center to find answers to critical questions.

Now we are being asked to grow up, take responsibility and search for the way Jesus might respond rather than rely on a legal ruling from those who 'know best.'

This raises fears at every level: some among the layers of clergy fear they will lose status and power. Their authority has already been stripped away by actions which failed to put the care of the flock first.

Taking responsibility

Those with some understanding of history and theology recognize that taking away strict controls can expose many to distorted beliefs and practices.

Taking responsibility for life and faith is going to require searching with others to find the best way we can respond to what lies ahead of us.

Expecting discernment in major issues

demands new ways to engage Catholics in their faith journey.

After 40 years of feminist and ecological theological reflection, research and serious theological writing, some themes are almost taken for granted among the relatively small group of women and men who have found liberation in this approach to understanding and living their faith.

What underpins these theologies is an awareness of the destructive impact of almost 2000 years of patriarchy where status and power are held in a small select group of males (or nations, or businesses) who control access to their elite and see the superiority of their caste as God-given and natural.

In such systems, those outside the power group often accept that this is the way of things until, at some point, scales fall from their eyes.

They see that the imbalance they have taken for granted is not required by God and is unjust.

Currently societies around the world are caught in the upheaval that results when this paradigm shifts, as women move to claim equality, and mother nature announces in a variety of ways that we have raped the earth to a point of no return.

Whether we call it clericalism or patriarchy the problem is the same. If these varied voices have been grappling with this issue in serious theological dialogue for over 40 years, what insights can they offer the church at this point? A few of these are mentioned below.

- A critical reading of the biblical text, recognizing its patriarchal cultural setting and naming as destructive those passages which no longer bring God's saving power of liberation. This also includes a call to recognize a greater presence of women (and thus the non-ordained) in the original texts and historical tradition.
- Allowing the way Jesus upended patriarchal expectations to transform our approach to leadership and to our relationship with nature.
- A community of equal disciples, valuing the many gifts in the community. This does not imply no structures, but honours the gifts given to each one and discerns ways to structure the community so that these can be utilized.

- A reclaiming of the power of Trinitarian theology where equality, difference, mutuality are grounded in love. Such a symbol for God undercuts all modes of dominating power over others or the earth.
- A move to honour the ‘otherness’ of God by recognizing the inappropriateness of naming God in exclusively male terms, recognizing that divine maleness has become an idol supporting patriarchy rather than one icon into the wonder of God.
- A sense of the Holy Spirit as the Wisdom of God present in our daily lives, where we meet Holy Mystery through people, places and ideas.
- A spirituality that dialogues respectfully with other branches of learning and honours the varied sciences as they bring new insights to our understanding of our world and ourselves.
- A spirituality which keeps encouraging people to discernment with others rather than confrontation, to listening rather than talking down, to believing that we are on God’s mission not building the power and glory of the church.
- A sense that change takes a long time... there is not worthwhile ‘instant renewal’, but if obstructed for too long, the damage can be irreparable.

The church as the people of God needs to act now. A few suggestions:

- Find new ways to structure our leadership and decision making. Some religious Congregations have changed their mode of governance over recent decades to include more participation and a different, more discerning approach to decision making. They have something to offer. Humble listening to how and why they have changed could be transformative of the whole church.
- A shared theological and spiritual formation for leaders, both lay and ordained, that addresses the issues of power, clericalism, male exclusivity, and sexuality, and gives experience of collaborative leadership.
- Women and men equally represented as decision makers in formal meetings or synods at the Vatican and at diocesan or national levels. Leaving all decisions to male bishops carries no credibility.
- Clear criteria for leadership and a transparent process by which new leaders are appointed, and a process for ongoing appraisal as would happen in any key role. ☪

Reflections on the crisis in the Church

MICHAEL G RYAN

Michael Ryan, Pastor of Seattle Cathedral, St James Parish, wrote this for parishioners’ reflection after the Vatican Sex Abuse Summit in February 2019.

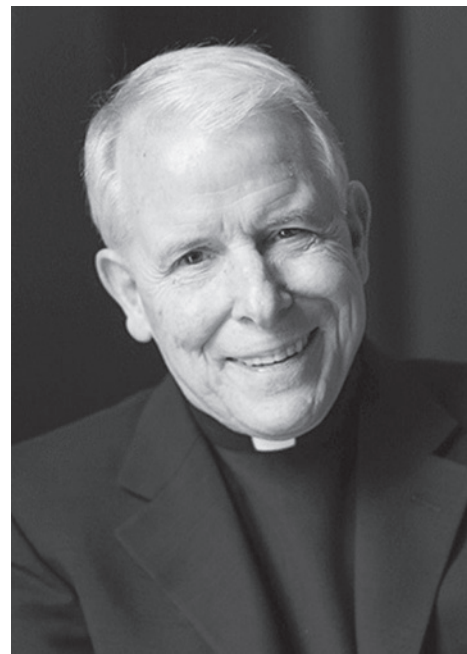
Not long ago, someone remarked to me about how difficult it is to be Catholic these days. An understatement, I thought. It seems that scarcely a day goes by that we are not greeted (assaulted would be the better word) by some new and shocking revelation that relates to one aspect or another of the sexual abuse scandal that, for far too long, has been rocking the church--not just in this country, not just in the developed countries of the world, but seemingly everywhere.

We are scandalized, disgusted, and weary beyond words. Our hearts ache for the thousands of victims who carry heavy burdens through their lives. And while I can’t speak for all of us, I am quite sure that most of us who follow the news – and who relate day after day to friends, neighbors, and co-workers (and, often enough, to family members who no longer consider themselves Catholic)--are finding it increasingly difficult to explain why we continue to identify as Catholic, why we continue to practice our faith.

I wish I could provide comfort for you at a profoundly difficult time. I wish I could provide answers to the questions you are struggling with. I wish I could reassure you that the worst is over and that things will quiet down soon. I cannot. All I can do is offer a few considerations that may help provide some context and some nuance--both of which, when it comes to news reports, seem to be in short supply.

First, the church, despite all its egregious sins and failings, its fatal compromises and its deceptions, will weather this storm and, with the grace of God, become a stronger, more credible, more effective instrument for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe this with all my heart. For this to happen, however, our bishops must prayerfully listen to God’s Spirit, humbly hear the cries of God’s people, and resolutely take bold and deliberate steps to root out of the church every discernible trace of abuse, cover-up, dishonesty, self-deception, and hypocrisy. Only in this way will a dispirited and deeply wounded church be able to move forward and carry out its sacred mission.

Not every representation in the secular media regarding these issues can be taken



as gospel. Don’t get me wrong: I am not accusing the secular media of ill will or deliberate misrepresentation, but we shouldn’t expect secular news sources to have a carefully nuanced understanding of the church, its life, its history, its theology, or its canons. I also think it’s true to say that the church has not always helped the situation: too often it has been far from forthcoming with clear, complete, transparent, and unbiased information.

Despite what we often hear in news stories, it is not true to say or to imply that the United States Bishops have not taken serious and significant steps to deal with the abuse crisis. That they have been slow in doing so is unarguable, that they have been uneven in their response is also beyond dispute, but since 2002 when they adopted the so-called Dallas Charter, the bishops have taken major steps not only to address the sad history of the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults in the church, but also to put into place a set of policies and protocols to prevent its ever happening again. So, even last summer’s revelations of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury, lurid and shocking as they were, should be seen as reports on criminal activity that took place prior to 2002 – and much of it fifty or more years ago. This will bring no comfort to victims, and it certainly does not in any way excuse past crimes and misdeeds, but it provides nuance and

acknowledges facts that were largely overlooked in much, if not all, of the reporting. And so, while it is true that before 2002 most, if not all, bishops made serious errors (sometimes on the basis of flawed advice from mental health and treatment professionals), it is not fair to overlook the major changes in policy and practice that have been adopted and implemented, nor is it fair to characterize all bishops as turning a blind eye, ignoring victims and their families, protecting offenders, and guarding the church's reputation at all costs.

The learning curve for dealing with these issues has been long and slow – too long and too slow. But the same can be said for society in general, including families, youth organizations, and other churches and institutions, both public and private. Put simply, society understands these issues much better now than it did decades ago: for us in the church it means that we have come to realize that the sexual abuse of children is not just a grave sin, but also a serious crime, and that it is, in almost every case, treatable but not curable. Some bishops awakened to these realities rather quickly and took them to heart decades ago; others, sadly, were slow to act.

The church is global. The church exists in countries around the world where cultural differences are well beyond our experience or comprehension. For that reason it shouldn't be too surprising that issues of sexual abuse and cover-up are not the same everywhere and that only today are we beginning to hear stories coming out of places like Africa and India. In spite of all our cultural differences, however, the church must adopt enlightened--and, as far as possible--unified approaches for dealing with these issues. The current meeting in Rome is an important step in that direction but only a step, and three days of dialogue, reflection, and meeting with victims can hardly be expected to heal this long-festering wound. If, during the meeting, the most important issues are identified, mistakes owned and repented, and a comprehensive course of action adopted, that is probably as much as we should expect. For now.

The debate within the church at the present time regarding the causes underlying sexual abuse is an extremely important one involving very complex issues. Some would narrow it all down to mandatory celibacy for priests, others want to blame gays within the priesthood, others the general sexual permissiveness within our culture, and still others the clerical culture within the church that places priests on a pedestal and gives them an

inordinate amount of power. I think it is safe to say that, despite claims made by representatives of various ideological factions within the church, the jury is still out when it comes to identifying all the causes. My prayer is that this week's meeting of bishops with Pope Francis – who is committed to finding solutions and has been very candid about admitting his own mistakes – will begin a frank discussion of the causes, and open the way to necessary changes and reforms, no matter how sweeping. I also hope that those bishops who have made quite clear their opposition to Pope Francis and his leadership, will set aside polemics and divisiveness and work together with him to find lasting solutions to the crisis we are facing.

Let me close with this thought. We will do well to keep in mind that the church has dealt with grave crises and scandals many times throughout its long history and, thanks to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the courageous witness of saints beyond number, the church has been deepened, purified, and energized. And I would add that none of the evils we are dealing with – no matter how grave – is able to undo the immense amount of good that the church, the holy yet sinful People of God, accomplishes every day in our parishes, ministries, and institutions here and around the world. We in this parish are witnesses to this every day – in fact, we are part of it. All of which puts me in mind of a recent editorial in *America* magazine, by its editor, Father Matt Malone.

He writes:
In any given hour, on any given day, the news in the church is more good than bad. Much more. By a magnitude of millions more. That's because most of the news in the church is the Good News of Jesus Christ. That's something we know as people of faith, but it is also empirically true: Every day millions, billions of people are served by the church, helped and healed through its sacraments, and accompanied through its social services. Couples marry, children are baptized, young people are confirmed in their faith, sinners are forgiven. This is happening right now as you read this in every place the church calls home.

My friends, all of us are committed to the holy mission of the church. In this most trying of times, may we find strength in our faith, hope for the future, and the joy that comes from preaching and living the gospel of Christ. I know that you join me, your fellow parishioners, our bishops, and the entire church in praying that we will. May it be so! ☪



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An Australian priest's letters home: from seminary to mission

JOHN WALLIS

John Wallis, priest and founder of the Missionary Sisters of Service wrote to his parents regularly. A hundred letters were safely archived at the Wallis Centre in Hobart. They tell the priest's story from his days at Springwood and Manly seminary to his priestly ministry and the founding of the Australian religious missionary order, the Missionary Sisters of Service. The letters are being published this year by his niece, Bernadette T Wallis, herself a Missionary Sister of Service. *Dear Mother Dear Father – John Corcoran Wallis' Letters Home 1927-1949* is published by Coventry Press, Melbourne. It will be launched in Hobart on the 19th November 2019. The article is written by Bernadette Wallis.

A new book, *Dear Mother Dear Father – John Corcoran Wallis' Letters Home 1927-1949*, authored and compiled by Bernadette T. Wallis, is to be launched in 2019. It provides access to Father John Wallis' letters home to his family, mostly to his parents, in the years 1927–1949. He wrote the letters from the age of sixteen to thirty-eight from the time he entered the seminary at St Columba's College, Springwood, then at St Patrick's College, Manly NSW, and later as a more seasoned priest in the Archdiocese of Hobart. This private collection of personal letters has been cared for in the archives of the Missionary Sisters of Service at the Wallis Centre in North Hobart, at the request in 1966 of John's brother, Father Brian Wallis of Melbourne.

Brian was one of the executors of his mother's will and presumably gathered her personal papers to deal with them appropriately. Among her things was a Pascall's *Westward Ho! Assorted Toffee* tin with John's 100 letters squashed inside. Brian approached the Missionary Sisters of Service in Hobart and requested that the letters be cared for in the MSS archives, but kept under wraps till John and his siblings had died. The letters finally came to light again in 2014, thirteen years after John Wallis died.

John, who was ordained for the Archdiocese of Hobart, was born in 1910 in Yea, north-east of Melbourne, to Abraham Knight Wallis and Emily (Emma) Kathleen Corcoran. Baptised at the Yea Sacred Heart Church, John began his schooling at the local public school at Homewood, travelling to school riding his horse, Bonnie. He had a year with the Sisters of St Joseph in Yea, before being educated at Assumption College, Kilmore, by the Marist Brothers. In October 2018, John was inducted into the College's Hall of Excellence.

John's seminary training was at Springwood and Manly from 1927 until 1932. His applications to various dioceses and religious orders had been turned down

on health grounds, but accepted eventually by Archbishop William Barry of Hobart. Ordained in 1932 by Archbishop William Hayden, John then served seven different bishops up until his death in Hobart on 3rd August 2001.

John's life was characterised by his pastoral ministry and the founding in 1944 of the Australian religious order, the Missionary Sisters of Service, who this year celebrate their 75th anniversary of foundation. John was one who rejoiced and embraced Vatican II (1962-1965), which freed him in his pastoral practice and in his teaching, having captured the spirit and vision emanating from the documents of Vatican II.

In 1970s and 1980s, he subsequently travelled to many parts of Australia giving lectures and retreats to religious, especially women religious, and priests, and also to lay people, to inform and impress upon them the call to change in the closed clericalised church. Seizing the opportunity, John knew the paramount importance of Vatican II, and while a segment of the church caught the spirit and were vitally enthused, many were blocked on the journey. Many did not share John's passion or glimpse the whole vision, or understand the dire consequences of not listening or of not continuing to listen to the *signs of the times* in the world through the people around them, even up until today.

John's 100 letters to his mother and father that are being published are delightfully candid, intimate and illuminating, and signed off as 'Jack', as he was known in the family. They reveal a close relationship with his parents and especially with his mother. He regularly mentions his siblings, Marie, Don, Chester, Brian and Charlie and other relatives. Coming from a farming background, John shows his love for the land and his appreciation for the bush and the natural environment. The spirituality and theology that is portrayed is of the era, as was the training at the seminary. Threads can be noted that develop into a very different theology and spirituality in his later life.



75th Anniversary of the Missionary Sisters

In November 2018, to begin the 75th anniversary celebrations, the Missionary Sisters of Service took a group of sisters and friends on a pilgrimage to Tasmania, following in the footsteps (by bus!) of the early Missionary Sisters of Service and the story of the MSS in Tasmania. During the pilgrimage, Father Graeme Howard, a priest of the Archdiocese of Hobart, spoke to the pilgrims, reflecting on John, the founder of the MSS, as follows:

So, imagine this young fellow coming to Tasmania at the age of twenty-two and a half, into a place he had never known, to meet with people he didn't know, and to mix with priests he didn't know – the humanity of it all and the loneliness that was there! He told me he landed in Launceston by boat. Because the Dean of the Parish was ill, John went straight into parish work in Launceston for ten weeks before going to Hobart, seeing his first dead person, meeting a man in prison who was to be hanged, visiting many sick people in hospital and doing his first funerals. Then two of the priests took him down to Hobart.

Coming into Hobart, how did he get around? As was the case in Launceston those first days, he didn't have a car. He walked around the hills visiting everybody and when he was stationed at the cathedral in Hobart, he gets a pushbike – not like the bikes of today. Imagine riding a pushbike around Hobart up and down those steep hills. In our early days once you were ordained, you had to get a car. I was blessed because my parents gave me a car, my first car. A few of the priests were like

me. But if you weren't lucky like I was, you had to save up to buy a car. Then the big thing was, how was he going to pay it off? John had to struggle with that, saving his money, working out what to do and how to get it. Today, the priest gets ordained – in two months' time he gets a brand new car, which is marvellous. He needs it. But it was different then.

When you think about the formation of the young John Wallis, his Mum played a major role. Reading his letters, I came across this extraordinary thing – what comes through is his incredible relationship with his Mum. He says that reading her letters was really like spiritual reading for him, not just reading a letter; there was real depth in it. And the way he related to her in a very affectionate way, and the way he spoke about her, in his letters, as time went on – it was very moving.

We were trained in a sense not to work with women, because you backed off from that 'other breed!' With John it was different – there was a greater depth there. His mother being such a formative force in his life and such an influence, it came right through till she died. Because of this John had such an ability to work with women. It is incredible to think of what he achieved because of that relationship.

Soon after John was in Hobart, he went down to Bruny Island by ferry – and on the island he travelled on a pushbike or on a horse. He immediately became conscious of the need for education and for spiritual care for the people. We all know the story of Kit Hawkins, the question that she asked of John, 'What about us? Does the Church care?' Then it all started to move and it germinated in John, the vision to have women involved, to go out to the rural and outlying places, to accompany parents in educating their children in faith.

In the letters John speaks about the spiritual life, particularly with reading, reading permeated his life. He said to me once, 'If you're going to meditate, read beforehand. You've got to keep reading, reading good stuff.' When you think about it, this young priest was already thinking about setting up a Catholic library in Hobart while he was in the seminary – all of this germinating out of this boy from Yea who, they said, was too weak to become a priest.

There is so much more in those letters. John battled on in those early years with loneliness. He was living at the Cathedral Presbytery, the 'palace' we called it, the Bishop's house, and there was a major development when they got the phone put on in 1936, and John could ring up home. This began John's love affair with the phone. He was always on the phone. It became almost like a magnet. It really

became a part of his life. Imagine if that was the case today with a mobile!

For John, one of the really changing experiences was the Vatican Council. He blossomed through the Vatican Council. Any sign of restriction in him was gone – he had a terrific openness, a wonderful freedom. He was one who understood, not only the theory, but also the practicality of Vatican II. When you asked a question about something he would say, 'You have forgotten that the entry on such and such a page in the Vatican documents, about halfway down, you will find this or that.' Sure enough, it would be there – he was extraordinary. The grasp he had, the way he read and the talks he gave on Vatican II were amazing. So from the priests' point of view, we were blessed to have him. I look forward to the book with the 100 letters being published, so we get to know him a little more.

Publishing the letters

In this new book, authored and compiled by Bernadette T. Wallis, herself a Missionary Sister of Service and a niece of John Wallis, Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO has written the foreword. After each of the ten chapters in the book, various Australian Catholic leaders have reflected on John's letters and the times – Archbishop Adrian Doyle AM, Fr Edmund Campion, Ms Kate Fogarty, Fr David Ranson, Fr Austin Cooper OMI, Ms Bobby (Barbara) Court, Fr Graeme Howard, Corrie van den Bosch MSS, Ms Angela Hazebroek and Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM.

The MSS Congregational Leader, Stancea Vichie, in writing the Epilogue of the book quotes Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Letters are among the most significant memorial a person can leave behind them.*

David Ranson writes: *Through these concluding letters, we are presented with an understanding of priesthood that will be echoed nearly 80 years later in Pope Francis' metaphor of mercy as the key to priestly life, understood as passionate involvement with those who find themselves on the margins. This imperative to view the world, not from the centre, but from the peripheries has now found itself in the language of the Magisterium itself. John lived this evangelical demand prophetically. For him, it was critical for one involved in ministry to identify that "special work upon which one can speak with authority" – in other words, to know with clarity to which margin the Spirit calls, and to whom one's ministry is uniquely at the service. For him, the specific margin was to be discovered in the isolation of rural communities. "I am convinced that our whole efforts should be directed to the*

promotion of greater interest in Rural life" – to 'the bushies', as he affectionately calls those living in such communities. Because of this, John's priesthood was never reduced to cult. It was a manifestation of how he defined genuine sanctity – "love gone mad." And because it need be first and foremost an expression of love, ministry must be engaged always with humanity and warmth. John is remembered for this quality and for which I, too, fondly remember him as a young boy growing up in Tasmania in the 1960s and 1970s.

From the beginning of their community in 1944, the Missionary Sisters of Service adopted the motto, *Into the Highways and Byways* adapted from Luke's gospel 14:23. The sisters were to go out to the people in their minds and their hearts, and in their action – to the edges and beyond. They worked in rural and outback parishes, conducted religious correspondence courses and catholic bookshops so that good reading was available and had an outreach to various groups of people through the years – industrial and hospital chaplaincy, counselling, adult formation, community involvement, work with refugees and asylum seekers, the signing Deaf community and advocating against human trafficking. Now with their community of sisters ageing and a new future emerging, they have established *Highways and Byways – a Community of Service* to carry on the work and spirit of the Sisters and John Wallis. This is a transformative development, people with skilled governance and leadership skills taking responsibility for this mission in the heart of the church.

In November 2018, at the source of where it all began, a memorial to John Wallis was placed and blessed on Bruny Island, south of Hobart. In November 2019, a walking pilgrimage will take place on the Island, where John loved to be with the people so very isolated in the 1930s. It will be a time to reflect on John's vision and how that vision was carried seventy-five years through the MSS – how it is being carried into the future, a future full of hope in the grass-roots church of Australia. ☺

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

Denis Edwards – priest, scholar and friend

JAMES MCEVOY

This is the eulogy for Fr Denis Edwards given on 12 March 2019 at St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Adelaide by Rev James McEvoy, senior lecturer in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at ACU and a priest of the Adelaide Archdiocese.



Denis was a priest, a teacher, a prolific author, and a theologian with an international profile in several key areas of theological inquiry. Yet he was, first, a disciple: his fundamental and constant concern was to be attentive to the drawing of God's Spirit. His gentle, unassuming presence gave expression to that concern. His life was about God.

Denis was a fine teacher. He loved teaching. Adept at understanding issues from students' perspectives, he could explain to beginners, step by step, even the most sophisticated line of thought, and help students discover how that understanding mattered to their lives. His books were written with that same skill – aimed at the average lay reader yet also read by leading theologians. He was a clear thinker and a skilled communicator. Those gifts, along with armfuls of patience, were carried into his supervision of doctoral students. In demand as a supervisor, he would usher students along, through the morass of self-doubt that can plague that undertaking. He trusted students' gifts, allowing them to flourish.

Denis was a superb theologian. He had those qualities which distinguish the great from the good in our field. He had an incisive grasp of the range of questions theology deals with, and a detailed understanding of the various approaches to those questions across the years, from the first century to the twenty-first. That task demands not only his capacious mind, but also decades of study. He dedicated the last 40 years to two important issues: the relationship between science and theology,

and theology's response to the ecological crisis. On these, he was a world-leader, and they were the focus of his 15 books, which reflected on the heart of the Christian tradition – Jesus, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and Creation. His final book, *Deep Incarnation*, is at the publishers and will be launched later this year. Please come. Theology was the one thing Denis was ambitious for – not to draw attention to himself; it mattered to him that the Christian community gave the best account of its faith in a challenging period of history.

Yet, to be clear: Denis's story was not one of perfection. He was keenly aware of human frailty, especially his own. But on the issue of human frailty: Denis was not naïve about his own need for the transforming grace of God. What is admirable is that he made a daily effort to be converted to that love.

Ecumenism was another of Denis's lasting commitments. He was the longest-serving member of the Australian Lutheran – Roman Catholic Dialogue (1983-2016). He listened deeply, recognizing the faith of the Lutherans as a real gift to Catholics, and looking for ways to receive expressions of their faith into our tradition.

Denis was ordained in 1966. After a few years of parish ministry and chaplaincy to the YCS, he worked with catechists in the diocese. To facilitate that work, he enrolled in an MA at Fordham and later completed a doctorate at CUA under the direction of Avery Dulles on the dynamics of faith in Karl Rahner and John of the Cross. Following this, Denis was a founding member of the Theology Institute, which proved to be a transformative endeavour. He had important roles in diocesan leadership, particularly in the various renewal movements through the decades: in the Diocesan Pastoral Renewal Program initiated by Archbishop James Gleeson in 1981; and as theological advisor to Archbishop Len Faulkner for the period of his leadership, 1986–2001. While committed to the Catholic Church's sacramental view of ordained ministry and church leadership, Denis was deeply committed to fostering lay leadership in the church, and to urging the church to find practices which uphold and embody the equal dignity of women.

While it's true that Denis was a retiring character, solitary even, he was also very good at friendship. Many of you are here today because he was your friend. In my experience, friendship with Denis was uncomplicated: it was never fussy and always generous and considered. He would share readily, for example, most recently about the changes to his life that prayerful discernment had led him to make at 75. On the other side of friendship, he had a clear sense of his friends' self-understanding and was a close listener, particularly when you wanted to talk over personal dilemmas or even heartache. He responded wisely, and not necessarily with the advice you had hoped for. For more than three decades he met monthly with a group of priests, his 'fraternity,' who support one another and reflect together about their lives and ministry. They socialize, with some, including Denis, attending the games of that football team. At work, Denis's connection with other ACU staff was collegial, and it was also one of friendship. I often noticed him expressing care and affection, as occasion called, for one or other members of our small team. He had friends from what seems to me like 'time out of mind,' beyond history: when first ordained he ministered to them as teenagers, celebrated their marriage, rejoiced in the births of their children and baptised them, celebrated birthdays and the high feasts; then celebrated their children's marriages and baptised their children's children. Denis had other long-lasting, abiding friendships which shared a deep love of God, commitment to the church community, and of course the rich gift of friendship itself. Here he enjoyed the simple things: a meal, a movie, a walk along the beach, and a conversation that emerges from deep knowing. From my observation, these friendships were profound sacraments of God's love in Denis's life.

Finally, a word about Denis's life now. As he sat at his office desk, a black-and-white photo of Karl Rahner was propped on the side bookshelf at about shoulder height, peering over his shoulder while he wrote, as it were. Denis welcomed this gaze. Taking a lead from Rahner, he would often say that we only have images with which to convey the eternal life that God promises, for which we hope, and which we know in embryo in Jesus. Eternal life is way beyond our imagining. Rahner expected us to be constantly surprised in heaven. To celebrate his eightieth birthday, Rahner's friends gathered for a seminar in Innsbruck.

Rahner gave one of the lectures, at the end of which he reflected about eternal life. He was gravely ill at the time and died later that month, so these matters were very real for him. This is Rahner's image. First, he evokes our experience of vulnerability and the way in which death makes us think again about our priorities, let go of trivialities, and focus on the abiding treasures of our lives. Rahner continues: *Our seemingly long life then appears as a single short explosion of freedom like an extended replay, an explosion in which question is transposed into answer, possibility into reality, time into eternity, potential freedom into exercised freedom. Then within an immense terror that is death will come a cry of unutterable joy which will reveal that the immense and silent void we experience as death is in reality filled with the primordial mystery we call God. It is filled with God's all-absorbing and all-giving love. Perhaps there, in this incomprehensible mystery we can catch a glimpse of Jesus, the blessed one who appears to us and looks at us. It is in this concrete figure of Jesus that all our legitimate assumptions about the incomprehensibility of the infinite God are divinely surpassed.*

This is Rahner's image of God's eternal transforming love. For us who remain, the pain is that we have glimpsed, have touched this same love in our friendship with Denis and, of course, in our other loves. And we would rather not let him go.

From us all then, Denis: farewell and thank you. Relish the mystery of eternal love. ☪



– BEQUESTS –

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Clericalism from the pews

BERISE HEASLY

Berise Heasly PhD offers some practical suggestions for combating the limitations of clericalism in the Catholic Church as we move towards the Plenary Council.

As a cradle Catholic, a mother, a teacher in Catholic schools around Melbourne for over three decades, and one who has history in the current difficulties facing the Catholic Church in Australia at this time, I raise my voice to offer some thoughts about the way ahead.

Defining Clericalism as a concept is a multi-dimensional task. It includes the various and familiar claims to entitlements, to priorities, to deference, to exclusiveness and to a demand for personal importance. In my forth-coming book, titled 'Call No One Father: Countering Clericalism in the Catholic Tradition' through Coventry Press, Melbourne, I have tried to identify all those many hues with clarity and precision. That project is research-based with an auto-ethnographical tendency, as it is not possible to divorce oneself utterly from the problems, the pain, the possibilities, the paradoxes we face.

By using the discipline of qualitative research methodology, it is possible to delve into the multitude of experiences over many decades, which have been the experience of what I call the 'People in the Pews' – the laity. We are faced with diminishing numbers of priests with pastoral expertise, and also with dreadful gaps in hierarchical governance, accountability and transparency which extends back nearly eight decades in Australia.

In following the debates in such august publications as *The Swag* and *The Tablet*, among many others, it becomes obvious that voices like mine may have some significant content to add to the multi-dimensional grief, anger, apparent impotence and confusion surfacing in public commentary today. So I offer these thoughts in the hope that they will be accepted as realistic, careful efforts at problem-solving.

The requirements of the Plenary Council mean that action must be coordinated, shaped and planned wisely, implemented with monitoring and auditing functions being central to change. I have offered within my book three change processes, which may seem at first to be a trifle exaggerated. These three processes originate



in the discipline of Education and they are meant to replace the present seminary formation – especially because candidates for the present form of priesthood are diminishing rapidly and also because the 21st century political and pastoral landscape requires a different set of quite advanced skills.

When we are faced with the important but shocking impact of sociologically focussed qualitative research of such a high standard as offered by Frederic Martel, we realise that the bigger picture must be addressed immediately. So with humility and sincerity, I offer here three major steps that can be taken, starting well before the Plenary Council gets underway:

1. Given the aging and exhausted present pastoral coterie of priests in Australia, but also all over the world, we must acknowledge the central issue of priest-less parishes, and acknowledge also that poaching priests from utterly foreign cultures is not the answer. Every individual priest on staff in the Vatican must be on notice, right now, that they are to be repatriated to their own countries or a country where the cultures are similar, to be appointed to engage within the existing priest-less parishes to administer Mass, Sacraments and to be

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one part of teams of parishioners parish councils.

2. Given the appalling nature of the such unsatisfactory behaviour uncovered by Martel, all Dicasteries must immediately be put in temporary recess for three years, during which Catholics of relevant qualifications and lived experience will be required to take up the commitments and responsibilities to manage or to close individual Dicasteries in a legal process. This allows decentralisation of Headquarters of each to be established outside Rome, and possibly established on each of the five continents. Assumed entitlement of Statehood of the Vatican is no longer an ethical stance, and this is a significant and central matter to pursue and change within the next ten years.
3. Every diocese with beautiful art works and other priceless articles should be required immediately to choose and offer at least one piece, which will be negotiated within the proper processes to be on permanent or long-term loan for financial purposes, so that the given diocese may use the ensuing funds for the 'fundamental option for the poor'. There would be many experts, both Catholic and other, who could provide a network of philanthropists, who are not prepared to be part of the existing money laundering and criminal sources indicated within Martel's research. Importantly, many pieces now residing in the Vatican, and claimed to be held in trust, would become an immediate part of that ongoing process.

On the business of priest-less parishes, we must guard against substituting one form of clericalism with another. If entitlements, deference and silence have been the order of the day up till now, we must not substitute a group of people on any Parish Council, who claim the power, the right and the priority to compel others to accept their strictures, their importance and their personal agenda. Non-clerical demand for power-and-control is still clericalism, and may also slip into fundamentalism as an ideology. Ideology is not faith and we must not only distinguish between the two concepts, but teach our people in the pews how to differentiate one from the other, so that confusion is minimised.

Precise and meticulous governance, with regular review must be instituted via legal mores within existing State governmental boundaries in which a given diocese is placed. Accountability measures must be instituted in each parish with lay expertise

in finance, audit and organisational standards of democratic restorative justice foremost in modelling inclusive and ethical processes.

Principles and Practices which senior priests in Australia will remember from the 70's and 80s, known as the Credit Co-operatives, must be revisited. Obviously, finance and money management has moved on since then, and it is important that proper procedures be followed. Leadership in such a way is already in operation in the parish of Hamilton, Victoria. The Parish Priest is to be commended for his foresight, clarity and shared planning. Variations within the rules and regulations of each Australian State would be consulted as the many planning and organisational moves are made, honed, analysed and monitored. This approach would be within the requirement of addressing the problem of the priest-less parish. It might mean that one priest still needs to travel long distances to administer the Sacraments, celebrate Mass and make vital contact with families and others within the arc of his territorial responsibilities.

Pope Francis has identified pluralism as a concept worth studying and worth opening up to address the evils that are present in our midst. This concept includes understanding that evangelisation is far too akin to colonialization to be pursued in its present form. Theologians and other experts are needed immediately to develop, clarify and teach 21st century people in the pews in 21st century teaching-learning practices so that the message of Jesus can once more flourish, rather than be frozen by the evil that surrounds us. Missiology therefore, as a concept, becomes a careful mature ethical modelling of the message of Jesus. Clerical dress becomes utterly redundant. Delicate communications with ecumenical and inter-faith groups become a careful, accurate and humble communication based on questioning, exploring, listening, without using rigid binary processes meant to assume authority in any form.

In conclusion, I must make it clear that these thoughts are not unrealistic in nature. It is time for action. It is time to be the hands and heart of the Holy Spirit. It is time to use the STEEP process: sociological, technological, economic, environmental, ethical and political spheres of our secular and sacred world and meld them all towards the wonder and beauty that God as Creator meant our world to be.



What is God asking of us at this time?

ALEX NELSON

Alex Nelson is a psychologist, educator and pastoral supervisor. His response to the call for submissions for the Plenary Council 2020 offers a thoughtful perspective. This is an edited version of the full submission which began describing the current context in which we live both in Australia and the Church. He continues here by addressing the questions asked by the Plenary Council Committee.

Clearly, the question is addressed to elicit and hear with respect the prophetic voice of Australian Catholics, whether or not we still regularly attend Mass. Our prophetic voice has its roots in our Baptism, and it is likely that Catholics have expressed it at significant times in our lives, at work and in the community. Prophets speak out when they discern that something really needs to change, and there is a hope here that Catholics in Australia may well have something prophetic to say at this time that energises the church's transformation. I suspect that many Catholics, who have not gained a sense of our dignity as baptised, may not respond to the question, but may say, 'Well, how would I know what God is thinking and asking?'

A thoughtful response to the question about what God is asking of us will benefit from some level of theological knowledge and reflective pastoral practice. I think that it is fair to say that although a number of Catholics, in post secondary education, have studied courses in theology and Scripture in degrees at a Catholic university or School of Theology, and therefore have some experience in thinking theologically, many others may not have. The annual Lenten study groups and diocesan adult education courses make a contribution to developing faith and pastoral practice among Catholics who participate in them. Religious women and men, some who are retired, also share their theological education and pastoral experience with Catholics who have an interest in furthering their learning in various ways: publications, blogs, retreats, participation in prayer groups, engagement in groups for reflection and action for global and local social justice, as well as sharing their faith through conversation with people who find in them thoughtful co-pilgrims. There are parish clergy also who, week in and out, try to evoke awareness of their baptismal dignity in their congregations, and foster their faith development.

The question about what God wants for Australia holds a respectful assumption that those who consider it are discerning people and not just satisfied or dissatisfied

customers. However, because Catholics anywhere in Australia are not regularly consulted by the hierarchy, it might well be anticipated that many might not know how to go about responding to this momentous question. I hope that the experience of considering this question on the occasion of the Plenary Council might stimulate Catholics in Australia to engage more habitually in ongoing theological reflection on their personal and communal life experience in the light of Scripture and Church wisdom.

God's perspective

My response to the question is that it does not seek answers that repeat what we have always done. I sense that what God asks of us is to take this time as an opportunity to turn away from what corrupts us and hear again the life-giving Good News. The call to all Catholics, including hierarchy, for a change of heart and mind in this time and context is fundamentally necessary. This means to me that our established practices and the convictions on which they are based need to be reviewed thoughtfully and courageously. Our Church is not well practiced in doing this. Attempts to do this frankly by a previous Bishop of Toowoomba met with disapproval and punishment from the Vatican.

Catholics learn from our contact with the human, ecological and environmental poor among us, as we engage in mutual ministry and cooperation for change. In this way, 'shepherds who smell like the sheep' will become a characteristic of all members of the Catholic Church, both baptised and ordained.

The current and long established practice of Catholic hierarchy appearing in splendid dress and regal processions does more to establish the church as an institution parallel to the monarchy, the military, the courts, and some professional strata of society who prefer the perfume of nobility rather than 'the smell of the sheep'.

It is not just some minor laws and regulations that have found a protected place in the organisation and administration of Catholic Church practices that need to be changed. Of

course, it is a lot to expect that those of us, who have known no other kind of church than one modelled on Empire, will be able to envisage for ourselves this pastoral kind of servant / leadership and live through it into a new form of Community. Resistance to the exhortations, publications, pastoral visits to the Catholic church in various nations, and new arrangements made by Pope Francis in response to global concerns and corrupt practices in the Vatican has already made itself present in the actions of some Vatican officials who have benefitted from a clerical culture of privilege and power for as much as half a century. Similar strong resistance from some hierarchy and powerful friends to calls for such a transformation is only to be expected to appear within the Plenary Council.

The Catholic Church in Australia will not be transformed without having a new vision of our identity and the will to make the vision live. Those whose visions are for an Australian Catholicism that stays as it is, with a hierarchy to maintain it, are likely to succeed in preserving elements in the status quo of the Catholic church. A Church which is stretched across a frame of hierarchy partnered by patriarchy will continue reproducing its distortion as it has done up till now.

The Sacraments

Catholics learn and believe that we need to participate in the sacraments for our lifelong growth into wholeness and holiness. Participation in some sacraments has been prescribed, with failure to comply categorised as serious sin. In previous generations, and perhaps also in the present generation, Catholics find some anxiety attached to participation in sacraments. At times, Catholics have sought and been relieved to find an 'understanding priest' to help them make a difficult confession, negotiate family expectations in the celebration of an inter-denominational or intercultural marriage, or arrange a funeral, as well as other challenging and rewarding pastoral circumstances. Most priests usually rise to the occasion with grace and kindness seeing opportunities to communicate the love of God. But people still have current 'horror stories' about a funeral, wedding or Baptism where there was considerable embarrassment or shame for some of those present.

Most sacraments require administration in some form or other by the ordained. Baptism may be administered in some circumstances by any Christian, but is

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the swag



usually performed by a priest, deacon or pastoral minister. Confirmation may also be administered by a priest deputised by the Bishop. Eucharist, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick are restricted to the ministry of an ordained priest. Though the ministers of Marriage are the couple, they still require a priest to be a witness on behalf of the church. In effect, to many Catholics the priest appears to be the minister for marriage. It appears that sacraments belong to the ordained. New pastoral practices need to be developed to correct this impression.

The presence of baptised but not ordained Catholics, many of whom are women, as Pastoral Carers or Parish Assistants in various pastoral care settings has relieved diminishing numbers of priests of a considerable amount of work, and also introduced different qualities of pastoral care. However, pastoral practice for the administration of sacraments still has specific places in which the presence of a priest is required. Having family members in hospital with a serious illness or in danger of death is a cause of anxiety for those who desire to have the person at risk 'see the priest'. Because it is associated with Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick is also reserved to the priest. With fewer ordained chaplains on hand in hospitals, an unordained chaplain often feels torn by requests from family members who want them to arrange for a priest to see their relative before they die. Priests respond as best as they can but the sacrament may become a brief fly in-fly out visit.

Everyone 'knows', from watching disaster movies, that a priest has to be on the scene making a sign of the cross over a dying person. Some chaplains have developed ways to provide an anointing with oil as a way to involve anxious or grieving family members in kind pastoral care for all present. What is God asking of us? To engage with imagination and empathy with pastoral practitioners in ongoing pastoral theological reflective practice to develop graceful pastoral practices that avoid stifling creativity, while the Church waits for a surge in the supply of ordained ministers.

Catholics are known to shop around to find a suitable church and a priest to celebrate their marriage as its official witness for the church. This understandable practice often appears to attach more significance in the whole event to a wedding (costly), rather than to a sacrament (gratis) which is a way of life between two people that reveals and communicates the love of God, different but just as much as does the sacrament of

Reconciliation. When the wedding is over, how do Catholics grow into mature people in the circumstances of their daily lives? Those who have access to a variety of personal and family resources are likely to live effectively into the challenges brought by partnership and parenting, in sickness and health, unemployment, responsibility for family members etc. Despite the sacramental identity of their marriage as a grace for the whole community, our secular culture draws many married people into the marketplace to live in competition with other Australians for a job, an affordable house, health resources etc. The advocacy of Church agencies with Governments and business on behalf of the less able, the violated, the immigrant and the refugee, the unemployed and the despised poor are all genuine supports for families and persons in need, but they can be brushed aside by government who dole out benefits only sufficient to placate and appeal to the dominant interests in society.

Priesthood

For years, the Catholic Church has agonised over a shortage of clergy. This phenomenon does not mean that the gift of priestliness is absent from the church, but only that there are fewer priests being ordained in Australia, and that the average age of priests active in leadership and ministry has risen. Having gone through blaming young people for selfishness and parents with sons for not encouraging them to enter seminaries, we might expect that God is asking us to discover opportunities to find transformative ways for communities to provide for their needs. A major concern about having too few priests is an anticipated lack of access to Mass and sacraments. That perceived shortage has led to dioceses developing the kinds of remedies for labour shortages that business develops, such as importing foreign workers with appropriate skills and arranging changes to visa regulations, in the hope that sufficient workers will be found to fill vacancies. This approach apparently works well enough with increasing the supply of skilled trades people and digital technicians.

A new way of imagining the life of Catholics and sacramental practices is long overdue. Current approaches to remedy Australia's clergy shortage often do not anticipate the time it takes for the imported clergy to transition from their original experience of being a priest in their home culture into functioning easily and satisfyingly in the various contexts of our complex Australian culture. Since post WWII, most immigrants to Australia from whatever country and culture have

experienced difficulty for years in accommodating to the language and diverse cultural habits of Australians.

Catholics often complain about having difficulties in understanding what the priest from overseas is saying within the liturgy. This can make important occasions such as funerals and marriages difficult for both the priests imported to relieve pressure in parishes and dioceses and for the parishioners and their family and friends. Priests who come to Australia with the best intentions and generosity find it difficult to insert themselves in some cultural expressions of Australian Catholic Church life that they encounter, which can vary from place to place throughout Australia. To priests who come to Australia from home countries that have endured colonialism and exploitation by so called First World nations, the casual but warm hand shaking friendliness of local parishioners may appear to be out of place and lacking in the deferential respect that he was accustomed to in his home culture. Community is not served well enough by *ex opera operato* performance of sacraments.

The way forward is not to blame priests or to overload them but to re-imagine how Church life and its practices can best be expressed and carried out. An ongoing reflective pastoral practice among the whole community with the clergy is needed for transformation to take place.

I think that God is asking the whole Catholic community to take this opportunity to be in consultation about imaginative innovation in the recruitment and education of both women and men in ordained ministry. This is an Australian challenge and Catholics are wasting time by waiting on the Vatican to find a way forward for us. Ask the Uniting Church, the Anglican Church and other Australian churches what they have learned from their practice of ordaining women and married men.

Hierarchy and Patriarchy

Hierarchy and patriarchy are structures of dominance that have been adopted over millennia in various cultures to retain power for some people over others. They are characteristic of societies worldwide, and are so pervasive that they are assumed by many, usually those who benefit from them, to be natural and even designed by God. These structures are distorting the Catholic Church worldwide, and are diseases that require radical surgery.

Those who benefit from Hierarchy and Patriarchy have assigned for themselves the place of being in charge of the sacraments.

This places them in a position of immense power because Catholics believe that their salvation depends on access to the sacraments.

In the name of service for the People of God, there seems to have developed in the Church a self-serving prejudgment that the sacraments can only be made available to the Catholic community by males who are designated and proclaimed through ordination as ontologically different from the baptised. The dignity of the baptised Catholic is reduced to that of being an obedient consumer of services provided mostly by the ordained. A theology of baptismal dignity is underdeveloped and the baptised are often described as laity, which is a sociological term to describe their inferior position at the bottom of the ladder of power. Clergy is a sociological term for an ordained male of higher position on the ladder of power in the Church. Clergy who currently face being disgraced for sexual abuse, are returned as punishment to the lay status of the baptised at the bottom of the ladder of power.

Hierarchy in all languages and cultures proclaims that some persons are designated by God as superior to others, with an appropriate position on a ladder of rank. The nobility and monarchy, as well as dictators and even elected leaders in democracies, subscribe to hierarchy or 'holy order' and support each other in this self-serving falsehood. In some social circumstances, women may also be a monarch, but only in order to preserve a line of inherited power.

The evil of Hierarchy is that it proclaims that some people have more worth than others, so that there is a ladder of social and cultural value, with great disparity between some and others. Ascent up the ladder of Hierarchy is possible; so is a fall from grace and esteem. The reason for the superiority of some over others may be ascribed to one or more circumstance. Race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, culture and membership of a religious group have all served to justify some groups and persons having privilege and power that is not conceded to others. Most serious in discriminating among people is the use of theological justification to accord, as God's will, superiority to some people who inherit and pass on a divine right to rule; or who by some divine rite, such as coronation, ordination or other religious mark of being chosen gain status which in principle is beyond question.

The other major distortion in Catholic Church is Patriarchy, which asserts that male is superior to female. This

discrimination among people is also asserted to be God's will. When these two distortions of human dignity are brought together, there is a prejudgment, held by some as God's will, that all males are superior to all females, and that clergy are superior to the baptised. When these two influences combine in the Catholic Church, clericalism is born as the inevitable offspring of Patriarchy and Hierarchy.

The Royal Commission Report in 2018 identified clericalism as a contributing factor toward the practice of both sexual abuse and the institutional cover up of evidence, thereby obstructing the works of justice and reparation that have needed to be taken.

My sense is that the persisting influence of clericalism (hierarchy, patriarchy) as a systemic factor of distortion and corruption in the Australian and worldwide Catholic Church remains unexplored and unchallenged. Through the Royal Commission into Institutions, attention has been directed towards instances of sexual, psychological, spiritual and human rights abuse and cover up for at least the last 70 years. Recently, the Vatican Synod was convened to examine ways to deal with these abuses in the worldwide Catholic Church.

It is very important for various institutions of Australian society and the Catholic Church to continue to research psychological explanations for paedophilia, to develop effective ways to manage those guilty of child sexual abuse and other sexual crimes, to establish ways for care of those who have been abused, including financial resources to help construct living conditions that sustain greater dignity for them, to set in place comprehensive processes to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, and to bring scrutiny to the recruitment of clergy and their formation for ministry.

However, as long as the focus remains on the disorder in individuals and does not address the effect of patriarchy and hierarchy on the life of the Catholic Church, there is a risk of reducing what is wrong within the Catholic Church to the behaviour of 'bad apples' who are being punished currently by Church and State for their misdemeanours.

There are some habits of thought and practice in Catholicism that are to large degree not accepted anymore, and the Church needs to face this honestly. Throughout the Gospels, as in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) Jesus presented a number of once taken for granted

cultural regulations and practices of human behaviour that were no longer worthy of human compliance. 'You have heard it said, but I tell you...' Jesus was inviting the hearers to take this opportunity to change important perspectives and practices in order to embrace God's Way.

In John 4, in meeting a woman about to be stoned to death for being 'caught in the very act of adultery', Jesus called on the would-be executioners to critique their social, religious and cultural practices for punishing women through the lens of their own behaviour. Without violence, he asked his hearers to take the opportunity to review their practices, change and enter the new community that Jesus was inviting them to join.

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

I think that God is asking us to take the current situation as an opportunity to turn away from what corrupts us and to embrace what is life-giving and go forward with it? This time in the life of the Catholic Church in Australia is a kairos that is emerging out of great suffering by those who have undergone sexual, spiritual and psychological violence in places designed to show God's care. There is also the suffering that all Catholics endure through leadership which continues to value hierarchy and patriarchy in its ministry.

It is time for all in the Catholic Church in Australia, and throughout the world, to take the opportunity that is extended to us in the present circumstances. To undertake ongoing and thorough reflective practice, with examination of conscience and a critique of the assumptions that sustain our consciousness. Which practices will the Australian Catholic church through this Plenary Council examine and change?

My conviction is that God is asking us to take this opportunity to start dismantling the structures of hierarchy and patriarchy in the Australian Catholic Church, and prefer to 'smell like the sheep'. ☪

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Ash Wednesday Reflection

PAT POWER

Pat Power, retired Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn, reflects upon finding hope in the Church through renewing our ways of working.

If ever repentance and conversion are needed in the Australian Catholic Church it is at this very moment. Significantly, this urgent call for a change of heart is not coming from our Church leaders but from the wider Australian community, the media and, most importantly, from deeply committed Catholics and those who share their hopes and aspirations.

The harrowing revelations from the Royal Commission and, most recently, the conviction of Cardinal George Pell have rocked the Catholic Church in this country to its foundations. American Rabbi Shmuley Boteach is 'spot on' when he says that Australians are deeply traumatised in the wake of all this. But before we start feeling sorry for ourselves and the loss of reputation, we must clearly focus on the untold damage done to victims of abuse. Innocent lives have been irreparably damaged by such abuse which has been perpetrated by God's representatives. This has led to confusion, guilt and shame on the part of the young ones abused, preventing them from sharing this with parents and others who might have been able to help them. Often when they did open up, they weren't believed. At least now that it is all out in the open, there may be some hope of bringing belated healing and reparation to those so harshly treated along with their families and loved ones.

It goes without saying that it is not just individual "rotten apples" which have caused such destruction but a total system failure in the mentality and structures of the Catholic Church. Branch and root reform needs to be fearlessly undertaken if the Church is to return to the mission entrusted to it by Jesus.

In 1996, I gave a talk in which I expressed my hopes for the Catholic Church. They were that it would be:

- a more human church
- a humbler church;
- a less clerical church;
- a more inclusive church (and therefore more truly catholic);
- a more open church;
- a church which finds unity in diversity;

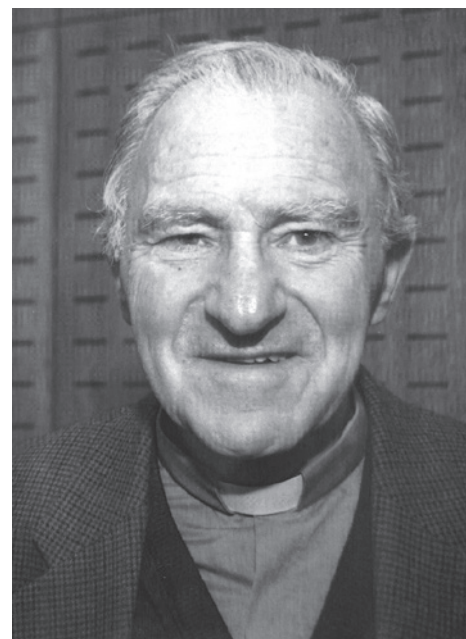
- a church which discovers its whole tradition;
- a church which reflects the person and values of Jesus.

I have restated those hopes many times since, including at the Oceania Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1998 in the presence of Pope John Paul II, the future Pope Benedict XVI and my brother bishops. Surely such aspirations are even more relevant today.

A male and clerically dominated church has a lot to answer for in terms of today's woes. It is hard to imagine that the church would be in its present parlous state if women had been in effective decision-making and governance roles. Nowadays, I sometimes hear bishops speaking of clericalism in critical terms but I wonder if there is any genuine change of heart when all real power continues to reside in the clergy. Sadly, at times this can be reflected at the parish level as well where the priest is able to have the first and last say in everything. This was well illustrated in Sydney priest, John Crothers' recent book *The Clergy Club* which strongly made that point. Authoritarianism is not a reflection of the true authority exercised by Jesus of Nazareth.

A large part of the problem has been the relationship of the Church in Australia (and elsewhere around the world) with the central authority of the Vatican. The notion of communion is an integral part of what it is to be a Catholic and that includes being in communion with one another, our local bishop and the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. It enables us to maintain unity in diversity respecting the cultural diversity of our world.

But there needs to be serious and urgent consideration of the questions of the ordination of women and optional celibacy for the clergy. These issues are seemingly off the agenda in terms of the central authority in Rome. In the present regime, a vast number of excellent candidates for the priesthood are being excluded. That has been well argued by individuals and groups wishing to bring about such reform. I do not wish to go over the debate except to say that I strongly support such reform and believe it is highly relevant to the present crisis in the church. Allied to all this is



Catholic teaching on sexuality. There are many lessons to be learned from the same-sex debate which has so occupied the Australian psyche in recent times. It is not enough for the Catholic Church to be repeating mantras from a past age. There are many voices which need to be respectfully listened to and critiqued. In the past, there has been far too much laying down the law by those in power and too little listening. Groups such as Australian Reforming Catholics, Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) and Catalyst for Renewal were often looked upon with suspicion and seen as disloyal whereas they have a great love for the Church and often their hearts are breaking with what is happening. Currently, the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform and our local Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn are providing effective forums where the voices of the people can be expressed.

The news of George Pell's conviction has brought me great sadness. I laid hands on him and Peter Connors when they were ordained bishops a year after I was. Over the years, as brother bishops, he and I were fairly regularly on the opposite side of the argument. I saw him as the champion of conservative positions which I did not espouse and which I believed did not embrace the teaching or the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. But he was well connected in the Vatican and with highly ranked conservative American bishops and cardinals. Clearly, this was all part of his advancement to high office in the Catholic Church. When he was made Cardinal in 2003, I publicly criticised his elevation because I said that I did not consider that he represented mainstream Australian Catholicism. For all that, he and I

maintained an amicable relationship and I was shocked when the allegations were brought against him. I found it hard to believe they were true. Twice last year, I wrote to offer my support and promise my prayers. Last weekend as he was beginning his time in remand, I offered Mass for him and asked someone close to him to convey that to him. I have to leave it to the courts to decide his fate. Over the years, I have spent a fair amount of time visiting prisons, often to comfort fellow priests who have offended. I have some insight into what a horrible existence it is. I take no joy whatever in George's fate.

I write this on Ash Wednesday in a spirit of repentance on behalf of my Church which has failed and hurt many good people. It

saddens me when so many people have lost faith and hope in the Catholic Church. It is understandable. But I simply say that God will never abandon you even when others have let you down or sinned against you. But I retain hope. When people asked me over the years when I was regularly in trouble with the Vatican why I remained in the Church, I said it was because it was my spiritual home. Today, I spoke with Bishop Bill Morris who was so unjustly removed from office in 2011 as Bishop of Toowoomba. I am in awe of the fact that he is completely devoid of bitterness and continues to have a rich pastoral ministry. Bill and I are regularly in touch with each other and when we spoke today and I sought his counsel about this article, he simply

replied 'Make sure you give them hope.'

I see that hope when I look at all the wonderful people involved in Catholic education, health-care, social justice and social services and the St Vincent de Paul Society. I find it, too, in commentators such as Frank Brennan, Francis Sullivan, Paul Collins and Bishop Vincent Long who have helped through the media in recent days to make some sense of what has been happening.

Pope Francis gives encouragement in his Lenten message: *The path to Easter demands that we renew our faces and hearts as Christians through repentance, conversion and forgiveness so as to live fully the abundant grace of the paschal mystery.* ☪



Faith leaders hold funeral for coal

THEA ORMEROD

Thea Ormerod, President, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, reflects on the funeral for coal liturgy held in March outside the office of Labor Minister, Chris Bowen, to highlight the need to bury coal as it is a major source of carbon emissions destroying our planet.



At a time when solidarity across religions is high, diverse faith communities gathered for a Vigil outside the Hon. Chris Bowen's office on Tuesday, March 26, with a unified message. This time it was not about interfaith harmony however, but a message for Labor about coal. The 'funeral for coal' was intended to convey their concern that Labor is not committed enough to halting new coal mines, starting with Adani's controversial Carmichael mine.

Fr Peter Maher, Ajahn Sujato, Dharmachari Arthacarya and Rev.

Elizabeth Orr jointly led the service, outside the Fairfield West office of Mr Bowen, who is the Shadow Treasurer and Member for MacMahon.

Mr Bowen stated in February that Labor would not block the new Adani mine. Those gathered were asking Mr Bowen to commit Labor to a formal review of the environmental approvals given to the mine after the coming federal election.

'Coal is dead and we are ready to bury it' said Fr Peter Maher, a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney. 'It's not ethical for Australia to be reaping profits from

expanding coal mining at a time when we know that coal pollution is driving an increasingly chaotic climate.'

Organised by the multi-faith Charity, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), similar funeral for coal vigils were organised in the same week outside the offices of Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, and Shadow Environment Minister, Tony Burke. In the previous week, the well-known Anglican priest Fr Rod Bower held a Funeral for Coal in his own parish, in solidarity with ARRCC's Vigils.

In Melbourne, some faith leaders associated with ARRCC are announcing that they are prepared to blockade at Adani's mine and rail sites and if need be, face arrest, in order to stop the mine from going ahead. They include a rabbi, a Baptist pastor, four ordained Buddhists, a Uniting Church minister and a Sister of Mercy, as well as several regular followers from different faith traditions.

They are responding to what they regard as a climate emergency. In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that global thermal coal use must drop by at least 59 per cent in the next 10-12 years if we are to avoid 1.5 Degree C warming.

Prominent faith leaders have also spoken out on the urgency of the challenge. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has called climate change a 'moral crisis' and 'the human thumb on the scale, pushing us toward disaster.' Pope Francis stated in his famous encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, 'Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony and disdain.'

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ARRCC would be very interested in hearing from any Catholic priests or Bishops who are drawn to working for a safe and sustainable world. Without being partisan, ARRCC engages in political advocacy for an orderly, rapid and fair transition to a low-carbon economy.

ARRCC also promotes lifestyles that are congruent with the earth's limits, through the organisation's participation in the global Living the Change Initiative (in which the Global Catholic Climate Movement also participates). People are supported in pledging lifestyle choices which reduce their carbon footprint in a real and sustained way. ARRCC believes that people of faith are best able to champion individual lifestyle change as one important response to the climate challenge, given that our faith traditions all value relationships over material comforts and possessions and all have compassion for those in the world suffering most from climate change.

If you would like to support ARRCC in some way, please contact infor@arrcc.org.au or call 02 9150 9713. The website has more information and resources: <https://www.arrcc.org.au/> ↻

Gods message through Water



In the scriptures water plays a significant role in several messages that the Lord wishes give to us his people. In the Old Testament we have the people of God passing through the Red Sea Ex 17:1-7 (Salvation), we have Moses tapping water from the rock (the Lord never abandons his people), we have Naman the Leper being cleansed in the waters of the Jordan 2 Kings 5:1-17 (God is the eternal Healer). Jesus walks on the waters and rescues Peter who is sinking, out of his own lack of faith Mt 14:22-33. (Jesus always holds your hand and rescues you). So we need to respect water at all times. Saving water means saving and sustaining God's precious gift of water for many years; hence saving life. Let us not waste water; let us close the tap while we brush our teeth. You may devise other ways of saving water depending on how much you normally use.

Xavier Pinto CSsR

Talking heads in the Catholic Church

PAUL COLLINS

Paul Collins has worked for more than fifty years for renewal in Catholicism, both as a priest and layperson. Here he discusses the upcoming ad limina visit by the Australian bishops to meet with Pope Francis and Vatican officials. What will they have to report?



Two months from now Australia's Catholic bishops will make their quinquennial visit to Rome reporting on the state of the church. During this visit *ad limina apostolorum* ('to the threshold of the apostles Peter and Paul') bishops meet the pope and officials of the Vatican to discuss issues facing their local Catholic community. *Originating as pilgrimages to Rome, these five-yearly visits became obligatory during the over-centralization of the church in the nineteenth century. What follows is what the Australian bishops ought to tell Pope Francis and what he ought to tell them.*

The bishops should begin by confessing that they are deeply divided among themselves, as revealed in the evenly split vote for bishops' conference president in May 2018 between Brisbane's Mark Coleridge and Sydney's Anthony Fisher, with Coleridge winning simply on seniority.

Essentially there are three groups in the conference: there is a sizeable minority who follow the uncompromising, Cardinal Pell, boots-and-all style of Catholicism, now led by Fisher. The majority are essentially 'neutral'. They feel they don't know what's going to happen next, and there's justification for that as accusations of sexual abuse continue to surface. Afraid, their response is to run for deep cover. While reasonably competent

administrators, they offer little genuine leadership or pastoral care to the community. Finally, there's a tiny minority who understand the terrible situation of Australian Catholicism, try to provide pastoral leadership, and are committed to the theology and practice of the Second Vatican Council.

Thus, we're left with an unhappy, mediocre episcopate, mainly as a result of the reactionary, conformist priorities of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, together with the baleful influence of Pell in Rome on bishops' appointments. No wonder able, intelligent priests are nowadays turning-down episcopal appointments across Australia and the world!

The bishops also need to tell Francis that the Catholic community has plunged into the worst crisis of its entire history. We thought we'd seen it all during the four years of child abuse Royal Commission, especially as terrible stories of abuse and mistreatment of children by clergy and Catholic institutions were recounted.

But George Pell's conviction leaves that for dead. Australian Catholics are stunned and outraged at the bishops' lack of accountability. They have left us utterly leaderless, offering nothing but clichés, with the outstanding exception of Parramatta Bishop Vincent Long van Nguyen. Long confessed that he felt 'awful

and empty inside,' but placed this within the context of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Most of the others were 'shocked and distressed', but said it would be 'inappropriate and inflammatory' to make further comment on Pell's conviction. No leadership there, no reference to Christ or the gospel.

The bishops don't have much else to offer Francis. With declining practice rates (only 8-10% of self-confessed Catholics go to Mass semi-regularly), a massive shortage of priests (just over 50% of priests in Australian parishes now are foreign-born) and a complete collapse in affiliation among young Catholics, the picture is bleak. The one optimistic note is that the ministries *least* controlled by bishops – Catholic health, education, social services and Vinnies – where some 80% of the church's service is delivered, are in good shape. These ministries are almost completely run by laity and largely funded by government.

What should Francis tell the bishops? First, he'll tell them to jettison their silly outfits like mitres, skull caps and other hang-overs from history. This is what Jesus meant when he talked about pharisees wearing 'wider phylacteries and longer tassels' (Matthew 23:5). Bishops need to embrace gospel modesty. This doesn't mean no ceremony, just simplicity.

For Francis, abandoning paraphernalia symbolizes a deeper change to make pastoral care rather than power, a bishop's primary priority. The church is here to serve, not to promote an ideology of gender, sex, reproduction, or end-of-life issues. Francis has made it clear that the real moral issues are care for nature and highlighting the dangers of global warming, as he made clear in his revolutionary encyclical *Laudato si'*. Here he also questions the radical anthropocentric dominance of humankind over nature, and he reintegrates humankind back into the biological matrix from which we emerged by emphasising the connectedness of all reality. He says it was the mystics who first 'experience the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feel that "all things are God,"' quoting the sixteenth century Spanish lyric poet and mystic, Saint John of the Cross.

If Francis knew the expression, he'd also tell the bishops that the ideology of ecclesiastical hierarchy – hierarchism – is a stranded asset, unsellable anywhere, least of all to anyone trying to follow Jesus. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is about power and bishops are initiated into it through papal appointment and ordination. In the process, baptism is forgotten and equality in the Christian community is lost. Francis needs to challenge bishops to abandon

power and become leaders. By 'leadership' I mean an ability to articulate in oneself the meaning and purpose of the church, plus the facility to support others in realizing their gifts and strengths. An experienced opera conductor thus explained leadership: 'I need to have so integrated the musical score that on the night I can focus entirely on facilitating and supporting the singers and musicians, so that together we can realize what the composer intended.' Spot on!

This kind of leadership can only emerge from the community. The whole focus of the church needs to shift from hierarchical priorities. Catholics shouldn't waste time on bishop-sponsored activities like plenary councils. They should concentrate on developing lay leadership, particularly women's leadership. Laity and priests need to act strategically in developing new structures in parishes and dioceses to which everyone is responsible, including bishops. Leadership in the church is something earned, not granted by ecclesiastical appointment.

This will be resisted, just as Francis himself is being undermined by the diehards. In a church at rock-bottom we need a new vision, and it is from the laity that that vision will come. The age of hierarchs is already over. ☺



Evolution-based theology and the problem of evil

JOHN SCANLON

John Scanlon offers an understanding of the kind of evil that results in abuse and concealment of abuse and mass murder such as we have seen recently in New Zealand and Sri Lanka.



Several years ago I wrote an article for *The Swag* titled *Human Evolution and 'Original' Sin*. The article explored the differences in treatment of the topic of Original Sin by two theologians who in essence accepted the truth of the theory of

human evolution; Jack Mahoney S.J., who taught at the University of London, and the recently deceased Australian Denis Edwards. In that article I sided strongly with Mahoney on the point of the mythical nature of The Fall and the misinterpretation of Paul's Romans 5 by Augustine, which between them remove all possible justification for Augustine's definition of Original Sin. Further, I quoted Mahoney in the following passage: *Why has sin become so central for many people in the life of faith? One thinks of extreme instances such as Augustine, Calvin, Pascal, and even in modern times, Reinhold Niebuhr, not to mention the countless nameless individuals who have placed, and who place, such emphasis on the prevalence of sin and the corruption of human nature.*

That quotation was directed by Mahoney at people whose consciousness of all-

pervading sin is so crushing that it damages their ability to respond to God's love. However I accepted in that article, and still do, that human sinfulness exists in the life of virtually every human individual. I still believe that much of what the church calls sin is a consequence of the spiritual immaturity and weaknesses of beings who at any time are the current embodiment of an evolutionary progression from our animal antecedents to our ultimate destiny. Nobody can know how far along that progression humanity has so far moved, but it cannot be disputed that we now behave as a blend of the pre-human animal and the conscious, reasoning being who is in that respect the *imago Dei*. However two instances of evil have forced me to examine again the nature and causes of human sinfulness; the ongoing crisis of clerical sexual abuse, including the monstrous attempts to conceal it, and the recent mass killing in New Zealand.

Instinctual and Reasoned Behaviours

A fair amount of sexual sin, as defined by the Church, is not far removed from

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non-human animal behaviour; e.g. autoerotic acts, and unthinking but highly consensual sexual stimulation and intercourse before marriage. It is hard to see this kind of 'sinfulness' as being very far along the scale of evil. Of course sexual sin becomes much more serious when there is no consent, particularly when it includes force or violence. Some might argue that rape is not primarily a sexual act but more a way of degrading the victim, but in any case the behaviour is largely driven by animal instincts that can and should be controlled but have been given free play by the attacker. Still it is my view that the violence is more important than the sexual nature of the attack in determining the seriousness of the crime and sin.

Sexual sin is even more serious when there is a significantly unequal status of the two parties and therefore there is an abuse of position, power or trust. It is this last condition that makes the sexual abuse of minors by clergy or religious (and by senior family members) so revolting. The abusive sexual acts in themselves might be driven by animal instincts, but the grooming of the victim and the conscious planning of the scenario in which the abuser gets to achieve his purpose must be seen as coldly reasoned behaviour. In my view, this evil use of the God-given faculty of reason is the factor that determines the high seriousness of this sinful and criminal behaviour.

Concealment of Abuse: The Sin against Trust

When we move on to consider the concealment of abuse, the first point to make is that this is in essence an offence committed by persons who hold a position of trust; bishops and religious superiors who cover up clerical abuse, and relatives of perpetrators in the case of familial abuse. In my view there is little to choose between the two groups with regard to the seriousness of the offence. In the case of concealers of clerical sexual abuse, the offence is magnified by the fact that not only the actual abuser, but even more the concealer, is supposed to be, and is assumed by the victim to be, a teacher and exemplar of moral virtue. In the familial sexual abuse case, there is a particular obscenity in the fact that the abuser or concealer or both are normally close blood relations, and quite often are the parents or siblings of the victim.

In both cases the concealer has committed an offence that cannot be explained away as a weakness rooted in our pre-human beginnings. He or she has committed a sin that follows from cold-blooded calculation

by a rational being; a person who has weighed the consequences of speaking out against those of concealment, and has decided to sacrifice the victim of abuse in the interests of some other perverted loyalty. Unfortunately this sin of concealment is not presently recognised in every country as a crime under the law of the state. Nevertheless it is a serious offence against the proper use of that God-given faculty of conscious reasoning which is the basic differentiation between the animal and the human.

Ideological Murder

The killing of another member of one's own species is not confined to human beings. There are many instances of this in the animal world. There are some species in which the father of newborn animals is apt to kill them, and the mothers therefore try to conceal the newborn. In many others, including those most closely related to us, adult animals can contest for dominance within a social group with a fatal outcome. This animal urge for dominance could be seen as the source from which springs the human urge to wage war.

It is easy to see such intra-species fatal violence as an inevitable legacy of our animal origins, which we are still as a species learning to control. But as we have developed away from our animal origins, our capacity for conscious reasoning has enabled some of us to conceive of an aggravated form of murder in which the perpetrator divides humanity into two groups – those accepted as the perpetrator's in-group, tribe or race, and those whose full humanity is denied and who therefore can be killed without remorse. Our rational nature has given us the ability to construct a conceptual framework, an ideology, which inherently values one group of humans over another. A tendency towards ideological differentiation does not inevitably lead to murder, but in extreme cases, psychopathic ideologues can bring about genocides and mass murders such as occurred recently in New Zealand.

Such mass murders are committed by people who have perverted their rationality to the extent that they consider they know better than God. The world view out of which they act is a grotesque parody of the true creation, in which the human perpetrator assumes the place of God. This is the ultimate offence against that essence in humanity that makes us human.

What is the Source of Evil?

Earlier I used the word 'psychopathic' to characterise mass murderers. However this

is a description, not an explanation. I think it is generally accepted that mass murderers are not suffering from an illness that would diminish their moral responsibility for their actions. Instead they behave in a manner that follows logically from their ideological premises, if there is no barrier in their minds between intellectual conviction and lethally violent action.

An atheist seeking to explain mass murderers would probably talk about the biochemical 'wiring' of their brains being different from, and defective in comparison with, that of normal people. A theological structure built on an acceptance of evolutionary theory as fact cannot of itself take us much further than the atheistic position, in the search for the source of evil. We therefore need to contemplate the possibility that, as Christian faith teaches, our minds are the battlegrounds in which the personification of evil, that we call the devil, contends against the goodness of God. Evolution is a phenomenon that is limited to that part of God's creation that we human beings can experience and comprehend. It cannot speak to the possibility that a spirit created by God could turn against its creator and attempt to destroy the rest of God's creation. Only faith can guide us here. ☞

Saving a precious Resource



In the Gospel of John (Jn 4:1-23), Jesus encounters the Samaritan Woman at the well. He wants to quench his thirst. He equates the well to a wellspring that will give life. She is amazed at his prophetic knowledge about her. She expresses her desire to be drawing from his wellspring so that she will never thirst.

See: <http://www.oasis-water.net> is a website dedicated to water and the campaign for saving this precious resource. The average use per person of water on a DAILY basis is in Ethiopia 5 litres; in the UK 104 litres; in the USA 595 litres; in Australia...?

The statistics don't matter. The task is to save water and to keep asking yourself how much do you waste? Let us take only as much water in the tumbler that we can drink at the time, or keep it covered and drink it the next time.

Xavier Pinto CSsR

Catholic Governance – a challenge for improvement

ERIC HODGENS



Eric Hodgens, Melbourne Catholic priest, explores how a monarchical organization powered by ideology, with promotion by patronage, results in bad governance.

Wilton Gregory has been appointed Archbishop of Washington DC replacing Cardinal Donald Wuerl. While there will be some disappointed faces amongst younger bishops in the USA, most Catholic commentators are positive about the appointment. At 71 he is old for the job and has only four years till official retirement age. One factor may be a shortage of younger bishops who are in tune with Pope Francis.

Therein lies the problem. A monarchical organization combined with appointment by patronage inevitably weakens an organization. The first rule of any Human Resources (HR) department is to get the best person for the job. This entails advertising the job, publishing an accepted set of criteria for the choice of the successful candidate, having a competent selection process to scrutinise the applicants, and a clear system of making the final determination. The more transparent this whole process the better will be the result. This is HR best practice.

The Catholic Church has not embraced this practice. It still works on the monarchical model of its past glory days. A monarchy is literally one-man-rule. The monarch's advisors and administrators are answerable solely to him. They try to discover "the mind of the boss" and reflect that back to him. This limits the frank and fearless advice needed for wise decisions.

The monarchical system tends to spawn an inner circle of influence with accompanying intrigue. George Pell was such an eminence grise. As archbishop first of Melbourne and then of Sydney he used his monarchical power to sack Melbourne's seminary staff and re-make Sydney's in tune with the papal ideology – making them both academies of clericalism. He also used his Vatican position and contacts to influence Australian episcopal appointments. The two main dioceses are headed up by his proteges.

The Roman system is monarchical. The pope is the sole appointer of bishops. Likewise, in a diocese, the Bishop has the final say on all matters. This explains the mediocrity of the Catholic bishops of the world.

The 35-year regime of popes Wojtyla and Ratzinger was heavily ideological and centralist. It opposed Communism. It opposed any review of sexual mores – contraception, divorce, clerical celibacy, homosexuality, family planning. It was suspicious of biological research. It opposed women's ordination. It reduced episcopal authority and changed the Synod of Bishops into a papal rubber stamp.

As identity politics became more mainstream across the world, the Wojtyla ideology became a network. Sympathetic bishops and academics built up think tanks such as the JP II Institute for Marriage and the Family, the Napa Institute in California, founded and funded by the controversial Timothy Busch, and the Catholic Institute of Italy, supported by Steve Bannon. Similarly, tertiary institutions like Notre Dame University Sydney were founded – in this case by George Pell. New publishers like Ignatius Press, founded by Joseph Fessio SJ, disseminated the ideology. Altogether a war with several fronts and a small, but tight-knit, and often wealthy, bunch of warriors. And – a million miles away from the pastoral vision of Jesus.

The essential pre-requisite for selection as bishop was complete compliance with this papal ideology. This eliminated many potential leaders and favoured conformists. When the full force of the sexual abuse crisis hit in 2002 this monochrome cohort of defensive bishops was singularly unprepared for it. "They're after us; protect the show."

Catholic services which answer to the wider society such as education, health care and social services do very well – but at some distance from the bishop.

However diocesan administrations are still based on the old monarchical culture. The bishop alone has full executive power. And even in those organizations open to public scrutiny the bishop still has enormous influence particularly in key appointments. Take for example the Director of Catholic Education in Melbourne archdiocese. Despite reservations being signalled to the bishop beforehand Steven Elder was appointed without any transparency as to process. He has recently retired his position under clouded circumstances.

Will his successor be similarly parachuted in? A host of people will be affected by the outcome but, under this system they will have no input to the result.

The appointment of Wilton Gregory effectively reaches back over the Wojtyla/Ratzinger period. He became bishop in 1983 under the patronage of Cardinal Bernadin. He has known a different era. Many younger bishops do not. He fits this bill, but the appointment method is the same. He is Bergoglio's choice. That's the system. Observers can only guess the rationale. It would be more legitimate if the appointment procedure was more transparent.

The governance of the Church is still locked into its monarchical past. That model is inefficient in today's world with its diversity of specialisation, social science knowhow and technological sophistication and political structures. A wise incorporation of aspects of modern politics, including the separation of powers, would make it more effective in achieving its main goal – the pastoral care of all. ☺



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By what authority?

MIKE YATES

Mike Yates, retired school teacher from North Rocks parish, explores how if the Church doesn't get this right then God may well side-step the Church and use the rest of the community (including people who call themselves atheists) to bring about the changes in society that the Church seems currently incapable of achieving because it has lost not only the trust of society but also many of its own members.

Last year, when parishioners stayed away in droves from a *Liturgy of Lament*, I came to realize they feared even prayer would evoke the nightmare that they dreaded. But if we face our demons that nightmare can give way to our Christian dream: a dream worth clinging to. But a dream that will never be realized if we don't understand why we have the mess that we do.

We know abuse happened because of power. But didn't that power come from trust? I think so. If we Catholics were a building, the floor on which the priests lived would have many of the blinds drawn. Why? Because there was little need for transparency; you could pretty well trust a priest in the same way you could trust God. Despite the Church not teaching that as such, it's obvious we've believed it and reinforced it a million times over for centuries. More objective, more courageous leaders and even some adult laypeople could have warded off evil before it got a foot in the door. If only our trust hadn't been so naïve and so indiscriminate.

What about the cover-up? To protect reputation, of course. But doesn't it go deeper? Somehow, our bishops have convinced each other that it is possible to move away from the truth... but still stay close to God. Really? I wonder if that conviction springs from the dualistic idea that life consists of the profane and its opposite, the sacred. God is clearly present in beauty and truth but never where there is an evil like sexual abuse of children. God could not possibly be present in that situation.

And yet our faith is based on Jesus... stuck in the quagmire of violent abuse meted out by power-driven leaders who demand an innocent man forfeit his life. And where was God at that moment? Deeply present in that quagmire of sin and crime, supporting His son in his pain. And it seems there's another conviction that has grown over the centuries.

Despite it not being Church teaching,

We all know that the Church exists for God's message. Protecting the Church, therefore, is protecting God's message. Protecting God. The Church has taken its role so seriously, it seems, that it has gathered God in from the storm, under the protective umbrella of the Church. Hence, to expose the Church to ridicule is to jeopardise the very message of God's love for mankind. Who could allow that to happen? Not our bishops. So, they closed ranks, lied when necessary, and, in that process, protected both the Church and God. Or so it was thought.

This totally understandable reaction is not our faith: although deeply present in our Church God is infinitely beyond it. Our leadership chose a path that leads away from *God* because it was not true. And now our Catholic community is paying heavily for it. As we should. We acted as though the Church was 'responsible for God.'

Ten years ago an assignment on *Authority in the Church* led me to focus on the authority of our appointed leaders: priests, bishops, cardinals, Pope, as you would expect. But there is a further dimension, as I discovered in class one day.

A seven year old boy in my Year 2 class challenged what I had just told the children: That's not true, Mr. Yates, it's so and so and so and so. How would I react? Listen and confirm he was right? Or tell him not to shout out in class? In an instant, I understood something really important for the Church's healing: the ultimate authority in the Church, and elsewhere, is not its appointed leaders but ...the truth. The Truth. This boy was speaking the truth and, dare I say, he was therefore speaking with authority. So I had to listen!

But Catholics have a problem. We always equate authority with position. Despite Jesus having no position in his society, did that stop him from speaking with authority? No way. Why not? Because his relationship with God gave him the

wisdom to see and the courage to speak, fearlessly.

What is Jesus teaching us here? He is teaching what the Church has always taught, very softly: if you are speaking out of wisdom from God, others must listen to you. Archbishop Coleridge recently said this. If enough bishops accept Church teaching on this we have a way through to healing; we will become what we were always meant to be. If they don't, our Church will rely on the wisdom of leaders who caused much of the mess we are in. We will fail. ☹️

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A place where Jesus would hang out

JENNIFER GRIBBLE

David's Place has operated in Sydney's inner city for 20 years providing a community of hope. Jennifer Gribble writes about the community and interviews Fr Issac Koi who shares about his life and the life of the community.



David's Place is an inner-city community founded by Sue Buckingham, Judi and Paul Taylor, and Peter McAuley to be the kind of place where Jesus would like to have hung out, where people of all religions, all racial and social backgrounds, are invited to come and share their experiences and pray together. Located in a demountable behind St Canice's Kings Cross, it is now celebrating.

Sue Buckingham reflecting on the journey said: *Twenty years of meeting together – marginalized people and friends – to allow and welcome Jesus into our lives! Twenty years of trying to provide a loving space for fragile and broken people, and allowing those of us under the delusion that we are 'all-together' to discover we aren't! Of recognizing the gift of grace held out to us by the poor – delight, friendship, generosity, gratitude, creativity and forgiveness!*

It was envisaged as a place where we would often be happy to spend some time in silence, getting in touch with the deeper currents in our lives in the Masses we share, and in bible-study and meditation groups and retreats. We asked Fr Isaac Koi, who is part of David's Place community, to tell us about his life and the community.

Q. Fr Isaac, where, originally, are you from?

A. Originally, from my mother's womb! I can't claim any country or land in the world as my own, I don't own it, but I'm a custodian of the land or place I live in. The only place I can claim is my mother's

womb, which is centred on love. I was born in a village in Kagua, Southern Highland Province, Papua New Guinea. I first came to Australia in 1983, when I was around 21-22 years old. That's where I came in contact with the De Porres Community made up of marginalized people from the streets of Sydney, run by Br Mark OP. After a short stay I went back to PNG to complete my priestly studies and was ordained in my village parish of St Mary, Karia-Kagua.

Q. How long have you been coming to David's Place, and what do you like about it?

A. Twenty years. Acceptance and love!

Q. In addition to David's Place, where else do you minister?

A. I have ministered, and continue to minister, to street communities of the Sacred Heart, Gethsemane, De Porres, Emmaus, St Francis; parish supply work; Propagation of the Faith appeals in Sydney, Broken Bay, Parramatta, Wollongong; hospitals, aged care, palliative care in St Joseph's, Auburn and at St Vincent's Health Care in Sydney.

Q. Do you have a favourite Bible story or passage?

A. The Beatitudes.

Q. How do you see the future of David's Place?

A. It will survive, even if the government improves the situation of homeless and

marginalized people. We're more about marginalized than homeless people, perhaps. A roof over your head doesn't make people less lonely. It's friendships we find here. We travel with broken people. Jesus was broken. We all are. We journey together with love. We care for each other. We are home. We tell our stories. Let's break the Word together.

Q. What is the difference between saying Mass in a big city church and David's Place?

A. Mass is Mass, whatever you're wearing! There are people around us and we celebrate together, in the same words. Nothing extra needed. We place ourselves within what Jesus wants for us. Our prayer is to ask Jesus. All sizes, types, they come to share a meal together.

Q. As well as saying Mass, and joining us for a BBQ afterwards, what other ministries to you have at David's Place?

A. Funerals, marriages and baptisms.

Q. What did your family think of you coming to Australia, instead of staying in PNG?

A. It was hard at first, but they understand now. Maybe God gave me a blessing. God has blessed me with a gift since I was a small boy. I worked hard, I paid my way. My Mum is as proud as anything. One of my nephews came on a trip with David's Place. Being a priest in PNG would be an extremely hard cross to bear. There are 750 tribes. I can speak for only a few. Bishop David Cremin asked me to wear my national dress, one day. I said 'You wouldn't want to see me naked – I don't think!'

One of the twentieth anniversary celebrations planned at David's Place is an Open Day on 25 May, where anyone is welcome to join us for Mass and lunch. Self-funded, we are always in need of donations towards our expenses, including excursions, Christmas parties, birthdays and funerals. But most of all, we hope to expand our circle of friends. To read more about David's Place and how to donate go to www.davidspplace.com.au ☺

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Sharing the role of priest

PATRICK FLANAGAN

Pat Flanagan, Red Cliffs, Victoria, goes to the experience of early Korean Catholicism to find new ways to overcome the shortage of priests and the trap of clericalism at the same time.

Recently, commenting on how the Church is faring in South Korea, compared with how it is faring in Japan, the Japanese Cardinal Mayda pointed out that the Gospel was brought to Japan by foreigners; but it was brought to Korea by Koreans.

I had read about the Gospel being brought to Korea by Koreans some years ago in a book entitled (I think) *How to Understand the Church in Mission*. The evangelists were Koreans studying in Beijing. There they were converted and became Catholic Christians. When they returned to Korea, they brought with them Bibles, Catechisms, Missals, prayer books, Rosaries – everything they needed to establish the Church in their native land.

However, they didn't bring any priests with them. They decided to overcome this problem by ordaining priests from among themselves. However, they thought it was not a good idea to have all the functions of priesthood vested in one individual. It might make that person too important. So they chose some to celebrate the Eucharist, some to baptise etc. Thus they avoided establishing a clerical caste. Eventually, of course, a killjoy turned up and said, *No you can't do it that way*. So they had to get a bishop to do the ordaining, and re-establish the Church along conventional lines.

I think that a partial answer to the priest shortage can be found in ordaining persons with limited functions, as those Koreans did intuitively. And, if there are enough people ordained with limited functions like that, well there wouldn't be a clerical caste there. We are running out of priests, and, if the Plenary Council will accept as a basic requirement that each Catholic Community be able to celebrate the Eucharist Sunday by Sunday, then what the Koreans did is worth more than a passing glance. But it would mean that the one who leads the Eucharist would not necessarily be the one who anoints the sick, and helps the dying, and also helps the bereaved. The marriage celebrant would be a different person again, as also the one who baptises etc. Obviously more than one person in a community would be ordained to celebrate the Eucharist for that community. And even more would be ordained to minister to the sick. None of the solutions at present being

adopted in Australia is satisfactory. In city dioceses, and even more in country dioceses, the priest is now expected to be a full-time pastor in several parishes at once. That's a killer recipe both for clergy and for parish communities. Priests are being imported from countries that are themselves short of priests. They come with a different culture to ours and a different native language. Often their contribution is heroic; but often, too, it means stress for both them and their communities.

I would very much hope that the Plenary Council will decide that, with the sole exception of communities that have shrunk so much that they are no longer viable, each community is to be kept alive, with Mass every Sunday. To do less is to diminish the Church.

Who will preach at Sunday Mass when the local community has no full-time priest? Fortunately the need for lay-led Sundays has shown that lay people can offer very good reflections. And there are very good Sunday reflections and homily helps being produced by various groups.

This is not at all to suggest that we eventually aim to do away with full-time priests and bishops, nor that we aim to no longer have celibate priests.

If we ask how a person ordained to celebrate the Eucharist could be trained for that work, we might learn something from the functioning of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia. When they need another priest, the community selects a person they believe suitable. In their case, it is men only, usually married with a family. If the person the community selects accepts the call, then, without further ado, the person is ordained. Then, straightaway, he goes to a monastery where he will remain for forty days. During those forty days he will be trained in Eucharistic spirituality & theology, as well as how to actually celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

Obviously, there needs to be tertiary trained Catholics, people who can be relied on for good answers. But they don't have to be in every parish. Nor is that role restricted to men only.

What I have suggested above fulfils only the Sacramental role of priests. What about pastoral care? In such communities, the community itself must become the pastor.

This will always mean some parishioners leading the community. And just as the full-time priest is first and foremost servant to his people, lay pastors need to embrace the call to be servants. It can easily happen in parishes that one or two people emerge as the ones who are willing to get things done. The rest leave them to it. They easily become the boss-cookies, resenting that they have to do everything, while the rest eventually resent that they are doing everything. A little example of how those *de facto* in charge can be, though perhaps quite unconsciously, serving their own interest. Quite some years ago, when the local pastor was away, I was asked to celebrate on a Saturday afternoon – I was unavailable to be there on the Sunday – two Baptisms, both children being related to a leading parishioner. I celebrated the Baptisms as requested; but a couple of weeks later I learned that there was another family who wanted to have their baby baptised at the same Liturgy. The boss-cocky refused them, saying that this was a 'private' Baptism. ☪

Baptism Water

Symbol of life and transition! Moses (Ex 15: 19) led God's people through the Red Sea waters.



It was a transition of a people in bondage towards a long cherished freedom in the promised land. John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the waters of the river Jordan to signify the transition from his 'hidden years' (30yrs) to his 'public life' (3yrs). The Samaritan woman at the well in her conversation with Jesus (John 4:10) longs for the Living Water which Jesus says he can give. She wants to be transformed from her former self to the person who Jesus says she can be! All of us are destined to be good people! The waters of our Baptism are the Living Waters which signify our transition from sin to grace; and from individuals to being community members of the Church. Our Baptismal promises help us stay connected with God and live in the grace he so generously gives us. Reject evil & choose good. Avoid sinful situations, choose good values. By the practice of your faith choose to stay connected to the church and its teachings. The church will always love you, no matter what! Many babies will be waiting to be born and bathed in the life giving waters of Baptism. Shout for joy at birth! Choose life.

Xavier Pinto CSsR

A New Heaven and a New Earth

The greatest story ever is the mystery of creation. In this article Cassie (real name and address supplied) explores the story that holds the greatest Mystery to be found at the heart of the universe story. It is told with acknowledgement to Judy Cannato and her book *Field of Compassion. How the New Cosmology Is Transforming Spiritual Life*.



Judy Cannato sees *three great stories* that have come to light in a new way in our days. Stories that have always been there but she invites us to see in a new way in our time. She points to an exciting time, in the evolution of our species. The three stories are all mysteries, Great Mysteries! And why wouldn't they be, for we know so little of them. The Mystery of Creation; that creation even exists is a *mystery!* The Mystery of the Incarnation, that creation should bring forth, in the 'fullness of time', it's Creator. A Creator who was always present in it (or it shouldn't have existed in the first place). And a third mystery, a mystery for our time: the Mystery of the Reign of God. It may be even just one Great Mystery but because our little minds can only cope with simple things we have to see three! I'd conjecture is that God only sees One!

By God's self-gift creation has been evolving to this nanosecond of time in which humans have been around. How many more nanoseconds, how many more 'light years' are still to come? And by God's self-gift, consciousness has evolved on this little speck of the universe. And so we can ask questions, one after the other as we search for 'truth'. Our feeble, brilliant intellects, our inventions can gaze in wonder, spell-bound, by the unimaginable magnitude of the little bit of universe we can see. How blessed are we to be so

awe-struck by such beauty as a super nova exploding! God's continual self-gift continues to energise His creation that is expanding at breakneck speed. Seventeen billion galaxies like our own 'milky way'. If Gerard Manly Hopkins were alive today he would write, '*The universe* is charged with the grandeur of God'. It shines out like shining...! We can only seek to know and adore such a Mysterious non-Being that is all Being. Nothing really changes, does it?

What a Mystery the new explorers with their radio telescopes and searching of space are uncovering for us – the Mystery of Creation.

Is it any wonder that a universe that is so filled with God and so energized by God should not 'bring forth in the fullness of time' ('when all was ready') it's own Creator. Thus we have our second Great Mystery. The Mystery of the Incarnation – God takes human form and 'becomes like us in all things but sin'. The earth has brought forth it's Saviour! We don't understand the Mystery of the Universe very well so it's not surprising we have tried to define the Mystery of the Incarnation with human words that we acclaimed as 'Dogmatic Truths'. How we love to define things as though it solves the mystery! It saves us from living the awesomeness of the Mystery. Love is always self-gift, and infinite Love is always giving unconditionally.

This brings us to the third great Mystery – a Mystery for our time. The Mystery of the Kingdom of God'. Stephen sums up this Mystery for us, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Father' (Acts 7:56). Thus he sees 'a new heaven and a new Earth', heaven can now be glimpsed from earth. Heaven may well be the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Might not the mystery of our evolving universe be 'set-up' by God to evolve into His Reign where the Kingdom announced by Jesus as 'being in your midst is actually in our midst!

This is *our story*, and we can be the story. Today we can choose to seek the Kingdom as Jesus called us to seek it. Our search can enter a new level of consciousness because we can combine science and scripture in a way that has never been done before. With You in me and me in You...and Me in them, may they be completely one so that the world may know it was You who sent me'. What an extraordinary statement of our destiny. The Kingdom is not a mystery to be defined – hence Jesus with his Judaic mind doesn't even try. It is a mystery to be lived; we are invited to the 'wedding feast'; invited to live the mystery of God's ongoing self-gift to us in the Kingdom.

This of course, brings us to the Eucharist. How could it not! Here matter is transformed into what it has always been – God's gift of Himself. Here the three Great Mysteries are present. We gather up every distressed cry, every unfulfilled hope, every desire, every human longing to love and be loved into our bread and wine and God transforms our creation, His creation, into what it has always been, His own likeness. He does this so that the 'whole of creation may groan in the one great act of giving birth' to His children as it gave birth to His Son; so that we may all be his children, so that we may all enter his Reign. Thus creation is being transformed, our consciousness is being transformed, and 'in Christ, and with Christ, and through Christ there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth to the Glory and Honour of God, our Almighty Father. ☪

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

Caring for our common home ecumenically

RICHARD WHITE

In March this year, an ecumenical conference at St Clement's Retreat & Conference Centre, Galong, looked at Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*. Richard White offers some personal reflections on the conference proceedings.

We've all been to conferences and possibly wondered how we got there and what we learnt. This was a conference with a difference and certainly ecumenical. The Anglican Bishop Phillip Huggins had to offer a last minute apology and was represented by Emily Evans, Project Officer of the National Council of Churches Australia.

At the beginning of this conference at St Clement's, Galong, on Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (which I had not read and whose title confused me) we had one of those awkward introductory sessions: 'How do you feel about being here and what are your hopes for the conference?'

In a moment of truth-telling that providentially set the tone for my weekend, I said, 'I'm surprised I'm here and I hope to be surprised again.'

Some years ago, Pat Corbett, CSsR invited me to do some work at St Clement's; his dream was that St Clement's and its surrounding farmland could become 'an environmental hub', a sign and source of environmental transformation and education. He found a sympathetic ally in Jacqui Remond, the former head of Catholic EarthCare and now co-founder of the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Together they planned this conference.

I was at the conference as a friend of Pat's, ignorant and bemused. Only gradually did I realise how much I needed to learn and to be changed.

The opening address by Professor Ross Garnaut went over my head. Of course, I had yet to read *Laudato Si'*. The Professor's detailed reflection on the encyclical did pique my curiosity. Here was a leading figure in debates on the economy and climate change talking appreciatively about a papal encyclical and he wasn't even a Catholic!

Next morning at breakfast I stumbled into a series of conversations that were as providential as the initial truth-telling exercise. The first was with Glen Loughrey, the Anglican vicar of St Oswald's Parish in Glen Iris, Melbourne, a proud Wiradjuri man.

Somehow we got on to violence and trauma and the perpetuation of violence through generations, the successive traumas unaddressed, unhealed. Glen spoke with an edgy earnestness; I caught a glimpse of personal experience and a people's trial and travail, repetitive and disabling. Then, Bishop Pat Power joined our table and I found myself talking about our own traumatic week, the revelation and reactions to the conviction of Cardinal

George Pell on charges of sexual abuse.

The use of the term 'trauma' had been used tellingly by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach on the ABC's Q&A preceding our conference. Both Pat and I agreed that this term well expressed how we and many other Catholics were feeling. The cumulative impact of the wide-ranging Royal Commission into Institutional Sexual Abuse reached a climax with Cardinal Pell's trial and conviction. There was shock, disbelief, anger, denial, confusion . . . all the classic reactions of acute grief and trauma. But, what did all these reactions have to do with the conference?

The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in our soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail'. (Laudato Si' No2)

Our Mother, Sister Earth is in trauma; the Pope is voicing the reactions of those of our sisters and brothers who know deeply the 'shock, disbelief, anger, denial, confusion' at what we are doing to the earth. Responding to trauma, in all its manifestations, seemed a sub theme to the emerging discussions.

Dianne Torres, Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, spoke of her own trauma. As a child she was almost taken from her family by welfare. She spoke movingly of the Aboriginal understanding of the land.



We were at the beginning of Lent. The familiar call to conversion had an urgency and personal significance as the week-end went on. 'Remember man (sic) you are but dust..' or 'Repent and believe the Good News'.

We are 'but dust' and the earth is our Mother in the words of the Canticle of St Francis of Assisi from which the title of the encyclical comes. We are 'dust of the earth' and 'the Earth is our Mother'.

'Poetry at its best and romantic nonsense at worst!' The men of power and influence and the rank and file like you and me can dismiss the Pope's words, not to mention the un-reading of his encyclical. These are typical responses to realities we find too painful to bear; our psychological defence mechanisms kick-in and reality in all its painful and wonderful guises is held at bay. We need to repent if we are to believe the Good News.

The painful realities were addressed and displayed by other academics following on from Professor Garnaut. Professors John Williams, a founding member of the Wentworth Group of concerned scientists, and Quentin Grafton, Director of the Centre for Water Economics Environment and Policy, touched a nerve in my emerging engagement. The full import of Professor Garnaut's talk was developed and illuminated by Professor Grafton's treatment of the extraordinary and short-sighted mismanagement of our own water resources, in particular, the Murray-Darling Basin.

In a conversation with Quentin, at one of the carefully planned deep listening and dialogue sessions, I remarked on the image of the fish deaths on the Menindee Lakes and the almost obscene image of the final breaths of a magnificent Murray Cod.

Another of those reflective musings ensued and I suggested that the image of the dying Murray Cod could have a galvanizing or transformative effect; I was thinking of the picture of the seven year old Syrian boy drowned as his family fled the war, his body washed up on an Aegean beach.

Images can pull us up short, break something of our defensive shell and allow us to experience horror or grief or cruelty or suffering. Quentin is a scientist but I sensed he knew where I was going.

Something was happening. The conference process, talks followed by silence then detailed suggestions about dialogue and listening, was working its magic. There was more to come.

Tony Kelly CSSR seemed to epitomise the

'hopeless romantic' so disparaged by the rationalists. I had no idea where he was going when he began his address with a story about the French musician, Hector Berlioz.

'Hector was in Rome, enjoying a meal with friends. He ate well, savoured and sipped and proceeded forth from the gathering under a star-lit Roman sky. However, disaster struck when he fell into the muddy waters of the Tiber and disappeared, entirely. (pause, for dramatic effect) Then, he emerged, singing, an operatic refrain he had been struggling with for some months. Voila!' Or, words to that effect.

Facts and information are one way to shift an ignorant or obdurate heart-set; the seductive power of whimsy and insight, the art of the poet, can be equally impactful. The Berlioz story, deftly and quirkily told, got under my guard. I kept thinking about death and resurrection, the feelings of hopelessness and release and joy and of the Poverello whose song was *Laudate Si', Mi Signor ...* and whose body was marked with wounds.

Over those couple of days, we danced the delicate dance of the realisation of cosmic degradation and inspiration of regenerative farming, the divisions within the Christian churches and a blessed communion, the inner struggles of our hearts and the enjoyment of rising from our own particular Tiber – singing.

The conversations, structured and informal, were all doing their bit, too. I spoke with Dr Cristina Gomez about her ambivalence with the images of the Church, and Earth, as 'Mother', something that had not struck me before. Then, on the bus journey to a sustainable farm, I sat next to Bruce Duncan CSsR.

I knew of Bruce from his long time association with Social Justice and the Church's response. It was a good to have time with him, not only to discuss the various themes and sub themes of the conference but to catch something of the energy and passion that informed and sustained Bruce's work. This experience of 'energy and passion' was good preparation to the visit to David Marsh's farm.

Driving around the roads where I live, in Cootamundra, I'm beginning to see the land as David Marsh does. David spent twenty years farming from 'an industrial farming mind-set' ploughing, fertiliser and herbicides, a system of great expense and vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather and to the reality of climate change.

We visited David's farm on the Sunday morning. For the past thirty years, David

has turned his back on the large scale, expensive and destructive processes of the past. By planting trees, sourcing and spreading native grasses and respectful and deliberate rotation grazing, his property is renewing itself.

The land I so often see, bare, grazed to a harsh emptiness or dusty and dry is like 'the earth herself, burdened and laid waste . . . among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor'. I'm beginning to see what David saw, back thirty years ago, or how Pope Francis is describing Mother Earth, the trauma of creation exploited, abused and traumatised.

The temptation is to shield myself from these images, to retreat into apathy or denial. But, trauma, like the cross, is the harsh reality of pain and suffering piercing our defences, illumining our blindness, breaking into our hearts.

Like the poet, I cry, 'Batter my heart, three Person'd God, for you do as yet but knock ...' Then, like Berlioz rising from the Tiber, or Pat Corbett who led us on a Cosmic Walk on the final day, I can begin to rejoice that 'there lives the dearest freshness deep down things' and that the poet, the dreamer, the scientist and the researcher have much in common with St Francis and the Pope of the same name. ☺



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The miracle of God!

Our planet is ¾ water and only ¼ Earth. This tells us what importance God the Creator Intended to give to its importance for our use. The cyclic marvel of how this gift of water moves from cloud to rain to ground and back by solar evaporation into the heavens... in the mean time achieving its purpose of cooling the earth, irrigating it and letting us humans eat of the fruit of the earthis indeed the MIRACLE OF GOD. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). God creates a firmament to divide the waters above from the waters below. The firmament is named heavens (Gen 1: 6). Streams came from the earth and watered the whole earth (Gen 2:3-7). Australia has been often facing water cut-back. Pray for rain. Thank God every time there is a drizzle and avoid grumbling or complaining, even in your mind, when because of rain your schedule & your movements get mucked up!

Xavier Pinto CSsR



Sabbatical in the holy cities

JOHN KNIGHT

John Knight, Sydney priest, reflects on his sabbatical experience which was financially supported by the National Council of Priests.



My desire to take a sabbatical developed over several years. A Sabbatical is a precious time in which you remove yourself from the Parish that is your life to rest and regenerate yourself and to help you to clarify priestly ministry. I knew that I needed this time to refresh myself, but when I received approval from Archbishop Fisher OP I was not sure how the parishioners would react. When I informed them I was quietly surprised. Many congratulated me and hoped this time would be beneficial to me and the parish.

I am very grateful to the National Council of Priests for their financial assistance towards my sabbatical.

I chose to participate in the Pontifical North American College program (ICTE), Vatican City for renewal with brother priests who understood priestly life in pastoral situations. There were 30 priests in the program which lasted from 15 January 2018 to 27 March 2018, 24 from USA, 3 Canadians and 3 Australians: Aurelio Fracapane (Melbourne), Joe Tran (Canberra-Goulburn) and myself.

The program was diverse with visiting the major basilicas & various churches in Rome, Sistine Chapel, various museums, Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, Clergy & Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, together with lectures by eminent presenters in Christian Ethics, Christian Art and Architecture, John Henry Newman, Pauline Theology, Bioethics, Preaching, Spirituality, Lectio

Divina, Causes of the Saints, God & His People in the Old Testament, Koran & Muslims today, women Saints in the Church.

There was plenty of time to explore Rome and Italy as well as other destinations that are impractical from Australia. To walk in the city of our Principal Apostles Peter and Paul in the seedbed of Christianity was a privilege. We were also part of a general audience with the Holy Father. One of the highlights was spending a week on retreat in Assisi. I believe this, too, has helped me in my renewal within the priestly ministry. One thing that I believe stood out in the sabbatical program apart from academic studies and immersion in art, architecture, history and culture of Rome and the Church was the fraternity between brother priests that I think encouraged me to be a better priest. A very enjoyable experience!

Following the program, I had the opportunity to travel to the Holy Land for the Easter Triduum. This was a once in a life time experience to be in there in Jerusalem for those Sacred Days. What a wonderful and blessed time!

I would recommend this sabbatical programme and suggest you visit their website: ICTE-Pontifical North American College Rome for a fuller study of the program and other related course modules.

I would once again thank NCP for their support and the work they do in assisting continuing education of Clergy in Australia. ☪

Water as Charity

It is unfortunate that humans continue to pollute water and water bodies to such an extent that the 'free' water of God's providence cannot always be consumed untreated. In Australia we are blessed that we can drink from the running tap. Money is rarely mentioned in the scriptures as a method for charity. Water is to be given FREE, appears more than 300 times! 'If your enemy is thirsty give him water to drink' (Psalm 25:21). 'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water in my name ... they will not lose their reward' (Mt 10:42) and 'When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink' (Mt 25: 35). If such opportunities do not come your way; then be kind and charitable to your own bodies first! All those 'junk drinks' and supposedly 'soft' drinks (not forgetting the gas and other preservatives in it) are really hard on your belly and being! Water cleanses, it purifies, it rejuvenates; it loves your body. Drink water and plenty of it.

Xavier Pinto CSsR



Let us not forget

KEVIN BURKE

Reflection on ANZAC Day Fr Kevin Burke, Eltham, Victoria.



Let us not forget soldiers and other members of our armed services, including nurses and other support staff who have given their lives in war or any other form of armed conflict or on peacekeeping duties. Let us never forget their courage, their sacrifice, their selfless service and their dedication to duty.

Let us not forget those who have returned home with often massive physical, and/or mental and emotional damage.

Let us not forget the families and loved ones of those returned service people who have suffered with, supported and loved them and let us not forget, as a nation, our responsibility to support and care for both those groups.

Let us not forget conscientious objectors, protestors and others such as Doctor Mannix who publicly and tirelessly spoke out against conscription during the 1st world war; some of whom paid a high price for their convictions.

Let us not forget our national leaders both those who acted with integrity and honesty as well as those who made irresponsible and reckless decisions in those critical issues of national security.

Let us not forget that second group who made misjudged and/or dishonest decisions to go to war and the victims of those invaded countries who suffered death, damage and destruction. May they forgive us for our failures.

Let us not forget that the first casualty of war is truth and with it ruthless pursuit of

deceitful propaganda and seek the Lord's forgiveness for our complacency, blind spots or complicity in looking the other way when we believed or at least reasonably suspected that our national leaders were making decisions that lacked integrity, justice or any other moral basis.

Let us not forget that ANZAC Day is an occasion for dwelling compassionately on the things that bind us together rather than those that separate us into allies and enemies.

Let us not forget our Church's clear and strong social justice teaching that lays down five specific conditions for a country to justify going to war, especially one that highlights that it must be an absolute last resort, in defence of one's country, and only after all other attempts to achieve peace and reconciliation have failed.

Let us not forget that Pope John Paul II's wise insight that true and lasting peace is based upon justice and development so that we conscientiously commit ourselves to support causes that promote justice and development in all countries with a special interest in under-developed and struggling countries.

Let us not forget that the seeds of intentional conflicts and wars ultimately begin in the human heart which can be driven by ambition, greed, arrogance and lust for power.

Let us not forget Jesus' call in the gospel to all His disciples throughout the ages to be peace-makers not peace-breakers. ☪

Cool the earth with your little effort!



Created by God (Genesis 1: 10) and formed in our mother's womb our body too has $\frac{3}{4}$ fluids and only $\frac{1}{4}$ tissue, flesh and bone. To survive water is necessary for our bodies. It takes 35 litres of water to make one cup of tea from planting a tea sapling to the time it reaches your hand! 70 litres for one apple and 170 litres for a glass of orange juice. All these come to us from the ground / mother earth. The earth is warming – thanks to the neglect of humans. But we have hope. We can participate in the right way in our own little way in our garden/ backyard /lawn. Insert a plastic basin in your Kitchen sink: collect the water you have been using to wash the dishes and your hands; put it to a plant in your garden or just on the lawns. Join hands with God in cooling the earth. And don't just let that precious resource go down the drain.

Xavier Pinto CSsR

Water Saves!



If a person is coughing or crying someone brings a glass of water. A public speaker feels the throat go dry; he/she will sip on water. In parched deserts animals walk miles to reach an oasis. Water saves! In the scriptures we see interplay between the actual need of real water and the 'thirst' of the inner being for God within oneself. While in his death throes Jesus said, 'I thirst' (Jn 19:28) and longed for actual water; the Psalmist 'thirsts' for the God within. Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God. My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life (Ps 42:12). Imbibing God satisfies the inner self and gives one the peace he/she desires. Remember to conserve water. What we save here on God's earth has wondrous way of recycling; and using it to save others. For example, remember to use half toilet flush.

Xavier Pinto CSsR

Freemasonry and the Catholic Church

KERRY COSTIGAN

Kerry Costigan, priest of Toowoomba Diocese, is chaplain of the Freemasonry Ashlar Lodge, Oakey, Queensland. In this article he talks of his experience as a member of the Lodge.

Some months ago, I was the victim of a silent protest. People knew I was a Freemason and distributed copies of the 1884 Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII which condemned Freemasonry in the foyer of the church where I was about to celebrate Mass. These people never had the courtesy to front me, face to face about their complaint.

From my research, Freemasonry as exists in Australia is different from the sectarian and political way some European Lodges act. The blanket condemnation of Freemasonry does not consider that each Grand Lodge is responsible for its own regulations, constitution and way of acting. So Freemasonry must be considered on a national basis. Freemasonry is not a single, united body.

It is interesting to note the religious history of European Freemasonry. Comparing the religious views expressed in the oldest Masonic Constitution of the 14th century with those set forth in the later ones of the 16th century and 17th century and again with those views laid down in the Charge of 1717, we can find a transition which took place in the religious aspect of Freemasonry in England and in some other countries.

At first, Masonry was Roman Catholic in its character and ecclesial domination. After the Reformation, which rejected many of the doctrines and teachings of the Catholic Church and the influence of its priests, Masonry became Protestant in its peculiar views, retaining its Christian character. Please note, I use the word "peculiar" in its correct sense.

With the so called Revival of the 18th Century, Masonry assumed the form it has retained to the present day. It abandoned its sectarian and political character and adopted a cosmopolitan and tolerant rule which required of its members, only a belief in God. Freemasonry is not a single

united body. Each Grand Lodge is its own supreme authority. The Grand Lodge is the sole authority over Freemasonry in its own territory.

In 1885, a French journalist Leo Taxil, following the publishing of the Encyclical of Pope Leo, decided to mount a Campaign against Freemasonry. He had previously been a non believer and as such wrote scandalous stories about the Pope. A book he wrote was called *The Secret Lovers of Pope Pius IX*.

Amazingly, he became a Catholic and, as I've said, began a vile and outrageous campaign to discredit Freemasonry, which he identified as a form of devil worship. His misguided views received great

publicity in his day; and, dare I say it, sad to say, even today some immature minds are still affected by his views.

Later in life, he again had a new lifestyle and thought experience, he repented of his lies and accusations

saying they had all been a literary creation. Furthermore, he said he had done it all for the sole purpose of exposing the idiotic gullibility of the Catholic Church and its Popes. He wanted to show intelligent people everywhere how ridiculous the Church was.

The Church reacted with predictable scorn and disgust. Every so often, the Taxil accusations resurface as part of some, ill advised attacks against Freemasonry and the Church.

Upset by the silent protest, I made even further enquiries. In 1984, it appears that the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) initiated an investigation into Australian Freemasonry. The result of that investigation was never published. The probable reason for this was that the investigation found that nothing in Australian Freemasonry was prejudicial to the Catholic Church and its teachings.



This finding runs counter to the official finding of Vatican authorities on what I call European Freemasonry, especially some French and Italian Lodges.

In 2016 as it happened, the Grand Masters of the WA Grand Lodge; the Queensland Grand Lodge and the SA/NT Grand Lodge were Catholics. The Grand-Master of the SA/NT Grand Lodge was moved, with brotherly concern, to make a formal approach to the ACBC about the standing of Catholic men in the Craft. He presented a request that was well researched and full of merit and conviction that the ACBC make some official ruling about the relationship of Freemasonry and Catholicism.

The Secretary of the ACBC asked for a combined affirmation of the request by all the Grand-Masters of all the Grand Lodges of Australia and a statement giving in detail the fundamental ideals and principles of Freemasonry as exists in Australia.

This information was duly presented to the ACBC through its secretary. The reply given in writing on the official letterhead of the ACBC was that any Catholic man may join Freemasonry as exists in Australia as long as his conscience agrees. The reply also asked that membership for Catholics in the Craft was to be carried out discreetly and without publicity. No doubt, this was not publicly to go against the teaching of the Catholic Church about Freemasonry, existing in other countries

This ruling of the ACBC would certainly be appreciated by Catholics who are members of the Craft. Gratitude is expressed to the Bishops of Australia for their open handed, sensitive and pastoral approach to the matter.

It is hoped that before long this approval will be made public. At the moment, the many Catholic men who belong to the Craft here in Australia have been condemned unjustly by the blanket condemnation of all Freemasonry. Good tidings of their very essence, need to be shared and ignorance overcome by information.

Freemasons are not just names, faces and aprons but hearts, spirits and personalities – they, too, are loved by Christ. The brethren I have met over 10 years, have been an inspiration, motivation and example to me. May God prosper in the Craft. ☺

Women leaders and church reform

FRANK O'DEA SSS

Frank O'Day SSS takes an historical look at women in leadership in the Church and finds that ordination hasn't always been necessary for Eucharistic leadership. Could there be another way?

There is a saying the church is always in need of reform, *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

Perhaps the best-known reforms are the Council of Trent in the 16th century and Vatican II in the 1960s. Such reforms are necessary because wrong practices and beliefs creep in, distorting our faith. Both councils went back into the past in so far as they could, to discover our traditions.

The further we go back into our history the more genuine are our traditions. I suggest we need to look again at the first 300 years of our church history.

Priesthood of the Faithful.

The apostle Peter writes, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light* (1 Peter 2:9). See also Revelation 1:6. Every baptised person belongs to this royal priesthood known as the priesthood of the faithful.

Immediately after a person is baptised with water, he/she is anointed with the oil of chrism when the celebrant says, *God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth water and the Holy Spirit. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.*

When I point out to people that if you are baptised, you are a priest, they find it hard to believe as this is rarely taught.

Leadership in Early Church

The early Christians broke away from the Judaism they had inherited. *Consequently, what we find in the pages of the New Testament (NT) is a complete discontinuity, a complete break, between the Israelite priesthood as it had evolved by the time of Jesus, and the Christian leaders, workers, co-workers and ministers, spoken of in the NT.* (Brian Gleeson CP, *Ordained Persons and their Ministries: New Testament Foundations and Variations*, Australian ejournal of Theology, p7)

Three kinds of leadership evolved in the early church. Firstly, the 'overseer' with the

Greek name 'episcopos'. He was assisted by 'presbyters' and 'deacons'. None of these leaders were called priests – there were no ordinations. The leaders baptised newcomers and presided at the Eucharist without being 'ordained'.

Raymond Brown, renowned scripture scholar reinforces the idea that the early church did not ordain priests: *Nowhere in the New Testament are church presbyters or bishops called priests; that development came for bishops in the second century, and later for presbyters. It is interesting that 1 Peter speaks of a general "royal priesthood" (2:9) and of "presbyters" (5:1) but makes no connection between them.* (Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, Paulist Press New York, 1984, p.80 footnote.)

Timothy was a leader in apostolic times. Paul called Timothy 'my loyal child in the faith' (1 Timothy 1:2). He then instructs him, 'Do not neglect the gift which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders' (1 Timothy 4:14).

Paul tells Timothy the qualities needed for leaders. They must be *above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectful, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well ... not a recent convert ... well thought of by outsiders* (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The overseer was the principal leader of the community. *The overseer and deacon are the main functional roles within the community, complimented by those of teacher, presbyter, deaconess and widow. As time passes, however, the role of overseer comes to absorb the roles of teacher and prophet.*" (Michael L. Papesh, *Clerical Culture: Contradiction and Transformation: The Culture of the Diocesan Priests of the United States Catholic Church*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004, p.23)

The deacon is the overseer's social minister, responsible for the administration, financial support, and practical care of the needy. (Papesh, p.23)

How did Ordination Creep in?

Ordination evolved under certain

pressures. It does not seem to have been a decision by a council or the pope.

Ordained ministry in the Church, in fact, is the outcome of an evolution and a development of patterns of ministry in the NT (Gleeson, June 2006, p. 1). One of the pressures came from converts from Judaism who found it hard to forget the idea of having priests to offer sacrifice.

By the third century the overseer's role is starting to be cast in priest terms because the community wishes to have priests like other Roman religions do. The Old Testament priesthood gradually becomes the model of what the overseer role ought to be, which is exactly opposite to the first and second generation's understanding. (Papesh, p. 23)

To provide priests, the overseers were ordained to offer sacrifice in a special ritual which in time became very elaborate. As the number of Christians grew, the overseer needed help to administer to the communities, so the presbyters were also ordained.

What I am emphasising is that the Eucharists presided over by the community leaders in the first 300 years were valid, even though these leaders were not 'ordained'. Therefore, we can conclude that ordination is not necessary for a valid Eucharist. The implications of this conclusion are profound.

Women as Leaders

In those times all the leaders were men. I suspect that was a cultural matter. Women were not considered to be suitable as leaders or were too busy caring for their households. Today the situation is very different. We have women as prime ministers, premiers, managers, CEOs. Women have shown they can be effective leaders.

The first 300 years of the church show clearly that if women can be good leaders, they could preside at the Eucharist without being ordained. Admittedly this would be extremely difficult as the present system of male clerics has been in place for 1700 years and has become solidly entrenched. It would be like trying to move a mountain.

Yet Jesus said we can move mountains. *Truly, I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea, and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you* (Mark 11:23). It will take an enormous amount of prayer and faith to move this mountain of prejudice against women.

Continued page 32



We could at least take the early church as a model and reform the church according to that model adapted to the twenty first century. We cannot do better than take the first 300 years of the early church as our Tradition with ‘T’ in upper case.

Equality

Today there is a lot of discussion about equality of the sexes. St Paul preempted this 2000 years ago. *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). Let’s take Paul seriously.

There were women deacons in the early church. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchræe* (Romans 1:1). We had women deacons in the church for hundreds of years. It’s tragic that this practice was discontinued.

By pursuing this way of women being able to preside at the Eucharist we avoid the problem caused by Pope St John Paul II who declared *that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be definitively held by all the church’s faithful* (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 1994). What I am saying is that women can be leaders who do not have to be ordained to celebrate the Eucharist.

Women Leaders in the Middle Ages

Gary Marcy, in his book, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination, Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford University Press 2008) has some very pertinent comments on this matter. The varied meanings of ‘ordained’ can be confusing.

Ordination comprised a much larger group of ministries in the early Middle Ages, including ministries reserved for women ... Women were frequently also referred to as ordained and occasionally as clerics (Macy p.35). Marcy says a tenth-century letter of Atto, bishop of Vercelli, described the initiation of deaconesses as an ordination: *Therefore for the aid of men, devout women were ordained leaders of worship in the holy Church* (Macy p.36). Note the word ‘leaders’.

Several interesting implications follow from the definition of ordination current in the first millennium of Christianity. First and foremost, the power to perform the rituals of the church was not the essential purpose of ordination. The question of who had the power to perform rituals was less important than whom the community had chosen as their ministers (Macy p.41).

This is in line with the understanding of the very early church. Marcy quotes Schillebeeckx: *in the ancient church it is said that he (or she) is ‘appointed’ as minister in order to be able to appear as leader to build up the community, and for this reason he (or she) was also the obvious person to preside at the Eucharist.* (Macy p.42)

A graffito found near Poitiers commemorates that ‘Martia, the presbytera made the offering together with Olybrius and Nepos.’ Scholars who have studied it agree that this inscription refers to Martia as a minister who celebrated the Eucharist along with two men, Olybrius and Nepos (Macy p.60).

Marcy is emphatic. *First and most important, women were ordained in the early Middle Ages. According to the understanding of ordination held by themselves and their contemporaries, they were just as truly*

ordained as any bishop, priest or deacon ... There are rites for the ordination of women; there are canonical requirements for the ordination of women; there are particular women depicted as ordained; and a number of roles limited to women are included in the list of ordained ministries. The evidence is simply overwhelming (Macy p.86).

In the early decades of the twelfth century a theology was developing that would completely remove women from any ordained ministry ... Within a fifty-year period, the centuries-old tradition of the ordination of women had been reversed and denied (Macy pp 92,93). Marcy quotes Guido de Baysio as saying: *A woman however is not a perfect member of the church but a male is* (Macy, p.101).

The Second Lateran Council in 1139 decreed that any marriages contracted by clergy, monks or religious were invalid. Celibacy thus became compulsory. A so-called reform began.

The ‘reformers’ used the tactic of denigrating women. Peter Damian was particularly loathsome: *I speak to you, o charmers of the clergy, appetizing flesh of the devil, that castaway from paradise, you poison of the minds, death of souls, venom of wine and eating, companions of the very stuff of sin, the cause of our ruin. You, I say, I exhort you women of the ancient enemy, you bitches, sows, screech-owls, night owls, she-wolves, blood suckers, [who] cry ‘Give without ceasing’* (Proverbs 30:15-16). *Come now hear me, harlots, prostitutes, with your lascivious kisses, you wallowing places for fat pigs, couches for unclean spirits, demi-goddesses, sirens, witches, devotees of Diana ... From you the devil is fattened by the abundance of your lust, is fed by your alluring feasts* (Macy p.113).

Rufinus of Bologna taught that women who were menstruating should not be allowed to enter churches and cardinal Sicard of Cremona said a woman after childbirth should not enter a church for the same reason. *If a woman should bear a male, she should abstain from entering the church for forty days as one unclean since an infant conceived in uncleanness is said to be unformed for forty days; and if [a woman] bears a female, the period of time is doubled ... women remain unformed in conception twice as long as men* (Macy p.114).

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was a dominant influence. He taught that women were naturally inferior to men, they were deformed males, a female results from an imperfect reception of the male seed. Aristotle strongly influenced Aquinas.

Thomas was equally blunt about women's nature: 'In respect to her particular nature, woman is something defective and accidental (Macy, p.120).

There are still traces of this bias today. Last year a woman correspondent of *The Tablet*

happened to meet a nun in St. Peter's Square, Rome. The sister worked in the Vatican. The correspondent asked what it was like to work with all those male priests, bishops and cardinals. Her reply: 'I feel like shit on their shoes'.

Macy continues his review of the Middle Ages: *Once women were reduced to lay status, and most sacramental functions were concentrated in the hands of the presbyterate, there was no official room left for women in the church* (Macy p.125).

This situation continued for centuries. I remember clearly when I was young the priest did everything at mass and made all the decisions relating to the parish. We could say the issue was power.

Women Celebrants in other Churches

Some years ago, I made a point of attending Eucharists celebrated by women in the Anglican and Uniting churches. My finding is that these Eucharists were exactly the same as those celebrated by men, except for their gender.

The Anglican church had to move a mountain of prejudice before this could happen, but persistence prevailed and now the Anglican church has many women priests and bishops, and it seems they have been generally accepted by the people though some did object strongly.

This has been accomplished within the current structure of priesthood, but my point is that women can celebrate the Eucharist with devotion.

Why is our church so far behind other churches? The current shortage of priests could be alleviated by having women able to celebrate mass.

Some years ago, I was in the waiting area of an airport when I noticed a woman in the pilot's seat of a jumbo jet. I thought there's a woman flying a huge aircraft with hundreds of people aboard, but a woman cannot celebrate the Eucharist. Something wrong here.

It's time to have a robust discussion on this very serious matter. ☞



To light a candle or curse the dark: the cardinal dilemma

PETER DAY

Peter Day, a priest of the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn, offers a perspective on how we might respond with mercy and justice to the violence in our society and how gospel forgiveness works.

'Foolishly, indulgently', Christian mercy does not depend on remorse, repentance, or even whether it is deserved. It takes the initiative in willing the good of the other.

Hardly a minute goes by that we don't look at the news to find more bad news – it's a daily ritual of ubiquitous 'gotcha' moments exposing yet more of our collective underbelly. Be it newspapers, television, or social media, rarely can we find anything to counter the conviction that we're a terribly underperforming species.

And then, just when you think there may be a little respite – just a little, please: the Christchurch massacre! The Cardinal George Pell disaster!

Sometimes it feels like our social order is about to unravel, is about to collapse under the strain of it all. Immersed in a fog of shock, bewilderment, and outrage citizens are left to grapple with two seemingly impenetrable questions: How is this so? Why is this so?

This dilemma is not new, of course, and

there have been some extraordinary figures in history that have grappled mightily with it: Jewish refugee and political philosopher, Hannah Arendt, comes to mind.

In 1962 Arendt was tasked by *The New Yorker* to cover the trial of the notorious Nazi, Adolf Eichmann – one of the chief architects of the holocaust. What became clear, if counter-intuitively, to Arendt as she observed the Nazi 'monster' in the dock was that he presented as anything but a monster: his ordinariness, even 'normalcy' stood out.

'The sad truth,' she said, 'is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.' Indeed, it was Arendt who coined the controversial and oft misunderstood phrase, 'The banality of evil' – she was even accused by some of trivializing it.

After much toing and froing with her critics, she concluded: *It is... my opinion now that evil is never radical, that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overgrow*



and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is 'thought-defying,' as I said, because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its banality. Only the good has depth that can be radical.

So, what to do with the evil we confront today? How might we respond? Dare we turn to another extraordinary Jew?

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FEATURES

Love your enemies; bless those who persecute you... (Jesus of Nazareth circa. 32 AD) 'Yeah, right; Christian nonsense; madness; bleeding-heart folly!'

I'm reminded of a story I came across many years ago about an elderly black South African woman whose son and husband had been brutally murdered by white security officers under the apartheid regime. Especially heinous was the way her husband died: burnt alive on a pile of wood as she was forced to look-on.

Several years later, she came face-to-face with the man implicated in both murders in a courtroom established by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The woman, along with relatives and friends, stands and listens as the white security officer confesses. A Commission official then turns to her and asks: 'So, what do you want? How should justice be done to this man who so brutally destroyed your family?'

I want three things, the frail woman says. I want first to be taken to the place where my husband was burned so that I can gather the dust and give his remains a decent burial. My husband and son were my only family. I want, secondly, therefore, for this man to become my son. I would like him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining. And,

finally, I want a third thing. I want this man to know that I offer him my forgiveness because Jesus Christ died to forgive. And so, I would kindly ask someone to escort me across the courtroom so that I can embrace him in my arms and let him know he is truly forgiven.

As the woman is assisted across the room, the white officer, overwhelmed by what he has heard, feints.

The purpose here is not to offer some cheesy morality tale, or infer that only Christians have access to the 'radical good'. Rather, it is to show that despite the untold damage evil can wreak, it never has the final say because it is utterly powerless in the face of that which has infinite depth: Love and Mercy.

And while an 'eye for an eye' is a seductive and eminently understandable human response to heinous acts; the problem is, as Ghandi quipped, 'all the world ends up blind.'

We're in an era, says social commentator Waleed Aly, where anger dominates our sense of morality. To be angry is to be righteous, while to temper that anger is to be somehow morally complacent, apologetic, complicit even. Of course, there's nothing new – or wrong – in anger as a moral response. It's a crucial part of our moral vocabulary. But there is something new – and wrong – in it being our only moral resource, our only way of demonstrating moral seriousness.

That's why the phenomenon of outrage culture is so runaway: we find precious few alternatives for expressing our moral agency.

Within this milieu, mercy is sidelined as a foolish indulgence. It has no place in the conversation. Of course, no one can begrudge victims of heinous crimes the right to want revenge, even to hate the perpetrator, but as for the rest of us, it behoves us to find 'alternative ways to express our moral agency' – within the legal system, for instance, this is called a 'Jury'.

The command to 'Love your enemies', or, better still, 'to will the good' of your enemies, has nothing to do with sentimentality, or feelings. It is about choice. And this is why mercy – and forgiveness – is so damned hard: it is an act of the will that calls us to defy raw, atavistic emotions.

To will the good of the 'monster' in the dock is never about obstructing or negating the path of natural justice; rather, it is about ensuring that justice is meted out without hatred and vengeance.

Surely, at the very least, we owe survivors and victims of heinous acts this glimmer of hope: the assurance that we will not replace the tyrant who brutalized them with yet another brute: the baying lynch mob? Our social cohesion depends on this.

It is better to light a candle than to curse the dark. ☺



Handling sexual abuse – back to basics

NIHAL ABEYASINGHA

Nihal Abeyasingha, a Sri Lankan Catholic priest and retired professor of theology, offers some thoughts on how we might find christian responses to the crisis in the church caused by sexual abuse.



The issue of sexual abuse has surfaced in recent times as a focal issue. In fact, it manifests itself worldwide beyond all boundaries. True, it is reprehensible behavior. But the question that we in the church – whether ordained ministers or lay persons who try to live according to Christian values – need to ask ourselves is how should the 'follower of Christ' deal with these issues.

First, how big is the problem? According to the statistics cited in a footnote of the Pope's address at the conclusion of the session to the bishops in February 2019, it was noted with Maria Isabel Martínez Pérez, *Abusos sexuales en niños y adolescentes*, ed. Criminología y Justicia, 2012, only 2% of cases are reported, especially when the abuse has taken place in the home. She sets the number of victims of paedophilia in our society at between 15% and 20%. Only 50% of children reveal the abuses they have suffered, and of these cases only

15% are actually reported. Only 5% end up going to trial. It does not take too much argument to accept that the issue is serious and widespread.

What are the elements to be considered in working towards a solution? Basically two – this is sinful; yet Christ came precisely to call sinners to repentance.

A manifestation of sin

This is just *one* manifestation of sin. Some time earlier, there was a focus on the issue about fiscal mismanagement in the Church. Previously, and even maybe at present, the issue of alcoholism in clergy. All these are manifestations of sin. Traditional theology has spoken of the seven roots of sin, referred to as the capital vices.

Sin will always exist in the church – as Lumen Gentium (48) said the church in her sacraments and her institutions takes on the passing forms of this world. The church is always in need of reform. In the time between the resurrection of Christ and the time of his final manifestation, the church will have to deal with the problem of sin. Christ came not so much for the virtuous as for sinners. Pope Francis has referred to the Church as a field hospital and many similar metaphors highlighting care for the problem of sin. Prior to Christ, the Deuteronomic history of Israel spoke of the four moments of history: Blessing from God-Pride/ Sin- Punishment-Crying in repentance and then, blessing and the cycle beings again.

In an issue like sexual abuse there are the predators and the victims. To the predators, the good news of the possibility of salvation needs to be announced. Peter denied Christ and wept in repentance; Judas betrayed Christ and hung himself. The Church acknowledges Peter to be in heaven; but refrains from making any statement about the ultimate destiny of Judas. To the victims, there is need of forgiveness and healing.

In handling the issue, the reality of sin and the call to forgiveness, and consequently the possibility of forgiveness for all, needs to be maintained. No matter what may be the spirit of the times, the Church finds itself in the world and not of the world. Before Christ, Lord Buddha had proclaimed: Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law (Dhammapada, verse 5). The even richer teaching of Christ calling for a love extending even to enemies in imitation of the indiscriminate love of God is well known. This value system has to be nurtured, even while the predators (sinners) are given severe punishment.

Zero tolerance

Even though punished, the predators remain human beings. To deny them human dignity is to negate our own. In handling church-connected persons, the zero tolerance policy has been advocated. Zero tolerance of what? Certainly zero tolerance of their sin. But a zero tolerance policy advocated to avoid financial or other liability for sin needs to be re-considered in terms of what they could do if let loose without any control on society.

Zero tolerance procedure would reject the sinner from the institutional membership in the church e.g. reducing the cleric to the status of lay persons. The result is that the church, as institution, would not be liable for the misdeeds of such a person. But what would be the situation of the predator? It would leave him/her free to indulge in predatory activity without control and liability of the institutional church. That would show little concern for future possible victims.

For the victim, there are many issues that arise – the handling of the memory, forgiveness of the wrong doer, coming to terms with one's situation, just to mention a few. In this situation, what is required is the use of the growth in modern science and technology working hand in hand with the good news of salvation. Remember that at the heart of the good news is the story of a murder of an innocent person, who was raised again. Salvation is turning back in repentance on the one whom we have killed. There is no indication that the risen Christ confronted his murderers – he revealed himself to believers, who were entrusted with a mission. Persons who have been victims themselves are best able to respond to other victims. That was the invitation of the law after the Exodus – you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in Egypt. Let this not happen among you. But the human situation of sin was that in fact it did happen among those led out of Egypt.

Repentance

Both for offender and victim, there is the need of the offer of good news with the invitation to repentance. Obviously, not all offenders and victims would be willing to accept the good news. For those who are willing to accept the offer, there can be two regimes – the one of penance for offenders and of healing for victims.

For offenders: would there be some sense in re-instituting some of the elements of the penitential procedure in the early church with adaptation to modern times. The early Church, faced with the

multiplication of such heretics, Christianity had to redefine the problem of relapse. In short, Christians had to answer the question: What happens to an individual who has consolidated his fundamental tie with the Truth through baptism and then falls out of that relationship, when he falls again into sin? What happens when he breaks with the Truth? He returns to the 'illumination of baptism' through penitence. This was the canonical penitence, a variety of techniques intended to encourage, exhort or constrain penitents to show their truth were put in place. Christianity called these techniques 'exomologesis.' In a very general sense, the word refers to the recognition of an act, but more precisely, in the penitential rite, what was the exomologesis? Well, at the end of the penitential procedure when the moment of the reintegration came, an episode took place which the texts regularly call exomologesis. Exomologesis is the dramatic manifestation of the renunciation to oneself."

This regimen consisted of the sinner admitting his guilt before the community and undertaking a long and arduous period of penance, as his willingness to return to the community of the church. Any such procedure in modern times would include reporting the matter to secular authorities, where "vindictive" action is available as well as the church instituting its own investigation. May be the individual may never be allowed to return to ministry as a priest/deacon/communicant member. But the Church can never renege on or forget its healing ministry – the proclamation of the salvation of Christ – no matter what maybe the spirit of the times. When all around they were calling for the blood of Jesus "Crucify him", his true humanity and divinity were recognized by unlikely persons – the centurion by the cross, the good thief etc... We can shout "Away with sex offenders" and rightly so. But we can never deny their humanity and that some of them have put on Christ through baptism.

If the offender willingly accepts the invitation to repentance, then the institutional church needs to impose on the person a period of prayer and penance without contact with possible victims ("occasions of sin") in what would correspond to an "ecclesiastical jail/ reformatory". Side by side, there would be scientific (therapeutic) helps and other means provided, so that they can gather up their lives. The church would always function as a field hospital eventually turning the "battle-scarred" offender into rehabilitation procedures and full integration into the community. Unwilling

Continued page 36

offenders, here I refer to those who come directly under the purview of the church, should never be let loose to prey on victims. The church needs to institute perhaps in link with the state suitable institutions where they would be “held” and prevented from future activity in society.

For the victims, who are willing to accept the invitation to believe the gospel, the church needs to provide every assistance to come to terms with their situation and to return to wholeness and discover their vocation. To those who are unwilling, little can be done, except the constant reminder that financial compensation – however much it may be – can never solve the harm they have suffered to themselves as human persons.

Finally, I am strongly of the opinion that the catholic faithful and the world at large is crying out for some sign of ‘sackcloth and ashes’ repentance on the part of the institutional church especially in its leadership. Can some act of institutional repentance be established? For example, the bishops especially in the dioceses where sexual abuse has been reported could decide not to use the mitre for a six or twelve month period. When Paul VI gave up the use of the papal tiara during Vatican II (November 1963), he left the possibility open for his successors to restart the use. He gave it up in the interests of adopting a simpler life style in the church. His successors have not resumed its usage. And an emphasis on the poor has spread in the church. In fact, Benedict XVI even removed the tiara from the papal court of arms and replaced it with the mitre. After all, the first written mention of the mitre is in the Bull of Leo IX (1049). This would be a strong symbol both to members of the church and those outside that the bishops take institutional blame in the sin of the church. If not this corresponding to the sack cloth and ashes of the people of Nineveh and the sack cloth and ashes used by Easter before meeting the king, the church can creatively devise forms of sack cloth and penance that will convey institutional repentance on the part of the church. God grant that we may address this manifestation of sin – until another manifestation will surely take place – which the church will handle going back to the same basic principles. ☺

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Prayer of a priest-prisoner

Lord, sometimes when I’m locked up in my little concrete box, like a force-fed chicken, I feel desperately alone and long for companionship.

Lord, help me to keep believing you are there.

I give thanks for the friends, new and old, who have held me up through their prayers, letters and visits. For the sprinkling of trustworthy inmate friends with whom I have shared and to whom I’ve listened, I ask your abundant blessing on them.

In those times when I feel I just can’t go on, you have lifted me up, Lord and given me hope to continue on.

When I feel full of fear, the butterflies rioting in my stomach and my bowels trembling, at the abuse and the unknown of what awaits me – in the escort truck or the new gaol – help me remember, Jesus, how you faced the future in Gethsemane.

As I look around my brother-inmates and see their self-esteem being destroyed, help me to overcome anger and have the courage to reach out to them Lord.

Visits are times when your love Lord is made flesh in my visitors; but it’s followed by the humiliation of the strip search. As I stand naked, help me Lord to remember your humiliation before your crucifixion.

I ask Lord, that all those I’ve damaged will be led by you on the way towards forgiveness. Please, Lord, don’t let them destroy themselves through hatred, anger and thoughts of revenge.

I thank you Lord for stripping me of all excuses and defences and helping me face my crimes and giving me the grace of repentance.

When year after year I face the sameness of the meals, the lack of decent preparation and serving in an appropriate fashion, help me Lord to be grateful and remember those who have insufficient to eat.

After the banana shortage, to receive an orange for the first time in nine years, what a treat Lord – before gaol so taken for granted.

Thank you Lord for the experience of being the leper, ‘I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.’

(This reflection was written by a priest who is in prison.)

Water feeds!

Is it contradictory to speak in terms of water feeding us apart from quenching our thirst? No, not when it comes to cargo and container ships. In times of peril and natural disasters UN ships for example carry the maximum amount of aid around the globe in one go. 70% of all food, goods and eating commodities are moved around the world by sea! And Australia is in the midst of one huge ocean. The ocean has never been without its perils and dangers. Isaiah 19/5 speaks of the waters from the sea that dry up; Jesus himself calms a storm on the sea to rescue his disciples (Mark 4/37); St. Paul journeys on in spite of shipwrecks and the ‘perils of the water’ (2 Corinthians 11/26). Modern day shipping has its own perils – terrorism, piracy and rough weather. Sailors and seafarers and fishing communities have their own share of work-related risk. Personally they may also suffer from loneliness, isolation, uncertainty and ‘temptations’. On Apostleship of the Sea Sunday, we pray for all seafarers, poor fishing communities, their families and children. May Mary, Stella Maris, Star of the Ocean guide all seafarers to the safe haven of heaven. Thank God for the food you eat and make a personal pledge never to waste it or throw good food into the bin. God could be checking your litter bag!

Xavier Pinto CSsR



A Positive way forward for our Church

While a local community court has found Cardinal George Pell guilty of criminality, the wider Australian court of public opinion we rub shoulders with daily, has found our Catholic Church system of governance to be in need of immediate reform, particularly in regards to our clerical leadership arrangements. Good faithful, Catholic people say this matter can't wait for Plenary Council musings, it needs changing now so the Plenary Council will have sufficient leaders to implement a way forward from this darkness our church finds itself in.

For love of the church and the mission of Jesus, and urged on regularly by my 'parishioners' in the veteran community I am compelled to keep raising this matter of the need for more inclusive leadership in the Catholic Church. I am a 66yr old Catholic married deacon. For the past 24 years I have led ministries to the military, Federal Police, ex-service people, and a humanitarian mission in Timor Leste. In all these areas success is predicated on having the most gifted people as leaders, be they male or female, single or married. Daily I am challenged by grass roots folks who remind me that the solution to the crises we face in the church today is better and more inclusive governance. Whilst we have some excellent priests and bishops, the clerical arrangements we have now, are being seen in our community as a catastrophic failure. More than 99% of our people are excluded from being in our key leadership roles.

With just a little tweaking of our structure we could have an exponentially positive outcome.

Our church lumbers on with archaic arrangements that visibly look more like the Roman Empire, than the foundational catholic model exercised by Jesus and the early disciples. People can't comprehend why the church is excluding so many potential leaders, by virtue of them being married or female.

I see potential priestly and deacon candidates already active in many Church groups and agencies. The additional vocations we need are here. They have already matured in leadership in formal training and in the school of life. We need our bishops to show the courage to respond to what their hearts must surely tell them. Pope Francis has stated he is open to new initiatives, but he wants us to ask. A clerical structure inclusive of celibate and married, male and female, young and mature age will consign

'Clericalism' to the dustbin of history, and reflect to the earliest traditions of the church. Peter and Paul, wherever they went, chose and appointed elders, who clearly were predominantly married men, and included female deacons. From among local communities (Acts 14, Titus 1).

Our church needs local pastoral leaders in number and quality that can implement the mission of Christ.

I honour and respect the ministry of the celibate clergy that continue to serve us faithfully. Thank you. I pray that you and the broader church community will want to be supported and followed by others who have a calling and gifting to priestly or diaconal ministry, but are presently excluded. Let us show the world and our own people, that we have a positive plan to move forward in hope.

Deacon Gary Stone, Clagiraba, QLD.

Embrace the LGBTIQ Community

Thank you for the article about the hurts inflicted on LGBTIQ Catholics the Autumn issue of *The Swag*.

My own thinking about gay people underwent an instantaneous conversion during an all day session about AIDS sponsored for clergy by the Ballarat Diocese in about 1992. Prior to that meeting I had accepted what I understood to be Sigmund Freud's explanation of homosexuality, namely that some boys (or girls) reached puberty while they were still stuck in the boys only, no girls (girls only, no boys) stage of psycho-sexual development.

During one of the talks the lecturer mentioned that 70% of homosexuals are born homosexual, and can never be heterosexual. There came straight into my mind, 'God saw all that he had made, and found it very good.' Not only did it enter into my thick skull, but I blurted it out, which made me look a bit stupid. One change in my understanding of homosexuality since then has been accepting that that 70% figure is closer to 100%.

Since they are created as such by God, they are special gifts of God to the human race, and should be honoured as such. But the human race as a whole is a long way from thinking about homosexuals that way. I find myself sometimes speaking about gays and lesbians in a tone that is belittling.

And the biggest gay-bashers are often gay themselves. I sometimes say that LGBTIQ people will have gained their proper acceptance by the community when they no longer feel any need to put on the Gay Pride march.

Martel's book, *In the closet of the Vatican*, reveals that the Roman Curia has been a leader in opposing the acceptance of gays, while the same Curia itself has a preponderance of gays, many of whom are sexually active. The hypocrisy of it all leaves the Pharisees for dead.

The CDF continues officially to call homosexuality a grave disorder because, I suppose, penises and vaginas fit together. The CDF also maintains that God calls all LGBTIQ people to lifelong celibacy, completely denying the importance of physical loving sexual relationships in the lives of most people whether heterosexual or homosexual. Instead the CDF, or rather the Catholic Church, should be contributing to the growth of positive ethical guidelines for homosexuals in their sexual lives.

After the first session of the Synod on the family, I devoted two Sundays to talking about the Synod. The second talk was about homosexuality. I began with the story that Ron and Mavis Pirola from Sydney told at the start of the very first day of the Synod. Friends of theirs have a family get together on the Sunday before Christmas each year. One of their sons is gay. One year he plucked up courage to ask his parents 'May I bring my partner' to which they answered 'Of course, bring your partner.' Then the Pirolas asked the Synod fathers, 'If they can say that, why can't the Church?'

I might mention that, that morning, two \$50 dollar notes appeared in the first collection, something quite unheard of in the long history of the Parish of Red Cliffs.

Fr Patrick Flanagan, Red Cliffs, VIC.

I am enthralled that Fr Peter Maher, Sydney, has been a pastor to the LGBTIQ Catholics for over 25 years (The killing must stop, *The Swag*, vol 27, p22). I could presume that several LGBTIQs of other churches or no affiliation at all would also be part of his flock. Such pastors are rare!

I too was equally surprised at Archbishop Comensoli's clarification that 'gay teachers would be more acceptable at religious schools if they lived far away from the school and their relationships were less visible.' I can well understand the grievous hurt his comment created. Paul Harris wrote to Archbishop in a very respectful tone to 'Please come clean. Are gay and lesbian people welcome in the Catholic teaching profession?' The Archbishop 'replied with an apology and an offer to meet with Paul....' I am eager to know the outcome, in the next issue of *The Swag*.

Our very pastorally oriented Pope Francis, who once asserted: 'Who am I to judge', is

concurrently hard on LGBTIQ couples. His stance is that individuals with ingrained homosexual tendencies are deemed as 'intrinsically disordered' and are not to be admitted to consecrated life. The last issue of *The Swag* carried an article on Fr Henri Nouwen, a renowned spiritual writer, who would, today, be debarred from entering the seminary (p17).

It seems to be the overwhelming concern of the church, or rather of our celibate clergy, to regulate and legislate about what goes on in the bedroom. Pope Francis seems to have gone back on his proclamation that 'it's time to drop the church's obsession with divorce, contraception, homosexuality and abortion, and speak of other things.' The church seems to hold on to its stance that there is an 'intrinsically disordered' behaviour in gay men and women. And they need to obey the church's teaching.

There is, however, an emerging consensus that same sex desire is natural to those who experience it. How many examples can the church cite of persons with such orientation who have been 'reformed'? What is the basis for the church's stance on same sex orientation being deemed as 'intrinsically disordered'? It is good to know that there are some quarters in the church which acknowledge that caring, stable and monogamous gay relationships could be acknowledged by the church as opposed to a promiscuous lifestyle.

Just as dioceses have chaplains for ethnic groups, prisons, youth, etc, it is time that every diocese has a chaplain for the LGBTIQ group as well. This would send a positive message to that community.

Fr Arnold Heredia, Melbourne, VIC.

The legacy of Bishop Ronald Mulkearns

This contribution comes from someone totally distant and distinct from a Bishop who for so many represents disgrace and betrayal of a high order. My contribution has arisen out of that regular and common task of writing some history of one's local parish consequent upon a centenary of one of its church buildings. As I ferreted around in the dungeon basement of the church archives in 2018 I discovered a printed bound copy of papers delivered in Brisbane in September 1991 of the conference celebrating 25 years of the formation of the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand. Bishop Mulkearns delivered a paper entitled *The relevance of Canon Law in the present Church structure- 1967 revisited*. The reference to '1967 revisited' was a reference to a paper Bishop

Mulkearns had delivered at the inaugural conference in 1967 by the same title prior to his being elevated to the Episcopate.

Both articles focussed upon a new spirit in the church, a spirit that ensured that canon law must always be 'pastorally relevant'. In his 1991 paper he focussed on subsidiarity, local church autonomy within a universal communion. He quoted Pope Paul VI's demand that there must be a new way of thinking in the Church that goes beyond mere externals and deals with the pastoral needs of the people. Since the revelations of the Commonwealth Government's Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse in relation to the administration of Bishop Mulkearns these two speeches seem quite forgettable.

But in fact they must never be forgotten for two reasons. On the institutional level the speeches demonstrate just how powerful can life's challenges overwhelm us and take us far from our first and youngest noble aspirations. The second reason this speech must not be forgotten lay in the very last paragraph of his 1991 speech. I quote it in full as it will explain itself: *... I ask you to excuse the rambling nature of this contribution. I was brought up with something of a jolt recently when I read the comment of Manning Clark that 'Everything a man writes or says is a fragment in a gigantic confession about his own life'. You have heard something of my own confession. I hope you will give me absolution.*

Vincent Hodge, Paddington QLD.

Sexual abuse and the Plenary Council

In recent times Cardinal George Pell has been found guilty on five counts of sexual abuse. He is appealing that decision which is his right. For me, this has brought the sexual abuse issue to the tipping point as to how we respond, regardless of the Pell outcome.

Over many decades the Church has handled the victims of sexual abuse badly to a point where its reputation is on the edge of a cliff. The only way it can salvage its reputation, is to be transparent, and by involving lay people. It is for this reason that I believe that the 2020 Plenary Council needs to have this issue at the forefront for discussion, and then take clear action to benefit victims and their families as their futures unfold. Our credibility and integrity are at stake. My view is if we don't take this on board by taking decisive action we may as well do nothing, and that is not an option.

Anon – name and address supplied.

A moment's silence on Good Friday at the football

In June 2018 I wrote a letter to the Australian Football League, in which I suggested that they consider observing a minute's silence before the matches on Good Friday. I received no reply. Maybe I was a lone voice. The wording of the letter printed below is substantially the same as the letter I sent. Would it be worthwhile taking a more concerted approach? If the AFL realised that a significant number were interested in the idea, they may view it favourably. My letter said:

The Australian Football League observes Anzac Day each year with a ceremony before the commencement of the match on that day. We remember those men and women from the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces who died in war and those who have died since. A special moment in the ceremony is when we reflect in silence. The players, coaches, umpires and spectators feel the emotion of the occasion. We Australians are proud of those who have gone before us.

I am writing to ask the Australian Football League to consider introducing a similar, but simpler observance before the commencement of the match or matches on Good Friday.

Good Friday has been observed by Christians for almost 2000 years as the anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ. It is a holiday in Australia because of its significance to the millions of Christians in our country. If the Australian Football League decided to introduce the observance of a minute's silence before the Good Friday matches, the Christians in Australia would be appreciative and grateful: those who follow AFL closely and those who follow AFL from afar.

The procedure could go something like this. The players, coaches and umpires would line up at the centre of the ground. The announcer over the public address system would say these or similar words: *Ladies and gentlemen, on this Good Friday, on behalf of the Australian Football League, I invite you to stand and observe one minute's silence in memory of Jesus Christ, the anniversary of whose death is observed today. (one minute's silence) Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.*

Then the match would begin.

Fr Ted Teal, Heidelberg VIC.

Evangelisation to lead Curia reform



The proposed apostolic constitution for reforming and governing the Roman Curia is expected to emphasize the church's missionary mandate with the creation of a 'super-dicastery' merging two offices dedicated to evangelization, reported Carol Glatz in *America Magazine* 29 April 2019.

The final draft of the document on Curia reform for discussion by the world's bishops and prepared by the Pope's group of cardinals, called *Praedicate Evangelium*, emphasises the evangelisation and the missionary nature of the church. This is 'why the new dicastery will supersede the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in importance', Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga from Honduras said.

The constitution places the Vatican dicasteries at the service of both the pope and the bishops, who are 'successors of the apostles' and 'are not in an ecclesiological position below those who work in the Roman Curia,' the Honduran cardinal said.

Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga said the new offices and upcoming reforms not only streamline the Curia, but also 'emphasize the importance of the laity in the church and for the church' by allowing the possibility for a layperson to head a dicastery.

The demotion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the elevation of a Dicastery of Evangelisation reflects the Pope's preference for the church being a field hospital rather than adopting a defending posture. It is hoped that the final document will be ready to promulgate on the Feast of St. Peter and St Paul, 29 June.

Church has 5 years for a complete turnaround or it's over

Fr Helmut Schüller of Austria says the sex abuse crisis shows an urgent need to 'desacralize' the Catholic priesthood and empower the laity, reported *La Croix International* on 7 March 2019.

'If the Church does not accomplish a turnaround shift within the next four or five years, then it's over,' said Helmut Schüller,

a former vicar general of the Archdiocese of Vienna.

Schüller, a co-founder of the Austrian Priests' Initiative (API), said the current sex abuse crisis must impel the Catholic Church to rethink its constitution, give lay Catholics more rights and introduce control mechanisms for those in positions of power.

'We must get back to seeing the priesthood as a service and not as an office that gives the holder power, because that can lead to abuse,' he said.

Austrian Priests' Initiative has backed Communion for divorced and remarried Catholics, the re-institution of a married priesthood and the ordination of women.

Mandatory celibacy is a sin says dying priest



Daniel O'Leary, in his last article for *The Tablet* (2 February 2019, p8) before he died noted that he wanted to say something free from bitterness and in love, but he wanted to be careful. He said: *I now believe, with all my heart, that compulsory celibacy is a kind of sin, an assault against God's will and nature. Let me avoid the minefield that this could drag us into! I'm just pointing out that one of the fall-outs of mandatory celibate life is the violence it does to a priest's humanity, and the wounds that it leaves on his ministry.*

Recalling his life and ministry, he wanted to record this 'deep awakening'. He noted: *Some priests hang on to their authentic, essential selves; many of us do not. The enemy, we were warned, back in the 1950s, was a failure in prayer; falling in love was the cancer; suppression, sublimation and confession were the cure. Emotion was the threat; detachment was the safeguard;*

becoming too human was the risk; the subtle carapace of clericalism was the precaution. Clericalism is a collective malaise which keeps vibrant, abundant life at bay; it quarantines us for life from the personal and communal expression of healing relationships, and the lovely grace of the tenderness which Pope Francis is trying to restore to the hearts of all God's people.

Women needed in Church governance



Australia's Ministerial Public Juridic Person (PJP) posted on their website on 26 February 2019 an article written by the executive officer, **Lawrie Hallinan**, noted: *Images of old men gathering at the Vatican would give the world the false impression that women are totally excluded from governance in the Catholic Church. A contrasting picture arises from the governance of a group of Australian Church corporate entities where women are equal participants.*

Eva Skira, Deputy Chair of the Council of the Association of Ministerial PJPs said: *ASX listed companies have had a target of 30% women on their boards for some time but we have reached about 50% due in large part to the tradition many of us inherited from women Religious who have always governed their own Religious Institutes.*

It is very likely that the role of women within the Church will come forward in submissions to the Plenary Council 2020. The trustees of Ministerial PJPs look forward to participating in the resulting discussions, the article noted.

Cardinal condemns clericalism during Chrism Mass

'Do humility and gentleness take priority in everything we do?' asked Cardinal Jean-Pierre Kutwa of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, at the Chrism Mass reports Lucie Sarr in *La Croix International* on 18 April 2019.

Renewal of priestly promises should be 'perceived and understood by all as a necessary *aggiornamento*, which places us in tune with the requirements of the world in which we live,' he said.



Turning towards lay people, Cardinal Kutwa emphasized the significance of their role in the Church, inviting them to take their place working together with priests 'without becoming their accomplices.'

'Each time that we are tempted to supplant them, make them shut up, ignore them or reduce the people of God to small elites, we are creating communities, projects, theological choices, spiritualities and structures without root, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately without life,' he observed.

Reform Group's Easter Agenda

Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI), in their Easter Message (21 April 2109) outlined how they seek to re-found the Church 'in the spirit of the early Christians. In that first century after Jesus ascended into Heaven, there were small gatherings of Christians with an anointed leader.' They were simply followers of Jesus meeting in catacombs and in Christian homes doing what Jesus asked: remembering him by replicating the last supper.

The letter suggested the agenda includes engaging in little acts of kindness; standing in solidarity with those suffering injustice, discrimination and racial, ethnic or religious bigotry; conserving natural resources and acting responsibly in our fragile environment.

Catholic Church Reform Int'l.
A global network seeking renewal of the Church

They also commend joining or creating small faith communities especially inclusive of those who have left the institutional church out of hurt, anger, or frustration or that provide regular gathering spaces inside or outside parish structures.

The letter asks that young people are supported in church leadership recalling some of the aspirations of young people at

a recent meeting of youth. These include lay involvement in governance and finances, women's ordination, including LGBTQ people in both the parish life and sacraments, review of mandatory celibacy and much more.

Rene Reid, CCRI director, concluded her letter reminding us that the 'laity must assume far greater responsibility in the Roman Catholic Church. We are truly the Church. In this special season of Easter, let us vow to behave like we are Church. Live as followers of Jesus. Become the Christ presence in today's world'.

Stop calling me 'Father'!



Jean-Pierre Roche, priest and author from just south of Paris, thinks the practice of calling priests 'Father' can be unhealthy when it is the expression of an emotional dependence based on a false idea of obedience, he said in an article in *La Croix International* on 29 March. In attempting to address the overwhelming disillusionment people feel in the current climate in the church he suggests the practice of calling priests 'Father' infantilises laypeople. He suggests the practice stop for three reasons.

The first is Jesus' words in the gospel: You are not to be called 'Master,' for you have but one Master, and you are all brothers and sisters. And do not call anyone on earth 'Father,' for you have but one Father, who is in Heaven (Mt 23: 8-9).

The second is the infantilising of Catholics. *How is it possible to have fraternal relationships between adults who are equals, if we are all brothers and sisters except for one person – the one we call 'Father'? How do we dare express disagreement if, in doing so, we must 'kill the father'?* he said in the article.

Roche wants to affirm all members of the church as the people of God and the practice of using the title 'Father' militates

against that. He also asks that priests be seen as spiritual guides in their priestly role, not spiritual fathers.

Roche wonders if the title is to somehow compensate for not having children. He claims this is unhealthy. Healthy celibacy sees others not as children, but rather brothers and sisters.

Finally, the practice of calling priests 'Father' *can be unhealthy when it is the expression of an emotional dependence based on a false idea of obedience*, he said. Being called by first name or, if that is too familiar, 'brother' will be a step in combating clericalism, Roche claims, as the Pope is advocating. Maybe we can all take this small step forward in building a more fraternal Church.

Pope addresses youth on Good Friday



Pope Francis' Way of the Cross service on Good Friday will draw attention to the suffering experienced by many young people, including girls who are trafficked and sex abuse victims reported *La Croix International* on 18 April 2019.

Consolata Sister Eugenia Bonetti, who wrote the meditations for the service, said the reflections would address human trafficking which left youth as part of the sex trade or slave labour.

She said Friday's event would pay testament to 'so much suffering in the present, the suffering of these women, these minors, who are faceless, nameless, hopeless, who are just used and thrown away.'

'We are all responsible (for turning a blind eye to exploitation) and each one of us is called to do something, is called to really recognize the cry, the secret of these women,' Sister Bonetti added. ☪

Marriage failure and a second chance

Second Marriage in the Catholic Church, 'Annulment' and other Solutions, Paul Robbins, 2018. Independently published through Amazon, and available as a printed book and an e-book. Reviewed by John Scanlon.

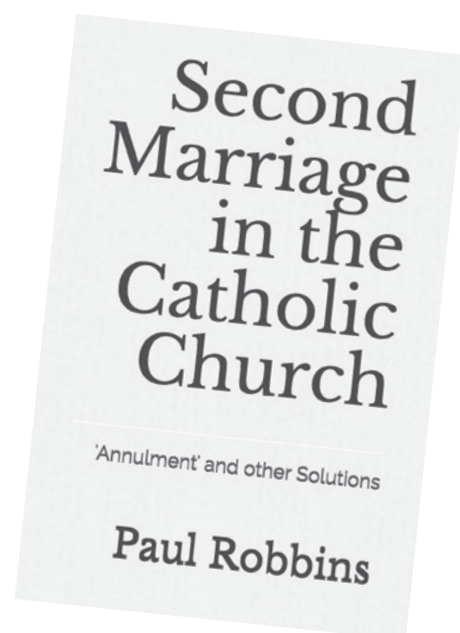
Paul Robbins is a British canon lawyer who has more than thirty years of experience as a tribunal judge or Defender of the Bond for a number of English dioceses and all of Norway. This short book has been written mainly for Catholics who have experienced marriage failure and who wish to marry again. With this lay audience in mind, the author has used the simplest language possible to describe canon law terms and concepts related to marriage validity and nullity. However he also believes that the book could be useful to clergy who have to deal with those who seek remarriage after their first marriage has ended.

Most of the book is an explanation of the theory of marriage nullity and the grounds for declaring marriages to have been invalid. It also explains how the process works and what is required of those who apply. Although my personal experience of the process began forty years ago and in Australia, very little of the process as described seems to have changed since then except for a somewhat faster process now being available in some "open and shut" cases. However the author has also let me know that since 2015 there is no longer an automatic appeal after an affirmative decision in the first instance. The only reservation I have about the treatment of the tribunal process is that in the case of petitions that are contested by the other party, it is assumed (as it should be) that the wishes of the parties, for or against nullity, are irrelevant. Only the facts,

insofar as these can be determined, should determine whether or not the marriage was valid. My personal experience leads me to believe that this theoretical assumption might not always have been correct in practice.

The final chapter of the book recognises the situation of those who have remarried without achieving a decree of nullity and who wish to receive the sacraments. This chapter deals with the 'internal forum solution.' The treatment of this difficult subject is detailed, taking up thirteen pages of closely reasoned discussion. However the treatment at all times is in accord with the author's statement that 'There is nothing contained in this book that contradicts the teachings and discipline of the Catholic Church.' The tone of the discussion can be seen in the following two quotes:

The internal forum solution might be of some assistance to those unable to find a solution in the external forum. However, in its strict interpretation, it is not available to everyone in a second union. Nor is it a way to avoid or put away Church teaching. It is a recognition of the limitation of the various external forum solutions. Since it is a matter of the internal forum, it is first and foremost a matter between God and the couple. The extent of the authority of Church ministers in such matters is limited and is usually restricted to guiding the couple as they attempt to discern the right thing to do. It is the couple, after all, who will have to answer to God for the decisions they made with their lives.



Recourse to an internal forum solution does not mean that an irregular union becomes a marriage recognised by the Church... Hence an internal forum solution will never include a ceremony of blessing or exchange of consent, or anything that gives the appearance of officially recognising the marriage. Consequently, it is not a perfect solution. It does not resolve the problem of the marriage being irregular but of the inability to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is something that would normally arise from an irregular union.

Many years ago I did encounter priests who were hostile even to the concept of seeking an annulment, let alone to the concept of an internal forum solution. I do not know whether such dinosaurs still exist. Except for any such, all priests could well find this book instructive and useful in their pastoral work. ☪

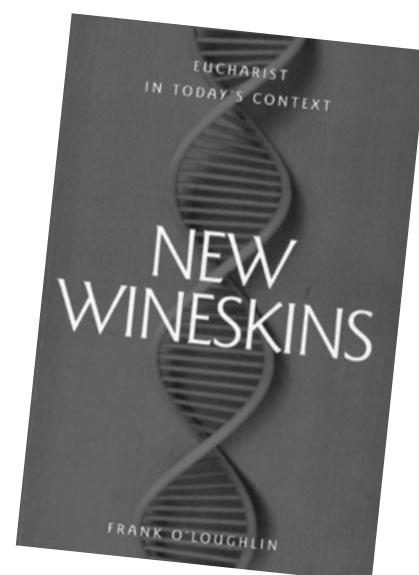
A fresh look at Eucharist

New Wineskins, Frank O'Loughlin, Coventry Press, 2019. Theologian and Melbourne parish priest, Frank invites us to look at the symbols that underlie the Eucharist and their meaning in today's context. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Current Eucharistic hot topics include the admission to the Eucharist of various groups of people such as divorced and remarried, gay people or those in irregular relationships and the translations of liturgical texts. O'Loughlin leaves these hot topics alone and returns to the meaning of the symbols of Eucharist. He explores the biblical and sociological meanings of bread, wine, gathering, community, covenant and sacrifice. He explores them with good biblical and historical study while also

keeping an eye on the current context in which we live.

The symbol of bread is clearly the stuff of life. O'Loughlin notes that bread is both ordinary food as well as special food. We can't live without food and thus it has deep meaning in the Eucharist as it is food we can't do without nourishing us for life. But it is also extraordinary as it takes on the meaning of the food of oppression in Egypt where the need for food from the oppressor kept them prisoners. Then



there is the wilderness manna which is food for the journey of discovery of the identity of the people of Israel. Finally in the Promised Land there is the food of freedom where the Israelites have a new identity based in their control over food as a symbol of their autonomy and self sustaining community.

Jesus in the last supper discourse extends this meaning scheme to be food in which we become one with Jesus himself. It becomes a symbol of unity, community and justice. Jesus insists that it is food for all people reaching beyond the confines of religion and ethnicity. Finally it has eschatological implications. It is a foretaste of freedom to come.

Wine however is not ordinary drink, it is a drink for special occasions, for celebration and joy. In Eucharist it becomes the celebration of the new covenant, just as the many cups of the Passover meal were symbols of the liberation of the people from Egyptian slavery.

This slim volume explores the themes of becoming community in Eucharist, giving and receiving bread, and sacrifice in scholarly ways while using very accessible language. In eighty five pages, O'Loughlin manages to break open these classic themes in fresh ways. While O'Loughlin doesn't address the hot topics directly, I wondered as I read his clear and passionate theology of the symbols whether we might find in this work a way forward in being more inclusive and whatever words we use in the liturgical texts, they must reflect the symbols' meanings in our times and not obscure them. The symbols are the same and their meanings are steeped in the biblical and church tradition but if we fail to realise we are eating and drinking afresh in each age and there is a new wine to be delivered in new wineskins, we may lose its power to liberate us. Eucharist must connect us to the God who is offering the bread of freedom in the now. ☪

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Glimpses of gospel inspired discipleship

We Want to see Jesus: Discipleship as a journey of search and commitment, Peter Varengo, Coventry Press, 2018. Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Peter Varengo is a Salesian priest, adult faith educator and retreat master. He masterfully uses scripture texts to unpack and think through aspects of discipleship for the 21st century. Varengo believes that the discipleship project happens in the ordinary everyday stuff of life. One of the problems with gospel texts is that we can glorify them so that they no longer speak to the baptised in everyday life. Chapter one on the post resurrection text where Jesus asks Mary, 'Whom are you looking for?' ends with this insight: *not only am I invited to discover a God coming into the banality, sameness and sometimes into the emptiness of my life, but to accept that I am loved and loveable, yes, in that very emptiness and banality.*

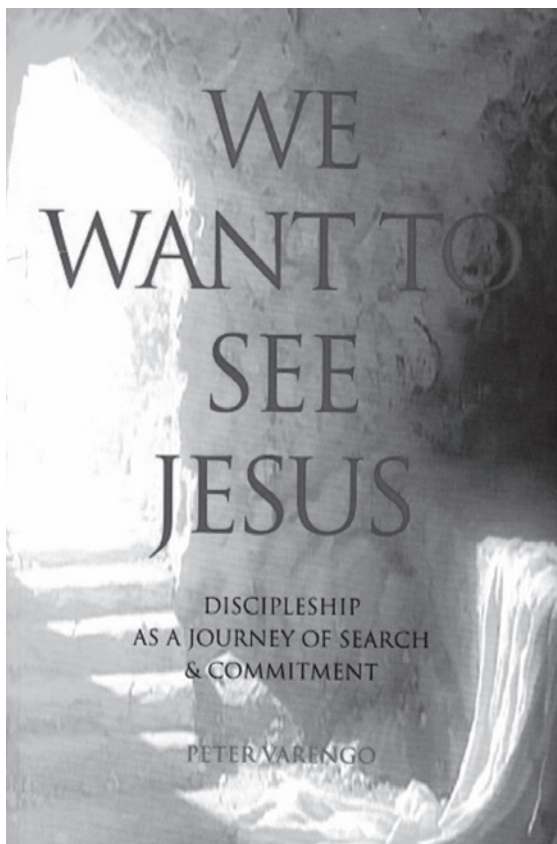
This book explores the texts with an empathy for the human and a passion for the divine insight not to draw us out of our reality but to assist us to reflect on the meaning, the beauty and the terror of our reality. Life's gifts, adventures and challenges are all ways of engaging with the incarnate God and the reflective and thoughtful exploration of the texts assists us to do that through the pages of this book.

The woman at the well story opens up a treasure for the reader as we are led to reflect on what the woman leaves behind. The story clearly indicates she rushes off to the town with good news leaving her water jar behind. In Varengo's hands this text opens up a whole new world of spiritual treasure. The woman's identity is wrapped up in her water jar and the hour she

chooses to collect water (the essential means of life) – her loneliness, isolation, fear and shame. Leaving the water jar signifies a change in her identity – she now sees herself as restored to a place of connection to the community, a member of the group, a bringer of good news. Her meeting with Jesus has refashioned the way she sees herself – she has discovered discipleship not in raising her to a new place in the hierarchy but by restoring her place in the community and by reaffirming

the truth of who she is, a valued member of God's family and the human family. She leaves her mistaken identity behind to embrace her true identity in the day to day living of her life. And that's just chapter two.

This book continues to invite us to reimagine discipleship in everyday life with Lazarus, Zacchaeus, the disciples journeying to Emmaus and of course table fellowship. This



book never lets us off the hook by spiritualising these crucial stories. Discipleship for Jesus is nothing if not embodied in the real day to day lives of disciples meeting and discovering the divine indwelling in our fellow human beings.

On Jesus' table fellowship, Varengo says: *to break bread together means availability to each other without distinctions or personal judgements. It means to go out to those we live with in spontaneous and joyful self-giving, even at the expense of one's own likes and dislikes and personal plans.* (p90)

This book offers a challenging approach to discipleship living but it is real and earthy – smells of Jesus from start to finish. ☪

By the Grace of God

Peter Malone MSC reviews *Grace A Dieu*, François Ozon's dramatization of the Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal behind the ongoing trial of Philippe Barbarin, the Archbishop of Lyon.



The first thing to say about François Ozon's contribution to the cinema focusing on clerical sexual abuse is that it is quite a significant contribution. It is based on real-life characters, an abusive priest, Father Bernard Preynat, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon, Barbarin, lay assistants, and a number of men who raised issues from their past, their experiences of abuse, leading to criminal investigations into the priest. An epilogue indicates that no date for the trial has been set, although there has been work on the investigation for several years, and that the Cardinal and one of his lay assistants have been on trial for not passing on information about the abuse. They were found guilty on March 7. The Cardinal offered his resignation and there is an appeal.

While Ozon focuses on one diocese and one priest, he highlights the events presented as something local and solitary, in comparison with many of the cases that have occurred in France. The screenplay scarcely acknowledges that there have been cases right throughout the world and for so long, many other countries have been pursuing the issues of abuse, attempts to rectify situations honestly, acknowledge guilt since the 1990s. So, for outsiders to France, to see this case coming up in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century seems comparatively late – and it would have been interesting had the men in Lyon had contact with organisations in other countries.

A note about the screenplay's use of the word, 'victim'. Another development over recent years, especially in some English-

speaking countries, is the substitution of the word 'survivor' for 'victim'. Victim highlights the perpetrator as well as the abused, while survivor highlights the life of the abused person (acknowledging that so many abused have committed suicide), a more positive perspective on going ahead with life.

As regards the film itself, it is very much a verbal film, voice-overs

describing experiences, the texts of letters and emails, words of interviews, reports to the police, family discussions. This means that the director is able to be less detailed in visual representations of abuse situations, relying on the flashbacks, on the age and innocence of the child, the child being selected by the abuser, his taking the child away from the group. In this way, the director is able to avoid any prurient response to the story.

The film is also an effective in its principal focus being on the particular survivors, four of them, one, devoutly Catholic, wife and five children, discovering the offending priest is still in ministry, wanting to act, communicating with the archdiocese, going to interviews, even a meeting with the offending priest. But, with ecclesiastical delays, his growing more concerned and, approaching the police, setting a criminal investigation in process. Another man, now atheist, wife and children, has been moved into action because his mother wrote to the then Cardinal and other clergy in the early 1990s and has kept a file which the police use. This man has another friend who remembers abuse in the past, at the scout camp sponsored by the priest. The fourth man, high IQ but not able to fit into society so well, also joins the group which establishes a website, and an association as more and more survivors emerge.

Again, it would be interesting to compare the networks of survivors in other countries and how they operate, cooperate, and have been significant in giving witness into investigations, especially government investigations as in Ireland and Australia,

for instance. This film gives the (perhaps unintended) impression that this website and network was a first in dealing with abusive clergy.

Ozon takes a fair perspective on the events and the characters. There is certainly criticism of the Cardinal, his hesitations, some contradictions in his testimony in press conferences. Worthy of note, is the Cardinal's faux pas in responding to issues concerning the ending of statutes of limitations, God be thanked (*Grace de Dieu*), the title of the film. The Cardinal is challenged, acknowledges his loose use of words, apologises (and mistakes like this, unthought-out comments by the hierarchy, have plagued investigations and stirred media upset, flowing over for the public).

In fact, there has been great rage in many of the survivors, the years-long hurt and wounding, the disastrous effect on life, relationships, ability to cope and lead a fruitful life. However, this film has its protagonists angry but more objective, less raging but earnest for justice to be seen and justice to be done, possibilities for reparation, hesitations concerning forgiveness of the offender.

It is interesting that in this film, while there are some lawyers, they play subsidiary roles, different from lawyers' work in more litigious cultures, with a focus on financial compensation, and a criticism of the church in using lawyers, legal action before expressions of compassion.

One of the directions for another film would be to take up the presentation of Father Preynat (for English-speaking audiences it is ominous that his surname begins with 'prey', a man who was a prolific predator), his admitting his guilt and responsibility, his apologies to the survivors, but his acknowledgement of his psychological condition which needed much more attention, his attraction towards children, even seen in his emotional response to meeting the survivors, wanting their support and forgiveness, speaking affectionately (until reprimanded by the lawyer), his willingness to pray with the survivors, his affectionate smiles as he left the meetings. We need more probing of the characters, motivations, mental and emotional conditions of the abusers.

For audiences from other cultures, it is a dramatisation of historical and contemporary events, issues for survivors, challenges to churches. ☪

Returned to God

LEO BAKER

06/01/1923 – 27/03/2019

✠ Leo was born in Cobden – the eldest of eight children of Jack Baker and Mary Denise (Thompson). His siblings were Margaret, Des, (Fr) Chris, Denise, Nell, Bernard and (Fr) Patrick. In 1925 the family moved to a farm near Tatura then to several other locations around Shepparton, where many suffered the effects of the Great Depression of 1929. In 1936 the family moved back to Cobden where Leo finished off his 8th Grade of primary school at Cobden State School.

In 1937, aged 14, Leo went looking for work to supplement the meagre family income. He milked cows, felled trees in the bush and cut them up for firewood for the Cobden Butter factory. He did very heavy work in the local hardware store and as a builder's labourer. In June 1939 he went as a boarder to St Patrick's College in Ballarat to learn Latin, because he felt called to become a St Columban Mission Society priest.

In March 1942, Leo began three years of study in Essendon and after a three year break, began a four-year Theology Course at Corpus Christi College Werribee. On 25 July 1948 Leo was ordained as a Mission Society of St Columban priest by Archbishop Daniel Mannix in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. In February 1950 he boarded the 'SS Taiping' to take up his appointment to Korea. In July of that year because of the Korean War, he was forced to evacuate to Japan which became his new assignment. He was there for thirty-six years, apart from three years in Australia (1976-79). In 1986, aged 63, Leo was appointed to Australia. He assisted with the Columban Mission Appeals in parishes of the Ballarat Diocese and in Adelaide. In 1988 Leo took the Pacific Mission Institute Renewal course in Turramurra, a nine month residential course. In 1998, aged 75, Leo retired to Essendon and celebrated his Golden Jubilee. From 1999-2014 Leo continued his retirement in Essendon. He was very active in the garden and Chaplain in several holiday homes of the Mercy Sisters with more time for his hobbies, photography and card-making. In 2014 Leo opted to move into Mercy Place Colac, where he died peacefully.

May he rest in peace.

JAMES DENIS EDWARDS

10/12/1943 – 05/03/2019

✠ James Denis Edwards, usually known as Denis, was born in Port Pirie, the son of Marcus and Kathleen. His secondary education and theological studies were undertaken at St Francis Xavier's Seminary prior to his ordination on 9 July 1966 in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide.

From early days his talent for teaching was recognised and he was asked to assist at the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine during his first appointment to St Mary's parish. His leadership qualities were again recognised when he was appointed to the Senate of Priests in his fourth year as a priest. He continued his academic studies by going to Fordham University in New York in 1973, receiving a Master of Religious Education degree. This was where he developed his love for Karl Rahner who had a great influence on his thinking and further studies. Three years later he went to Catholic University in Washington, becoming a Doctor of Theology. On his return Archbishop Faulkner asked him to serve as his Consultant Theologian.

In May 1994 Denis was appointed a Professor at St Francis Xavier's Seminary and continued in that teaching role following the closure of the Seminary. He then joined the Adelaide College of Divinity, formed in conjunction with the Anglican and Uniting Churches which entered a partnership with Flinders University. Later the diocese joined the Australian Catholic University establishing a campus in Adelaide for teaching theology where Denis continued working until his death.

Throughout this time while continuing his teaching role, Denis assisted in various parishes where he resided. He was a gifted lecturer, teacher and preacher, with an ability to convey theological truths in language all could understand and he became a world renowned theologian, writing 15 books, mainly on the link between science and theology and ecology.

Denis received an Order of Australia medal and was made a Prelate of Honour by Pope Francis and received an Honorary doctorate from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland.

Sadly, Denis died rather suddenly from a stroke on 5 March 2019. His Funeral Mass was celebrated in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral on 12 March, attended by bishops, priests and many devoted followers, including people of other faiths in view of Denis' strong commitment to ecumenism. Wonderful tributes were paid to him by Fr Philip Marshall and Fr James McEvoy.

May he rest in peace.

ADRIAN MEANEY MSC

15/12/1933 – 06/02/2019



Adrian spent 13 years in the Northern Territory, mainly in Alice Springs, and over 23 years in PNG, mostly in Bereina and Port Moresby, serving as Parish Priest, Bishop's Secretary and as Vicar General. During his time in Bereina and Koki Point in PNG, he organised two Papal Visits of JP II in 1984 and in 1996 for the beatification of Peter To Rot.

Adrian once described himself as impatient to have justice done. He said "I want to do as St Therese of Calcutta spent her life doing, to help the poorest of the poor".

In the last 20 years, his principal focus was the MSC Mission Office based in Kensington Monastery where Adrian single-handedly devised, built and marketed the most efficient not-for-profit Catholic charity organisation in the whole of Australia. In


that time, the Mission Office raised over \$20million for Clean Water, Disadvantaged Youth, and Health projects; extending his outreach beyond our Pacific neighbours to include South East Asia, the Sub-Continent, Africa and parts of Central and South America.

Adrian often repeated that “Contrary to common belief, the MSC Mission Office was never established to be a fundraising organization. Instead, it was founded to continue the call of Fr Chevalier, ‘May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.’ The MSC Mission Office was founded as a movement to carry on this tradition by supporting those in need and spreading the Good News.” He then added some very beautiful words, “With our loyal partners – supporters, volunteers, prayer groups and benefactors – we burn with the fire of raising awareness and supporting the poorest and most marginalized people on earth.”

May he rest in peace.

CARTHAGE (PADDY) O’DEA

02/11/1927 – 22/11/2018

 Carthage O’Dea, one of the 1954 Cistercian Irish founding group of Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen, Victoria, died at 93 in the monastery infirmary on 22 November 2018.

He was 1927 Dublin-born to Denis and Susan O’Dea, one of five children. At baptism he was named Patrick Brendan. On completion of his Matriculation examination at Cistercian College, Roscrea, he entered the monastic community of Mt St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea on 2 September 1945. He made his solemn profession as a monk on 18 October 1950, and was ordained a priest on 25 January 1952. His brother Denis (Fr Joseph) also became a Cistercian monk, at Nunraw, Scotland.

Cardinal Gilroy visited Roscrea in 1952 and asked the monks there to found an abbey in his archdiocese. By way of response, Fr Eugene Boylan was sent to explore the possibilities. Eventually, Abbot Camillus Claffey followed on a decision-making mission, accompanied by Fr Carthage, his secretary. One version is that Carthage later claimed that he did not know at the time that he was destined to remain. But Australia was to be his future and in 1958, together with the other founders, Carthage made his stability at Tarrawarra.

In 1962 Carthage was sent to Rome for three years to study Canon Law at the Gregorian University, and Moral Theology at the Alphonsianum. Upon his return he taught these two disciplines to the up-and-coming generations of Aussie monks. The Marist Fathers welcomed him to Hunters Hill in 1987 to a much-appreciated renewal course.

Besides his teaching role, Carthage filled a number of positions in the community. He was bursar in the early years; sub-prior from 1968 to 1992; sacristan; confessor and spiritual director. He enjoyed preparing short homilies for the 10.30 guests’ Mass which were appreciated by the small congregation and he could be counted on to pull his weight during the hay season!

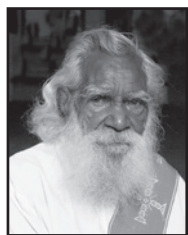
The Tarrawarra community is grateful to Carthage and his fellow founders for bringing Cistercian life to our country.

May he rest in peace.

Please note: Deacon Boniface’s family has given permission for Catholic media to publish images of him.

BONIFACE PERDJERT

14/05/1936 – 18/03/2019



Photography by Mark Crocombe

The Catholic bishops of Australia have paid tribute to the deep spirituality and decades of service of Deacon Boniface Perdjert following his death on Monday.

Deacon Boniface was the first Indigenous permanent deacon to be ordained in Australia following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, but was also an Indigenous senior elder of the Kardu Diminin clan and the traditional owner of the land on which the town of Wadeye (Port Keats) is built.

“Deacon Boniface was a profoundly respected elder within the Aboriginal community, well known for his deep spirituality and his service to his Indigenous brothers and sisters,” said Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE, chairman of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Deacon Boniface had the rare privilege of meeting three popes during his lifetime: Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

He assisted at the celebration of Mass with John Paul II in Alice Springs in 1986, when the Pope delivered the famous address to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. He again assisted Pope John Paul II at the Mass for the beatification of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop in Sydney in 1995 and was present in Rome for her Canonisation in 2010.

He was among those who welcomed Pope Benedict to Australia in 2008 to celebrate World Youth Day in Sydney. Archbishop Christopher Prowse, chairman of the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry, also acknowledged Deacon Boniface’s service.

“Deacon Boniface was the epitome of the diaconal ministry. He was widely regarded for his preaching in his native language and developing the faith community of Port Keats,” Archbishop Prowse said.

“He lived his diaconal vocation in complete service of others.” Darwin Bishop Charles Gauci extended his condolences to Deacon Boniface’s family and the Northern Territory community.

Bishop Gauci said: “May the Eternal Father now welcome him with those words of Scripture: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your Master’s happiness!’”

Continued page 46

LAURENCE JOSEPH QUINN

31/08/1931 – 30/01/2019

✠ Laurence Quinn was sometimes known as the typical Aussie Country Priest. Born in Burra, SA, the son of Tom and Harriet Quinn, Laurie was one of four children. He left school before any secondary education to work on the farm. From a faith-filled family Laurie gradually became convinced that he was called to become a priest. However lack of education was a problem, but the local PP came to the rescue by tutoring Laurie in Latin, even enabling him to gain a high grade in public examination.

Laurie entered St Francis Xavier seminary at the age of 26, a man among boys, but his dogged determination brought him through to ordination at Burra on 29 June 1963. He served as Assistant priest at Whyalla and Loxton, then Parish Priest of Port Lincoln for nine years (where he built a magnificent church) and Burra for the next 14 years until his retirement.

Laurie was proud of his family background and history, he loved the bush and cars, but above all he was a devout priest with great devotion to prayer, to the Mass, to Mary and the Rosary, and the people of his parish. He was very keen on local history, developing a detailed family record, and he carefully maintained many priests' graves throughout the huge diocese.

After retirement in 2014 he lived at St Joseph's Home in Port Pirie until his death. Laurie was baptised, confirmed, ordained and finally farewelled with Requiem Mass on 8 February 2019 in his local Burra church where he was Parish priest for so many years.

May he rest in peace.

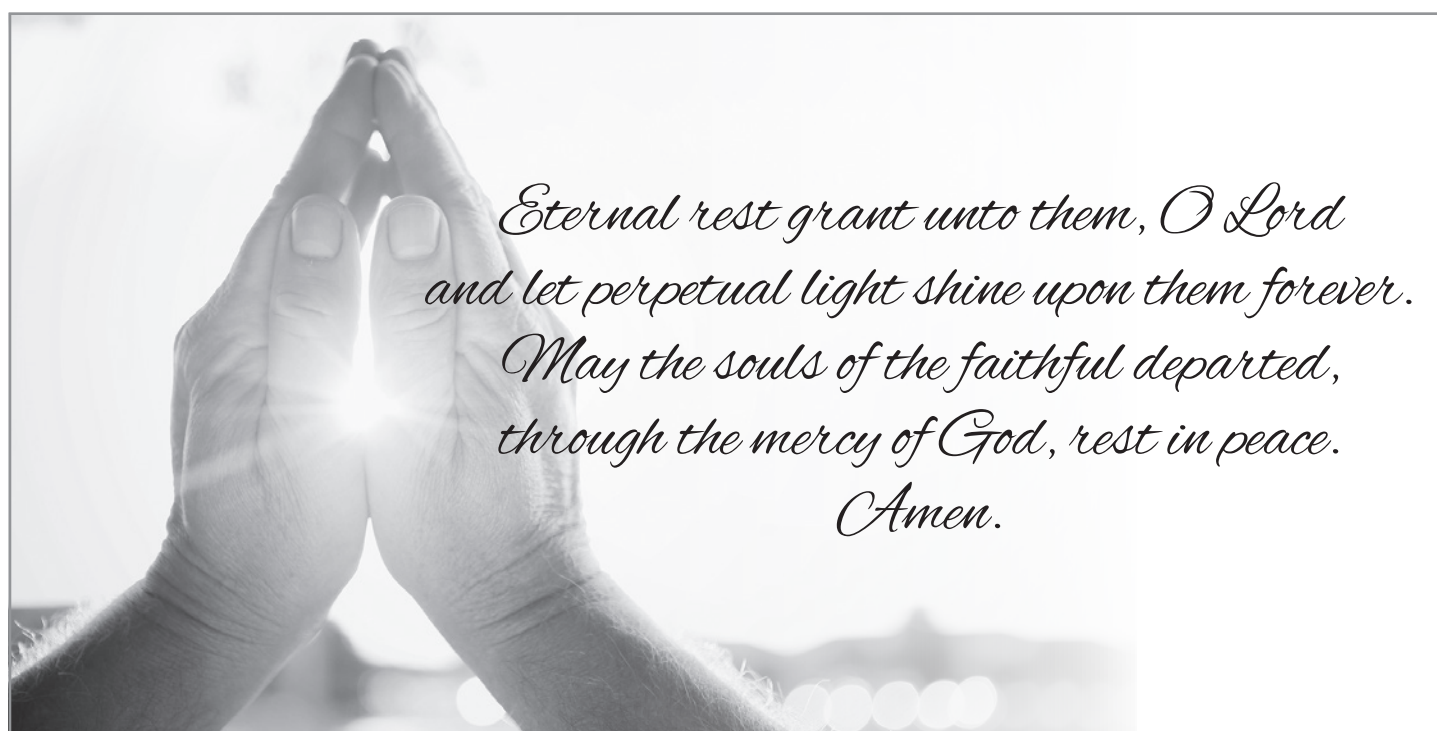
Returned to the God, we hold them in prayer.

✠ Francis Crane (Diocese of Cairns).....	18/04/2019
✠ Jose daSilva de Bairos (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	25/03/2018
✠ Graham Kings (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	17/02/2019
✠ Peter McCrann (Archdiocese of Perth).....	17/02/2019
✠ Lauro Rufo CS (Scalabrinian Missionaries).....	06/03/2019
✠ Thomas Shanahan (Diocese of Armidale).....	22/12/2018
✠ John Bosco Tipiloura (Diocese of Darwin).....	09/12/2018

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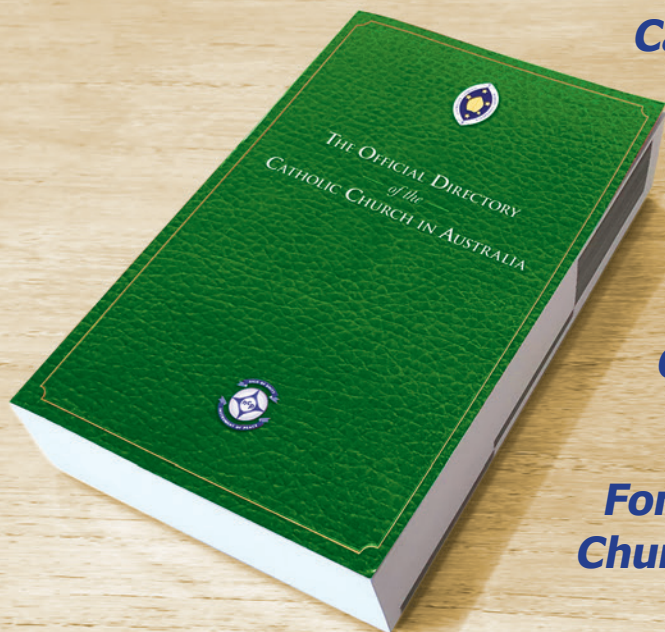
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The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Clergy (Bishops, Priests & Deacons) and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians) who join together to support each other in their ministry in the Church.

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

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

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