

Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

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Plenary Council

Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

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

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ABOUT THE NCP

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

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Paddy Sykes



Greetings to our readership as we celebrate the joy of the Risen Lord in a world still confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. It was wonderful that the Holy Week celebrations in Australia this year could be held in our churches with our communities. As parishioners gradually work up the courage to return to the pews, there are still many who have not returned. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) National Attendance Count that is taking place this month will tell an interesting story about the effect of a pandemic on our church life. We have all had to pivot our parish life and adopt new practices to continue to attend to the spiritual needs of the People of God.

As I write this report, the ACBC is conducting their Plenary Meeting. The upcoming Plenary Council gathering in Adelaide and other aspects of the Plenary Council will no doubt be part of what is

discussed by the Bishops. It is my observation in my diocese and in many other places, that the energy that was so evident at the beginning of the Plenary Council process has evaporated. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has played its part in interrupting the momentum of the process, the Bishops of Australia who called the Plenary Council seem to have let other priorities overtake what Archbishop Coleridge has often referred to as the most important event in the life of the Australian church during his lifetime.

In an attempt to keep up the momentum of reform in our Australian Catholic Church, the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform invited Sr Joan Chittister OSB to address them about the upcoming Plenary Council which she did via Webinar on 2 May 2021. Archbishop Coleridge welcomed Sr Joan and introduced her to the 3,000 strong audience. Sr Joan's presentation was deeply influenced by her own Benedictine spirituality and she gave a powerful outline of where she felt the Catholic Church today needs to be going. She began by talking about the changes in the world's population demographics and that the world now is a completely different place to what it was even 50 years ago. The world has never been so cosmopolitan. For Sr Joan, the starting point has to be the here and now – the reality of the world in which we all live.

As Christians, we are called to be disciples in the world, with a biblical and spiritual response (not a religious response). The old ways are not working and so Sr Joan reminded us that biblically, the mountains

were places where humanity touched heaven and gave us perspective. She then unpacked the biblical/spiritual significance of the eight mountains of the Old and New Testaments and what they can teach us about how we can be church at this time in Australia and help those in need in our world.

Sr Joan identified the characteristics of a church that would be relevant and be seen to be relevant in this cosmopolitan world. We need to be a holy church; a free church; a church that gets passionately involved in issues; a theologically discriminating church; a prophetic church; a feministic church; and to remember that we are the remnant of the Gospel in our time to bring about the creation of God's Kingdom here on earth.

She finished with a message of hope: "My hope has never been higher. We must be mountain-climbing people." People will lead and leaders will follow. She urged all present to be the "carriers of the new age" and hoped for an "open, honest and heavenly Plenary Council".

Sr Joan's talk is available to be viewed online until 30 June, 2021 at www.garrattpublishing.com.au and I would encourage everyone to take the time to listen to the wisdom of this deeply spiritual and inspirational woman.

I wish you all every blessing as we discern together what parts of our Australian Catholic Church we need to let go and identify the new life which is emerging.

Shalom,
Paddy. ☺

NCP Elections

NOMINATIONS ARE HEREBY CALLED FOR CHAIRMAN AND TWO COMMITTEE POSITIONS

- Paddy Sykes will complete his term as Chairman at the end of 2021.
- Brian Mathews will complete three years of a possible six year term and Jim Clarke will finish after completing Greg Barker's term.
- Nominations for all positions close 30 September 2021.
- Nomination forms included under the mailing sheet.



Religious culture wars alive and well, but at what cost



PETER MAHER

The New South Wales parliamentary hearings were recently held on the NSW One Nation Party, Mark Latham sponsored, The

Education Legislation Amendment 2020 (Parental Freedoms) Bill. This bill, if passed, would completely prohibit any mention of transgender people and identity in schools and make it a sackable offence for teachers to support trans students. The surprising thing is that Archbishop Fisher supports the bill.

Latham is weaponising the vulnerable in a politically motivated attempt to gain favour with the right in both church and society. Having lost the vote over marriage equality, the right now hope to gain favour by victimising transgender people. This bill, apart from the cynical political expediency that threatens the most vulnerable, potentially endangers transgender people, emotionally, spiritually and physically. This is recognised by the submission from Parramatta diocese that points out the dangers the bill poses to transgender students and their families.

The church needs to support people trying to find and establish their identity. This is not ideology or 'gender fluidity' brainwashing. It is a matter of pastoral care for students who often have little support for their journey of discovering themselves.

Schools, Catholic or not, have a duty of care to their students as the staff take their vocation seriously to support the students practicing a broad interpretation of education befitting their profession.

Supporting this bill is just another example of church intervention that produces the exact opposite of the stated aims. The response to the question of blessing gender diverse couples is another example. Under the guise of supporting LGBT people, it achieved the exact opposite. LGBT Catholics, particularly young committed gay Catholics, are in despair as they read the headlines: Pope denies gay people a blessing. While inaccurate, that's what they hear. No wonder they are depressed and suicidal.

The teaching church must do better than to endanger the lives of the

vulnerable, in a ham-fisted attempt to protect traditional teaching in a way that is unscientific, poor theologically and disastrous pastorally and politically. Church self interest to appear as a credible commentator and ethical citizen demands much better thought and theology.

A further example is the Mexican Nuncio telling the local bishops they must change their pastoral strategy as the percentage of the population identifying as Catholic plummets. Surely, the change in strategy must begin with the Nuncio and his Vatican colleagues. While they continue to produce documents that leave youth, marginalised, women and LGBTI people underwhelmed, traumatised and scandalised, no talking to local bishops is going to change things. They have seen how thoughtful pastoral bishops have been treated. The treatment of Toowoomba's bishop Morris is not lost on them.

The people of God, bishops and priests already living the Mexican nuncio's challenge, not to mention Pope Francis' example, need our full support, to build the church as a productive contributor to the human project and the earth community. Nothing less will restore the faith of the people in our church and re-establish the Catholic church as a good global citizen. This may restore the church's mission of incarnating the gospel.

In this edition of *The Swag* you can read about the efforts of the people of God trying to support these efforts in preparation for the plenary council and the efforts of bishops such as Bede Heather to implement gospel values in practice. This sounds like what the Mexican nuncio is calling for.

Meaning of *The Swag*

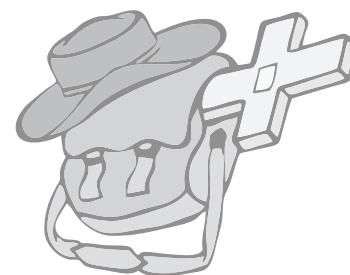
The Autumn edition of *The Swag*, carried a letter by Bill Burt SVD asking about updating the name of this magazine. We have discussed this proposal but have decided not to change the name of the magazine. The main reason is that *The Swag* has carved out an identity as a progressive Catholic magazine that we would not want to lose.

But what is behind the name. Originally it was chosen as symbol based on the swagman immortalised in the Australian song, Waltzing Matilda. Swagmen were travelling people, drifters, who walked from one place to another carrying a swag.

The swag is a canvas bedroll, a tucker bag for carrying food and some cooking implements which may have included a billy can, tea pot or stewing pot. Also, sometimes found in a swag would be flour for making damper and some meat for a stew. In other words, enough to live on for the journey where the next meal or place to rest was uncertain.

The National Council of Priests saw the swag as a metaphor that might indicate how our member magazine would be a resource for the, sometimes uncertain journeys, physical or spiritual, that Australian priests were encountering. Could a magazine that promoted conversation and sharing of ideas among the priests of Australia support them in their vocational journey?

The magazine was a support for priests for a long time, until it was thought it might benefit a wider audience. The Catholic people started to read and write for *The Swag* as a unique resource in the Australian Catholic church that valued and published thoughtful articles and news that supported them in their spiritual and vocational journey. We hope to be that 'bedroll' and nourishment, a swag for the swagpeople of God, in these challenging times. ☪



The Swag Spring Edition

Closing date for letters
and articles is
Monday, 26 July 2021.
Please email submissions
for consideration to:
editor@theswag.org.au
Articles: 700 words
Features: 1,400 words

Dadirri

MIRIAM-ROSE UNGUNMERR BAUMANN

Dadirri (da-did-ee) means Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness. This is a reflection by Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann AM, Senior Australian of the Year 2021. Dr Ungunmerr Baumann AM is an Aboriginal elder from Nauiyu, NT and a renowned artist, activist, writer and public speaker. The word, concept and spiritual practice that is *dadirri* is from the Ngan'gikurungurr and Ngen'giwurri languages of the Aboriginal people of the Nauiyu/Daly River region, NT, Australia. Reprinted with permission.



Many Australians understand that Aboriginal people have a special respect for Nature. The identity we have with the land is sacred and unique. Many people are beginning to understand this more. Also, there are many Australians who appreciate that Aboriginal people have a very strong sense of community. All persons matter. All of us belong. And there are many more Australians now, who understand that we are a people who celebrate together.

What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. I believe it is the most important. It is our unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called *Dadirri*. It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. *Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us.

This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call 'contemplation'. When I experience *Dadirri*, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of *Dadirri* is listening.

Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still

gather around the campfires and together we hear the sacred stories. As we grow older, we ourselves become the storytellers. We pass on to the young ones all they must know. The stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. In the ceremonies, we celebrate the awareness of our lives as sacred. The contemplative way of *Dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us whole again.

In our Aboriginal way, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This was the normal way for us to learn – not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting. Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 40,000 years. There is no need to reflect too much and to do a lot of thinking. It is just being aware.

My people are not threatened by silence

They are completely at home in it. They have lived for thousands of years with Nature's quietness. My people today recognise and experience, in this quietness, the great Life-Giving Spirit, the Father of us all. It is easy for me to experience God's presence. When I am out hunting, when I am in the bush, among the trees, on a hill or by a billabong, these are times when I can simply be in God's presence. My people have been so aware of Nature. It is natural that we will feel close to the Creator.

And now I would like to talk about the other part of *Dadirri*, which is the quiet stillness and the waiting. Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course – like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth. When twilight comes, we prepare for the night. At dawn we rise with the sun.

When we are really still in the bush, we concentrate. We are aware of the anthills and the turtles and the water lilies.

We are river people. We cannot hurry the river. We have to move with its current and understand its ways. We watch the bush foods and wait for them to ripen before we gather them. We wait for our young people as they grow, stage by stage, through their initiation ceremonies. When a relation dies, we wait a long time with the sorrow. We own our grief and allow it to heal slowly.

We wait for the right time for our ceremonies and our meetings

The right people must be present. Everything must be done in the proper way. Careful preparations must be made. We don't mind waiting, because we want things to be done with care. Sometimes many hours will be spent on painting the body before an important ceremony. We don't like to hurry. There is nothing more important than what we are attending to. There is nothing more urgent that we must hurry away for.

We wait on God, too. His time is the right time. We wait for him to make his Word clear to us. We don't worry. We know that in time and in the spirit of *Dadirri* – that deep listening and quiet stillness – his way will be clear.

We hope that the people of Australia will wait. Not so much waiting for us to catch up, but waiting with us, as we all find our place in this world. There is much pain and struggle as we wait. My people are used to the struggle, and the long waiting. We still wait for the white people to understand us better. We ourselves had to spend many years learning about the white man's ways. Some of the learning was forced; but in many cases people tried hard over a long time, to learn the new ways.

We have learnt to speak the white man's language. We have listened to what he had to say. This learning and listening should go both ways. We would like people in Australia to take time to listen to us. We are hoping people will come closer. We keep on longing for the things that we have always hoped for: respect and understanding.

To be still brings peace, and it brings understanding. Our culture is different. We are asking our fellow Australians to take time to know us; to be still and to listen to us. And I believe that the spirit of *Dadirri* that we have to offer will blossom and grow, not just within ourselves, but in our whole nation. ☺

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Mandatory celibacy no longer tenable

KEVIN TRESTON

Dr Kevin Treston OAM, adult faith educator, has been working with adult Catholics for many years. He considers the factors and influences on the movement towards mandatory celibacy for Roman Rite priests in the 12th century and what changes have made the rethinking of this policy essential in the 21st century.

The issue of mandatory celibacy for ordination to priesthood in the Latin Rite has become a significant topic for the process of church renewal. During the listening phase of the Plenary Council in Australia, the Synodal gatherings of Germany, the Amazon Synod and the public church media in many countries have highlighted the growing movement to seriously address this issue in church life. The global exposition of sexual abuse by clergy, such as the finding of the Royal Commission in Australia (December 2016), sharpened the debate about mandatory celibacy for priesthood. Clericalism with its association to mandatory celibacy has been identified by many church leaders, including Pope Francis, as a major impediment to church renewal.

It is important to begin this reflection by emphasising that the issue briefly addressed here is not about the charism of celibacy which has been and continues to be a sacred gift of the Spirit which has been lived and lived now by billions of Christians including monks, Religious and dedicated lay people throughout the two thousand years of Christianity.

The issue considered here is whether mandatory celibacy should continue as a dictum for future ordinations in the Latin Rite church.

Given the growing shortfall of priests in many countries with an estimated 10-15% of 1.3 billion Catholics who no longer have regular access to celebrations of the Eucharist and sacraments, why should the 12th century laws specifying mandatory celibacy for priests in the Latin Rite continue to be upheld? Does the enforcement of this legal condition for ordination take precedence over a more universal priority of regular access to Eucharist and sacraments for the People of God?

Mandatory celibacy for ordination was legislated by the First Lateran Council 1123 (canon 3) and Second Lateran Council 1139 (canon 6, 7).

Influences on the movement towards the Lateran Council legislation

1. From the very beginning of the church life, faith communities have struggled

with upholding a holistic appreciation of sexuality in its teachings, spirituality and church governance. Early Christianity had to combat both negative views about the body as evil and the superiority of the soul over material things. This toxic dualism emanated from heresies such as Gnosticism and Montanism. Neo-Platonic thought in the fourth century emphasised a dualism between spirit and matter, things of the world and spiritual realms. A celibate state was judged to be on a higher spiritual plane than a married state of life. Sex in marriage was tolerated as necessary for the propagation of the human race but a degradation of the spiritual essence of being human. Augustine held that sex between husband and wife was at least a venial sin. St Augustine wrote that, 'There is nothing so powerful in drawing the spirit of men downwards as the caresses of a woman'.

2. The emergence of monasteries after the fourth century reinforced the pre-eminence of 'flight from world' spirituality. Salvation was more assured in monastic rather than worldly living. The patriarchal culture and legislation of the Roman Empire were reinforced by the patriarchy of the Judeo-Christian traditions, especially in the marginalism of women in leadership of Christian communities after the second century. Women by their very nature were designated as ontologically subordinate to men. According to Aristotle, women were something like a 'deformed male' (*The Generation of Animals*, 737a, 27). Gratian's Decree (foundations of canon law 1140 CE) stated that 'women are not created in the image of God'.
3. The gradual transformation of clergy after the fourth century from a style of living in a ministry of service to a cultic state of priesthood began to posit the view of a priest as 'another Christ' (*alter Christus*). Since Christ was not married, it was held that it was more edifying for a priest as *persona Christi* to remain celibate.
4. The notion of 'white martyrdom' (different from 'red martyrdom') affirmed a celibate state of living where a person renounced things of the world, including

- sex, to devote oneself completely to Christ without the distractions of worldly affairs.
5. Until the early Middle Ages, apart from monks with the vow of chastity, most clergy were married. Seven popes were married. In spite of 600 years of decrees, canons and harsh penalties such as an ecclesial decree of Pope Urban II in 1095 which directed that wives of priests were to be sold in slavery and children abandoned, Latin Rite clergy continued to be married and have children. Even as late as the 15th century it is estimated that 50% of priests were married.
 6. By the early Middle Ages the papacy became much more powerful and the church much more bureaucratic thus enabling a monarchical papacy to enforce its prohibition of married clergy. Medieval popes tended to have monastic backgrounds and thus favoured a vow of chastity (mandatory celibacy) for all priesthood, not just for monks.
 7. During the early Middle Ages the church began to acquire major land holdings. Increasingly there were land inheritance disputes between the families of the priest and wives and children of priests. A celibate clergy would remove this problem and church land would remain as church land after the non-married priest died.
 8. During the early Middle Ages, the rise of monastic power in the higher realms of the church and hierarchy, including the papacy, accentuated an increasing momentum to legislate for mandatory celibacy.
 9. The First and Second Lateran Councils (1123 and 1139) decreed mandatory celibacy as an absolute condition for ordination.
 10. This legislation did not impact on Eastern Churches with married priests permitted under certain conditions. In 2009 Pope Benedict allowed those married Anglican priests who converted to Catholicism to continue their priestly ministry in the married state.
 11. Pope Paul VI (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* 1967) and Pope St John Paul II (*Pastores dabo Vobis* 1992) reiterated the traditional rationale for mandatory celibacy viz. A priest is a 'persona Christi'; a celibate priest offers freedom for pastoral service; a celibate priest is able to give his whole commitment to the mission of the church.
 12. There is a growing demand by faith communities to plead for integrity by the official church with its law
- of mandatory celibacy in the face of the reality of what research shows that a number of clergy in the Latin Rite are living with partners (in one country estimated to be about 50%).
13. The conservative elements in the Catholic Church firmly resist any lessening of the mandatory celibacy in priesthood as a marker of fidelity to a purported venerable tradition of the church. Mandatory celibacy is A tradition for priestly ministry. It is not THE tradition for priestly ministry. The recent book *Depths of Our Hearts* (2019) by Cardinal Robert Sarah with co-author (sic) Benedict as Pope Emeritus has stimulated discussion again on the issue of mandatory celibacy by the book's strong defence of its retention in Latin Rite Catholic priests.
 14. A relaxation of laws relating to mandatory celibacy will be highly contested by influential elements in the church. A recent example of this dilemma was how Pope Francis avoided this issue in his apostolic exhortation (*Querida Amazonia* January 2020). In spite of strong recommendations by two-thirds of the bishops in the Pan-Amazon Synod to authorise the ordination of married men (*virii probati*), Pope Francis deferred to take this step at this time so as to concentrate on the urgency of massive threats to the ecological wellbeing of the mighty Amazon region.

Why is there a growing movement in the Catholic Church to review the legislation of mandatory celibacy for priesthood?

The following themes are relevant in this movement:

- A much more healthy holistic appreciation of sexuality and marriage has developed during the last fifty years of Catholic life.
- A greater awareness of the historical elements involved in the 12th century legislation and the psychological/social/spiritual forces influencing the contemporary position of the official church towards mandatory celibacy.
- The global sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church raised serious questions in the public domain and faith communities about the problem of clericalism, especially the role of priestly celibacy in this abuse. However it should be emphasised that there is no direct link between priestly celibacy and paedophilia. The incidence of sexual abuse of minors in families is well verified.

- A growing shortage of priests in many countries such as in the Amazon region and even in Ireland, has prompted questions about the pastoral effectiveness of priests outsourced from other countries especially with associated diverse social and theological concerns. The current 'solution' (sic) of collapsing parishes into large pastoral centres and bringing clergy from other countries offers no enduring solution at all but simply props up a basic question which will not go away.
- A basic question to ask those who oppose any change in upholding mandatory celibacy is whether they are placing a medieval church law and discarded clergy/laity theology above the prospect of all Catholics having regular access to Eucharist and sacraments? The proposed response of praying harder for priestly vocations is no solution at all.
- The living example of married clergy in Eastern Rites and other mainline Christian churches such as the Anglican and Uniting church, offers practical ways forward for new pastoral structures and governance for optional celibacy in Latin Rite priesthood.
- A growing demand for a full inclusion of women into ordained ministry also adds urgency to raising the whole question of what is the nature of ordination in contemporary theologies of ministry and how might the regular celebration of the Eucharist and sacraments – so central to Christian faith, be enhanced.

May the Spirit of discernment lead the People of God to expressions of priestly ministry which reflect the Jesus spirit of service for energising faith communities.

Caution: In a process of discernment for decisions about a continuation of mandatory celibacy, it is imperative that there is a pastoral sensitivity to affirm the commitment and pastoral care of priests who have been ordained in the Latin Rite. The sacred charism of celibacy is to be celebrated and supported through caring faith communities, personal friendships, emotional support and spiritual direction. ☺

Kevin Treston has been involved in pastoral ministry for 65 years in all dioceses of Australia and several countries. He graduated BA (Hons), MA (Hons), MEd, PhD and pursued post doctoral studies in Washington, Boston and Chicago. He was Visiting Scholar at Boston College and a member of the Association of Practical Theology Oceania. He was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to Catholic Education. He lives with his wife Kathryn in Brisbane.

Catholic schools – their role in the mission of the Church and in society

AENGUS KAVANAGH FSP

Aengus Kavanagh FSP, Patrician Brother, Sydney, has been involved for many years in Catholic Schools at all levels of administration. This article is the second part of an article begun in *The Swag* (Autumn 2021), looking at the history and development of Catholic Schools in Australia after 200 years. This second part asks questions about where Catholic education is going, the challenges ahead and some hurdles to be overcome.



Structures – New South Wales Catholic Schools

In recent years a new tier of governance has been introduced by the bishops of NSW to replace the NSW Catholic Education Commission, a structure set up in the 1970s as a centralised body to represent the Catholic sector as a whole in its advocacy and accountability in financial dealings with State and Federal Governments.

The new tier is designated – CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NSW. CSNSW states as its mission: ... to support the Bishops of NSW in bringing to life the Church's evangelising mission through Catholic schools ..., including among its aims: ... to improve the education and faith outcomes of students in NSW Catholic schools by creating communities of faith and learning.... Existing diocesan schools' systems might reasonably detect duplication here and could be forgiven for sensing implicit criticism of their own commitment to what has rightly been a given in their core agenda for generations.

CSNSW has a Board of Independent Directors comprised of personnel whose expertise derives mainly from qualifications and experience in the following roles: bishop, economics adviser, lawyer, corporate executive, civil engineer, accountant, company director, corporate manager. There are three educators among the Directors, two whose experience has been mainly at tertiary level, leaving but one

Director who has had some sustained professional experience as a school and system educational leader within the Catholic sector.

Published profiles suggest that all the Directors are highly qualified professionals of vast experience. A serious question emerges however regarding the disproportionate absence of experienced and successful Catholic school educators from among the Directors. This apparent syndrome of 'other is better' is likewise being reflected to a lesser degree in a trend towards increased recruitment from the corporate sector into leadership roles in diocesan systems.

For sure, the Catholic school sector needs to be to the fore in transparency and accountability and needs to marshal good counsel and specialist support in meeting this aim. Surely though, this need not entail the sidelining of professional and competent Catholic educators who carry the story of Catholic schools in their bones and who have always viewed their roles as a vocation and a ministry. After all, Catholic schools strive to be Gospel communities and ought never to be seen as mere cogs in a corporate entity with trimmings of religiosity.

To be fair, CSNSW exercises an important role in its general promotion of the profile of the Catholic school sector and in its serious conversation with issues which impact on school education throughout NSW. Towards the end of 2020, CSNSW published a well-researched enlightened document under the title *Pathway to Better, Smarter Regulation for Catholic Schools in NSW*. Themes explored were applicable to most schools across the State and dealt mainly with the massive increase in regulatory requirements – red-tape – in the running of schools. An overall impact of such 'red-tape' is a diminishment of autonomy in schools and a crippling of school leaders and teachers in attending to their core business as educators. The document, very tangential to the espoused mission of CSNSW, is largely shaped by

research academics and by the Kathleen Burrow Research Institute think-tank of CSNSW.

There is ample data to support the increased cluttering and duplication of bureaucracy emanating from State and Federal governments and negatively affecting all schools in recent years. Leaders and teachers in Catholic schools have to cope with additional layers of regulatory requirements and compliances coming from system, diocesan, and parish authorities. There seems to be a need to reclaim elements of that trust which characterised Catholic schools in less affluent times, and for a greater awareness of the multiple pressures on leaders and school staffs in contemporary circumstances.

Structures – The Church

As an important arm of the Church, Catholic schools share in the mission of the Church, and diocesan schools are subject to the governance of the diocese in which they are located. In 2007, the bishops of NSW and ACT launched a Pastoral Statement with serious implications for the Catholic schools of their Region. The booklet statement bears the title *Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*. The introduction contains the affirming assertion: The Catholic school system is one of the 'jewels in the crown' of the Catholic community in our region, with few overseas parallels.

The 'crossroads' image was used to identify two policy options for the future of Catholic schools.

Option 1 – *To downsize our school system to a scale at which we can choose students who readily embrace the mission of the Catholic school.*

Option 2 – *We can reaffirm our commitment to the essential elements of the Catholic school while recognising, even embracing, changing enrolment patterns as 'signs of the times' and of a new mission for Catholic education.*

The bishops went for Option 2 stating: The bishops of NSW-ACT believe this second course is the better way forward, and we commit ourselves to it.

This decision, to an extent, validated a trend that was already common practice in many places, but it probably also contributed to the increased proportion of students not of the Catholic faith. Depending on location and demography, Catholic secondary schools especially, may now have at least

30% of their students who are not baptised Catholics. In general, however, such students and their parents or guardians, at time of enrolment, are required to assent to alignment with the religious ethos of the school before enrolment is accepted.

Given this context, it may be more appropriate and inspiring for Catholic schools to be regarded as at frontiers rather than at crossroads. Give or take a few thousands, one way or the other, the total population of students and staff in Catholic schools in the country hovers around 800,000.

This is probably higher than the total number of weekly Mass-goers in the whole of Australia. This statistic is worth reflecting on given that the faithful remnant of practising Catholics comprises the group that is almost the sole beneficiary of the sacramental and pastoral ministry of almost all the clergy and ministry assistants in every parish in the country. 'Preaching to the converted' rightfully remains the norm, but, what prospects for a future Church does this scenario hold?

Especially in the Papacy of Pope Francis, the aspiration has been strong that parishes move from maintenance to missionary mode. Pope Francis has been Pope for over seven years now and yet evidence is sparse of any impact of the Papal exhortations on parish life.

The contention that Catholic schools are at a frontier gains substance from the fact that, in general, each school is in direct contact with a whole constituency of people who have hardly any affiliation with the institutional Church. It is often said that 'the only experience of Church' that most students and staff in Catholic schools will ever have, will be as experienced in their schools. Most schools are aware of this and seek to make this 'experience' a good one.

In varying ways, the following policies and practices are expressions of the religious dimensions in the majority of Catholic schools and are an integral part of the schools' culture: Eucharist celebrations to mark special occasions; regular classroom prayer and prayer at staff meetings and at school assemblies; religious education for all students; display of Catholic religious art and symbols throughout the school; reflection days and retreats for senior students especially; annual Faith & Spirituality day for staff; regular dispatch of School Bulletins to parents including religious themes which highlight Church liturgical seasons and news items regarding sacramental programs, social justice outreach initiatives, etc. It devolves on

each school to ensure that these 'experiences' are integrated within the school's total curriculum, and are not but disjointed box-ticking add-ons, at the behest of the principal and the 'RE God squad', to appease expectations of authorities.

One can never gauge the impact of these experiences on students and staff. The hope is that it will lead to a deepened sense of the sacred in their lives, and that they will become more understanding and appreciative of 'the Catholic way'. The hope too is that they may leave school with a heightened sense of awareness of, and a relationship with, Jesus, thereby giving them a sure foundation to shape the moral compass that will guide them through life.

There probably remains scope for Catholic schools to give greater attention to the development of a social consciousness among students, who may then in their futures be strong in a commitment to social justice, thereby giving witness to Christianity in action. Pope Francis, in a message to the Vatican-sponsored *Global Compact on Education* (Rome Oct 15 2020) expressed a wish that ought to find easy resonance among all Catholic educators: The value of our educational practices, will be measured not simply by the results of standardized tests, but by the ability to affect the heart of society and to help to give birth to a new culture. A different world is possible, and this calls for the involvement of every aspect of our humanity, both as individuals and in our communities.

Sounds a bit like the oft-expressed wish in the Lord's Prayer – Thy Kingdom Come, the growth of the reign of God in the hearts of all people?

Most DNA Catholics would like it to be otherwise, but a reality is that almost all students of Catholic schools sever connection with the institutional Church on leaving school. The statistic is that only about 5% of baptised Catholics in the mid-teens to mid-forties age-range, attend Mass regularly. One could conclude from this that matters of faith and spirituality are just not on their agenda in this period.

Such may be the case for many, but, teachers who regularly lead retreats for senior students in Catholic schools will readily testify to the fact that, given the right setting, surprisingly large numbers of young women and young men are quite amenable to reflection, prayer, and faith-sharing, often volunteering to act as leaders in these activities.

In the Summer 2020 issue of *The Swag*, an article by Melbourne priest of 50 years,

Fr Terry Dean, raises an issue worthy of consideration by the Church generally, but especially in the context of the massive drift of young people from Church:

It seems to me that our bishops look to manage rather than imagine a church of the future. For all my 50 years, the Eucharist has always been the centre of my Catholic expression of prayer and action ... However, it is not the source and summit for many. Even most Catholics ... so many of them find it irrelevant and uninspiring ... maybe ... Our insistence as Catholic church on Eucharist and the presence of the priest has meant we have not encouraged other expressions of Liturgy as well as we could have ... such liturgies can be more creative and less tied to rules and regulations as in our Eucharist.

Brave of Fr Terry to articulate for *The Swag* readers a misgiving that is already more widely shared. The lure of the Youth Folk Mass of the 70s has long since perished. The aspiration expressed by Pope Francis in his address to the Brazilian bishops (27 July 2013) is especially apt for our lost generations: *We need a Church capable of restoring citizenship to her many children who are journeying, as it were, in an exodus.* More important still, the sentiment aligns with the way of Jesus, moving out through towns and villages, encountering people in their lived reality bringing them healing, relief, and hope. No hint of Jesus not caring for the 'lapsed Jews' who did not show up regularly at his synagogue of assignation, for Sabbath worship!!

The Catholic school presents a favourable setting for the development and the offering of prayers and non-sacramental liturgies using themes and language relevant to the age and stage of students and inviting active participation. It is heartening to witness such events where, in many instances, students have had active roles in the preparation and celebration. No longer just the passive acquiescence that often characterises school Masses.

Partnership in mission

Frequently, Catholic schools and parishes can appear to offer parallel models of 'Church', especially in the case of Catholic secondary schools. Given the common mission they share, this is a pity. Where there is good rapport between the local clergy and the school leadership, fruitful partnerships in mission are to the fore, and happily this scenario is a common occurrence. The key ingredients of this 'rapport' are trust and relationships. Personalities play a big part, as do different perceptions of authority and different

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understandings of ecclesiology. Whatever the differences, it devolves on the school principal and on the clergy involved to maintain as a priority effective school-parish(es) collaboration. It is sad to hear that occasionally building good parish-school relationships may be ‘like walking on egg-shells’.

Tellingly, on the feast of St Francis, 4 October 2020, Pope Francis launched his lengthiest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, at Assisi. Against a world back-drop of the rise in populist nationalism, increase in extremist movements, greater polarizations in society and in Church (US Presidential election, American Catholics voted – Biden 51%, Trump 49%), the Pope’s encyclical offers a timely and compelling voice to the international discourse.

Recurring themes include pleas for: a respect for differences, a readiness to listen to diverse opinions and to dialogue, an increased awareness that trust and mutuality in relationships are at the heart of healing and collaboration.

In general, the Church needs to embrace these principles more fully, but they find particular application in strengthening the complementary roles of parishes and

Catholic schools in the mission of the Church. Such complementarity results from commitment, not from decree.

Towards the future

Though there have been shadows and there have been glitches along the way, the story of Catholic schools in Australia has been unique, proud, and fruitful. It is important that knowledge and understanding of the story are an integral part of the induction of all who work in Catholic schools and in schools governance.

It is particularly important that all staff are aware of the main reason underpinning the courage and the generous support of the Catholic community and generations of Catholic educators through decades of hardship, to remain a separate sector on the education landscape in Australia.

It was not that Catholics schools might grow to be replicas of good State schools; it was to ensure that faith integration would remain a priority

In 2014, this writer was co-author of a book titled *Will Catholic Schools Be Catholic in 2030?* The rather quirky title was adopted with the intention of inviting

reflection and discussion on the fundamental reason for the continued existence of Catholic school education. The title itself provoked some interesting reactions: Are they Catholic now?; Who cares?; What will it be like to ‘be Catholic’ in 2030?, et al.

Despite an increase in contrary forces, many of the policies, practices, structures already in existence, have the potential for schools to maintain an authentically Catholic identity into the future.

One decisive factor however will be the level of commitment of schools and systems to the provision and the promotion of a range of programs and opportunities, enabling the ongoing faith formation and spiritual development of staffs.

In 2016, the Executive Directors of Schools in NSW & ACT sponsored the production of a short video on the Story of Catholic schools (www.growingthestory.com.au).

At this time of Bicentenary, the best way the Australian Church and Catholic educators can honour the rich legacy bequeathed, is by rallying together in a renewed commitment to the telling and the growing of what is best in the story. ☪



Some thoughts on what God can and cannot do

JOHN O’LOUGHLIN KENNEDY

John O’Loughlin Kennedy is a retired economist. With his wife, Kay, he founded Concern in 1968. He discusses the flaws in the Vatican’s logic behind denying blessings to same-sex couples. His book, *The Curia is the Pope* is published by Mount Salus Press.

The negative responsum from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) on the issue of blessings for same-sex unions has evoked a well-deserved negative reaction.

There has been great disappointment, too, that Pope Francis’ name is associated with it, although there is uncertainty as to how much this really means.

The statement lacks the compassion and pastoral sensitivity that has characterized his pontificate from the start. Moreover, where one would normally expect to find the words “approved” and “ordered its publication” with day and date, Francis is described as having been “informed” and having “assented” to publication.

The modified wording has led commentators to question whether the Pope had the opportunity to consider its implications.

It has been noted that during his Angelus

address on March 21 he seemed to distance himself from the CDF statement. High ranking clergy, priests and laity have rejected the document in an unprecedented way. So have reform organizations across the world.

One such organization, “We are Church Ireland”, has described it as “theologically flawed, out of date, as well as profoundly lacking pastorally”. To describe a statement prepared by the top curial guardians of orthodoxy in this way is certainly challenging. Is this justified? Can one continue to be a Catholic in full communion with Rome while rejecting such a statement?

The short answer to both questions is “Yes”. God knows there is more to the relationship than sex (Full disclosure: while I have been an ordinary member of *We Are Church Ireland* for many years, the views expressed here are my own.)

The CDF document contains an Explanatory Note, but the official response

itself is given in a single word: “Negative”. Consequently, to find the meaning of the answer, one must carefully examine the question: “Does the Church have the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex?” The phrase “the power to give the blessing” is doubly flawed. Only God has the power to give a blessing. The Church can only pray that God will bless the relationship in whatever way he sees fit.

God knows there is more to the relationship than sex. Far from blessing a sin, as contended in the Explanatory Note, the priest and the congregation are praying that God will improve the relationship as time goes on. If some aspect of it is thought to be imperfect or sinful, then asking God to improve the relationship is even more apposite. The reference to power is both irrelevant and misleading. The Church has no power in the matter.

St Thomas Aquinas taught that the sacraments (and presumably the sacramentals) are wrought by the power of God, not the celebrant. When used colloquially, the term “blessing” can mean the prayer or God’s action in response to

it. If one is talking about “power to give”, one is talking about the latter.

The timing and tone of the statement will have consequences

In trying to lay down the law, the CDF ought to avoid ambiguity. In interpreting pronouncements, the faithful are entitled to read exactly what is written. Since the Church never had power to effect a blessing, the denial in this instance is theologically meaningless. However, the timing and tone of the statement will have consequences. The Explanatory Note tells us that the blunt refusal is based on an assumption that the life of the couple together will involve sexual activity outside of marriage which, in current Church teaching, is against the moral law for Catholics ... and God “cannot bless sin”.

Here the CDF has failed to make the elementary distinction between a breach of the law and a sin. Catholicism has for long recognized that not every breach of law is a sin. Here the CDF is claiming to judge the conscience of homosexually-oriented people en masse.

The Church now officially teaches the primacy of conscience. It should apply its own teaching. If the couple has a lively enough faith to seek a blessing on their commitment to one another, it is unlikely that they consider their intimacy to be sinful. Much the same happens with heterosexual couples who discover before the wedding that the natural expression of total commitment has changed its character before God and no longer offends their consciences.

Sex is no longer sinful, but something beautiful and elevating that they share. It is no longer disfigured by selfishness or exploitation, because the two have become one flesh. They make love in good conscience. They sense that their commitment has already made them a unit – that they are already married in some philosophical sense or in accordance with their human nature. They are aware of the truth of their self-giving.

The Vatican II mandate to renew moral theology

They are not consciously rejecting the moral law but rather the definition of marriage which they judge, consciously or sub-consciously to be too narrowly elucidated. They might just be right. The Second Vatican Council looked for a renewal of several theological disciplines, calling for special attention to be given to moral theology, which touches the heart of Christian living.

“Let the other theological disciplines be renewed through a more living contact with the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. Special care must be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific exposition, nourished more on the teaching of the Bible...” says the Second Vatican Council decree on priestly training (*Optatam totius*, 16).

This text from 1965 expressed clear dissatisfaction with the state of Catholic moral theology at the time, albeit in the restrained language appropriate to a Conciliar document. The decree received near unanimous approval. No less than 2318 bishops voted in favour of it with only 3 against.



The Vatican II decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, had already recommended moral theology as a suitable area for joint study with our ecumenical partners (no.23). Both decisions have been ignored by the papacy. There has been no public move by the Popes in the post-conciliar age to undertake the necessary research and debate, whether in-house or ecumenical.

Moral difference between life-long commitment and fornication

One can see why. The mere announcement of such a review would undermine the aura of pseudo-infallibility that the authorities have attached to magisterial teaching in the twentieth century.

On the contrary, the CDF has persecuted theologians who dared to start work on the review independently, even those who were patently acting out of love for the Church, the truth and the marginalized.

If the review had been allowed to proceed, it would have removed a regrettable constraint suffered by several assemblies of the Synod of Bishops over the years. The synodal discussions were bedeviled by a moral theology already deemed unsatisfactory by the Council, but which could not be directly questioned in the

debate. The theory that every sin against the sixth or ninth commandment is a mortal sin has conditioned the discussions on marriage, the family and access to Holy Communion.

An honest review would probably have modified this teaching significantly. I have been told by someone who is in a position to know that top level academics in moral theology do not hold this theory any longer, but are inhibited from saying so outside of professional circles.

If the recommended review were to conclude that it is the commitment to life-long caring, sharing and unselfish concern for one another’s well-being that distinguishes marriage from fornication, then it might be able to discern a moral difference between the self-indulgent, promiscuous behaviour so often conjured up by the term homosexuality and the life-long loving commitment that we see in so many homosexual couples.

The business of managing the Pope

The Church now accepts the primacy of conscience. If “normal” couples can discover in good conscience that mutual commitment changes the moral implications of sexual intimacy, then the same might be true for their LGBTQ brothers and sisters. If they are following their consciences, they are not sinning, and the argument now being advanced against asking God to bless their relationship collapses completely.

Why, then, issue the responsum at all? It is part of the business of managing the Pope. The Roman Curia cannot be seen to disagree openly with the Pope. That would destroy the aura of generalized infallibility so carefully cultivated since 1870.

Nor can the Pope be seen pull the rug from under the curia. In the secular world, he would be described as a “captive regulator”. He is dependent on maintaining a working relationship with his team, if he is to have any hope of coping with his utterly overwhelming job.

When Pope Francis went as far as warning members of the curia against becoming mere “bureaucrats” in his first Christmas address to them, his criticisms became public knowledge and created a damaging backlash. He softened his stance the following Christmas. As the doctrinal watchdog within the curia, however, the CDF considers it a duty to anticipate discreetly and guard indirectly against anything they see as papal divergence from currently accepted orthodoxy.

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In this case, Pope Francis has been causing anxiety by his emphasis on mercy and compassion, and by his rejection of clericalism and legalism. Improvements in any of these areas would tend to reduce the power of the curia.

His insistence, in a recent message to Italian catechists, on acceptance of Vatican II as a criterion of being “with the Church” was obviously addressed to a wider audience. “Taking Vatican II seriously” would call for big change in the curia. It could not but reinvigorate ecumenism, which is the great fear of the bureaucracy.

The Roman Curia reins in God

So the responsum, when read carefully, says very little apart from telling God what God cannot do. It does not contradict the Pope, so his surprising “assent” to its publication, even if it was manipulated, is credible.

Its tone, however, hardens the emotional atmosphere and makes further initiatives in treating homosexuals as children of God more difficult.

A similar stratagem was used after the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) at a big celebration in St Anne’s Church in Augsburg, Germany in November 1999. There was reason to celebrate, and Pope John Paul II is said to have personally approved the Catholic participation.

The Declaration, resulting from a joint study initiated during Vatican II, resolved the key theological disagreement that had turned Luther’s reform campaign into the Reformation. By resolving the basic issue, it raised hopes of a revival of ecumenical progress.

But the following August the CDF issued a declaration entitled *Dominus Iesus* that dashed any immediate hope for progress. It contained nothing that was new but consisted mainly of a restatement of the Roman Catholic claims to dominance and exclusivity. Its reiteration of the Catholic claim to be the sole true Church of Christ was uncompromising and untimely.

Many Protestants were pained,

disappointed, or offended. Emotional barriers to Church unity were strengthened. The declaration indicated that, despite substantial theological progress, the ecumenical winter would continue. And it did, because the curia that governs the Church wanted it that way.

The second question posed above was whether one could continue to be a Catholic in full communion with Rome while rejecting such a statement.

The responsum is obviously not an infallible document. It is theologically meaningless. Its roots are in the tensions within the papacy, in prejudice, and in the neglect of the review of moral theology mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

It is also contrary to the *sensus fidelium*, if the outcry from the Catholic world is any indicator. In loyalty to Jesus Christ, Catholics should push for the overdue review of moral theology and dismiss the responsum as a monumental misjudgment.

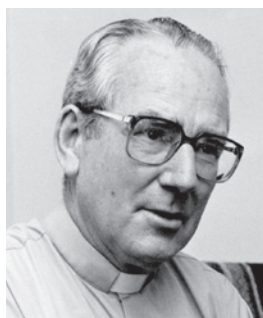
And religious leaders should stop telling God what God can and cannot do. ☞



Heather: a wise bishop

ROD BOWER

The Rev Rod Bower is the Anglican Rector at the Anglican Parish Gosford which belongs to the Newcastle Diocese. He was also a very good friend of Bishop Bede Heather. This is the eulogy he gave at the Vigil Mass for Bishop Bede Heather at St. Michael’s Catholic Church, Baulkham Hills on the evening of Wednesday March 3, 2021.



Bishop Bede Heather

In the 8th Century the Venerable Bede of Jarrow said, He alone loves the Creator perfectly who manifests a pure love for his neighbour. He could well have

been describing his namesake Bede Heather. Our presence tonight pays tribute to a family member, a friend, a scholar and pastor.

As the 8th Century monk indicated, our Bede’s love of the Creator was made manifest in his love of neighbour, whether that be the closest of friend or a casual acquaintance. Bede’s manner always exuded quiet gentle decency, kindness and care. There was something about his presence that somehow raised the bar on our own

way of being. When I was with him I wanted to be just a little less judgemental, and just a little more forgiving and understanding.

I first became aware of Bede Heather over 40 years ago through a mutual friend. For me in those days Bishops were remote and foreboding figures, my friend Col would speak of this bishop who insisted that you: ‘call me Bede’. Twenty years later I met Bede and saw what Col saw; a friend. It is not possible to honour Bede as a friend without acknowledging Leona, their friendship has been the deepest of blessing to them both.

I don’t know that it is accurate to say that Bede was a true child of Vatican II, as I suspect he was probably ahead of the curve there, and that the Council reflected some of Bede’s views rather than the other way around. Certainly, his time in Rome in the early 1960’s afforded him the opportunity to sit down with the great scholars of the day, and this was ultimately a deeply

formative time for him. I do think however, that it is accurate to say that Bede was a true embodiment of the Second Vatican Council.

This embodiment took form for Bede most manifestly in the ecumenical movement, formally in dialogue with the Baptist Church, and informally across the denominations.

In retirement on the Central Coast, Bede was determined not only to believe in ecumenism, but to practice it. So, it would be one Sunday in the Catholic Church, the next in the Uniting Church, and another with the Anglicans. He was an active participant in, and supporter of, ecumenism in the local church, attending and contributing to various ecumenical study groups.

Bede was known for being somewhat of a progressive, so I was often surprised at how theologically orthodox he really was, but it was always a generous orthodoxy that left room for people to be accompanied on the journey into truth. I must confess to feeling just a little intellectually intimidated when around Bede, especially when preaching on John’s gospel. But I know that says more about my insecurities than it does about Bede’s manner.

In fact, he was always incredibly affirming. At the church door after Mass, he would invariably echo a phrase from the sermon, and voicing his reasons for appreciating it. Occasionally he would add: 'such and such a scholar is very good on this subject'. I eventually worked out that this was Bede's code for saying that I still had more to discover in the text, and his gentle way of guiding me into a deeper understanding. He was a passionate biblical scholar with the rare gift of being able to translate deep

scriptural truths into a form that was food for everyone's soul. It is sometimes a shock to discover that those we consider to be great among us have their own vulnerabilities, wounds and hurts. This was certainly true for Bede and was perhaps his greatest gift. I am sure the pain of his own journey contributed to his deep understanding of, and compassion for, all of humanity.

I simply want to say, Bede, friend, scholar and pastor, we love you, we will miss you,

we give thanks to God for you.

I want to give Bede the last word, and this is literally some of the last words he wrote, only days ago, in his study on Revelation: *The Day of the Lord is actually every day in which we are challenged to live by faith. The second coming is to me, now, in love and faithfulness. When I pray Maranatha, Come Lord, I am not asking that he come in some distant age when the earth as we know it is dissolving, but that he come now in truth and love.* Maranatha. ☪



Farewell Homily for Bishop Bede Heather

JOHN BOYLE

Monsignor John Boyle, a priest of the Diocese of Parramatta preached this homily at Bishop Heather's funeral at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta on March 4 2021. Reprinted text and photo with permission.



Monsignor John Boyle

All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead.

These words, heard this morning, are taken from part of a letter Paul wrote to the Christian community in Philippi, sometime around 60. The whole letter, written possibly from Rome, exhorts the followers of Christ to rejoice regardless of circumstances, and to act always with humility and unity. Striving for unity, particularly, Christian unity was one hallmark of Bede's episcopal ministry. He was at home with people of faith and those of no professed faith, with anxious agnostics and angry atheists. He put a very human face on the Church in our secular pluralistic society.

Humility was a constant virtue lived throughout his life. Sixteen times Paul uses the word 'joy' in his letter to the

parishioners of that Roman colony. Our funeral Mass, where we will pray for the repose of Bede's soul, should therefore be simple, humble, yet joyful. Paul's letter also contains a warning regarding the dangers of legalism. Bede, like Paul, had his detractors, the temple police, more intent on the observance of the law than freedom of the Spirit. With these thoughts in mind we

can begin to understand why Bede chose Philippians to be read at his funeral Mass.

This reading, and the Gospel proclaimed today, are perhaps the most subtle yet powerful homily Bede ever preached.

Bede confirms his belief in the resurrection by choosing these four verses of the letter, and in the gospel proclaimed this morning – a strange gospel for a funeral Mass – Bede unashamedly reminds us that our baptismal commitment finds its fulfilment in service. It is a teaching Christians must live, from the bishop down to the youngest altar server. To those in public life, politicians and women and men serving as councillors, the service industry workforce, public servants, personnel in the armed forces, police force, young and old married couples, and those generous and brave seminarians who will willingly take Bede's place in the ordained priestly ministry. If we are to be true followers of Jesus, we must do what Jesus asked us to do.

He says in today's gospel, "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." Bede, of course, was a teacher and he is teaching us from there even now.

Man of humility

Regarding humility mentioned in the Second Reading, some of the priests found it interesting that Bede moved around the diocese wearing the simple wooden cross you can see on the casket. It was held around his neck with what looked like venetian blind cord. I notice that official photos of bishops taken together with Pope Francis now have many bishops wearing wooden crosses. They can follow a trend. In this, Bede was ahead of his time. At the moment in Rome, I understand there is great demand for venetian blind cord.

Bede did not want to be buried from this great cathedral. To return to Philippians, in his humility he wanted to go from a more humble place, a simple, ordinary, parish church with a funeral presided over, not by a bishop, but by a simple, ordinary priest. That's why he chose me.

But the funeral had to proceed from this place. It is the first and mother church of the diocese. There is so much of Bede alive and present here. He is everywhere. Bede favoured the name Parramatta for this diocese over the competing, Cumberland. The great organ he acquired from London; this is the place where he was installed, where he took canonical possession of the diocese on May 19, 1986 as the First Bishop of Parramatta and, of course, he watched the fire take hold of the cathedral on that eventful day in February 1996.

I penned an article about the fire for a Melbourne periodical called *The Summit*. I wrote, "Our first parish gathering was the night after the fire. My memory of that night is of Bede Heather looking taller

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and in control. He was like a strong father surrounded by adult children who were desperately in need of reassurance." Flawed like all of us, he could be definite, even stubborn. Sometimes he was very formal. He was always the gentleman. As a bishop he was a man of his time, but on the cusp of a new era.

Forgiveness

After that parish meeting, Bede said to me, "Tomorrow we will wait on the Lord Mayor". He wanted the Council to block off Marist Place, the road outside the cathedral. "Wait on the Lord Mayor?" I thought I was talking to Archbishop Polding. John Bede Polding, of course, opened the first church on this site in 1836. Incidentally, it is the anniversary of Polding's ordination today, two hundred and two years ago.

Can I be brave and say Polding was responsible for the proliferation of the name 'Bede' of Bede's generation? When we were walking back from the Lord Mayor's office, I said to Bede, "I am going to the court house. I want to see the arsonist who is appearing in the court today." Bede stopped short and formally said to me, "John, go down into the cells and tell him he is forgiven."

I am here to tell you that forgiveness was the furthest thing from my mind. But, I thought, "What a good idea! By going into the cells below the court I can get a closer look at the scoundrel." I had in mind that dramatic photo of John Paul II and

Mehmet Ali Agca in 1981 in the cells following his attempt to assassinate the Pope. If I could get close enough to the rogue I was even willing to break the fifth commandment. But, I told Jason, as Bede instructed me, that the bishop said he was forgiven.

When I returned to the entrance to the court house, a large contingent of media was present, cameras, microphones, about 40 of them talking over each other and shouting questions at me. One journalist asked, "You met with the arsonist, what did you say to him?"

"I told him he was forgiven."

"Why did you say that?"

"I heard myself say, as if butter wouldn't melt in my mouth, and in my most pious voice, 'I preach forgiveness, so I must practice what I preach'."

The hypocrisy was too much, even for me. I feared God might strike me dead. Talkback radio that night was critical of the bishop. "Who does this bishop think he is to forgive the arsonist who burnt down our cathedral?"

To forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins was always Bede's preference. It was a revelation to him that the community – even those educated in Catholic schools – did not honour or understand this basic, fundamental Christian mandate. Paul failed in this matter with the church in Philippi, so I can't understand why Bede was surprised when he was so viciously attacked by Catholics when he preached this message of forgiveness. His openness to forgiving people who had failed, sometimes proved his downfall.

Rebuilding a cathedral

In choosing Aldo Giurgola, the architect for the parliament house in Canberra, as architect for the rebuilding of this cathedral, Bede was authentically following his episcopal motto, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In that document, SC, it is written that it is the desire of the Church "that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy".

Parliament at Question Time is the great example of full, conscious and active participation. One can notice the likeness of the architecture in this sacred space with the Parliament House in Canberra. Again, Bede was ahead of his time. But not quite. From his Roman days he was familiar with the basilica of Santo Stefano Rotondo, Santa Costanza on the Via

Normantana and he loved San Vitale in Ravenna and of course Charlemagne's palatial chapel in Aachen. All of these historical churches are "in the round", not dissimilar to this sacred space.

Bede's ecclesiology was that of Servant Church. This found expression in his attendance at the Palm Sunday Peace Marches. As Holy Week began Bede would be part of the 300,000 people in a 'protest for peace'. He was a visual aid indicating Catholics could work with other Christians and that Catholics should be involved in social justice issues. He was criticised for this activism. He wrote in an article for the Catholic Historical Society that Cardinal Freeman tolerated his participation in silence. His most enduring legacy was his dialogue with the Baptist church.

The first diocesan office was in the presbytery at Blacktown. That was an unsuitable arrangement and Bede and his two staff upped into what was a parish-owned fibro house located on a sort of alley linking Main Street with Bungarribee Road. It has the pretentious name of Hereward Highway.

The house was approached through an overgrown lawn and Bev Driver, Bede's secretary, remembers there were half a dozen to ten Coca Cola bottles filled with water lying around on their sides. A strange fashion accessory for a bishop's office. The house had a wire screen door where it was safer to lift the flapping wire and walk through than to attempt to open the door with the screws missing from the bottom hinge.

"Well, what do you think?" Bede asked me on my first visit.

"It looks like squatters are about to move in", I replied. "What gives with the Coca Cola bottles lying on the lawn?"

"There's a belief", Bede said, "that water in bottles will stop dogs from using the lawn as a convenience".

The whole arrangement was humility on steroids.

Reaching out to the world

In this precinct, Bede set up a Marriage Tribunal, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Finance Committee, Centacare and a diocesan Catholic Education Office. In November 1986 Pope John Paul visited the Diocese. Bede was his official host riding in the popemobile. But not all events were occasions for joy. The story of the Gerard Majella Brothers is a painful chapter for all. And Bede facing the Royal

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Hans Küng: a theologian for everyone

PAUL COLLINS

Dr Paul Collins, historian, broadcaster and writer reflects on the life and theology of Hans Küng (pictured). Küng died on 6 April, 2021.



Hans Küng died last Tuesday aged 93. I had the honour of knowing him as a friend. He was a rare breed: a theologian who spoke to people of diverse beliefs and none.

It's not often that you get a chance to improve a world-famous Swiss-German theologian's English as you drive along the Reuther Freeway in Detroit, Michigan in your Volkswagen Golf. Yes, I know 'world-famous' is not a term that you usually apply to theologians, but this was 1983 and the theologian in question was writing op-eds for the New York Times, was being interviewed by all the major US networks, was giving lectures all over the country and was Visiting Distinguished Professor at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. I was his temporary amanuensis and occasional driver.

'Paul, make sure I speak proper 'English' English, not American English,' he said as we drove to yet another lecture. I took as our guide to 'proper' English some of the patter arias from Gilbert and Sullivan. No one can write tongue-twisting English like Sir William Schwenck Gilbert, and Küng took to the modern major general and Sir Joseph Porter, KCB like a duck to water. He was fascinated that the British navy minister was called 'First Lord of the Admiralty,' and he loved the 'three little girls from the ladies' sem-in-air-ry'.

Küng's Formation

Born in Sursee, Switzerland, in March 1928, into a middle-class family, Küng was the eldest of seven with five sisters. Deciding to be a priest at age 11, he studied for the Diocese of Basel and was educated at Rome's Gregorian University, the Sorbonne and the Institut Catholique de Paris. In his Memoirs he says that he grew up 'in the time of Adolf Hitler's seizure of power and the threat to our national and personal freedom' in

Switzerland and that, he says, 'shaped my early years.' Freedom of thought and speech were primary values for him.

His doctorate was on the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth's theology of justification, the notion that faith alone saves us, not what we do, what Luther called our good 'works'. Küng showed that there was no real conflict between Protestants and Catholics on this fundamental doctrine, a position widely accepted nowadays.

He was ordained in 1954 and in 1960 he was appointed a remarkably young professor of Fundamental and later Catholic Theology at Tübingen University, Germany's equivalent to Cambridge. Pope John XXIII had called the Second Vatican Council in 1959 and Küng was perfectly placed to set an agenda for it.

A prolific writer, in 1960 he published *The Council, Reform and Reunion* which set out a clear agenda for Vatican II with a strong ecumenical flavour. This was re-enforced by his book *Structures of the Church* (1962) and together with his lectures to packed audiences across the world, including Australia in 1971, these books had a profound influence on the subsequent history of the Council and Catholicism. John XXIII appointed him a conciliar peritus (expert advisor).

Theology in the public square: a brave choice

Küng believed theology must underpin and explain belief and should always be in the public square. Catholicism, he said, had to transcend post-Reformation controversies, reconcile with Protestants and retreat from the First Vatican Council's (1870) definition of papal infallibility. He wanted an open church with a married clergy, women in all ministries and the abandonment of outdated practices that contradicted the Gospel. He was critical of the many vacillations of Paul VI (+1978) after Vatican II – the pope's nickname was 'Hamlet' – and he openly repudiated the attempt of John Paul II to re-interpret the Council in line with his own idiosyncratic theories.

In *The Church* (1967) and specifically in *Infallible? An Inquiry* (1971) Küng argued that infallible propositions are impossible.

Continued page 16

Commission at nearly 88 years of age was not the highpoint of his life. The Priests' House of Prayer built at East Kurrajong was a special work dear to his heart. His inclusiveness meant he welcomed priests born overseas and started the annual meetings of Anglican and Catholic clergy leading to the inaugural annual law service to mark the beginning of the law term. Ever the teacher, he set up the Parramatta Pastoral Institute at Blacktown to provide spiritual and theological formation for lay persons. Following the International Year for Handicapped Persons in 1982, Bede began a professional outreach to handicapped persons. And, like Polding, Bede had a special interest in the indigenous population in the Diocese setting up the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry. Added to this were other initiatives such as single parents' accommodation, and HIV Aids ministry. He was Chairman of the Board of Mount Druitt Hospital and established a stand-alone palliative care facility at Mount Druitt. The list goes on. He was a visionary.

At Bede's 90th birthday celebration at Blacktown, his words had the ring of a final will and testament. He spoke of the Olive Tree as a symbol of his life. He wrote, "St Paul and St John have each described in glowing terms the future hope of Christians. I just hope that when I close my eyes for the last time there will be a vision of light and two olive trees, one on the right and one on the left." That is the symbolism of the olive trees at the sides of the ambo, the place from where the scriptures are proclaimed. And, of course, Bede was a scripture scholar. Only two weeks ago he published twenty-nine pages of notes on the Book of Revelation, ending with Maranatha, "Come Lord".

Even though he struggled for breath, he was conversing up to the last minutes of his life. He knew he was dying and many people came to say goodbye. He presided over his own death.

Bede closed his eyes for the last time at sunrise on Thursday February 25. When I arrived at St Ezekiel's, sometime later, his body was still warm. And together with Leona and Bev Hackett, we prayed, "Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High".

In this Mass we pray that angels will receive his soul and present him to God the Most High. Today we hand Bede Vincent Heather over to God – and the historians. ☪

His approach was historical and he maintained that, rather than the pope being infallible, the church is 'indefectible', that is that despite errors and misjudgements, in the long term it will remain true to God's Word and Jesus' teaching. The Vatican was outraged.

The result: in late-1979 Küng was stripped of his licence to teach as a 'Catholic theologian', but not of his good standing as a priest. In the early-1980s he went through a difficult period, as the second volume of his *Memoirs Disputed Truth* shows.

Nevertheless, there was widespread support for him across the European and Anglo-American Catholic, Protestant and secular worlds, and it was around that time that I met him in the US. Having lost his Catholic chair, Tübingen University appointed him to a new chair of Ecumenical Theology which he occupied for the rest of his life.

After 1980 he published some of his best books: *Does God Exist?* (1980) confronting that precise question, *On Being a Christian* (1984) takes us back to the historical Jesus and the implications of his teaching, and

Christianity and the world religions (1986) highlighting Küng's profound ecumenism. There are also books on Mozart, Freud, dying with dignity, Islam, Judaism and global ethics. His two volumes of *Memoirs* (2003 and 2008) and his *Can We Save the Catholic Church?* (2013) conclude a bibliography of some 34 books.

In his later years he put much of his energy into the Global Ethics Foundation, that is committed to bringing world religions together to contribute to peace and the welfare of society by establishing a basic set of common values.

Direct, authentic and a sense of humour

Some have claimed that Küng was arrogant. I suspect part of that is that he was Swiss-German and he could be abrupt and brusque. He certainly liked talking. I remember a dinner party when he discoursed for an hour on the role of women in the church, addressing all his remarks to the men present, all priests, completely ignoring the two women there. The hostess was an experienced Catholic educator and the

other a distinguished Dominican sister. Eventually, it was the nun who exploded and rightly told him some home truths about chauvinist theologians and women in the church. To his credit, Küng copped it sweet, largely saved by his sense of humour.

He remained a priest in good standing throughout his life. He worked enormously hard and had an excellent exercise regimen. Socially, he was wonderful company. His biographer Robert Nowell says 'He combined the very qualities that many of the Catholic church's detractors have regarded as totally incompatible: a passion for truth and loyalty to Rome, an open-minded willingness to accept the fruits of critical inquiry, and adherence to what from the outside was seen as a closed dogmatic system.'

I simply remember him as a man of deep faith, a thoughtful friend – I have several handwritten notes from him – as well as an articulate man of integrity for whom truth was only norm, a man of prodigious energy and commitment above all to the message of Jesus and the genuine tradition of Catholicism. He was truly a theologian 'for all seasons.' ☺



Can same-gender couples be blessed in the church?

FRANK BRENNAN SJ

Frank Brennan SJ, Rector of Newman College at The University of Melbourne, offers an analysis of the Response of the CDF to the question of whether a blessing can be made for same-gender couples. It was delivered as a homily for the Fifth Week of Lent (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

This week, the Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome published a response to a query whether the Church had 'the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex'. It's one word response was 'Negative'. A simple 'No'. Unlike many other Christian denominations, we Catholics have a theology and practice of 7 sacraments, one of which, marriage, is administered by the couple, and not by the priest. The sacrament of marriage is not available to all couples. There are many people in the world living in blessed unions who have not availed themselves of the sacrament of marriage, most of them not fulfilling the criteria set down in the Church's canon law. Many of them ask God's blessing on their relationship every day and every night before they go to bed. Unlike many other Christian denominations, we Catholics bless all manner of things with liturgical actions. Those things include homes and pets. We Catholics have formal liturgical actions for blessing where others simply pray in the quietness of their hearts.

The CDF has answered one question couched in terms of Church 'power', the giving of a blessing, and the bestowal of a blessing on a union of two persons. But there is another question: May a priest or any other member of the faithful fervently ask God's blessing on any couple who are committed to loving each other for life, professing fidelity and mutual support for each other? In particular, may a priest or any other member of the faithful fervently ask God's blessing on such a couple who are precluded from the sacrament of marriage, and may a priest or member of the faithful pray for such a couple that they will be happy and fulfilled in their lives together, avoiding injury to others? I answer unreservedly, 'Yes'. This question is not couched in terms of 'power' and the bestowal of a blessing on a union but in terms of asking God to bless two people who are seeking to live a life faithful to each other in love.

The CDF approach

In August 2017 I gave a lecture in which

I stated: 'Though I am a committed Catholic, I could vote "yes" in a survey on same sex marriage while hoping and demanding that the parliament do the hard work on religious freedoms when considering amendments to the *Marriage Act*. I am one of those Australians who will be pleased when same-sex marriages are recognised by Australian Law but with adequate protection for religious freedoms.'

Someone reported me to the CDF, as is their right in the Roman Church. The CDF requested that I publicly retract the two sentences I had publicly uttered. The CDF reminded me of its 2003 publication which stated that 'where homosexual unions have been legally recognized or have been given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, clear and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any kind of formal co-operation in the enactment or application of such gravely unjust laws.'

I respectfully declined to retract my remarks. Unlike the CDF, I do not believe such laws are 'gravely unjust'. I respect the various officers of the CDF. The prefect of the Congregation after all is a Jesuit cardinal. His jurisprudence about what constitutes a gravely unjust law is very different from mine, and I suspect, so too is some of his theology. But that's OK.

Pope Francis reminds us in latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*: ‘differences are creative; they create tension and in the resolution of tension lies humanity’s progress.’ (#203)

Happily, three years on, the CDF has left me alone, and as far as possible I try to draw fruit from the observations of the CDF and to develop my own thinking on issues, particularly when I find myself at variance from the stands taken by the CDF. I feel sympathy for the CDF as they try to hold together many contradictory norms culminating in their explanation that their denial of Church power to give a blessing to a gay couple ‘does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations’.

Like 61% of the Australian population who voted in the same sex marriage plebiscite I voted in favour. Incidentally, Catholics voted in favour in at least the same proportion as the general population. I then accepted appointment to the government’s committee set up to study the adequacy of religious freedom laws in Australia. In this electorate of Melbourne where we gather for eucharist, 84% of those who voted were in favour of same sex marriage laws.

Response to Marriage Equality vote

In Germany, where same sex marriage became legal just two months before it became legal in Australia, the Catholic bishops have been quite exercised and public in their deliberations about whether to institute or permit church ceremonies including the blessing of same sex couples. Understandably there has been a strong difference of opinion within the German hierarchy. Here in Australia, our bishops don’t tend to engage in such public deliberations as they generally find themselves in happy agreement maintaining the liturgical *status quo* stipulated by the CDF. None of our Australian bishops has said publicly that he would be prepared to offer a blessing to a couple in a same sex relationship no matter how faithful, committed and permanent such a relationship be. There are many priests and members of the faithful who would welcome a blessing being given reverentially and prayerfully in an appropriate setting and for an appropriate couple.

The German bishops’ conference president, Bishop Georg Bätzing, has said that he is ‘not happy’ that the Vatican decided to participate so determinedly in the debate on blessings for homosexual couples: ‘It suggests that one wants to end the ongoing controversial theological discussions [on the subject] in various parts of the World Church, including in Germany, as soon as possible... That is, however, impossible, as the issue is being intensively discussed

with good arguments, and theological inquiries concerning today’s pastoral practice cannot simply be got rid of by laying down the law.’

In today’s first reading, the prophet Jeremiah brings a message of hope to those whose world is falling apart. Jeremiah’s words are set against the backdrop of the Babylonian invasion which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 587BC. The scripture scholar Juliana Claasens tells us, ‘Throughout this book that is pulsating with raw emotion, one sees evidence of the community’s often convoluted struggle to understand and deal with the existential and theological crisis that impacted the very core of what the community believed about God, about the world, and about their place in it.’

The people are to be offered a new covenant, not like the old covenant with rules and regulations set down and imposed from above: ‘No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant My Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people.’

There will be no further need for neighbour to try to teach neighbour, or brother to say to brother, ‘Learn to know the Lord!’ No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind.’ Under this new covenant, with the Law written in our hearts, I daresay that the CDF would have a very different function than that of lawmaker demanding public retractions in relation to legitimately disputed questions like what constitutes a gravely unjust law.

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes: ‘Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except “in the sincere gift of self to others”. Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: “I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others”.

No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love.’ Let’s try to understand what those words mean to a gay or lesbian person. I daresay they mean much the same as they mean to the rest of us, or they should.

Francis goes on to say: ‘In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves and towards others. Since we were made for love, in each one of us “a law of *ekstasis*” seems to operate: “the lover ‘goes outside’ the self to find a fuller existence in another”.’ (#88)

Blessing gay couples

I imagine there are many same sex couples who would happily embrace these words of the Holy Father. If such a couple, precluded from the sacrament of marriage, were to present, asking God’s blessing, having committed themselves to loving each other for life, professing fidelity and mutual support, I would happily pray with them and join with them in asking God’s blessing upon them. I would seek advice about an appropriate liturgical formula and celebration. I would not rule out all prospect of a blessing. But being a Catholic priest, I will continue to reserve my witnessing of the sacrament of marriage to those who are eligible for marriage in our Church’s canon law.

I will continue to respect the CDF in its difficult role trying to articulate a consistent jurisprudence of all manner of things including gravely unjust laws, sacraments and blessings. The officers of the CDF, like each of us facing new pastoral realities in a complex world, need to come back to the starkly simple and beautiful insight offered by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*:

‘The spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love, which in the end remains “the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life’s worth or lack thereof”. Yet some believers think that it consists in the imposition of their own ideologies upon everyone else, or in a violent defence of the truth, or in impressive demonstrations of strength. All of us, as believers, need to recognize that love takes first place: love must never be put at risk, and the greatest danger lies in failing to love (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13).’ (#92)

It would be a mistake for any of us to think that the CDF has brought to an end all discussion and discernment in the Church about the blessing of same sex couples. It’s ultimately not a question of the Church’s power to give a blessing but of the couple’s openness to receiving God’s grace. The CDF’s ruling on the limits of Church power does not restrict the ambit of God’s grace blessing human love. The unresolved issue is if, how and when the couple’s family, friends and local worshipping community can celebrate such blessing. German bishops are right to insist that the conversation continue. Let’s pray for the German bishops, the CDF personnel, the pope, and most especially those who were so hurt by the CDF’s declaration this week, including those Catholics who crave God’s blessing on their own loving, faithful, and committed relationships or on those of their loved ones. ☺

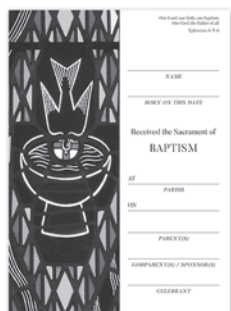


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Pastoral Supervision: a doorway to life-giving ministry

DAMIEN PRICE CFC

Damien Price CFC writes on the meaning, practice and value of pastoral supervision for pastoral practitioners.

As soon many hear the word, 'Supervision' images of Sargent Shultz from Hogan's Heroes looking over one's shoulder could come to mind. Many cringe at the word! Others have an image of a psychologist resplendent in white coat, sitting with clip board in hand and tickling us with an constant mantra of 'Ummmmmm!' or as if in meditation 'Ommmm!' Others still fear an endless cave where one's deepest, darkest secrets are laid bare to be sent by private courier to some Vatican Office where one's file grows ever larger under the label: *Never to be given a skull cap!*

Whatever image above comes anywhere close to your perception, the reality is that all of them are far from the truth of pastoral mentoring, accompaniment or supervision. Increasingly within Church circles we are using the term pastoral supervision. Pastoral because the focus is primarily on our pastoral practice, and secondly the role of the professional you are working with is to supervise you and to lead you to discover, own and celebrate your own pastoral wisdom. Supervise in this context is NOT a leaning over one's shoulder but rather a professional 'walking beside' or mentoring. So, for the purpose of this reflection, we will use the term Pastoral Supervision (PS).

What Pastoral Supervision (PS) is NOT

PS is NOT counselling. Counselling is a professional intervention that will assist someone engage with blocks in their life, past hurt, present trauma and a litany of other aspects that make up our shadow. While there may be times during PS when aspects of our shadow come into play the primary focus of PS is not these aspects but rather making our pastoral practice more effective and our lives more whole.

PS is NOT spiritual direction/ accompaniment. We may be struggling with our prayer life (welcome to the human family), we may be doubting our vocational call, or we may be discerning a new appointment in our ministry. All of these are part of our lives as pastors but they are NOT the work of Pastoral Supervision – these issues are at home in Spiritual Direction.

PS is NOT coaching. Coaching is when, as part of our pastoral practice, we seek to gain or refine a professional skill. We may seek coaching around how to give a better homily, or run a parish planned giving campaign or gain skills in dealing with the stages of grief. All of these are wonderful aspects of our ministry and from time to time we need to grow our pastoral professional skills. This is where a coach may be very helpful. Again, in the Pastoral Supervision space the need for some coaching in a particular field may be identified but the actual 'coaching' of these skills is not part of PS.

What is Pastoral Supervision?

There are many definitions of what PS is. For the purpose of this reflection we will name it as: a space of professional walking with a pastor to enable and enhance more effective pastoral practice.

In this space:

- Pastoral supervision is a 'walking with' – it is accompanying the person on their pastoral journey. The role of the pastoral supervisor is that of a professional listener bringing their skills to help the 'client' identify patterns, gaps, reactions, blocks and more that are limiting your pastoral effectiveness.
- The key role of the supervisor is to work with the client in such a way that supervisees tap into their already present wisdom as regards the pastoral issue they are identifying. Through open ended questions, the identification of patterns, examination of what 'has worked' and more, the real nature of the block or issue is identified.
- The PS space is confidential. What is shared is between the pastor and the professional accompanying them.

Pastoral Supervision is highly personal. When the pastor comes into this space they do so with their own unique personality, skills and context. The role of the professional is to create a space/forum where someone else is totally focussed on you and your pastoral professional story and situation. The role of the professional will often be to hold a mirror up to your pastoral experience to reflect what is

happening to you. The professional helps you clear the image in your mirror and will do so in a supportive but sometimes challenging way. You know that PS is NOT working when the professional is doing all the talking.

One of the 'skills' that leads to effective pastoral supervision is the skill of becoming 'aware' during your daily pastoral practice of questions and issues that are arising. Everyone has their own practice here. One priest keeps a small notebook in the console between the drivers and passenger's seat. Others have developed the skill of noting and then 'filing' the question/issue at the back of their heads. Whatever method is most effective for the pastor is what will work. But one cannot underestimate the power and the value of doing this homework – of bringing 'real' and relevant issues to this professional space. Our clergy are busy men with great pressures upon them. The last thing they need is to be turning up for pastoral supervision because they 'have to' and the issue they raise is not real.

The power and effectiveness of Pastoral Supervision is linked intimately to the reality of the issues that one brings into the PS space!

One image that comes to mind in an Australian context is that of a Cricket Snikko – that small infra-ray mark when the ball touches the bat or glove on its way through to the keeper. In our pastoral practice we become aware of those small 'blips' linked to our pastoral practice:

- How do I get a more effective power dynamic within the Parish Council?
- I seem to be spending an inordinate amount of time in meetings?
- What is going on that I appear to be 'blocked' out of the local parish primary school?

The Pastoral Supervision space

What happens in a typical Pastoral Supervision session? The rhythm of this pastoral professional space is quite simple.

1. The session will begin with a 'touching base' and to see how you have been since you last met.
2. Often there will be a re-visiting of the issue you shared about last time and seeing how the strategies you collectively came up with are going. This works on the premise that even if something does not appear to be working that in itself, is good data to refine your strategy.
3. Then the pastor raises their question / block / pastoral issue that they wish to explore.

4. The pastoral supervisor uses their skills to help the pastor break open the issue or question further. The aim is for the pastor to grow in insight. The dialogue is aimed at creating a clearer picture of what is going on and why. The hope is that the dialogue will lead the pastor to identify their own skills in this area and how they can more effectively engage.
5. Every professional pastoral supervisor will use their own techniques in this dynamic. I continually write notes, draw diagrams and identify key words and phrases shared. I continually show these notes to the pastor I am meeting with. I am professionally listening for the 'throwaway line', the instances of deeper energy in what is said, possible red herrings and more. At the end of the session, I copy the notes and give my client the original and they often refer to them in-between sessions.
6. Once the real issue has been identified and some ways of more effectively engaging with it are identified the session begins to come towards a conclusion. The pastoral supervisor will help the pastor identify some small practical steps they might engage with over the coming weeks.
7. This material will then become the homework that the pastor will engage in and bring the result to the next session.
8. The session concludes with an identification of the date for the next session and the expression of appreciation and a checking in as to how they are feeling.

You know PS is working for you when you are feeling more empowered, more insightful, less reactive and better able to pastorally/professionally walk with the people of God.

Insights

Pastoral Supervision, like all 'new' aspects of life, requires the acquisition of some new skills. It may take two or three sessions before you feel 'at home' in the PS space, but you will. Many pastoral supervisors will, after the second or third session with you, re-negotiate as to whether you wish to continue the professional relationship. Not everybody is everybody's 'cup of tea'. You may just not feel 'at home' with this particular person. Some people like to work with a female pastoral supervisor, some people like to engage with someone who knows Church life and mission while others like someone completely 'outside' of the faith community. All of these aspects, while important, are simply matters of personal preference and you need to claim your wisdom in this space.

Practicalities of Supervision

- **Frequency:** Ideally PS takes place once a month. Often if you go longer than a month you may lose touch with the presenting issue or you find you have too many issues to engage with. However, monthly is simply a guide. Some pastors I have worked with alternate Spiritual Direction one month and then PS the next. As with all the other aspects of PS identified above – the key is whatever works for you.
- **SKYPE/ZOOM:** You may be ministering in a faith community which is quite isolated. A ZOOM or SKYPE PS session can be quite effective with a professional somewhere else in Australia. While this can work quite well my own personal experience is that once or twice a year (when the pastor is 'in town') it is good to catch up for a face to face PS session.
- **Who to approach:** The key for Pastoral Supervision lays in the skill set of the supervisor and their heart and mindset of wishing to be in this pastoral professional relationship. Most Pastoral Supervisors belong to a Professional Association. Social Workers, counsellors, psychologists and some other pastoral professionals are especially equipped to offer the needed professional skills.
- **Time and cost:** The PS session would normally go for one hour. The cost of the session will depend upon the professional status of the Pastoral Supervisor but would normally vary between \$90 and \$120 an hour. Some dioceses include this costing in their pastoral Professional Standards support for the pastors.

Like many 'new things' in our lives there will be an initial concern, awkwardness and perhaps level of anxiety associated with the PS space. This is quite natural and normal. While engagement with PS is becoming a professional requirement of those in helping professions it would be wonderful if we did not approach PS as something we 'had' to do. If you approach it with an open mind, bring 'real' issues to the space and trust yourself within the dynamic you will find that you are looking forward to your next visit.

More and more our pastors can feel isolated and alone in an ever increasingly complex ministry and world. Pastoral Supervision, Spiritual Direction, our confidants and the brotherhood of the priesthood are all ways to ensure that we know and feel that we are part of a vibrant community of faith and care walking 'in the footsteps of the master!' ☪

Funerals from the field hospital

PETER MATHESON

Peter Matheson, retired priest, Melbourne, recalls experiences of creating a welcome solace for those mourning their loved ones at Catholic funerals.



Pope Francis' appreciation of a 'Field Hospital' situation in which he feels a lot of good pastoral practice occurs, seems to relate to many funerals we are called to celebrate these days. After 50 years of work in parishes and special duties, I find myself in retirement often called upon to celebrate funerals in funeral parlours, or in parish churches when the overworked local pastor is unavailable at times.

Recently I celebrated a funeral of a 54-year-old man who had died of early onset dementia. He and his partner and two children (now adults) lived in my former parish but I never knew them. They were part of the many unchurched people we rarely meet now in our parishes. I retired from the parish nearly two years ago. The new parish priest had another external meeting to attend at the time the family and the funeral director wanted the funeral to take place.

So, he rang me to see if I was free to do this funeral. He had offered to celebrate the funeral the following day, but that did not suit the family or the Funeral Director. The man's parents were still alive and active members of another parish. Originally, they tried to have the funeral in their parish, but were basically told that the parish could not host the funeral. Too busy, might have been the excuse. After that they approached my former parish, the one in which they lived. I was able to help.

The pastoral approach

This was a 'field hospital' situation. A fair

bit of flexibility was required to heal people who had imagined rejection. I believe a lot of pastoral healing can happen for family and friends if flexibility on the part of priests and fellow workers is exercised. Later that same day, after the funeral, the widow emailed me a simple message of thanks for what she believed was a very personal celebration of her husband's life.

After 50 years of parish funeral ministry I know that so much healing happens in wounded communities, when a funeral is celebrated warmly, with great dignity, yet inclusive of a wider often non-sacred world in which the dead person lived.

The pandemic made us all unchurched Catholics for a period of time during lockdown. But many of course were unchurched before the pandemic. The funeral of this 54-year-old was in the context of a Requiem Mass, largely due to his parents who belonged to the previous generation who still attended Mass. At communion time I was surprised by the number of people who approached the table for communion, because many people there belonged to the generation of the dead man's children. It showed that the Catholic DNA in this mob was still quite strong.

I know there are some bishops and many priests who will tell people before communion that only those in full communion with the Catholic Church (state of grace, etc.) may approach for the Eucharist. Then, as an afterthought, they suggest people may approach for a blessing. I have never been so unwelcoming.

The words of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), have been a wonderful guide for many of us in the eight years since the encyclical was published.

Pope Francis wrote: *The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems* (#47).

Welcoming approach

I have read out the Pope's words at Communion time in a Requiem Mass. Many may be attending Mass for the first time in months because of Covid lockdowns, or because they have simply slipped away from practice, and too frightened to go through the pains of first rite reconciliation. The words create a sense of welcome, and relief. I have had people come up to me afterwards and thank me. The Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father.

Recently I was asked by a Funeral Director to celebrate another very sad funeral in one of the chapels at the Springvale necropolis.

A young mother of 51 had died following a tragic accident in the driveway of their own home. She was Catholic. Her husband had no religion. He was utterly devastated. Family friends had gathered to help and they asked the Funeral Director to find a civil celebrant. But when he learned that this woman was born of an Irish mother and a Sri Lankan father in England, where the mother and the sister and various aunties still lived, he suggested a Catholic priest might be a better option, given that the Irish connections would be watching the funeral via the internet. And he rang me!

A few funeral directors in this part of Melbourne have my phone number. I met with the grieving husband and one close friend to plan the funeral. The close friend was part of a family musical group that formed a string quartet. They immediately offered to provide the music. One immediate problem solved. The husband left a lot up to me. He was happy for me to celebrate the funeral, but I had to do most of the work in trying to find a couple of appropriate Scripture passages, formulating prayers of intercession, etc.

The dead woman's sister got my phone number from the grieving husband and rang me from England. She shared stories of her brilliance as a physician and linguist. Their aunty, a Columban Religious Sister in Dublin, had composed a beautiful personal "Song of Farewell," (Saints of God, come to her aid, etc.), for her niece which they emailed me to include in her service. I heard later that 34 relatives had crowded around a TV in Lockdown London at midnight to follow the funeral. Sr Kathleen was there with them, tears streaming down her eyes as she apparently mouthed the Song of Farewell with me half a world away.

Appropriate songs or music for funerals is often a thorny issue. Often we may prefer 'sacred' music in the funeral, using music and songs loved by the generation of the deceased. But often a younger generation is organising the funeral of their loved one, and songs from Cold Chisel, or Dire Straits, or Midnight Oil, or other modern bands may be requested. For wedding celebrations, I often told the bride and groom that if their grandparents approved the lyrics of the songs they wanted, then it was OK with me.

But in funerals it is often their grandparents we are burying. Whatever music or songs they choose we hope it honours the dignity of the dead person. Music and space often go together. Gregorian Chant in soaring cathedrals goes very well. As do rock songs in beer halls. But Gregorian chant in beer halls, or rock songs in cathedrals, may jar. In these matters we could recall the words of Pope Francis: *the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.* We run the risk of turning the Father's House into a tollhouse if we are too prescriptive.

Meeting needs and circumstances

Another most memorable recent funeral I was invited to celebrate was that of an 85-year-old Slovenian lady who came to this country in early 1955 with her husband as refugees. She was nineteen years old and pregnant with the first of two eventual daughters.

Her husband had been a childhood sweetheart and was the love of her life, but he died a quarter of a century ago. Her two daughters and their children then became the entire focus of her life. She collapsed and died on her kitchen floor as she was preparing to attend the Good Friday afternoon liturgy in her parish church. The local parish priest was unavailable on the day the funeral was to take place. Again the undertakers rang to see if I could help.

The younger daughter was a professional musician and she organised her musical group to attend her mother's funeral and provide the music. Naturally it began with a Slovenian theme. The daughter stood at the back of the church and played a Slovenian dance jig on her squeezebox. The squeezebox was then laid on the steps of the sanctuary just behind her mother's coffin. The band consisted of a keyboard, saxophone, bass fiddle (which the daughter played), castanets, and a singer with a wonderful voice. The singer sang an Ave Maria, in one part of the liturgy and the

whole group was involved in playing three quick songs during the photo presentation. A love of music and dance were gifts this lady brought with her from Slovenia. The liturgy was alive.

During my homily I expressed gratitude for her, and the many people who had come to this land as migrants after the Second World War; people from so many European, and Eastern European countries. Many migrants and refugees had settled in my last parish on what was previously market garden land.

I have never ceased to be amazed by all the stories of bravery, resilience, and determination that marked their personal stories. They came to this country with nothing except the clothes on their backs, and perhaps a battered case. But they came carrying a dream of freedom and hope for their children.

And they brought their culture, their faith, their cuisine, their music, and their incredible love of family. Many were brave indomitable spirited people who escaped pain, hunger, political turmoil in their own countries, and came to this country and have done so much to build this place and make it so much better and richer for their coming.

Photo presentations at funerals

A final thought concerns photo presentations. This is another effect of the digital age in which we now live. Photo presentations in funerals are an extension of the eulogy. Sometimes people go overboard and try and show every photo ever taken of the deceased loved one. We have suggested the length of the presentation should be no more than the length of one song imbedded in the presentation. Our suggestion is sometimes adhered to.

A Catholic Funeral offers rich possibilities of choice in prayers, readings, and songs. What cannot be prescribed is the attitude of the celebrant. Preparation with the family is essential. By gentle listening to the stories about the loved one you can discern the way that person fitted into their lives, and discern the appropriate attitude for someone leading the liturgical celebration of that person's life, as the church hands over that person into the loving care of God.

The funeral liturgy can heal the hearts of many who have been estranged from the church for years. If we fail here, we only prolong their pain and separation. Our failure means the Church for them is still a tollhouse. ☪

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Remembering Archbishop Wilson

MARK COLERIDGE



Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane and President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference offered this eulogy at the funeral in Adelaide on 2 February, 2021.

At the end of a life that spanned 70 years, we try to see things whole, with the eye of God as it were, and to

speak the truth of what we see, with the mouth of God as it were; and this is never simple.

Philip Wilson was not always what he seemed to be. He was a man of surprises, easily misread. It was no surprise however that the talented young Fr Wilson was sent to study canon law in Washington DC. Nor was it a surprise that a man of his personality revelled in much of what he found in America.

Bishop of Wollongong

But then, out of the blue in 1996, came the call to serve as Bishop of Wollongong. That was a surprise. Philip hadn't even finished his studies when appointed bishop; but he was appointed for a precise reason. Wollongong was in trouble, struggling to deal with the scandal of sexual abuse. In his last years, Bishop Murray before him had seemed overwhelmed; and the need for action from the new bishop was urgent. It required someone of Philip's youth, energy and ability to meet the need.

His years in Wollongong weren't many but they were tough; and because of what he did there he acquired a reputation of being compassionate, clear-sighted and determined in tackling abuse. At one point the Holy See decided against Philip and in favour

of a priest accused of abuse. Philip made it clear that, if that decision were to stand, he would have to resign the see. He appealed the decision in Rome, won the appeal and stayed as bishop.

He went to Wollongong just as the first Church protocols on sexual abuse were appearing in this country; and he became one of the trail-blazers in shaping the Church's response to abuse in Australia, which was why in 2002 he was invited to speak to the US Bishops Conference on these issues. He was also a key figure in establishing the annual meeting of English-speaking Bishops Conferences

to help each other better understand and address the reality of sexual abuse.

Coadjutor of Adelaide

Another surprise came when, after only a few years in Wollongong, he was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Adelaide. It used to be said that you could move bishops from place to place but not from football code to football code. That was changing at the time, but Philip was very much a New South Wales rugby man. He could hardly have been more different from Archbishop Len Faulkner who was very much an Adelaide man. Len was the insider, Philip the outsider. Some thought he was a right-wing plant, hand-picked to undo all that Archbishop Faulkner had done in his years. That was never the case. Philip was no restorationist ideologue; he was a man of the centre, a pastoral pragmatist rather than some ideological warrior. Some who had hoped he'd turn Adelaide on its head were disappointed as the years told a different story.

There were those too who saw Philip as some kind of ecclesiastical bureaucrat. Yet the man I knew could be visionary. It was he who first suggested in the early 2000s that the time had come in Australia for some kind of national ecclesial assembly. Not all the bishops agreed, but Philip had sown the seed of what became eventually the decision to move to a Plenary Council. One sadness I feel as we bid farewell is that Philip didn't live to see the assemblies of the Council and their fruit in the life of the Church.

Sexual abuse crisis

There was some surprise when Philip was elected President of the Bishops Conference. He was a new Archbishop, and the Archbishop of Adelaide had never held the position. But he was a fine President through difficult times, three times elected to the position. This was because Philip could unify a Conference in which there were tensions and disagreements. He could listen to all the voices, being both fair and firm. He had a strong sense of episcopal fraternity, often staying late to chat over a drink at night. And he knew his canon law.

But then came the inquiry which led eventually to Philip being charged, tried

and convicted. It was surprise enough to us who knew him that he was charged, given his work to address abuse. But it was a real shock when he was convicted and given a custodial sentence. It was certainly a shock to Philip who through the long legal process had been confident of acquittal. Perhaps it was a shock from which he never recovered.

The pressure grew on Philip to resign, and he resisted with typical determination. He remained confident of vindication on appeal and hoped to return as Archbishop, even though his health had deteriorated badly. He was eventually cleared on appeal by a judge who described Philip as "a very honest and forthright witness". Like others, I had come to see that, whatever the outcome of the appeal, Philip had lost the capacity to govern – because of his health, but also because at the time of his conviction cruel and unwarranted things had been said of him publicly, things that could never be unsaid. Very reluctantly Philip yielded to pressure and resigned, though that decision rankled with him, I think, till the day he died.

News of his death came as a surprise – not so much that it had happened but that it happened when it did. We didn't expect it so soon. He simply slipped into eternity, almost unnoticed, on a warm Sunday afternoon. So much drama had swirled around him, but the end itself was undramatic.

Some may have seen Philip differently, but I found him humble and self-effacing. Usually when he rang me, he'd begin by saying, "It's only me". When he chose an episcopal motto it was the opening words of Psalm 115: *Non nobis Domine, "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory"*. As a personality he seemed confident and robust, but I found him in some ways shy and vulnerable. He may have seemed a complex character with a very complicated story; but it was his simplicity that struck me. I speak however as a friend who saw more of Philip Wilson than many. There was much more to Philip than his public persona may have suggested; and we see the more, so much more, as we give thanks for his life and bid farewell.

So now, Phil, dear brother and good friend, the greatest of all surprises awaits you as you stand face to face before God who has always seen you as you are and loved you, the God who says to you now at journey's end, "Thanks for all you've done. Welcome home". ☪

Beliefs that highlight the need for Church reform

JOHN BUGGY

John Buggy STL BSW(Hons), Australian Reforming Catholics spokesperson, articulates the reform group's ideas for change in the Catholic system of belief in the lead up to the Pastoral Council.



Catholics across Australia who met in discernment gatherings have expressed quite strongly the need for Church reform as they await the outcome of the coming Plenary Council. They have drawn out teachings that should be changed or reinterpreted if the Church is to connect and reconnect with so many people seeking intelligent and meaningful ways to approach their faith.

A number of organised groups have arisen in recent years attempting to give a lead in how reform should take place. One of these groups, Australian Reforming Catholics (ARC), established in the year 2000, has hundreds of members across Australia and includes clergy, religious and laity. Its main objective has been to inform, educate and support those who are attempting to develop a mature spirituality. This often means putting aside notions and practices that inhibit an understanding of what Jesus was really teaching and how we should apply that today.

The members of ARC hold that this objective could be pursued even more effectively if 19 identified Church reform organisations, grouped under the name of Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR), were able to state a set of beliefs that unite them in their efforts to influence the process of reform.

Below is a draft statement, already supported by some, that could develop towards the expression of a united set of beliefs. It is currently a work in progress.

ARC statement of beliefs

As members of ACCCR we hold that the following is needed in order to bring about much needed Catholic Church reform:

1. A revised theology of Church as the People of God served and inspired by its

pastoral leaders in accordance with the vision of the Second Vatican Council;

2. A revised theology of priestly ministry that recognises the equality of men and women and eschews all forms of clericalism;
3. A pastoral theology of revelation based on Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* with its emphasis on the ongoing nature of revelation in a changing world understood more and more by new scientific understandings as well as through "believers who ponder these things in their hearts" (*Dei Verbum*, 8);
4. A scholarly approach to the Sacred Scriptures in accordance with scriptural insights gained over the past century or more;
5. A renewed theology of the Trinitarian God as Mystery that emphasizes the love and mercy of the divine and the equality of all in status and dignity;
6. A broader theology of evil and individual and social sinfulness that overcomes the limitations of the concept of original sin and incorporates insights from contemporary theological, scriptural, psychological and sociological understandings;
7. A contemporary pastoral theology of women and the feminine that highlights their equality and participation in human and ecclesial affairs;
8. A revised theology of sex and sexuality in moving beyond the confused understandings of the historical past and which views sexuality in terms of a loving and life-giving encounter of the other, incorporating the fact of different sexual orientations;
9. A revised theology embracing the universe and the environment given by God for our care and enjoyment in ensuring its sustainability;

As members of ACCCR we adhere to the following with relation to this much needed reform and would hope that it is or becomes reflected in Church teaching and/or practice:

The people of God

In relation to #1: The people are the Church and its pastors are its servants (*Lumen Gentium*, II). Although the Church has

historically operated as a hierarchy, Pope Francis constantly refers to an "upturned pyramid" as an image of the way the faithful should have influence on and support those who are commissioned to lead (*2 Corinthians*, ch.3). Vatican II requires its leaders to listen to the sense of faith of the faithful and to be accountable, transparent and inclusive in their decision-making.

As a consequence, any non-remunerative arrangements that are designed to enable participation by non-clerics in decision-making must be by right and also provide the actual opportunity for them to do so. Such decision-making or decision-influencing positions of non-clerics, including those in councils and synods, should be obtained through nomination/election by their peers.

In relation to #2: All the People of God have exactly the same human dignity and ability to respond to the Holy Spirit and should be respected in this way. Bishops and priests are not changed ontologically through ordination. Their position in the Church arises through their commission to respond to the Spirit. The communities of the baptised should be able to select their recommended candidates for this commissioning.

Faith and reason

In relation to #3: Because revelation is ongoing, we believe that the Church must be open to the possible sources of that revelation. Through this, our understanding of the content of our faith progresses over time.

All teaching of the faith should be predicated on the understanding that faith and reason are compatible. Doctrines are to enable understanding but they are not the faith and they develop over time along with new knowledge.

Church teaching does change over time and needs to do so because it is sometimes incorrect or ill-informed.

In relation to #4: Any understanding of the truth in sacred scripture must be interpreted by taking account of the literary forms in which it is written. (*Dei Verbum* III, 12). Scripture teaches religious truth rather than historical or literal truth.

In relation to #5: God is a mystery, the depth of which is unknown in this life. Fundamentalist and over-anthropomorphic depictions of God performing actions that defy the laws of nature are incompatible with reason.

Continued page 24

In relation to #6: God is love and his mercy is infinite. In the dynamic, evolutionary perspective of Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes*, 5) creation becomes the continuous act of God's love by which he draws it, and humankind as part of it, into eternal union with him. Apart from wilful rejection of his love, the notion that anyone is condemned for all eternity is quite inconsistent with this.

The whole understanding of inherited sin, personal sin, and societal sin (e.g., lack of care of the earth) needs to be totally re-examined.

Equality and Inclusion

In relation to #7: All human beings are equal in status and dignity. They all have the right to be free and self-actualise, to speak openly, to act according to their conscience, to marry, and form relationships in harmony with the needs and rights of others. To support this, inclusive language should be used in all forms of Church communication, including liturgies.

Given the equality of men and women, there is no cogent reason why any man or woman, single or married, per se cannot be ordained to the priesthood.

In relation to #8: All truly loving relationships are important. However, relationships and marriages do fail but people need relationships to sustain them throughout life. People should not be shut off from the sacramental life of the Church for any reason if they genuinely desire otherwise.

The church teaching that homosexual inclination is 'objectively disordered' and homosexual acts are 'intrinsically disordered' must be revised to reflect what we now know from science, anthropology and psychology. Sexual and gender diverse individuals, couples and communities must be recognised as inherent members of God's people and the human and church family, created by God, loved and equally blessed by God.

In relation to #9: Care for the earth, the environment, and the sustainability of life within it is of utmost importance (constantly emphasised by Pope Francis). False ideas of dominion lead to exploitation. We need sustainable progress supported by human values that have been swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur. (*Laudato Si*, 114). Population sustainability with dignity has become critical and people have the right to limit the size of their families in this context. The Church's official teaching on contraception requires revision because the faithful overall have not accepted it. ☪

Covenant Spirit inspiring Plenary Council

CHRIS BAKER SSC

Chris Baker SSC, retired Columban priest, reflects on his ministry in the context of the covenant motif in scripture.

Thanks to *The Swag* (Autumn 21) for naming me among Jubilarians ordained priests over seventy years ago. As a Columban guest theology student at Corpus Christi College, Werribee, I was ordained in 1950. After twenty years teaching Scripture in Sydney, my assignments were for some thirty years of pastoral work in Peru and eight years of editorial work in Ireland. Now retired at Essendon, I am happy to share with you some of the Gospel joy experienced from so many years of celebrating daily Mass.

It has helped me appreciate the central role of biblical covenants, especially their call for a personal and community renewal on the people's part. Pope Francis' call to a "Covenant between humanity and the environment" (*Laudato Si*' 209-221) may help integrate recommendations arising in the Plenary Council from the masterly preparatory *Instrumentum Laboris* (Working Document).

The overall perspective for my presentation is the continuity of all biblical covenants down to the present day. This is based on the words, "Before the world was created, he (Father) chose us in Christ to be holy before the world was made" (Eph 1,4), and Christ "is the firstborn of all creation, ... and in him all things hold together" (Col 1,15-17).

Brevity now means each covenant will be simply outlined. (A much fuller account is given in the author's *Covenant and Liberation – Giving new heart to God's endangered family*; Peter Lang, 1991). Because God is love, all the progressive covenants are pledges of unconditional love, inviting a response of loving service from sinful humankind, and in harmony with all creation. God always shows "everlasting love" towards all people. Consequently, the merciless who despise, impoverish, even enslave and kill others, are warned and punished.

Covenant with Noah and all living creatures to come

The first biblical covenant tells, in myth form, of a fresh beginning of the human family, when God assures Noah and his family, "I am now establishing my covenant with you, and with your descendants to come, and with every living creature with you for all ages to come" (Gn 9,8-10).



The rainbow, which can be seen by all generations anywhere on earth, is to be a permanent sign of that covenant (cf. Gn 9,17). It remains in force today.

Covenant with Abraham and descendants

How has God bridged the millennia between mythical Noah and his "descendants"? Very recently Pope Francis' historical trip to Iraq included a visit to Ur, the birthplace of Abraham. There Francis dwelt on the unique call of the patriarch to become a channel of blessings for "all the nations of the earth". God confirms the promises to Abraham with a ritually sealed covenant, and later with an oath. God calls Abraham to be the father of one elected family. (cf. Gn cc. 12-22)

Covenant with Moses and Israel

Abraham and Sarah's family expanded, through Isaac and Jacob, into twelve tribes of Israel. Eventually they became slaves in Egypt. The God of Abraham, mindful of the promises, leads them out of slavery. At Sinai God invites this emerging nation to enter a covenant, binding them to live according to the Ten Commandments. They are to worship God alone, while treating all their fellow Israelites with justice and family concern. They accept these obligations, allowing Moses to seal the covenant by casting sacrificial blood over the altar and people (cf. Ex cc 18-24).

Covenant with David and dynasty

Israel's history for the following eleven centuries was marked by successes and failures in living according to their covenant. The covenant with King David, in the ninth century BC, is another unbreakable promise: "Your dynasty and your sovereignty will ever stand secure before me" (2 Sam 7,16). This covenant

underlies the long messianic expectations. Royal leadership soon deteriorated and led to such a divided Israel that major populations of north and south kingdoms were deported to Nineveh and Babylon. By early fifth century BC, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, the reign of monarchs suppressed.

Prophetic promises of a new covenant

Prophets are called by a compassionate God to teach the rebels that they are still loved, like a faithless wife being invited back to her loyal husband. For example: Hosea, in the north, gives God's promise to Israel, "I will betroth you to myself for ever ...in uprightness and justice, in faithful love and tenderness" (2,19). Jeremiah in Jerusalem announces God's explicit promise of a new covenant with Israel, but unlike the one with their ancestors. "No, they broke that covenant of mine" (31,31-32). To facilitate fidelity to the new covenant, God promises, "Within them I shall plant my law, writing it on their hearts" (31,33).

The writer of Isaiah cc.40-55, among the captives in Babylon, presents God as Creator and Redeemer, about to lead the deported people back to Jerusalem. The suffering servant portrayed in four exquisite Songs has an astonishing similarity to Jesus – see Holy Week liturgy. The first Song announces to the Servant, "I, Yahweh, have called you, ... I have made you a covenant of the people and light to the nations" (Is 42,6). After the fourth Song, God reassures faithless Israel, "your Creator is your husband" and "in everlasting love I have taken pity on you" (Is 54,5-8).

New covenant with Jesus and all humankind

From that long and troubled marriage is born from Mary, a consenting Jewish maiden, God's beloved Son made man. The Infancy Narratives of Mt and Lk hail the infant Jesus as both Son of God son of David, sent to rule on the long-vacant throne of David. On his presentation in the Temple, he is welcomed by Simeon as the light of the nations and the glory of Israel.

Jesus proclaims and personifies the Good News of God's kingdom arriving. John the Baptist rejoices as a friend hearing "the voice of the bridegroom" (Jn 3,29). Disciples of John and the Pharisees also hear from Jesus that his own disciples do not fast "while the bridegroom is with them" (Mk 2,19). The priorities of Jesus' redemptive mission are summarised in the Sermon on the Mount, like a charter of

new covenant demands (Mt cc. 5-7). Jesus is continually forming a small community of disciples to be guided and served by the Apostles. He is patiently preparing them to be his own chosen bride, the Church (cf. Eph c.5).

At his final Passover meal in Jerusalem, Jesus is ready to mediate the new covenant between his Father and the human family. Jesus announces this to the Twelve as he asks them to eat "my body given for you", and to drink from the cup, as "This cup is the new in my blood poured out for you" (cf. Lk 22,19-20). In Gethsemane he accepts as man, on behalf of all people, "Father, let your will be done, not mine". On the Cross he prays to the Father for forgiveness of those who do not know what they are doing, such as those who shout, "we have no king but Caesar". Now that his hour has reached its climax, Jesus entrusts to his mother the care of the beloved disciple, representing all future disciples. After some sour wine, as exclaims, "It is fulfilled." And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit" [better: gave the Spirit] (Jn 19,30). He has just sealed the new covenant in his own blood. Mary becomes the mother of the infant Church now firmly founded by Jesus, in the presence of other loyal disciples like Mary's sister and Mary of Magdala. A brilliant reflection on the Cross and the covenant presents Jesus Christ as the compassionate and trustworthy high priest, whose sacrifice "makes him the mediator a new covenant," (Hebrews 9,15).

It is highly significant that the Risen Jesus appears first to Mary of Magdala at the empty tomb. As she beholds in him the first fruits of the new creation. Confiding in her why she need not cling to him, he sends as first witness of his resurrection, to tell the disciples,

"I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (Jn 20,17). This phrase recalls God's frequent summary of a covenant, "I shall be their God, they shall be my people".

New Covenant inspiration for Plenary Council

Pentecost ushers in the new Holy People of God, equally open to Israelites and all descendants of Adam and Noah. Entry into the Church is through baptism. The Spirit of Jesus inspires the loyal missionary disciples to reach out and invite others to join them with faith in the kingdom of God. As one global family they may happily recognise God as their Creator, King and Father. Celebration of the Eucharist has been the Church's supreme

way to nourish and broaden its sharing in the new covenant. It remembers the Mediator's command, "Do this in memory of me". Each Mass leads up to Communion as the covenant meal of joyful kinship. As the rainbow is a continuing reminder of the Noah covenant, so is the Mass a reminder of the new covenant. This involves participation in a Christian community, a local church. The right to share constantly in celebration of the Eucharist demands radical new ways of selecting, preparing, and ordaining sufficient local people to be celebrants.

Members of the Church are brothers and sisters, being holy and with personal charisms (cf. *Fratelli Tutti* – Brothers and Sisters All). Clericalism is not acceptable. All are guided by the Spirit to share wisely in discerning the "sensus fidei" (correct grasp of the faith). That is why the global Church now encourages a synodal attitude, of readiness to listen carefully "to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev 2,29).

In conclusion, the invitations from God to remember and keep on acting according to covenant obligations are unceasing. They now extend to the participants, and those they represent, in the coming Plenary Council. All three Divine Persons will be present at the Council, calling their Australian Holy People to renew their church in the light of the five covenants so graciously granted through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and perfected in now risen Jesus Christ of Nazareth. ☪

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Preaching and celebrating with humanity

KEVIN BURKE

Kevin Burke, retired Melbourne priest, reflects on changes and challenges in preaching relevant homilies in the current time.

Two years retired, I'm a restless pew dweller. I find myself critiquing celebrants on their presidential and preaching skills.

Admittedly the bar is staggeringly high. I live in the Melbourne bayside parish of Sandringham and have been spoilt rotten by the unmatched presidential and preaching skills of arguably Australia's top liturgist of our generation, Frank O'Loughlin. I'm developing a theology of preaching with three fundamental criteria, namely the preacher's humanity, spirituality and passion.

Firstly, a quality preacher needs to be experiencing life in all its beauty, ugliness and enlightenment. Early in my seminary days, I heard the slogan: Grace builds on nature. That's too abstract and static for me so I re-construct it to say: God's dynamic Spirit works in and through people and life. Through life's highs and lows a preacher needs to be learning the lessons of failure, hurt, humiliation, joy, forgiveness and healing thereby becoming a person of compassion and empathy.

God's transformative Spirit can bring about superb and unexpected results but it helps if we are open and receptive to her magnificent gifts. That way we give ourselves a chance to be empowered with the gifts of wisdom and discernment in all their extraordinary depth. The great Melbourne archdiocese has a well-earned reputation for energetic, pastorally-minded priests.

Enabling leadership and clericalism

As Eric Hodgins has noted in *The Swag*, Melbourne parish life in the 70s and 80s was vibrant and dynamic thanks partly to the enabling and supportive leadership of the gentle, joyful, empowering leadership of Frank Little. Our instinctive pastoral disposition was one of serving the community. As Pope Francis regularly counsels us, clericalism is sadly alive and kicking. It's among us like a highly infectious virus. It afflicts every one of us with widely differing range of awareness. I'm afraid that in recent decades, the service culture has been swamped by the clericalism contagion.

I'm concerned that many priests ordained in past thirty years or so, whether here or overseas, have had sheltered upbringing and seminary training heavily based on conformity and piety. Moving widely around the suburbs, from what I've observed and been told, many younger and middle-aged priests are as authoritarian and dogmatic as some of the tough old priests of pre-Vatican II days. People say to me: he's so arrogant, he needs to grow up, his sermons are airy-fairy, his outlook is reactionary.

Secondly, an effective preacher needs to be developing a healthy spirituality that's sustaining and nourishing. He obviously



needs a strong prayer life backed up by spiritual reading and personal reflection. He must become a passionate lover of both the word of God and His people. There are ample sources of wise and insightful spiritual writers from the mystics to more recent people such as Frs. Richard Rohr and Ron Rolheiser. I remember one of my parish priests saying, something like: unless we are powerfully touched by the Holy Spirit, we'll just continue going through the motions. I've found that to be so true. I was blessed to experience a transformative marriage encounter weekend in my sixth year. We all need the healing touch of the Spirit to depth our spirituality. The spirited experience energizes and sustains us, giving us a refreshing and renewing perspective on life.

Enfleshed ministry

I'd love to ask one guy if he believes in the incarnation. I'm sure he'd say yes, thinking dogmatically, notionally, but his head

needs to inform his heart. That would give the Spirit an opening to get in and do her thing. The Word did become flesh and the person Jesus did dwell among us and continues to dwell among us through his Spirit. This guy's preaching is basically a running commentary on the scriptures with little danger of being enfleshed in our lived reality or touch on life's challenges, struggles and joys.

I realize that ideas, principles and truths are fundamentally important but a person is more than the mind. We have a heart and a spirit as well. Our intellectual, emotional and spiritual components coalesce and are intermingled. Our preaching needs to respect the fullness of our human condition.

Ideas can be expressed in a narrowly cerebral way so that our preaching becomes boring and irrelevant as many parishioners say. We need to break out of our cosy little world of doctrines and principles and pray for the gift/grace of regaining our child-like capacity of wonder, awe and fascination. It's so liberating and empowering to dare to dream, to explore life's richness, beauty and mystery. We can learn so much from poets and other creative artists.

My favourite Old testament quote is: Where there is no vision, the people will perish (Proverbs 29:18). Each day in morning prayer I pray earnestly for the gifts of wisdom and discernment so I can see more clearly. I want the Spirit to help me broaden and depth my life's vision.

A creative imagination inspires

Our preaching becomes more powerful if it stems from a mature and creative vision. As I say, ideas are important but, even here, we have scope to be more expansive and adventurous. It's important for us preachers to activate and express our God-given gift of imagination. It's the master key to empowering us to explore the depths of life's mystery, paradox and grandeur.

I'm not a very creative person but I try to exploit my imaginative graces when preaching as well as using gutsy, moving stories from more creative people like Rolheiser and US pastor/writer Bill Bausch.

Thirdly, an impactful preacher needs to

speaking from the depths of his heart and communicating with conviction and passion as Jesus did. Our cerebral westernized culture doesn't encourage us to share our personal feelings. My years as a marriage encounter team priest helped me greatly to explore and reveal my deepest feelings.

Good preaching based in story

You can see parishioners sit up and listen when you tell your story and reveal your vulnerabilities and blind spots. We don't have to spill our innards every week but I'm sure people appreciate it when we're honest and transparent with them. Recently I've impertinently challenged two guys in their sixties, quality guys and good pastors and I said to them: you preach well, good exegesis, excellent theology, concise etc. In addition to the head stuff, I want to hear from your heart as well. I'd like to see some passion and conviction.

I reckon it's important to be confident that we have an open and trusting relationship with our parishioners and that we can and should preach from the depths of our hearts. The dynamic life-giving Spirit within us reaches out and communicates with the Spirit within our people.

I recently read an article about the brilliant actor Anthony Hopkins. He was musing about life's mysteries. He said, *I'm an old sinner, like everyone else is... It's a wonderful freedom... There's more to life than I can even begin to comprehend. Am I talking about God? I don't know. I'm talking about the divine process of being alive. It's such an experience.*

To what extent do our celebrations and preaching reflect that reality of the divine process of being alive? I wonder how many Anthony Hopkins types we're driving away from our churches in recent decades

as our celebrations, and preaching in particular, lack energy, imagination and passion? To engage and hold onto our surviving bunch of searchers and truth seekers, we preachers need a breadth of vision, openness to life and an imaginative sense of wonder and mystery.

A well-directed, nuanced homily touches on life's mystery, beauty and paradox. It has the power to appeal to the imagination as well as energizing and moving hearts. A head only approach won't ever do it.

We preachers have a sacred responsibility, a privileged gift and an awesome challenge to actively create the most conducive environment for the Spirit that energizes and sustains us to reach out and communicate to the Spirit dwelling in the people gathered for the Eucharistic celebration. ☪



Whose rule of law?

DR CRISTY CLARK

Dr Cristy Clark is a senior lecturer with the Faculty of Business, Government and Law at the University of Canberra. Here she discusses the meaning of 'the rule of law' in Australia in the wake of the use of this term recently. This article was first published in *Eureka Street* on March 11, 2021. Vol 31 No 4 (www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/whose-rule-of-law) Reprinted with permission.

Last week, during a press conference in Perth, the Australian Attorney-General refused to stand down in the face of a serious allegation of sexual assault. To support his right to continue to serve as Australia's first law officer, the Attorney-General said: 'My guess is that if I were to resign and that set a new standard, there wouldn't be much need for an Attorney-General anyway, because there would be no rule of law left to protect in this country.'

In response to this bold claim, there have been a raft of articles defending both the concept and resilience of the rule of law in Australia, including its capacity to withstand an independent inquiry into allegations of sexual assault against the Attorney-General. I am not planning to add further to that particular conversation. Instead, I want to dig a little further and consider the quality of this rule of law that we are all so keen to protect.

The rule of law is an elusive concept that we legal academics teach to law students as a fundamental principle of our system of law and government. At its core, it means that a country should be governed by a

system of laws rather than the whims of an authoritarian government (or monarch). What this means in practice isn't always clear, but most theorists agree that it means that government can only act when authorised by law; that the law applies equally to everyone (even to those in power); that the law is transparent and certain (meaning, for example, that retrospective laws are generally not okay); and the separation of powers is respected.

This shallow, or formal, concept of the rule of law is obviously preferable to an unaccountable authoritarian government that wields power arbitrarily against its population. But it still only gets us so far. A more substantive approach to the rule of law makes further demands in relation to both the *quality* of law and the *process* by which it is developed.

This substantive approach requires that we go beyond universal access to justice in order to provide just outcomes – including the social, economic and cultural conditions conducive to human dignity. It also demands that everyone is able to participate in the process of developing the law – that the legitimacy of both the government and law



is grounded in the consent of the governed.

Far from the rule of law

The events of the last few weeks have provided a devastatingly clear illustration of how far we are from upholding a substantive version of the rule of law in Australia. And before I'm misunderstood, let me be clear: the last few weeks have been instructive, not because the women who have been so thoroughly let down by the system are in any way representative of the people who are the most structurally disadvantaged. It is precisely because these white, middle-class, well-connected women were not protected (let alone allowed a seat at the table) that we can conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the rules of this game are rigged.

'It is no wonder that the Attorney-General calls on the rule of law to protect him. He, and people who look just like him, have written the law to do just this.'

There's a reason, for example, that such a tiny percentage of victims report sexual assault to police, and it's related to the fact

Continued page 28

that so few of these reports result in prosecution and even fewer in a conviction. There's also a reason that recent 'tough on crime' laws have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of women and girls being incarcerated, and it's related to the fact that 33 per cent of them are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. These statistics are not an aberration – they are a direct result of our current settler, carceral system. As just one illustration of how this currently plays out in Australia, let's recall the story of Ms Dhu who was arrested in

2014. The police were actually responding to a report that Ms Dhu's partner had violated an apprehended violence order. Instead of providing her with support or protection, the system imprisoned Ms Dhu for outstanding fines. While in custody, Ms Dhu became ill and subsequently died as a result of 'unprofessional and inhumane' handling by police and 'deficient' treatment from hospital staff – all motivated by racism (consciously or otherwise). A formal approach to the rule of law makes sense, if the law is designed to

protect you. What's more, if you have a guaranteed seat at the table when the law is being written, then it's highly likely to protect you, to *privilege* you even. Given this, it is no wonder that the Attorney-General calls on the rule of law to protect him. He, and people who look just like him, have written the law to do just this. The question is, now that the rest of us know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the rules of this game are rigged, what are we going to do about it? ☹️



To err (and shame) is human, to forgive is divine

PETER DAY

Peter Day, Canberra priest, looks at the influence of guilt and shame culture in today's difficult hyper-public ethical space.

In July 2018 students at the University of Manchester painted over a mural of Rudyard Kipling's "If" – a poem which has previously been voted Britain's favourite. But however moving or inspiring many people find the poem, these students decided to erase it [cancel it!]. Perhaps, inevitably, they wrote a poem by Maya Angelou over the top of it. The "liberation and access" officer at the university's student union justified the action [the shaming] by explaining that Kipling was guilty of having "sought to legitimate the British Empire's presence in India" and "dehumanizing people of colour." (Douglas Murray, *The Madness of Crowds*)

Something's happening to western civilisation. A paradigm shift: a movement away from the Judeo-Christian Guilt/Righteousness (Redemption) Culture to a Shame/Honour (Exclusion) Culture – and there are significant consequences. First, some distinctions:

- In a guilt culture, one's conscience referees the dividing line between the good and the bad one does. In a shame culture, the community is the referee: it determines whether you are honoured or excluded – i.e. who's in and who's out.
- In a guilt culture, the sin and the sinner are treated separately: "Sure, I've done a bad thing, but that doesn't mean *I am bad*." In a shame culture, the sin and the sinner are one and the same: "I've done a bad thing, therefore *I am bad*."
- In a guilt culture, the sinner is encouraged to repent under a canopy of forgiveness and mercy: redemption. In a shame

culture, the sinner is encouraged to keep quiet in order to save face (honour) and, thus, avoid being shunned by the group (aka the twitter mob et al).

Indeed, the current manifestation of shame culture with its trial by media and public opinion is, inter alia, re-wiring how we navigate our moral landscape – and what voice(s) we listen to. As David Brooks and Andy Crouch have observed, *The world of Facebook, Instagram and the rest is a world of constant display and observation. The desire to be embraced and praised by the community is intense. People dread being exiled and condemned. Moral life is not built on the continuum of right and wrong; it's built on the continuum of inclusion and exclusion... There are no permanent standards, just the shifting judgment of the crowd. It is a culture of oversensitivity, overreaction and frequent moral panics, during which everybody feels compelled to go along.*

It's as though we're slowly, but surely outsourcing our morality to a voice that sits outside ourselves: actors on a public stage allowing the level of applause to determine our morality. This is in stark contrast to the voice commended by a guilt culture; one that encourages us to engage in an inner conversation with the better (and more forgiving) angels of our nature: *Deep within our conscience we discover a law which we have not laid upon ourselves but which we must obey. Its voice, ever calling us to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in our heart at the right moment... For we have in our heart a law*

inscribed by God... Our conscience is our most secret core and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths. (Vatican II, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)

Sexual ethics

Much is being said and written (and protested) about violent and inappropriate sexual behavior in our culture. Some observations:

1. Sex 'education': The pervasive reach of the internet and social media has given the purveyors of porn virtually unfettered 'teaching' access to almost every living Australian. Indeed, the average age we access porn in this country is around 10 yrs. We are literally soaking in porn: much of it utterly exploitative and degrading of women, increasingly violent, and contemptuous of consent.
2. Relationship 'modelling': Wife Swap. Bridezillas. Farmer Wants a Wife. The Bachelor. The Bachelorette. Married at First Sight. Dating in the Dark. Kiss Bang Love. Love Island Australia. Back with the Ex. Seven Year Switch... the less said, the better.
3. "Free love": Casual, Inconsequential Sex. This seems to be the default ethic of the age. Thus, sexual encounter has been commodified: hollowed of its meaning, or, at the very least, decoupled from it; a mere exchange of goods between consumers. "Intimacy?" Bah humbug! "Do you care?" Bah humbug! "Can we get to know each other?" Bah humbug! "I'm not so sure about this?" Bah humbug! "I've had too much to drink." Bah humbug! "NO!" Bah humbug! Is there anything casual, or inconsequential about sex?

Alas, we find ourselves mired in diabolical double-bind: that is, on the one hand, we set the sexual ethics bar so low, encouraging the hounds of licentiousness and sleaze to roam the streets unchecked; while, on the other hand, we set the bar for mercy and forgiveness so high, so as to place them out of reach. It's as if we're sending people blind-folded into a field contaminated with mines, and then reacting with shock and disgust when they set them off.

No wonder the confusion, no wonder the tears – no wonder the outrage.

Perhaps some re-arranging is in order? Why not consider setting the sexual ethics bar very high with this, or similar messaging: You are of inestimable worth. You are infused with inherent dignity and value. This worth is inviolable. It transcends gender, sexuality, social status, ethnicity, colour, and Creed. Endowed with this objective truth, it behoves you to not only honour and reverence your own humanity in all its fullness, but that of others as well.

And why not consider setting the mercy and forgiveness bar very low with this, or similar messaging: Conscious that the dividing line between good and evil rests in the human heart, it stands to reason that each of us is prone to fall – and often. 'Who am I to judge?' Further, conscious, too, that without mercy and forgiveness there can be no justice, no peace; we are compelled to resist the impulse to condemnation and hatred when others fall short of community standards and expectations, even drastically so: Our social cohesion depends on this.

Look, this is not a facile pulpit call to cancel porn, or reality TV, or casual sex; rather, it is a call to imbibe our young with a narrative of personal and communal self-worth to help them navigate the fraught, life-giving, clumsy, profound, confusing, and mistake-riddled path to sexual maturity and health.

Healing the broken spirit

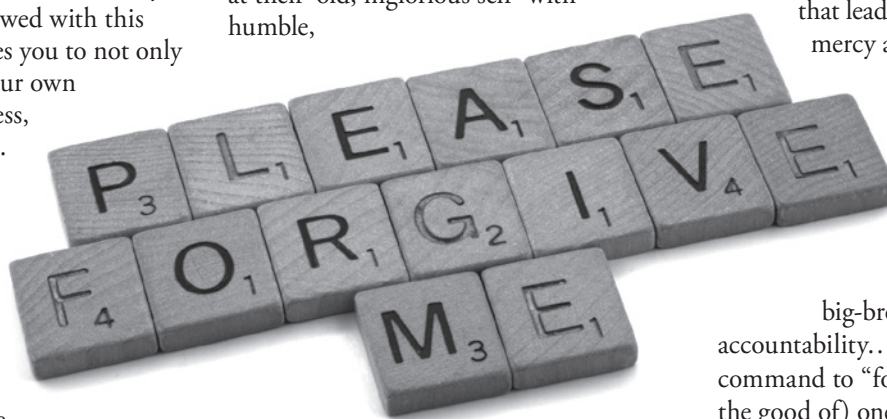
The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) have much to commend them. They have saved many a life, healed many a broken spirit – and opened the path of mercy, forgiveness, and redemption to those diminished by the shame and humiliation of addiction.

Two of the Steps are particularly pertinent to the challenges presently facing our culture, most especially the struggle to come to terms with our past:

Step 4: The addict is to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of themselves. Is not western culture in the midst of a searching moral inventory of itself: a sort of racial and gender relations audit?

Step 8: The addict is to make a list of all persons they have harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. Is not western culture in the midst of compiling lists of the peoples it has violated and damaged in the past? And, is it not our culture seeking to make amends – e.g. via redress/reparations schemes, for instance?

An important distinction: the addict in an A.A. setting is invited to look back at their 'old, inglorious self' with humble,



forgiving eyes, lest self-hatred and resentment take hold; thus, undermining the path to redemption.

This searing moral inventory also takes place away from the gaze of the public: no Facebook, Twitter, or mob shaming here. This 'anonymity' affords the addict time and space to converse with their inner voice; to name their demons and, as much as is possible, make good and make amends: healing.

The 'addict' we call western culture, however, finds itself in a different setting; under a different gaze: that of shame and exclusion. Within this framework, there's little chance of recovery and healing from past sins: gosh, even something as trivial as an old, if really dumb Tweet is paraded as a permanent indicator of character, regardless of context, or personal growth: "sack him, cancel her; shame on you!"

This is why, according to Rabbi Johnathan Sacks; *in a shame culture you don't hear people saying, 'I was wrong. It was my fault. I'm sorry. Forgive me.* [Instead, people try

to lawyer it out, or hide behind a PR smokescreen: don't admit, don't get caught.] *The only way to survive in a shame culture is to be shameless. Some people manage this quite well, but deep down we know that there's something rotten in a system where no one is willing to accept responsibility.*

Within this milieu, mercy and forgiveness are sidelined as a foolish indulgence. They have 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.

It has been said that "Justice without love is Marxism" – and we know where that leads. Similarly, justice without mercy and forgiveness also leads to tyranny, and the fruits are bitter: vigilantism, witch hunts, cancel culture, public humiliation, circumventing of law, suspicion of neighbor,

big-brother hyper-accountability... The Judeo-Christian command to "forgive" and "to love (will the good of) one's enemies", has nothing to do with sentimentality, or feelings. It is about choice. And this is why forgiveness is so damned hard: it is an act of the will that calls us to defy raw, atavistic emotions.

Forgiveness of the perpetrator, be it an individual, even a culture, is never about obstructing, or negating the path of natural justice – indeed, lengthy prison sentences are also central to justice and healing where serious crime is involved. Rather, it is about ensuring that justice is not meted out with 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, unforgiving mob?

Shame and exclusion puts (and keeps) the addict in the gutter; forgiveness and redemption leads them home – and back into right relationship.

'To err is human, to forgive is divine.' ☪

Hope and healing after abortion

VERONICA MCCLUSKIE SGS

Sr Veronica McCluskie SGS, Spiritual Director and Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Team member, speaks of the heartbreak that can follow abortion and her ministry with women and men who have found healing through that ministry. This article was first published in the April 2021 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-journal of the Good Samaritan Sisters (www.goodsams.org.au) and is republished with permission.

It was just over twenty years ago that I was invited to attend a meeting about how to support women and men affected in some way by abortion. I was very unsure of how I could be of any assistance, but I went along. So began my deep involvement in Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Ministries, Sydney.

It was Julie Kelly who introduced this supportive and healing retreat to Sydney and so to Australia. Julie had come across this ministry while attending a RCIA conference in America. This ministry touched a deep chord in Julie's heart so she decided to return to America to learn more by attending a retreat and facilitation workshop. It was on her return that she invited Fr Peter Maher (at that point Peter was the Parish Priest of Newtown) to help her share this ministry here. It was then, at the very beginning, that I was invited to help as well. But this was not just Julie's idea. The ministry is directly connected to Rachel's Vineyard Ministry in America

It was Dr Theresa Bourke, who discovered early in her career as a psychologist working on eating disorders, that many of her patients who suffered from symptoms related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) had also had an abortion. In 1994, she published *Rachel's Vineyard: A Psychological and Spiritual Journey for Post Abortion Healing*. After writing the book, Theresa developed a Catholic weekend retreat to help those affected by abortion to come to healing. The retreat, firmly based in Scripture, invites participants to enter into their own reality through a variety of Gospel stories, reflections, symbolic actions and personal sharing.

In the past twenty years, the Sydney group has grown into a well organised team. I have been privileged to be part of that team. We have had our ups and downs over these years. In the beginning we had no funds to help. I was delighted that Sr Sonia Wagner (our Congregational Leader at that time) not only encouraged me to be part of this ministry, but also allowed us to use Mt. St Benedict, Pennant Hills, as the place for our Retreats. Initially the Congregation carried some of the costs so that participants could attend based on

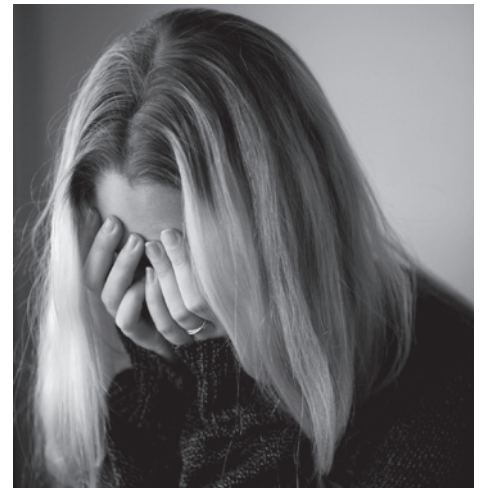
what they could afford. This allowed the team (all volunteers) to lead the retreat without worrying about finance. Over time, through the advocacy of Julie Kelly, support was given by the Dioceses of Sydney, Broken Bay and Parramatta.

What is it that I have learnt about this ministry?

I have discovered that while our mainstream society appears to accept abortion as a means of dealing with an unwanted pregnancy, I have come to realise that for many women and men that this is not all the story. Yes, in some ways abortion appears to solve a problem. But for many it simply creates more, often hidden, problems. The term 'abortion' is replaced with 'termination' which for some is easier to say. But even that is often hidden from others. While people may readily talk about operations they have had, the topic of an abortion is not readily discussed. I wonder if this is because this is not just about the physical but somehow it reaches into the very depth of our human psyche?

Over the many retreats I have been part of I have listened to the pain, the guilt, the soul-destroying agony of both men and women, young and old as they shared their story, for some, for the first time. The retreat space was a place of safety where such stories could be told. I heard the anguish of those who thought there was no forgiveness. I heard stories of shame and guilt that blinded the retreatant not only to see the love of others for them, but to reject it. I cried with a young man as he told of how he discovered that his child had been aborted. My heart broke as I heard so many times the cry: 'I just want my baby'.

But over the time of the retreat I also witnessed a slow and gradually healing. Nothing magical, but certainly grace filled as new insights emerged. The image of God changed from that of an angry ogre ready to condemn, to a God of mercy and love, who is ready to understand and forgive. There was often, too, a discovery that God's love challenges and encourages love and forgiveness in return. I recall one woman coming to the realisation that something was missing from her story.



When asked what it was she replied simply "God". When asked what she wanted to say to God, she very quietly whispered, "I miss you". When asked what she thought God wanted to say to her, she paused, thought for a moment and then said, "I miss you, too!"

I witnessed women naming their child and beginning to see light in the darkness as their child is named in the simple ritual of remembrance. Often at this time of the retreat, women also give a name to a child of a miscarriage they had. Healing is not magic, it takes time. One retreatant wrote, "Some years after my retreat I still carry feelings of regret and sadness. Grief never really goes away completely, but I have been able to forgive myself and the others in my story and to turn my terrible experience into a positive one. My lost child is an important part of my life that I hold within, and Rachel's Vineyard has enabled me to bring dignity and acknowledgement to his life. Never fully healed, but well and truly in a much better place with the knowledge that my God understands, loves and forgives."

The team, all volunteers, some who have come via the retreat experience, are there as a means of support and guidance, one of whom is always a priest. For many Catholics, that presence and indeed mine as a Religious, gives some participants a different view of Church, which, I have been told, is itself the beginning of the healing process. While this is a retreat founded in the Catholic tradition, it is not limited to Catholics. It is open to anyone of faith. For me it is a truly amazing way of being a Good Samaritan to some very wounded persons. ☪

*For more information about the retreats at Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville NSW,
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E: rachelsvineyardaus@gmail.com
W: www.rachelsaus.blogspot.com*

Monstrans ... Elevans ... The Eucharistic Prayer

PATRICK FLANAGAN

Fr Patrick Flanagan, Maryborough, VIC, explores the rubrics of eucharist.

Retiring means doing what we want to do, not what we have to do; or something like that. I was extremely fortunate. When I retired mid-2010 at age 75, I was able, through the good graces of Mildura parish priests Tom Brophy and then Mick McKinnon, to continue to live in the Vinnies' unit next to St Joseph's Church, Red Cliffs and to continue on as de facto pastor, but without the burden of administration, doing still what I wanted to do, but no longer what I had to do. That ended with the end of the year 2020, and I am now all but completely retired and living in a home owned by the Maryborough parish, helping out there just a bit. So, I can now write articles for The Swag reflecting about liturgy and me.

At one point in the renewal of liturgy post-Vatican II, in a little-known instruction, the post-conciliar Commission for Liturgy authorised priests to do some experimenting with the liturgy, providing that it was with the knowledge and consent of their bishop. Bishop Mulkearns of Ballarat encouraged me, recognising that I might have something to contribute. My contributions were mainly in the writing of texts for Liturgy. Paul Stenhouse MSC had given a parish mission in Hamilton Vic. in 1972, where I was assistant priest. He recognised that I had a gift and encouraged me to develop it. I have to confess though that when the period for authorised experiments ended, my experimenting continued. I want to share that with you, because parishioners generally were happy with the way I have celebrated Mass.

But just now, I want to point out something about the Eucharistic Prayer that reveals a widespread misunderstanding. *Monstrans* is a rubric which means 'showing.' *Elevans* is another rubric. It means 'holding up high.'

In each of the Eucharistic prayers, when we reach the point that we call the Consecration, the celebrant, at each Consecration, is directed to *monstrare*, to 'show' the Eucharistic species to the assembly. Most celebrants though, at the consecration hold the Eucharistic species up high. This may be a long leftover from the days when the priest celebrated with his back to the congregation. If they were to see the Host at all, he had to hold it up high. But holding it up high is *elevans* not *monstrans*. It is not what the rubric is



telling him to do. This act of showing should be a very simple action, marked by a short pause. In no sense should it convey 'Look what I have done. Recognise the power given to the priest.' Now, don't get me wrong about this. I, Patrick J Flanagan, believe and accept firmly that – by the power of the Holy Spirit – the bread we provide becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine we provide becomes the Blood of Christ. How can this be possible? That's God's worry, not ours.

However, there is a real danger of seeing the Eucharistic prayer as having no function other than that of changing bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharistic prayer is a prayer of 'blessing', that is of praising God and thanking God. In no way may the Consecration be separated from that.

The Eucharistic prayer continues beyond the Consecration, and reaches its climax in the Doxology which concludes it. There is a rubric which tells the celebrant what to do with the Eucharistic species during the Doxology. The rubric says *elevans*, that is 'holding up high.' That gesture is one of offering. If we ask how do we express in the Eucharistic prayer that we are joining with Jesus in his giving himself to God his Father, nowhere is it better expressed than in the *elevans* while we say strongly, Through Him, and With Him and In Him..., concluding with the Great Amen.

There is a corollary to this. If the doxology, with the *elevans* is proclaimed properly it almost pleads for the whole assembly to proclaim the Doxology with the celebrant.

It has been pointed out that if the Doxology is proclaimed by the whole assembly, then the Great Amen becomes a tautology. True, but, in practice, that doesn't matter a bit.

In many places, the Assembly did proclaim the Doxology with the Celebrant. Gradually, this practice was suppressed. Wherever I had responsibility, I have always invited the congregation to recite or to chant the Doxology with me. Now that I am properly retired, I will no longer do this.

Between Red Cliffs and Mildura there is a little place called Irymple, average Sunday attendance, thirty to forty, where the participation in Mass is extra good. Well, they always recited the Doxology with great gusto. Then an assistant priest who had, it seems, a hotline to the Vatican, informed them that the Holy Father did not want them to recite the Doxology. It was for the priest only to proclaim it. So, they stopped. I was told more than once that they were hoping that I, or some other priest, would invite them to begin again to say 'Through Him . . .' I never did. I was just a guest there. But their instincts were spot on.

I would like to suggest to any celebrant who reads this article that you, before you begin the Doxology, hold the Host and the Cup up high, as the rubric tells you to. Later on you might reflect, 'By doing that, did I convey a different meaning?' ☞

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The Eucharist: our joyful commitment to be the body and blood of Jesus

PATRICK KEMPTON

Patrick Kempton writes about the Eucharist based on his Grad Dip Theol. studies.

The Eucharist, (the Greek work for thanksgiving) as celebrated today, is structurally the same as that described in the Gospels and that described by Justin Martyr (100 – 165CE). However, its appearance and focus is often much different. Justin Martyr describes the Eucharist:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves ... and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation. When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss. Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks [the word used by Justin here is the word we translate as 'Eucharist'] that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen'. When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the 'Eucharist' bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent (1st Apologia 65-67).

In the time of Justin Martyr the Eucharist would, most likely, still have been celebrated as part of a meal as is indicated in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 11:17-33).

While the essence of the Eucharist has remained the same since Jesus' final meal before his death, the theology, rituals and symbols have changed greatly over the centuries. The intended emphases have been lost to most communities. The writings of some theologians seem to fail to refer to the complete testimonies of Jesus at the Last Supper. Commentaries

fail to acknowledge a critical section. Jesus does not simply say this is My Body this is My Blood, but this is my Body given, broken, for you, and this is my blood poured out for you. It is these complete statements, which Jesus asked of his followers to do as a memorial of him, that is, to be body broken and be blood poured out for others.

In the account of the last supper the author of John's Gospel seems to have this understanding (Jn 13: 3-17). He tells not of the details of the meal as in the gospels according to Matthew (Mt 26: 26-28), Mark (Mk 14: 22-24) and Luke (Lk 22:



14-20), but importantly highlights the complete giving of self in that Jesus, like a servant washes the feet of those present at the Last Supper. John's Gospel seems to be saying to readers that this Eucharistic meal is a commitment to selfless service of others – body (bread) broken and blood (wine shared) poured out for others.

A sharing in the body and the blood

Paul supports this contention: 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread we break is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?' (1Cor 10:16) Paul is not saying simply that this is the blood and this is the body of Christ but very significantly saying it is a sharing in the blood and body of Christ. This means the community must share in

Jesus' body which was given for all and in His blood which was poured out for all, that is, the community must do just that, in memory of Jesus. With the foregoing in mind, it is important to acknowledge that Jesus did not duplicate Himself at the Last Supper. The bread and wine shared at the Last Supper was not the physical Jesus who was 'at table' with His disciples. Thus the bread and wine became a very significant symbol of the life of Jesus, who gave all – body broken, blood poured out.

Transignification is a term employed to explain the symbolism. K. B. Osborne explains in *Sacramental Guidelines. A Companion to the new Catechism for Religious Educators* (1995) that 'among these theological explanations of how the bread and wine are changed is a traditional view called 'transubstantiation', and a contemporary view called 'transignification'. The real presence of Jesus is the center of this church teaching. Even a name for this, *transubstantiation*, though used by the bishops at Trent, was not defined. Consequently, teachers should never say: the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the real presence is transubstantiation. Rather, in faith we say: 'Jesus is really present to me. Jesus is really present to us.'

Jesus, as divine, is everywhere. While living and working in 1st century Palestine He promised: 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.' (Mt 18: 20) Thus Jesus confirmed His real presence, after His death and resurrection, among all people who gather in His name. The celebration of the Eucharist is one of those occasions. In logic Jesus' presence is either real or it is not. Therefore, to say Jesus' presence is there during the Eucharistic celebration is the same as saying Jesus' real presence is there in the Eucharist. Hence, to emphasise the notion of *real* presence is an exercise in futility. Jesus is either present or He is not.

After centuries of misunderstanding and mal-practice (eg Mass Priests; multiplicity of Masses without congregations), Vatican II has established the path back to the Scriptural notion and that of the Apostolic Tradition regarding the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, one of the early documents of Vatican II, made it clear that Jesus is

present in the Church gathered, in His word, in the person of His minister (the priest presiding) and especially under the Eucharistic species.

How Jesus is present

The presence of Jesus is far broader than the consecrated bread and wine, named the sacred species. But even the bishops of Vatican II found it hard to accept that Jesus' presence, wherever it is, is the same, whether in the home where two people have gathered in His name, or in the His word, or under the Eucharistic species. In other words Jesus is either fully and really present or He is not. It seems that, because there had been in the past such a profound emphasis on the presence, in many cases the physical presence of Jesus in the bread and wine, the bishops of Vatican II had to use the word "especially" in referring to Jesus' presence under the Eucharistic species. This begs the question: what does "especially present" mean?

Accepting the understanding that Jesus' real and full presence exists in every aspect of the celebration of the Eucharist takes away the distracting emphasis on the consecrated bread and wine and opens

up the ability to focus appropriately and equally on the function of each part of the Eucharistic celebration.

At the Last Supper Jesus took, blessed, broke and shared bread with his friends saying this is my body broken for all and took, blessed and shared the cup of wine saying this is my blood poured out for all. This represented His complete unconditional giving of Himself in love. Jesus as the Gospels relate had lived life to the full. He brought the good news to the poor; proclaimed release to the captives; recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free. (Lk 4:19)

While the Eucharist is imbued with the presence of Jesus there is deeper action going on. Bernard Cooke in *Sacraments & sacramentality* (1994) explains that one of the earliest words used in relation to the celebration of the sacraments was the Greek word 'mysterion'. Including the Eucharist, 'The celebration of the sacraments were celebrations of the ultimate 'mysteries' revealed in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.'

Cooke then goes on to say, very significantly, that the sacraments bring 'men and women into a world beyond the purely human, into the realm of the

sacred, into contact with divine power and, it was hoped, divine mercy and grace'. Thus, not only is Jesus present during the Eucharist but those participating are caught up into the realm of the divine.

Justin Martyr refers to the 'Eucharisted' bread and wine. That is to the bread and wine representing those present and their gift of self and other physical gifts to be given to those in need. This crucial aspect of the consecrated, or Eucharisted bread and wine, has been often overlooked but wonderfully described by Frank Andersen in *Eucharist: Participating in the mystery* (2008).

He writes: 'in the early Church the small amounts of bread and wine now on the table ... are but a token of all the gifts of the community that had been stored for distribution during the week (the clothing, the oils, the wax, and so on)'. Andersen goes on to say 'To consecrate the gifts of bread and wine is to consecrate the assembled community: it is the community – and its gifts of bread and wine – that become the fullest extension of the Real Presence of Jesus'.

The Eucharist is our joyful commitment to be the body and blood of Jesus, broken and poured out for each other. ☪



Consent and a new sexual ethic

MICHAEL MULLINS

Michael Mullins, writer and journalist, comments on the current crisis in sexual ethics in the world and the church. Can a sexual ethic be crafted in service of adult love relationships?



Recently I was asked what I thought about consent, in light of the rape allegations that the Federal Government is being forced to confront. It is difficult to answer this without preaching, and preachers on this subject often fall into hypocrisy. But having said this, I have strong views about consent in

sexual relations that I don't mind sharing. Specifically I believe that the most important aspect of having sex is our reading of how the other person is feeling – at every moment of the encounter – and our physical and emotional response to this. Indeed this sense of the other is integral to the pleasure we

get from sex. If that's not the case for you, my advice is that it could be better to use a sex robot or a sex toy instead of a real person.

You may wonder where I get this from. It's straight from the moral teaching of the Catholic Church, which gives priority to respecting the person.

My view is that if we don't do this, we become utilitarian and start to think pragmatically about the sex act. We might consider that society is going to be better off if we lay aside that isolated consent transgression and hope that the other person gets over it. That is perhaps how the Government is playing the current allegations.

But while I believe the Catholic Church gets it right on uncompromising respect for the person, I think its leaders got catastrophically lost along the way when they decided that human reproduction had to be the basis of the Church's sexual ethics. That is, you can't have sex unless you're making babies.

To my mind, this does not sit easily with their more important principle of respect for the person, which has made its own contribution towards western society's valuing of sexual consent. ☪

The story of the caterpillar – a Paschal mystery

RICHARD FRANCIS

Richard Francis explores the Second Sunday of Lent, with Mark's account of the Transfiguration.

When we were kids the most prized caterpillar to find was the one that became the Emperor Moth. Pale iridescent blue green with lots of little brown feet and black spikes on its back that were obviously meant to deter predators. I haven't seen one of those caterpillars for ages; could it be that it's gone the way of many other species, or is it that I don't see with the eyes of a child anymore? Little did that caterpillar know as it chomped voraciously through its favourite leaves that hidden away in its DNA was a magnificent moth, called 'Emperor', I suspect, because of its size.

You and I are a little like the Emperor moth – hidden away in our DNA is a transfiguration into a thing of stunning beauty. Paul calls us 'God's work of art'.

Daniel O'Leary in his *Astonishing Secret* quotes St John Chrysostom (who was known to give some pretty fiery sermons in his day!) as saying, "We are created to be manifestations of God's beauty".

Wow!

That's mind blowing stuff – enough to make us change the way we see ourselves – if we only believed it!

A hidden treasure revealed

You and I are clay pots with a treasure inside. And that's just what we are now; wait till the truth is fully revealed. We focused on the clay and never got to touch the treasure inside; and who knows how dazzling we will look when death transforms (transfigures) us. Like Peter we probably won't know what to say!

Hidden away in the DNA of the caterpillar is the weaving of its own tomb! It must let go of its earthly caterpillar beauty when its *kenosis* time comes! I daresay, like us, it reluctantly begins the process of spinning its own cocoon but little by little it realizes this is what it became a caterpillar for. Does it know it is 'dying' so that a beautiful Emperor moth will come out of its tomb? Who knows?

You and I know because it has been revealed in the Paschal Mystery: the life, death of Jesus of Nazareth and the resurrection of the Christ of God in the humanity of Jesus. The Reign of God is in our DNA – not a static place or state – but a living

transformation into a way of being, into the image of the Christ; as Paul says, 'he will raise up these mortal bodies to be like his own in glory ...and we shall become like him...for we shall see him as he truly is... then shall we also appear with him in glory'. So, I hear this Sunday's gospel of Jesus' transfiguration and think to myself, 'Wow, I'm going to become just like that'.

Is that presumptuous of me, probably, but it's not my worthiness that counts, is it?

There will be some kenotic moments along the way, especially the great kenotic moment of death when you and I will let go of all the 'caterpillar' that clings to us. We can even say the Reign of God is in the DNA of the whole universe – everything that exists; everything is living, dying, and coming to new life.

Did you know that one of the most magnificent displays of gas and dust in the Universe, the Super Nova, is the result of the brightest star, gradually, over thousands of years, slowly fading and condensing into a tiny point of matter/energy, and at the very moment it dies, it explodes into a stunning Super Nova? That looks a lot like paschal mystery to me.

Finding the universal Christ

Are you familiar with the experiences of Thomas Merton and Carryl Houselander? I would encourage you to google their experiences. Merton stood on the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets in Louisville and had an extraordinary vision of the people passing to and fro around him: *liberation from an illusory dream...they were all shining like the Sun, the secret beauty of their hearts where neither sin nor desire, nor self-knowledge can reach... I nearly laughed out loud.*

And Carryl Houselander, on a train in the London underground, had a life changing experience. She speaks of the people around her: *suddenly, I saw Christ in them all, and because they were here the whole world was here...Christ is everywhere.*

Please, read the full accounts of their experiences, they are mind blowing in the strict sense that they are beyond our minds to visualize or imagine! These are extraordinary 'happenings'. Do we dismiss them as their over-active imaginations or are they seeing a reality that we without

the 'eyes' to see are blind to; or are they 'seeing the beauty of God made manifest'? After all, if we could but see it, the whole of Creation manifests the beauty of God!

The people in their visions are transformed! Not just their souls – as though their souls were somehow different to their bodies! They weren't just seeing the people's souls, they were 'seeing' them!

I believe our souls, our spirits, our psyches, our true selves – call it what you like, 'the life principle' is in every cell of our bodies or they wouldn't be living cells. In my head, in my fingernail, in every hair on my head – that's why and how its 'been counted'. Every little sparrow has been counted, 'not one falls to the ground ...'; so the next time you see a sparrow say to it, "Hello, little sparrow, beloved of my Father", she may just answer with a chirp or a flight!

It would be a change in, what Richard Rohr, calls 'our dominant consciousness' if we began to see ourselves not made up of a perishable body and an immortal soul hidden somewhere inside us, and instead, saw our spirit enlivening every cell of our bodies and destined for glory. Why do we cling to the image of 'fallen flesh' and 'our sinful bodies', and sinful world? It would seem we'd prefer bad news to the 'Good News'. Every cell of ours is informed by the 'Reign' of God and destined for a glorious resurrection. After all we do believe in the resurrection of the body, don't we?

Joseph Mary Plunkett, soon after his brother was killed in 1914 in 'the troubles' in Ireland, wrote a beautiful poem: "I see his blood upon the rose", and he finishes with the words:

*'His crown of thorns is twined
with every thorn,
His cross is every tree.'
So, be it archetypal myth to live by,
or Paschal Mystery to be emersed in,
It will always be in love and suffering
that glory shines,
For the Man on the Tree is you and me!
(poetic license invoked!).* ☪

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

Allegations – welcome to my world

PAUL GOOLEY

Paul Gooley, Parish priest, Port Macquarie NSW, explores the double standards when allegations occur in the political world and in the world of a priest.

In light of the Attorney General, Christian Porter facing allegations of a criminal act recently, many politicians and those in the media have made some very interesting comments:

- We must support the victims of sexual assault but not at the expense of the presumption of innocence. *(Christian Porter Press Conference)*
- If I stand down from my position as Attorney-General because of an allegation about something that simply did not happen, then any person in Australia can lose their career, their job, their life's work based on nothing more than an accusation that appears in print. *(Christian Porter Press Conference)*
- My guess is if I were to resign and that set a new standard there wouldn't be much need for an Attorney-General anyway because there would no rule of law left to protect in this country. *(Christian Porter Press Conference)*
- If the law applies equally to each of us, the other side of the coin must be that each of us are just as entitled to the force of the law's protection and procedural fairness, just as we all are subject to the force of its reprimand. *(Financial Review)*
- This means that in a nation governed by the rule of law, everyone is entitled to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt before a criminal court. *(Financial Review)*

In the words of Darryl Kerrigan from the movie *The Castle* – 'tell him he's dreaming.' Because these comments just prove how out of touch politicians and others are. I say this because, as a priest, I find it interesting that our politicians and others are trying to avoid living in the same world that the rest of us now live in. Three examples from my 'world':

NSW Children's Guardian: *Our child protection system in NSW is an allegation-based system. Anyone can make an allegation about a priest/teacher/parent, police officer etc and that allegation, whether true or false, will forever be listed against your name. The allegation is assessed on the standard – "the balance of probabilities" – that is on the balance of probabilities something could have happened. In practical terms, innocent until proven guilty does not exist.*

The National Redress Scheme:

This is an *allegation*-based scheme. Anyone can apply to the scheme and make an allegation about a priest/teacher etc. The priest/teacher etc are never aware that an allegation has been made. The allegation is assessed on the standard – "It is likely" – that is it is likely that something could have happened. Therefore, on that basis a payment is made to the alleged victim. Again, in practical terms, innocent until proven guilty does not exist.

The new national Protocols of the Catholic Church: *The new National Response Protocol (NRP) of the Catholic Church has recently been sent by the Australian Bishops to Rome for 'the approbation of the appropriate Dicasteries'. This protocol sets out how the Catholic Church will deal with "concerns or allegations" (NRP-Stage 1-Page20) going forward from the Royal Commission. Investigators of cases will be applying "the balance of probabilities" as the standard of proof (NRP-Stage4D-Page32).*

If the concern or allegation is 'plausible' then, in certain circumstances, the person is stood aside (NRP-Page24). So, again, in practical terms, innocent until proven guilty does not exist.

So, in my world, in my humble opinion, a new standard was set by our leaders at both civil and church levels some years ago. That standard is this: *'It is likely' that 'on the balance of probabilities' you will always be guilty and even if you can prove your innocent, it's too late because the reality is, that if an allegation is made then the priest/teacher etc would have already been stood aside, lost their job or vocation, had their life's work and reputation destroyed and we will never work in that role again.*

I would also like to draw attention to two other issues that are relevant to my world. They are:

Media Reporting: In my world... if Christian Porter was Fr. Christian Porter then there would be every chance he would have been named and shamed months ago with no regards to privacy, no right of reply and no chance of innocent until proven guilty yet the media kept his name quiet and reported no names until Mr. Porter outed himself as the person of interest.



Seal of Confession: In my world...it is also interesting to note that many political parties and others are trying to take away the seal of confession. Well, how about this – I will if you will. I will give up the seal of the confessional if politicians give up 'Parliamentary Privilege'. Parliamentary Privilege allows any politician to make statements or allegations in the parliament where they are safe from prosecution. I will give up the seal of the confessional if lawyers give up 'Client Legal Privilege'. Client Legal Privilege is a common law right that exists to protect the administration of justice and the right of individuals and other entities/organisations to obtain confidential advice about their legal circumstances. And the list can go on.

So, what should happen to Christian Porter who is alleged to have committed a criminal act? Maybe treat him like the rest of us out here in the real world...

- An allegation has been made.
- The allegation is 'plausible', so he be stood aside while an investigation takes place. That could take two or three years.
- On the 'balance of probabilities' he is guilty.
- He is sacked from his job. He is barred from holding public office and barred from his previous profession – practicing law.
- The Liberal Party (not the taxpayer or Commonwealth) which failed to adequately screen him prior to joining the Liberal Party or supervise him since he was elected should be made to pay millions in compensation to the alleged victims family.

This is probably what would happen to me if it was alleged, I committed a criminal act. Welcome to my world. ☺

Not dividing the seamless garment: why we Catholics don't fit in

GREGORY MOSES

Gregory Moses, retired priest Diocese of Cairns, asks how we might work together with respect and dialogue so that the seamless garment of Christ might remain intact.



Mention of 'the seamless garment' is a reference to the Crucifixion scene in the Gospels, the seamless garment of Jesus which the soldiers didn't want to divide and for which they cast lots. In this context I am talking of the seamless garment of Christian ethics as understood within the Catholic tradition and possibly elsewhere in the Christian tradition as well.

The reference to a seamless garment is appropriate enough in so far as the Crucifixion constitutes part of the grounding for what is at the heart of all our human related ethics, namely the dignity of each and every human being across all boundaries and barriers and distinctions from the first moment of their existence to the last moment and every moment in between, made in the image and likeness of God, one of those for whom the Christ was prepared to lay down his life.

I would like to illustrate this seamless garment with two quotes. The first is from A Message from Fr. Ryan Lerner [the Catholic Chaplain at Yale] to the Saint Thomas More Community at Yale, New Haven, CT, on the occasion of the annual March for Life in Washington D.C. 2021, on January 28th 2021:

For the past three years, Saint Thomas More, the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale, has accompanied students to the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. Because this year's March for Life will be primarily virtual, we will not be travelling with students. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and celebrate the truth that God has breathed each of us into existence. We pause to meditate on this mystery: that all of us

were made for life. We remember that all human rights, justice and liberty, rest on the foundational right of being born, and created in the image and likeness of God. We passionately advocate that prolife means creating a world in which all life can flourish with equal opportunity, where all people have access to adequate nutrition, a clean and healthy environment in which to live, education, health care, family and community support.

We do not excuse any violence against life – such as through abortion, crimes against human dignity in the form of racist bigotry, exploitation and expressions of hatred against marginalized persons, human trafficking, abuse of refugees and immigrants, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide or the death penalty.

On this day we pray for the grace of conversion of heart for all to respect life from its earliest stages, to natural death and every moment in between. We remember the words that Reverend Sylvester Beaman prayed in the final Benediction at the recent Presidential Inauguration: that "we will become a beacon of life to the world". May we join in his prayer and in the prayers of the Archdiocese of Hartford for God to grant us this grace.

The second is from Andrew Hamilton, S.J., in Eureka Street, an Australian Jesuit publication, in an article entitled *Making space for conversation*, February 4, 2021. It is about the peculiar difficulties of sponsoring a Catholic publication in the present social and political context. In the first five paragraphs he talks about the present context, making for a narrowing of the possibilities of serious conversation. He says:

This narrowing has made it difficult for any publication sponsored by a faith-based organization to sustain conversation that encourages public reflection on all salient relationships involved in public issues. On the one hand it must move outside the specific language and conceptuality of the tribe to engage its participants in a public language. On the other hand it must work from the moral centre that lies at the heart of its faith tradition.

In the Catholic tradition, that centre is the claim that each human being has an inalienable dignity that forbids anyone to be treated as a means to other goals, whether profit, security or unity. Furthermore, no human is an isolated individual, but each must be seen in relationship to other people and to the larger world.

The difficulty facing Catholic sponsored magazines in the public conversation arise from the fact that some conclusions Catholics have drawn from the dignity of each human being are widely seen [in the society at large] as incompatible with one another. The inalienable dignity of each human being underlies not only the received Catholic accounts of inequality, respect for the environment, slavery and racial discrimination. It also underlies the accounts of gender relationships, abortion and euthanasia. [See above, Message from Ryan Lerner.] In public conversation [out there in the wider world] these are seen to belong to different and opposed packages. The challenge that this polarisation poses lies in the pressure that it exerts on magazines to yield to a programmatic, oversimplified and partisan understanding of conversation.

A social and ecological ethic

By now you probably understand what I mean by the 'Seamless Garment'. It is as if so-called Left and so-called Right have ripped up the seamless garment and divided it between them, with each taking about half. Meanwhile, except in so far as we are affected by the same social and political forces as everyone else, we don't fit comfortably in either camp.

What to do about it, I don't know. Hang in there, do the best we can in the circumstances, deciding ourselves who to side with on this and that particular issue. There is no reason why we should allow other people to force us personally into taking sides.

We have a powerful, perfectly consistent fairly comprehensive interpersonal, social and ecological ethic, relating to and coming out of an amazing grounding narrative about an unaccountable Love beyond all boundaries, in respect of which we have a cognitive right and for some of us maybe a cognitive obligation. Which is not to say that we actually live up to the ethic, or sometimes even come close, something we can't do without the continuing work on us of that very same Love.

In any event, the least we can do is to try not to add to the confusion. Whatever our

passion, it is probably a good idea regularly to remind ourselves that this is part of the one seamless garment, and sometimes to make this explicit.

Pope Francis gives us some good models for this, for example in his recent book *Let us dream: the path to a better future* (December 2020), where he treats of abortion and refugees in the same paragraph and employs parallel arguments in respect of each, or in his speech to the US Congress, where he does something similar with capital punishment.

But in case some people might think Francis too 'liberal', the classic text is probably in *Veritatis Splendor* (John Paul II,

1993). Once again I quote from Paragraph 80, talking about intrinsic evil, where it is not licit to do evil that good may come of it:

Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that 'there exist acts which per se and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object'.

The Second Vatican Council itself, in discussing the respect due to the human person, gives a number of examples of such acts: 'Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever

violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat labourers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honour due to the Creator'. (G&S, 27) ☞

Pope in Iraq



Pope Francis visited Iraq in 5-8 March, 2021. To accomplish this visit, the 84-year-old pope defied the advice of all the experts and some of those close to him who were convinced, until the very last minute, that it would be more reasonable to postpone the trip, due to security and health concerns, reported Loup Besmond de Senneville in *La Croix International* (8.3.21).

Standing on the same soil as Abraham thousands of years later, Francis said: 'Here, where Abraham our father lived, we seem to have returned home'. Alongside the leaders of many faiths, he said: 'From this place, where faith was born, from the land of our father Abraham, let us affirm that God is merciful and that the greatest blasphemy is to profane his name by hating our brothers and sisters'.

The pope promised to support Christians who survived the war and appealed to them to remain in Iraq. 'Now is the time to rebuild and to start afresh,' he told them. The pope asked the survivors of terrorism to 'forgive' those who tried to annihilate them.

Vale Noel Davis

How does one describe the richness of the life of Noel and his poetry? So many people have shared with me how Noel's poetry over his thirty years of composing has touched their lives and their spirituality.

They speak about how they often quote his poems and reflections in conferences, homilies, retreats, spiritual direction and personal prayer.

Noel's family grew up in a Sydney suburb, his father was a railway man. His mother was from Lismore. Noel entered the Marist Brothers then withdrew and sometime later married Trish.

They lived at Narooma, New South Wales. Again and again in the introductions of his books, Noel expressed appreciation for Trish for her support, insightful editing, suggestions and how she, 'brought out of me treasures and resources I was unaware were there' (Together at the Edge, Trust Me).

Noel's first published book *Heart Gone Walkabout* (1991) was quickly followed by a succession of books, *Campfire of the Heart* (1994), *Love finds a Way* (2000), *From the Wilds of the Heart* (2003), *The Heart Waking and Breaking into Dance* (2007), *Together at the Edge* (2011), *Heart coming home* (2017).

It is not easy to encapsulate Noel's poetic gifts but the following themes weave their trails through his verses: the gift of drawing out evocative images from apparently ordinary things and happenings, his profound spirituality suffused with God's love, his affinity with the wonders of creation (especially after his trip to the

Red Centre), how the everyday events are graced, gospel stories, the gift and magic of silence, the mystery of love, the very Australian grounding in public language of 'bone dry', 'cropper', 'bugger', 'poo'.

Noel's poetry touches the heart. A reader does not have to retreat to a dictionary or Google to unpack what he is saying. Its poetic musings for insight are right there in front of us, if only we will 'make space' to read and to ponder.

Noel's books are beautifully adorned with nature photos, reflecting Noel's connection with the web of life in creation.

Noel's poems are a treasure chest for spiritual seekers. But a word of advice: It takes the keys of inner quiet, trust, tender touch to open once more and free our playful child. (Kevin Treston)



Pope criticises Catholics who reject Vatican II

Those who reject the teaching of the Second Vatican Council are placing themselves outside the Church, Pope Francis said, reported Christopher Lamb in *The Tablet* (Feb 6, 2021).

Francis' remarks are his strongest criticism yet of Catholics who have called Vatican II into question including some 'conservative' Catholics who oppose the direction of his pontificate.

'Either you are with the Church and therefore you follow the council, or you interpret it in your own way – according to your desire – [and] you do not stand with the Church,' the Pope told members of the National Catechetical Office of the Italian Bishops' Conference.

But the challenge that the teaching of Vatican II faces in the Francis era is not from "liberal dissenters" trying to push it further than the council fathers had in mind, but from those who question the wisdom of the Council at all, or want to so re-interpret it that it would lose its impetus. These neo-traditionalists are among the most vocal opponents of the Francis pontificate, Lamb reported.

Cardinal Cassidy mourned



Cardinal Edward Cassidy died on April 10, 2020 in Newcastle at the age of 96. Cardinal Cassidy served as a Vatican diplomat in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa and later appointed to the Secretariat of State, where he served for almost two years, noted the Australian Episcopal Conference media release.

He was president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and received

the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 1990 in "recognition of service to religion and to international affairs".

While Cardinal Cassidy was highly regarded for several reasons, it was at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity that he shone, Archbishop Coleridge said.

German bishop says Catholic Church must change its stance on homosexuality



Bishop Peter Kohlgraf of Mainz backs blessings for same-sex couples and a revision of the Catechism.

The Catholic Church should adopt a new pastoral approach to homosexual couples by accompanying them and blessing what is good in their lives, according to Bishop Peter Kohlgraf of Mainz reported Christa Pongratz-Lippitt in *La Croix International* (12.2.21).

The article quotes the bishop saying: '[Blessings] are not modelled on Catholic liturgical wedding ceremonies, nor do they aim to achieve one standardized liturgy. Priests who accompanied such couples bless what is good in their lives'.

The bishop supported the publication of a collection of blessing ceremonials for gay couples titled: *Couples, Rites, Church*.

Kohlgraf admitted that, personally, he found it difficult to imagine that something had gone wrong in the order of creation.

He said very few homosexuals found the Catechism of the Catholic Church's stipulation that they practice chastity as 'tactful and respectful'.

The bishop pointed out that the Catechism, also states that their inclination is not of their own choosing, the article noted.

Archbishop of Paris closes experimental, "Vatican II" parish

Archbishop Michel Aupetit closed Saint-Merry Pastoral Center, Paris which was established in 1975 as a place of welcome for people on the margins of the Church.

The experimental parish has welcomed all people from tourists to outsiders at its inclusive liturgies and outreach programs. Divorced and remarried and LGBTIQ Catholics were included.

Situated across from the Pompidou Centre of Modern Art with its vast public squares and public performance area, the church is prominent and stood as an adjunct to the public spaces around where all are welcome to explore and drink coffee.

The Archbishop said he was closing the centre because of the difficult climate at Saint-Merry, especially regarding the people's attitude towards the most recently assigned priests.

There was some concern that priests and lay people have, from the beginning, experimented with 'co-responsibility' for the centre, something that's been reinforced by Pope Francis's words on synodality. But there has been friction between some of the centre's long standing lay members and the more recently assigned priests. ☪



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Making a Church where women feel included

In our current world, with our current use of language, where the use of term 'men' does not make sense, it does not make sense in current prayer either such as 'For us men and for our salvation'.

Women exist, women pray, women are loved by God – women need to be acknowledged in our formal prayers and readings. We would not say 'for us white men and for our salvation', no matter the translation. So let us not say 'for us men...' either.

And on that note, 'brethren' is the Old English archaic plural for brother (Oxford Dictionary). So let us acknowledge the sisters in our midst by saying 'brothers and sisters'. Let us use Bible translations that convey intended meaning, and so use 'people' instead of 'men', 'person' or 'human' instead of 'man'. We can use 'all humanity' or 'humankind', for 'mankind'. Unless, of course, we are saying that words do not matter. Or perhaps we are saying that there are no gender distinctions, and so women can be called men.

The early Church was built around a society that discounted women (eg. the number of those who ate was about 5,000 men, not counting women and children. Matt 14:21). We then perpetuate this by referring to the incident as the 'feeding of the 5,000', ignoring women and minimising the extent of God's miracle.

A friend of ours from the middle-east reinforced this. Over for dinner some time ago, he innocuously said he had three siblings, then burst out laughing to correct himself saying, 'no five actually, three brothers and two sisters' when he remembered that in western society the daughters are also counted as members of the family. Do we mean to prolong this prejudice?

There is evidence to suggest gender-exclusive language can ostracise women (Metaxa-Kakavouli D, Wang, K, Landay, JA, Hancock, J (2018), Gender-Inclusive Design: Sense of Belonging and Bias in Web Interfaces. Found at <https://tinyurl.com/4he5cf>). And I for one, experience this every Sunday at Mass, during the Nicene Creed.

So surely, if it is not changing the meaning of anything, can we show women the courtesy of having our presence in the Church acknowledged, by removing gender-exclusive language from our prayers and readings.

If only to help those women who love

the Church and love the Mass, practise our faith in peace, instead of being hurt and distracted by the various attempts to reinforce the maleness of the Church. Chivalry takes many forms including being considerate of the feelings of women in a male-led Church.

Nimmi Candappa, VIC.

Vibrant and interesting

I have been reading the articles in *The Swag* for several years. I find many articles very enriching, although some are verbose.

Harry Moore's articles are succinct and interesting – every word is important.

This year I have found many of the Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter from the Archdiocese of Brisbane very challenging and interesting. The reflection for Easter Wednesday on the Emmaus story noted: 'Who Jesus is, does not register on them because they are still in their blindness.

It is the words they hear, and the truth that these words convey, that begins to work in their hearts. Jesus does this by taking them on a journey through scriptures (the Old Testament, for the New Testament had yet to be written), and points out everything there to do with himself.

It is interesting to reflect on Jesus' approach here. He is not interested in getting bogged down on this scripture passage or that. He does not discuss whether anyone can prove the world was created in six days or if Noah's ark might still be found on the slopes of Mount Ararat.

He does not try to defend whether or not a talking serpent caused the downfall of our first ancestors.

Instead, he focuses on the primary question – the only thing that matters: what truth does scripture show us about who God is and who we are called to be in response to God? He takes that two-part question and applies it to himself.

Mary Oliver is another example of being succinct: 'To live in this world you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.'

Thanks to those who take the time, and I know it does take time, to write articles for *The Swag*. I ask that each word be important so that it is more vibrant and interesting.

Margaret Tisch SMSM

Pandemic Pastoral Theology

Throughout the Pandemic we have become used to receiving updated guidelines for liturgy from the office of the Archbishop. In Victoria we have been in and out of lockdown in various degrees over the past twelve months. Little seems to change however in relation to liturgical regulations that emerge with each lessening or tightening of restrictions.

One item of interest that remains seemingly constant is the rule that the hosts to be consecrated for the faithful should be placed on a separate paten or ciborium to the paten holding the host that the priest will consume.

What has happened to our Eucharistic theology proclaimed by St Paul that it is the one body of the Lord that we break and share (1 Cor 11:25-27)? And regulations remain to sanitise our hands before and after the distribution of communion. Sure, we try and wash our hands always before we eat. But I have always enjoyed placing the Lord in the hands of people who have obviously used their gnarled stained hands for work, like farmers or mechanics. Do we think Jesus minds? After all, this bread we break is the work of human hands.

Another unchanging pandemic guideline concerns the sacrament of anointing of the sick. The Church's guidelines speak of the importance of touching the sick person, both in the laying on of hands on the head of the sick person, and in the anointing of the forehead and the hands with the blessed oil.

Now we are told not to touch the sick person at all, to maintain physical distance, to use a cotton bud rather than our thumb to anoint the sick person, and immediately dispose of the cotton bud after use. Thankfully, Jesus did not obey the commands of the Chief Health Officer of his time to not touch lepers. What we have done is turn all our sick people into lepers. How do they feel when we refuse to touch them? Sure, we have to listen to Chief Health Officers, but our hotel quarantine disasters seem to have been caused, not so much by touch, but rather by aerosol movements. Hence, the need for masks.

Touch may be responsible for some transmission, but do we have to totally put our pastoral and sacramental theology and practice aside for the duration of the Pandemic? Our faith-filled sick always need the Bread of Life, and the touch of a human faith community.

Peter Matheson PE, Mentone VIC.

A communion of all believers

Leadership in a Synodal Church (2021), Anne Benjamin & Charles Burford, Garratt Publishing. Reviewed by Dr Kevin Treston OAM.

The signs are everywhere in society and church that there is a crisis in leadership. In society there is uncertainty which prevails about the veracity of news, questions about the integrity of government legislation for the common good, prevalence of sexual misdemeanours, fragmentation of social cohesion, widening gap in wealth distribution, dire consequences of climate change, Covid pandemic and so on. In church, especially in Western orientated countries, various commissions such as the Australian Government's Royal Commission about the extent of sexual abuse of children by members of the church (2017) exposed serious problems relating to accountability, transparency and prevailing culture of clericalism in church leadership.

The recently published book *Leadership in a Synodal Church* by Dr Anne Benjamin and Dr Charles Burford has responded to these challenges by a comprehensive analysis of the notion of a Synodal Church through the lens of leadership. Their choice of such a lens of leadership within the notion of a Synodal Church is highly relevant in contemporary ecclesiology. Under the pontificate of Pope Francis, the vision of a Synodal Church is clearly an orientation in ecclesiology which will not be reversed. A Synodal Church brings together a communion of all believers to enhance the mission of the church.

Dr Anne Benjamin and Dr Charles Burford, Honorary Professors at Australian Catholic University are eminently qualified to undertake such a challenging enterprise. Both have impressive global academic qualifications and networks. They also have extensive pastoral experiences which empower them to integrate current theories about leadership with practical applications for leadership that are congruent with a church for the whole People of God. The Activity Exercises at the conclusion of each chapter ground theories about leadership in a Synodal Church with practical levels of implementation.

The ten Chapters of the book indicate how perceptively the authors have addressed a profile of a Synodal Church through the

lens of transrelational and transformational leadership.

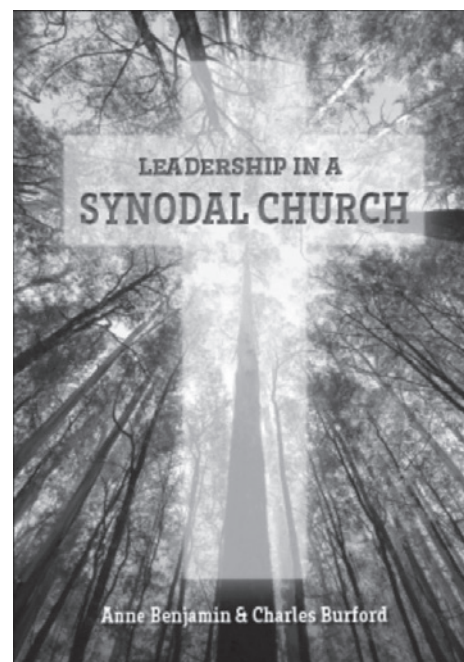
Each of the ten chapters illuminates key aspects of an authentic leadership for a Synodal Church: Leadership for Mission, Contemporary Issues of Culture and Leadership in the Church, Mission and Culture, The Culture of a Synodal Church, Cultural Transrelational and Synodal Leadership, Governance Serving Mission in a Synodal Church, People in Leadership, Leading through Moral Discernment, Moral Decision Making and Developing Leadership for a Synodal Church.

The authors call readers back to the fundamental mantra of Jesus and the gospels which is always a given for those who exercise leadership in any Christian agency and church ministry. The values emanating from the centrality of Jesus and the Reign of God permeate every dimension of how leadership is exercised. The imperative of moral discernment for moral decision making and nurturing a Spirit driven culture is never far from how this vision of leadership is implemented. What are core values that characterise the moral and ethical GPS for a Synodal Church? How does discernment shape the process of moral decision making? Such questions are abundantly addressed in the book.

Because the notion of a Synodal Church would be unfamiliar to most readers, the authors are careful to devote considerable attention to explicate its meaning and emphasise how the notion of a Synodal Church arises out of a theology of *sensus fidei* and People of God appreciation of a community of all believers.

From my own experiences in leadership studies, I have found it quite a rarity to encounter a book such as *Leadership in a Synodal Church* which integrates so thoroughly a distillation of the best of contemporary studies about leadership with a spirituality and theology of a Synodal Church.

Those familiar with matters of the church are only too aware of some serious obstacles to implementing the vision and practice of leadership in a Synodal Church. Perhaps the most serious obstacles for the implementation of a prophetic vision of leadership in the notion of a Synodal



Church are vestiges of clericalism and some articles of canon law such as canon law n.129: Only those who have received sacred orders are qualified to exercise the power of governance and jurisdiction. Such attitudes and articles reflect a pre-Vatican Two ecclesiology which contradicts the very notion of a Synodal Church and consequent leadership. Hopefully in the immediate future there will be urgent reforms of canon law to align its articles with the pastoral and theological assumptions which frame a Synodal Church.

Although the authors do not back away from naming serious impediments to realising their ideals of transformational leadership in a Synodal Church, the book ends on a hopeful vision of what could be done to promote such leadership by citing examples of current models for leadership programs in Catholic agencies.

I highly recommend *Leadership in a Synodal Church*. I would hope that all those associated with leadership in dioceses, parishes, Catholic Schools, Catholic Health Care, Catholic Agencies and seminaries utilise the wisdoms of this book for leadership development in a Synodal Church. ☺

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

Spirituality of an 'ordinary' life

Towards the Promised Land, Enza Di Franco Russo, St Paul Publications, 2019. Reviewed by Susanna Gorman.

This book is many things. It is part autobiography, part reflection, part poetry, part word pictures and part prayer. It is the story of an 'ordinary' life made extraordinary through faith and love.

There are many lives of famous and significant people, saints, sinners and in between, and yet this book reminds us of the value of each and every life, whether famous or not. This is the story of Enza Di Franco Russo, a woman now in her 80s, who migrated as a child from Italy to Australia after the war.

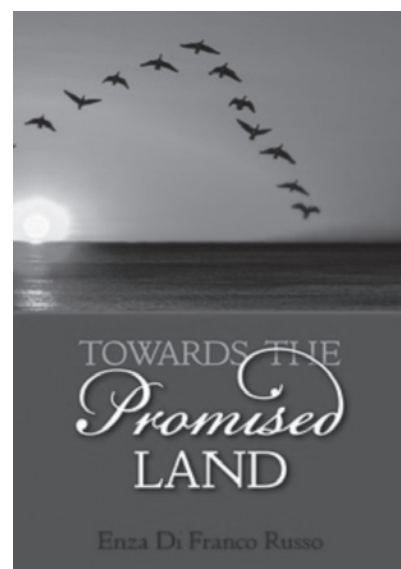
Enza is a born story-teller. Her experiences come to life in a series of short chapters exploring life's events – pregnancy and birth, illness and death, love and friendship, work and family, all viewed through the lens of faith.

Her story will resonate particularly with migrants and refugees who have also been strangers in a strange land, who have

experienced the trauma of war and have had to learn a new language and culture. For those who have not personally had such experiences, it allows a glimpse of what it must have been like.

One of the most moving chapters tells the story of Maria, whose husband and son were shot in front of her during the war, in their own home. Instead of giving way to anger and bitterness, she worked as a volunteer in a hospice, and one day after the war encountered the same soldier as a patient. Enza writes, 'He was the same age as the son she had lost. He had no one to care for him, she had no family left. Maria decided that she would care for him. He would fill the void left by the loss of her son.'

There is something for everyone in this eminently readable book. This is written by a woman who sees God in the small details of everyday life, as well as the everyday miracles. Enza has lived her life in faith, in which her relationship with



Jesus is central, and that flows into all she does. She reminds us that we all have a vocation to live our lives in a way that invites God into our midst, and that this transforms us and those we encounter.

This is a book that can be read at a sitting, or dipped into at will. It would be a perfect gift for someone in hospital because it is encouraging and optimistic. ☺



To Right Every Wrong: The Making and Unmaking of One Improbable Minor Prophet

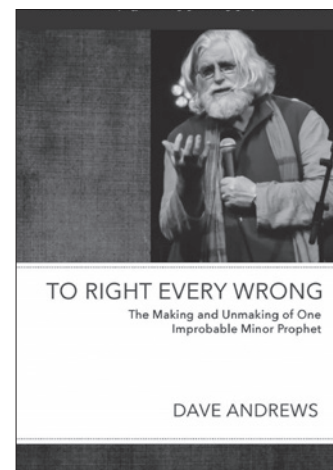
Dave Andrews. WIPF & STOCK, Eugene, Oregon (2021). Reviewed by Rev Wally Dethlefs.

I first met Dave and Ange, his wife, in the early nineteen eighties, soon after their return to West End, Brisbane from India. *To Right Every Wrong* is not only the story of their exploits and adventures, but it is especially the story of their Christian commitment which saw them immersed in mission in such countries as Afghanistan and India and many other places including West End, Brisbane. Dave and Ange strongly believe that one's Christian beliefs should be lived out in their personal lives, prophetically, while embracing and learning from their inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies.

Dave believes that all Christians are called to be prophets while humbly referring to himself as an 'improbable minor prophet'. In fact, over 180 pages of this work are dedicated to unpacking just what it means to be a prophet both in theory and especially in practice. Dave and I have been friends for many years and as I became more engrossed in his book I wondered if

some of the stories I'd heard Dave relate would be included. For instance, would the 'military tank' story be there? I wasn't disappointed. This book is grounded in Dave's life and his and Ange's life experiences. It is largely written in such a homely way that a reader could be forgiven for thinking he/she is sitting conversing with them at their kitchen table. Do we as practicing Christians often or even occasionally ask ourselves why we don't identify and name the prophets of our day? Or identify in practice Jesus as a prophet? Or name one or another of our Churches 'Jesus the Prophet'.

Dave doesn't consider this book to be an autobiography, however *To Right Every Wrong* does have strong autobiographical elements. Quoting John Dear (*The Beatitudes of Peace*, p116-117), Dave writes that 'a prophet ... sees the big picture-war, starvation, poverty, corporate greed, systemic violence, nuclear weapons, and environmental destruction [and] interprets



these current realities through God's eyes not through the eyes of pundits'.

What are the nuts and bolts of *To Right Every Wrong*? This book is a coherent and compelling mix of down-to-earth theology, spirituality, community development, humor, in-depth inter-faith work, global analysis, of thinking and acting locally as well as thinking and acting globally while challenging, nurturing and living the developing understanding of faith.

I found this book challenging and I highly recommend it to you. ☺

Francesco

Francesco 116 minutes. Directed by Evgeny Afineevsky. Reviewed by Peter Malone MSC.

This is the fifth major feature film focusing on Pope Francis. There was a 2015 Argentinian drama, *Francisco, El Padre Jorge*; there was the 2015 Italian drama, *Call Me Francis*; worldwide audiences watched *The Two Popes*, 2019, a fictionalised encounter between Francis, played Pryce and Benedict XVI, played by Anthony Hopkins. In 2019 there was a documentary by celebrated German filmmaker, Wim Wenders, *Pope Francis, a Man of his Word*, with limited release (but, Googling the title and adding You Tube, several previews as well as some substantial clips can be found).

Francesco has been acquired by the Discovery Channel, with limited screenings, but with rental or video on demand.

Francesco completed filming in April 2020, featuring the Pope and an assistant on the dais altar in an empty piazza in front of St Peters. But, at the end, there is enthusiastic footage from countries all over Europe and the United States, people in lockdown, but coming to their windows and doors, waving, shouting, applauding – images of hope (not yet fulfilled). This film is a lively and challenging overview of Pope Francis' seven years as Pope, 2013-2020.

The director is Russian and has made a number of documentaries, focusing on the war in Syria, conflicts in Ukraine, as well as a documentary about divorce. In this film, as with Wim Wenders' documentary, the words of the Pope are significant, from public addresses, to more personal encounters, to interview statements. But, these films are not simply "talking heads" documentaries. The director and his assistants have done extensive research all over the world, finding a powerful range of footage from Pope Francis visits to different countries, to meeting significant personalities, and striking and vivid footage to illustrate the particular crises around the world of his seven years' pontificate.

Instead of providing some background to Francis, his Argentinian and Jesuit backgrounds, his work as Archbishop in Buenos Aires, two key issues are initially highlighted. The first is that of climate change, the Pope's document, *Laudato Si*, his visit to the Philippines in the wake of the severe typhoons. The second issue is that of migrants throughout the world,

his visit to the refugees on the island of Lampedusa, refugees from Africa, refugees from Syria and visuals of the desolation of ruined Aleppo...

With this social consciousness in mind, the film then goes to the portrait of Francis, a sketch of his life, photos of his family, the story of their migration from Fascist Italy, growing up in Argentina, his vocation, joining the Jesuits, his role as Jesuit provincial – and quite a section later taking up the issue of accusations of collaboration with the Generals during the Dirty War, vocal criticism, examination of the issues, some critics retracting, the Pope explaining a more silent approach to work behind the scenes, followed by two years seeming exile away from Buenos Aires. It seems this period gave him time to reflect, to mellow his stances, to be conscious of the poor, something he took to his ministry as Archbishop.

The film provides quite a number of clips of Cardinal Bergoglio and his work in Argentina, continually with the poor, taking public transport, but also his strong interfaith links.

There is quite a challenge as the film documents Francis' visits to conflict centres around the world, to the Central African Republic, to the island of Lesbos to meet the refugees, to Myanmar where diplomacy required no mention of the Rohingya, to Bangladesh and meeting the refugees. He also goes to Mexico denouncing walls that separate instead of building bridges which reunite (and a glimpse of President Trump). There is also the sequence of his addressing the American Congress (with Joe Biden, then VP, sitting behind the Pope).

There is a very personalised sequence where the Pope has a Zoom conference with those working on the American-Mexican border, especially his singling out unknown a nun, champion of the poor, and a close-up of his more affectionate language with her.

There are several other very personalised encounters, the three Muslim families that he brought back to Italy as an example of leaders welcoming refugees, his visit to them, their testimonies, the finding home and employment in Italy. Then there is the father who wrote a letter to Francis, giving it to him at an audience, explaining that he and his gay partner had three children, wanting the Pope's assistance in their

being accepted at the parish school. The Pope phoning the father, encouraging him, the film including a quotation of the Pope talking about recognition of gay men and women in society, of civil unions... The film does not quote, "who am I to judge?", but includes this more ordinary episode.

The issue of women in the church is raised, a number of speakers, the Pope emphasising that women must have roles in the church – but, interestingly, for all the ceremonies, those assisting and servers are all male.

But, the treatment of sexual abuse by clergy is presented in a tantalising way, something like the old-fashion serials, the audience left with cliffhangers, wondering what and when the sequel will be. In fact, the subject does receive quite a lot of attention but in separate sections, increasing in dramatic tension, throughout the film. There is the sequence where the Pope seems to have lost his temper accusing critics of the Chilean Episcopacy of slander. Later, especially with interviews with Juan Carlos Cruz, the leader of the young men who accused the Chilean celebrity priest, Karadima, of years of abuse, presenting his case, being invited to the Vatican, wary that it was a PR exercise, meeting the Pope, hearing his apology, having a three-hour conversation, present at a papal audience. Then there is the episode, surprising those in Chile, of summoning the Chilean bishops, firing a number of them, declarations about stricter investigations, the sending of official investigators to Chile, their 2,300 page report.

So, here is an opportunity, a two-hour consideration of Pope Francis, growing awareness of all the world situations where he has intervened. But, there is a chance to see him at greater length in close-up, with people (as with his Jewish and Muslim long-time friends as well as leadership of churches and world religions), his body language, his unsteady walk, for instance, in Auschwitz, the close-ups when he is speaking officially, or in homily, or in personal encounters.

Not the last word. Not the last image. But an opportunity to make some kind of assessment, some kind of appreciation (and, one hopes, a good impression on those Catholics who have publicly expressed disagreement with or condemnation of, Francis) of an unanticipated Pope and seven years of unanticipated papal service. ☺

Pell proceedings analysed

Observations on the Pell Proceedings, Frank Brennan SJ, Connorcourt Publishing.

Cardinal George Pell pleaded not guilty before a jury to child sexual assault charges in 2018. The public knew little of the proceedings because the trial judge had imposed a suppression order, prohibiting the media from publicising the evidence and court proceedings. Fr Frank Brennan SJ was asked by the Australian Catholic bishops to follow the proceedings and to offer commentary on the conduct of the proceedings once the suppression orders were lifted. The bishops asked that the commentary be seen, as far as possible,

to be clear, objective and impartial. Cardinal Pell granted Brennan access to the published transcript of the proceedings.

At the first trial, the jury could not reach agreement. So Pell was tried again when the jury convicted him of all five charges. Brennan attended critical parts of both trials, as well as the unsuccessful appeal before Victorian Supreme Court and the successful appeal in the High Court of Australia with all seven members of the nation's highest court acquitting Pell of all charges on 7 April 2020.

After the initial conviction and after the

ultimate acquittal, Brennan wrote a series of articles and was interviewed in the media. This book provides a chronology of his reportage, including an assessment of the flawed adverse findings made against Pell by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Brennan identifies the failures of the Victoria police, prosecution authorities, and Victoria's two most senior judges. Brennan concludes that these failures 'did nothing to help the efforts being made to address the trauma of institutional child sexual abuse. As a society we need to do better, and the legal system needs to play its part.' 🙏



The God of scripture

Steele Hartman, *Seeking GOD in Scripture: An introduction to Lectio Divina*. Coventry Press. Reviewed by Father Anthony Percy STD.

Steele Hartmann, OSCO, has done us all an immense favour. He has written *Seeking GOD in Scripture*. It is precise. Perfect. It is practical. Perfect. It is pertinent. Perfect. Who is Hartmann? He is the Abbot of Tarrawarra Abbey in Victoria, a member of Order of Cistercians

of the Strict Observance, otherwise known as Trappists, tracing their origin back to 1098.

Thomas Merton was one of them. He used to say, 'The reason people don't become saints is because they refuse to be themselves.'

Question without notice for Hartmann:

How might I be myself?

Answer: Listen to God. Don't just read about God. Listen to him. Let the Lord do the talking, We can then think and feel a little. We can then respond and pray a little. We might even rest in Him a little.

Availability to God. That's all it takes and we shall become ourselves. 🙏

The Official Directory – of the – Catholic Church in Australia 2021/2022

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

This edition will be Sally's 24th and Chris' 18th.

In his *Word of Welcome* which will be published at the beginning of the new edition, and on the Directory website, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference says, ***"I thank Sally Heath and Christine Moore of the National Council of Priests office for their work in compiling the Directory with a care that goes beyond efficiency. It is a real service to information and communication within the Church and, to that extent, a gift to all of us as we make our way through affliction to a more peaceful time."***

The Directory (900 pages) is an essential resource for all working under the Catholic Church umbrella – priests, pastoral associates, administration staff, principals, school librarians, CEOs etc.

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

For the complete picture of the Australian Church and to keep connected... fill out the order form inside the back cover and return it to the National Office.

Returned to God

PHILLIP CROTTY SJ

1932 – 07/04/2021

✠ Phillip Crotty (generally known as Phil) embodies much of the history of the Australian Province's long and beneficial association with India and its mission in Hazaribag (begun in 1951). Born in regional Victoria and educated by the Marist Brothers, he knew as a schoolboy that he wanted to be a missionary. He belonged to the first generation of scholastics to make the long (and, it was assumed, one-way) journey on the SS Multan to India in December 1952. Based there for 48 years, he became a pillar of the Hazaribag mission, enabling it to grow into a Region, then a Province. He continues to be held in high esteem there.

After studying Hindi, he entered the philosophate in Pune and did regency in Maheshmunda and Ranchi, working with younger and older students with equal facility, before studying theology in Kurseong. His theologate was exactly contemporaneous with Vatican II and the new ideas being explored in Rome stimulated a generation of students coming to grips with what inculturation meant for them. The theologate at Kurseong was renowned for its staff and students and their delight and intellectual rigour in taking advantage of the Council's opening to the world. The lessons were not lost on Phillip, who went on to apply them in practical ways in his work among the tribal people in Hazaribag. Having done advanced studies in Hindi and learnt Kurukh (also known as Oraon), he ministered faithfully to people of all walks of life and backgrounds, from steelworkers to residents in remote villages. A man of great spiritual depth and a wonderful pastor who touched many lives, he maintained throughout his life a keen but gentle sense of humour and the eye of a curious observer of the human condition, a warm gaze which included his own foibles and weaknesses.

This deep and sympathetic understanding of the human condition and his ability to contextualise it in the light of the love of God served him well as regional superior and made him well loved by subjects and colleagues alike. He became a noted spiritual father and director, serving as Director of Hazaribag's regional theologate from 1987-1989 and of the Region's pre-novitiate in Daltonganj in 1998.

In 2001 he returned to Australia. With his wealth of contacts at home and abroad, he served firstly as Deputy Director (based in Melbourne) and then Director (based in Sydney) of Jesuit Mission Australia at a challenging time for the organisation.

His final years were spent as assistant priest in the parish of Our Lady of the Way, North Sydney. A wise and genial companion with a big heart and a gift for putting people at their ease, he continued to inspire benefactors and those who worked with Jesuit Mission and to keep its story alive. A member of the Hazaribag Province to the end, he was always abreast of the latest developments there. He died at home peacefully, aged 89, as a much-loved member of the Lavender Bay Jesuit community.

FRANCIS JAMES HART (FRANK)

31/03/1939 – 03/01/2021

✠ Born in the Mercy Hospital, Melbourne, Frank was the first child of Frank Hart and Margaret (nee Hopkins) of East St Kilda. His sisters Marie and Patti, followed.

Frank commenced schooling at St Coleman's Catholic School, Balaclava and was an altar server at St Coleman's church where he attended daily Mass with his mum, his Dad had contracted TB. When Frank was 10 years old, the Harts moved to the Hopkin's family farm at Boosey in North East Victoria for a better, clean air experience for his Dad. They were warmly welcomed by Frank's bachelor uncles, John and Tom Hopkins.

Primary schooling was completed at Burrumine South then Tungamah and secondary schooling at Assumption College, Kilmore. Frank was multi skilled and a high achiever but after completing Intermediate Certificate, he returned home, to Boosey, to fulfill his desire to commence farming with his uncles. Immersed in the presence of this large, loving and devout Catholic family, he enjoyed the rewards of farm life. He participated in sports, social, and community life. The homestead became known affectionately as "Boosey" and so did Frank.

They were happy years but niggling thoughts about the priesthood intensified. After fast tracking the necessary schooling as a mature aged student, Frank entered Corpus Christ College Werribee at the age of 24.

Frank understood loneliness and recognised the need in others. His kindness and his sense of fun soon endeared him to the other seminarians, many of whom remained loyal and committed friends for the duration of his life.

Following his Ordination at the Sacred Heart Church, Yarrawonga, in 1969, Frank served as assistant priest in many parishes of the Diocese of Sandhurst before travelling to Canada to complete a Master of Sacred Theology. He returned home fired up with ideas for change. His first appointment as a Parish Priest was to Cohuna. It was a time of much growth and activity for him. At last, he felt empowered as a parish priest, to implement post Vatican II initiatives and ministries, particularly empowering the laity, especially in liturgical matters. He sensed the hidden potential in people, challenged and stimulated them and empowering them by his affirmation.

Frank broke new ground when he trained for and committed to counselling for Marriage Education, previously the domain of lay people. He suffered a number of debilitating health issues over his lifetime, and although a proud and independent man, he never complained. After serving as Parish priests in Cohuna and then Euroa, Frank suffered a further health setback and the rigors and responsibilities of working as a full-time parish priest became increasingly challenging.

He took sabbatical leave and studied in Jerusalem. On his return to Australia, Frank commenced as part-time assistant priest in Wangaratta, where he endeared himself to the local parishioners and the many outlying smaller communities attached, in the following years until his retirement in 2013.


He moved to Bendigo the following year to be cared for by a friend, as his health declined. Frank died in Simkin House on 3rd January 2021 and was buried at Yarrowonga Cemetery.

He will be remembered as a man who, was fully committed to the priesthood that he loved, was kind, charming, loved to have fun, and was a loyal friend to those who had his best interests at heart. He had a great understanding of God, and mirrored this image of love to each person in his presence by making them feel like they were the only person in the room.

As he described in his memoirs, he had “No Regrets”. Rest in peace

IAN MACKINTOSH OMI

07/11/1939 – 19/02/2021

 Ian Joseph Mackintosh was born in Geelong, Victoria, and educated at St Joseph’s College by the Christian Brothers. His talent as a footballer was certainly recognised at St Joseph’s but he decided to join the Oblates on leaving school, Along with a group of young men he spent his year of novitiate in Sorrento and was then sent to Cedara in South Africa in 1959 where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts and after six years returned home to Australia where he was ordained on 8 December, 1965.

His first obedience was to Mazenod College, Lesmurdie in 1966. It was the first year of the college and Ian showed himself to be an excellent teacher, sporting coach, and assistant priest in the college and nearby parish. They were pioneering and harsh early days and Fr Mack worked very hard with the Dads and Fr Denis McCarthy developing the rocky landscape and developing the college oval. He also made a name for himself playing football in the local suburban team for two years. The first boarding students were welcomed and the college began to grow. In 1973 he became Rector before moving to Victoria to become the third Rector of Mazenod College, a position he held until 1983. In 1984 it was back to Mazenod College WA as Head of Religious Education for almost 6 years before a final school appointment teaching at Iona College in Brisbane.

Ian then moved to parish work, with 12 years at St John Vianney’s in Springvale North, first as assistant and then as PP. In 2005 till 2010 he was PP at Sorrento, followed by 6 years as PP of Dernancourt in Adelaide. He then returned to Sorrento – his final posting until he retired in 2020.


Ian will be remembered for his devotion to the Mass and to Mary Immaculate, his pastoral care to the sick and down and out. True to his pastoral nature and his love of outback Australia, in 2016 he volunteered to spend three months in the Diocese of Geraldton, as acting PP of Newman, Tom Price and Paraburdoo, ministering to miners, their families and to Aboriginal people. He was assisted there by Sisters of St. Joseph.

In January 2020 he retired to the Camberwell Community where he was a great addition and was very happy and well cared for. Affectionately known as the “Bear”, Ian was a passionate sportsman, loved Richmond and Australian teams, frequently wore Richmond football socks and it must be said he did not like umpires or referees! He was a great reader who loved history and politics, was passionate about the Oblates and absolutely loyal to the Church, prepared his sermons carefully and wrote them out in a very refined hand. Mack was a home body, Australia before all others – he was shy but kind and caring and great company once you knew him. A loyal and wonderful friend.

His Oblate family are saddened by his sudden death and thank God for his 55 years of Oblate priestly ministry. May he rest in peace.

MICHAEL (MICK) O’CALLAGHAN

22/04/1942 – 05/03/2021

 Michael “Mick” O’Callaghan, Emeritus Parish Priest of Our Lady of the Way Parish, Emu Plains died 5 March 2021, aged 78. Born to Leonard and Mary (nee McDonnell), on 22 April 1942 in Coleraine, Victoria – a town in the Diocese of Ballarat, Mick attended Christian Brothers Business College, North Melbourne, the Prahran Institute of Technology and Yarra Theological Union and St Paul’s National Seminary.

In the 1970s, Mick discerned a vocation to the Carmelites. Studying for the priesthood at Yarra theological union and St Pauls national seminary Mick was ordained to the diaconate on 24 November 1975 at St Pauls national seminary chapel, Kensington and ordained to the priesthood on 27 August 1976 by Bishop John Kelly, the then Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne.

Mick was the vocation and youth retreat director for the Carmelite order and prior and parish priest of Middle Park, Victoria, from 1980 through to mid-1982. He arrived in the Diocese of Parramatta on 10 September 1987 and was Incardinated into the Diocese in 1988.

In addition to ministry at Leura, Mick ministered at parishes in Seven Hills, Richmond, and Baulkham Hills. His last appointment, as parish priest, was at Our Lady of the Way, Emu Plains. Mick’s hobbies included lawn tennis, volunteering in the Young Christian Workers, reading and classical music.

Parishioners and fellow clergy will remember Mick’s warm smile and natural laugh. “I have always considered myself a bit radical,” he said cheekily in an interview with Catholic Outlook. “Parish ministry is the greatest joy of my life as it enables me to touch and be touched by people from all walks of life.”

Thank you Mick, may you rest in peace.

Continued page 46

CHRISTOPHER WARNOCK

30/06/1955 – 04/03/2021

✠ Chris Warnock grew up in the Riverland of SA. As a child Chris suffered badly from asthma and eczema, and at the age of 9 spent 6 months in a Red Cross Home in Adelaide. From Grade 6 he was a boarder at the Salesian College in Adelaide. His parents thought Chris might be destined for a religious vocation and the Salesians would nurture that.

On leaving school Chris was an apprentice Fitter and Turner for a year or so before going into St Francis Xavier Seminary in 1974 and was ordained in Renmark on 7 February 1981. After his ordination Chris started as Assistant Priest in St Mary's Parish in Port Lincoln, he was also Parish Priest at Cummins, Whyalla, George Town, Gladstone and Renmark.

In 1990's Chris studied a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Australian Political History with Deakin University. This was at a time when Distance Learning meant just that...all assignments were sent and submitted by snail mail. Sadly, for many of his latter years, he suffered from Parkinson's disease, which he fought with great courage and determination. Chris had a brilliant intellect and in many ways Parkinson's stole this from him but in spite of his illness Chris had a wicked and dry sense of humour. Needless to say, Chris had his ups and downs in life but in the face of everything he always courageous.

In later years Chris was the Editor of the Port Pirie diocesan paper *The Witness*, a responsibility he took very seriously, until his Parkinson's symptoms forced him to relinquish his editorship. Chris was a common sight around Pirie, on his gopher wearing his West Adelaide Footy Beanie with Rustus, his loyal companion.

As Bishop Greg O'Kelly said of Fr Chris: "His direct manner and humour were his constant features but more so was his fidelity to his vocation, his loyalty to the Diocese, and his endurance of such a terrible illness, so long without complaint. I can honestly say that in all the times I visited him I never heard a word of self-pity from him through those years. May the peace and joy of Christ now enfold him forever."

Chris's funeral Mass was celebrated in St Mark's Cathedral, Port Pirie on 12 March and he was buried in the Gladstone cemetery. ☞

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

✠ Harold Baker MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)	14/03/2021
✠ Kevin Barry-Cotter (Canberra & Goulburn)	28/02/2021
✠ James Byrne (Diocese of Toowoomba)	11/12/2020
✠ Phillip Crotty SJ (Jesuits)	07/04/2021
✠ Francis Ferrie SSC (Columbans)	09/11/2020
✠ John Fitz-Water (Diocese of Lismore)	19/11/2020
✠ John Gibson OH (Hospitaller Order of St John of God)	14/03/2021
✠ Peter Gillam (Archdiocese of Brisbane)	02/03/2021
✠ Thomas O'Connell (Diocese of Sale)	28/02/2021

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

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

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



The Swag Spring Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday, 26 July 2021.

Please email submissions for consideration

to: editor@theswag.org.au

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



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The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)

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

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

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

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

Prayer to St Joseph

Lord God, Sprit of Creation,
You have formed and fashioned our earth, our being and our living.
At the dawn of Creation you breathed in us the spirit of justice.
You are our dreamtime,
You are our hope,
You are our strength.
Bless us, and bless those who share the riches of this earth.
From the seed to the sapling, to the great forests of the world.
The timbers give us shelter, the timbers give us warmth.
We call upon St Joseph, the carpenter, craftsman of the timber.
We dedicate ourselves to serve others as he did.
A common Jewish tekton – carpenter – man of wood.
St Joseph be our guiding hand, our model of compassion.
A man of dreams,
A man of hope.
A man of strength.
As hammer against nail, inspire us to be strong.
As timber against timber inspire us to be tall and proud.
As craftsman among humanity, inspire us to dream.
Let us welcome the cross of timber,
the sign of our faith in Jesus, earthly son of St Joseph.

Michael Carmody (10/08/1983 – 22/12/2007)

*Written by Michael when he was a student at St Joseph's College, Geelong
and reprinted with the permission of Michael's family.*