



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

# The Swag

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## ABOUT THE NCP

The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Priests and Associate Members (Lay, Religious and Seminarians) who join together to support each other in their ministry in the Church. Founded in 1970 in the Spirit of Vatican II, the NCP is committed to the fraternity and further education of clergy and to representing clergy in the public forum.

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Please contact the NCP National Office for all subscriptions.

The views expressed in *The Swag* are not necessarily those of the NCP executive, the editors or NCP staff.

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

## John Conway



Greetings to all and welcome to the winter edition of *The Swag*.

You will notice from the Editorial and from the Quo Vadis letter of Bill Burt that follows that the NCP is floundering at this stage of its history.

Sadly, with the retirement of our guardian angels, Sally and Chris who have kept the wheels of NCP in motion for so many years, the Executive is uncertain about how to maintain the organisation into the future. But, like so many of you as members of the National Council of Priests, we too hope that the NCP does have a future.

We face considerable challenges at this time in endeavouring to maintain effective membership of the NCP, and there are times when we, the Executive, wonder just what the future may hold.

But we do live in hope, and it is the hope of the Executive that we can resurrect the NCP from the ashes of diminishment that surround us at this time.

The NCP has been active and effective for more than 50 years, and there are dedicated members who still desire to have some connection with the organisation itself and with the many priests who serve our Church across Australia.

I have no doubt that the challenges that confront me as the current Chairman, and the members of the Executive, are probably no different from the many challenges that have been faced by our predecessors who have steered the NCP through the highs and lows of priesthood within Australia over these 50 years or so.

The current Executive still has a passion for the life of the NCP, especially for the 780 or so members who continue to support the life of our organisation, and who continue to express keen interest in the activities of the NCP as well as the production of *The Swag*.

For the present, *The Swag* will continue with this winter edition, and with subsequent editions. Many articles that attract our attention are still being submitted for publication. Sally and Chris did much to oversee the production of *The Swag* and collate parts like the "Returned to God" section, which all added to the attraction of each edition.

The challenge for the NCP Executive and for *The Swag* is the need to draw the priests of Australia into the focus of the NCP. Through the second half of this year we will continue to plan how to attract the many priests from overseas, be they from India, Africa, Vietnam or other Countries, who have come to participate in the parishes of our Australian Church.

The NCP, as an organisation may not be as attractive to these overseas priests who develop their own support networks amongst themselves. The NCP may not be the support network to sustain them in ministry and to enable them to maintain their own sense of well-being.

These are some of the challenges we face in today's Church and today's priesthood. But for those of us who see the significance of the NCP for our on-going well-being, and for our involvement in the worldwide church, we hope to keep the NCP and *The Swag* as important resources at our disposal.

There is a future for the NCP, but it will only have a future when we, its members, support the organisation and one another in our day-to-day lives. We are building upon what generations before us have built

May our God of creation continue to guide us together.

Yours in His Priesthood,  
John Conway ☺

## RE-CONNECT | RE-ENGAGE | RE-ENERGISE

17-20 March 2025

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

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

Further details to come.

### SAVE THE DATE – NCP CONVENTION



## Peter Matheson



As our Winter edition goes to press our country is struggling with the scourge of domestic violence and the tragic deaths of many women already this year at the hands of violent men. What are the causes? How can we help heal situations of domestic violence we find in or own parishes? These are just a couple of questions we all struggle with.

Another major issue facing us as the NCP is the question of our own survival. The cover of *The Swag* in recent years carries the motto of the National Council of Priests: “Sign of Unity: Instrument of Peace.” But is the NCP a sign of unity and instrument of peace? Or is it just another sign of the disunity that affects so many dimensions of Church from the parish to the Vatican?

Our chairman, John Conway, has outlined our struggle for survival in his message. Bill Burt’s “Quo Vadis?” is equally challenging. Last year 780 of the almost 3000 priests in Australia were financial members of the NCP. And many of the 780 are Australian born and seniors. If the NCP dies, so does *The Swag*. And many lay Catholics read and like *The Swag*. What could replace it?

Pope Francis says that we are living, not in an epoch of change, but rather a change of epoch. And he is not the cause of the change, but a perceptive commentator. A number of cardinals and bishops are anti-Francis. His synodal church is a threat to their clerical church.

The crisis envelops us. Fewer young men are interested in the priestly vocation. Traditional parish structures are being

torn apart. The attempts of the hierarchy to ease the crisis by merging parishes, and importing priests from other countries, is not easing the crisis. Parishioners are voting with their feet, and their cars. They go where they feel welcome and nourished, or trawl the web to find a heart lifting celebration. We hear that the Covid pandemic has caused the emptying of congregations. And that is true. But the crisis predates the pandemic. In 2019 Ave Maria Press published Joshua Whitfield’s book “*The Crisis of Bad Preaching*” reflecting another dimension of a pre-pandemic crisis.

Many good priests are exhausted by increasing workloads with partnered parishes and red tape, which thwarts their desire to nourish themselves by continued reading and on-going formation. Even though they may share Pope Francis’ vision of a synodal church they have little time to implement and nourish this dream in their own faith communities.

The dimensions of the change of epoch affecting our time are deeply and powerfully analysed by Tomáš Halík in his recent book “*The Afternoon of Christianity*” (Notre Dame Press 2024). Halík was speaking in Melbourne and Sydney in February this year when the English translation of his book was published.

In one part of his book, he writes: “If decades of Church-wide prayer for new priestly vocations has gone unanswered, perhaps God is telling us that he expects us to look for other doors and other solutions instead of stubbornly pounding on the doors he himself has closed” (p 63).

The NCP was born in the late 60’s after the Second Vatican Council. The NCP motto stems from the first paragraph of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church where we read, “the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people” (LG 1). That dogmatic statement made 60 years ago has underpinned the role and purpose of the NCP for the last 55 years since it began. Unfortunately, the teaching of Vatican II is still to be received by many in the church, and consequently the theology of many in the current Church has not been nourished by Vatican II.

The theology of synodality encouraged by Pope Francis is directly related to

the theology of Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Those who do not accept synodality, do not accept Vatican II. Vatican II encouraged a return to the sources (*ressourcement*) with a view to updating Church life and practice (*aggiornamento*).

History is important, and the history of the Australian church and Australian priesthood is changing. What is the future of the NCP and *The Swag*? Where are we going?

Once again, I am grateful to those who have contributed to this edition of *The Swag*. Many articles have come from lay people. Susan Sullivan attended the German Synodal Conference as an Australian official observer (along with Bishop Shane Mackinlay) and offers an appreciation of those proceedings. Peter Wilkinson continues his very interesting series on the history of Australian Seminaries. The history of priests in the Australian landscape is also taken up by Damian Gleeson with an article on John Therry, one of the pioneering priests in Australian Catholicism. John Warhurst offers a warm tribute to Timothy Radcliffe. Robert Van Mourik continues his reflections on the God we might imagine. And Paul Collins writes on the Vatican Israel tension over Gaza.

Priest contributors include Gerry O’Collins SJ who writes in praise of book launches, and he has created so many himself. And a very important reflection has come from retired Bishop Peter Ingham of Wollongong. His “Personal Advent” was written as his life slowly ebbed away. He died the evening after ANZAC Day. We received his reflections from his carer just three weeks before his death. Much discussion has followed the publication of *Dignitas Infinita* and Bill Uren SJ has added an important piece to that discussion. Mick McEntee reviews the theology of Armando Matteo in his recent book “The Francis Option” where the Pope challenges us all to be evangelisers. And finally, Gerard Moore of the Broken Bay Institute reflects on models and challenges of adult faith formation.

The section on “Letters to the Editor” was accidentally omitted from the Autumn edition. That was the editor’s fault. Those missing letters are printed in this edition.

There will be a Spring edition of *The Swag*, at least to publish responses we receive to the survey about the future of the NCP and *The Swag*.

No subscription or membership renewals have been sent out this year. The Belmont office of the NCP is now effectively closed following the retirement of Sally and Chris, and a new temporary office is being established in our chairman's parish in Brisbane. We cannot accept subscriptions if the NCP (and therefore *The Swag*) is to cease existing. Its continuation will depend on a positive response to the survey conducted by the executive in this Winter edition of *The Swag*. In the meantime *The Swag* is being mailed to all priests who were financial subscribers in 2023.

Unfortunately lay subscribers from last year will not receive copies this year. Hopefully they will pick up copies left around churches by priest members who have purchased bulk copies.

I conclude with the prophecy of Tomáš Halík in his recent book: "The situation will not change unless the Church adopts a completely new model of pastoral ministry, different from that of territorial parishes, unless it offers a new understanding of the priest's mission in the Church and in society, unless it creates the conditions for a new style of training for the priesthood, and unless it creates even greater scope for the involvement of the laity, both men and women, in the life and activities of the Church" (ibid pp 63-64). ☪

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

## The NCP & *The Swag*: Quo Vadis?

Since the early days of the NCP, *The Swag* has been much more than just a newsletter of our organisation. It has been a platform for the clergy of Australia and their many friends to share information and views, as well as news, about the life of the Church in this country. It rightly holds a unique position, as there is no other publication quite like it.

**H**owever, *The Swag* doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is the official mouthpiece of the NCP. That being the case, its fate is very much dependent on that of our organisation. This is a matter of great concern for the present Executive of the NCP. As those ultimately responsible for the organisation, the Executive is facing the reality of our current membership, which quite honestly is in a dire state.

There are presently 2,979 Catholic priests in Australia. Of these, only 782 are members of the NCP. By far the majority of these are senior citizens, mainly from Anglo-Irish/Caucasian backgrounds. Very few priests from other ethnicities are current NCP members and almost no younger clergy who have come to Australia from overseas in recent years have indicated any interest in joining the NCP.

Quite frankly, we do not represent the body of active Catholic clergy today.

The Executive, too, is not immune from the present reality: We haven't had a full membership for years, as

there have been almost no nominations for a long time.

This is the reality we are facing. For those of us for whom the NCP and *The Swag* have been highlights in our priestly journey, the suggestion that the time is fast approaching for us to "close the shop," is a bitter pill to swallow. But Quo vadis? Is there any other way to go?

The Executive is considering holding a General Meeting of the NCP at which a vote would be taken regarding the future of the organisation, in accordance with its statutes.

Should a decision be taken to close the NCP, this would, of course, mean the end of *The Swag* as well.

The Executive is not going to act irresponsibly. We are keen to know the views of the readers of *The Swag* and the general membership of the NCP.

Please let us know your thoughts, as we struggle with the Quo Vadis question. Thank you.

*Bill Burt SVD (NCP committee)*

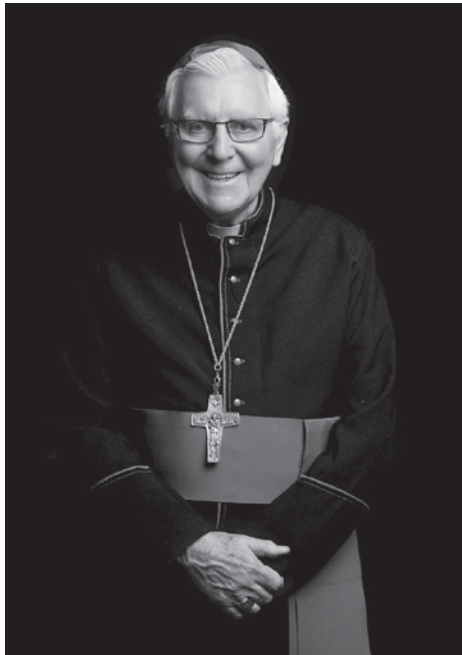
## Quo Vadis?

1. Do you still wish to see the NCP continue?
2. Are you interested in attending the Convention in 2025?
3. Please reply by end of June 2024 with your current contact details:
  - Name
  - Diocese (or Congregation)
  - Mobile number
  - Preferred email address
4. Please send to: [editor@theswag.org.au](mailto:editor@theswag.org.au)

# My Personal Advent

EMERITUS BISHOP PETER INGHAM

**Peter was the Bishop of Wollongong for seventeen years, retiring in November 2017. For a number of years he was afflicted with Pulmonary fibrosis, a terminal condition. As his condition worsened he chose to prepare the following article for *The Swag*. It was forwarded by Julia Cuming who in her role of Enduring Guardian and Power of Attorney cared for Peter in the family home. Julia's parents, Doctor John and Dame Monica Gallagher, first met Peter as a young priest when he was personal secretary to Cardinal Freeman. The friendship with the Gallagher family has endured for fifty years. Peter died peacefully in the evening of the feast day of Saint Mark, 26 April.**



**W**hen my mother was dying and I ministered to her the Sacraments of Penance, Anointing, Holy Communion and prayed the Commendation of the Dying for her, I realized, more than ever before, that this was the most important time in her whole life – Mum was on the threshold of the fullness of life with God in eternity – entering the joy of the Lord.

Now, as I face the same situation with a deterioration in my incurable terminal pulmonary fibrosis, I thought to share some of my personal thoughts and experience in the hope they may resonate, and possibly be of some help to others.

I could be feeling a sense of being parked diagonally in a parallel universe, or on the crest of a slump! But of course, as we all know, being psychotic is not all it is cracked up to be! You and I also know, fear is the dark room where negatives develop.

On the positive side, on the advice of doctors I am under Palliative Care as

the best alternative, since there is no surgical or medical cure for me. Palliative Care actually affirms life and regards dying as a natural process. It is so much more than a synonym for end-of-life care. Anyone with a life limiting illness has the right to live, as well as possible, for as long as possible. Palliative care integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of care.

Under Palliative care, I am on Morphine medication to assist my breathing and I am using oxygen as needed. Increasing breathlessness even with moderate activity is my main difficulty thus I am fortunate to have paid carers who come and shower me throughout the week. I am becoming more breathless with less activity thus sitting or lying down comforts me. Morphine also constipates one, so antidotes to that cause stomach upsets and require the proximity of the bathroom. These episodes are quite exhausting.

I am grateful to be in the home of my Legal Guardian and Power of Attorney as I can no longer manage independent living.

I came across an article in "The Tablet" citing the words of an Advent song by Marty Haugen, "For you O Lord, my soul in stillness waits; truly my hope is in you." That made me think I am now in the Advent of my life, awaiting the coming of the Lord, reminiscent of Saint Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68) I also recall an old prayer of yesteryear, "Lord, spare us a sudden and unprovided death". I feel blest to have time and opportunity to observe this personal Advent as profitably as possible for my spiritual and physical welfare.

Once in this frame of mind, it is amazing how quotes from the Liturgy of the Hours, the Missal, and Scripture

generally almost jump out at one more obviously, even though having prayed them for years. I have also had the blessing of our Sacraments of salvation through my illness and am, at time of writing still able to celebrate daily Mass at home.

## Telling Quotes

"He will give light to those in darkness, those who dwell in the shadow of death, and guide us into the way of peace."  
(Benedictus)

"O Lord, you have shown me my end, how short is the length of my days. Now I know how fleeting is my life." (Ps 38:6)

"My life is on the brink of the grave. I am reckoned as one in the tomb. I have reached the end of my strength" (Ps 87:3f)

"My days are vanishing like smoke, my bones burn away like a fire" (Ps 101:13)  
"my skin clings to my bones" (v 7)  
"my days are like a passing shadow, and I wither like the grass." (v 22)

"He has broken my strength in midcourse, he has shortened the days of my life. I pray to God: do not take me away before my days are complete, You, whose days last from age to age." (Ps 101:24-25)

"Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me"  
(Ps 22:4)

"You have given me a short span of days; my life is as nothing in your sight. A mere breath, the one who stood so firm, a mere shadow, the person passing by; a mere breath the riches he hoards, not knowing who will have them." (Ps 38:7)

I have personalised these more generic words of Pope Francis applying them to myself: "I cannot allow suffering to lead me withdrawing into self-doubt to the point of despair and rebellion; I must accept this part of my life as an opportunity to grow and to discern about what really matters in my life until the time, I meet God."

"Alive or dead, we belong to the Lord, who is God of both the dead and the living." (Rom 14:9)

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Jesus' identification with the sick and

suffering culminates in his own suffering and death. Christ's Cross becomes the sign par excellence of God's solidarity with us (especially in suffering) and at the same time, the possibility for us to join in his saving work, "as we fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ on behalf of his Body, the Church." (Col 1:24)

This also calls us to be close to people in pain and to do what we can to help or comfort the sick person.

### Facing the Mystery

When I try to imagine my own dying and death, I have always felt that, at both birth and death, we are on the edge of the mystery of our existence. We surrender into a larger Mystery that embraces us – God, "in whom we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28) Even, despite my faith, I still have fears and anxieties about dying, and I have experienced temptations against faith. Naturally this is a prime time for Satan! One of my classmates, Rev Dr John Hill, reminded me how Saint Martin of Tours (d 397) when dying, became conscious of Satan at the end of his bed (Office of Readings, 11th November).

In "the Spiritual Combat," Father Lorenzo Scupoli (d 1610) claims that the Enemy's first assault at the hour of death is against faith. He advises, keep our heart intently fixed on Jesus crucified by saying, "My God, my Creator and Redeemer, hurry to my assistance, and stay with me lest I wander from the truth which you have taught me. Grant that, as I was born in the faith, so may I die in the faith to your glory and my salvation."

Scupoli says the enemy's second assault at the time of death is to despair of God's merciful forgiveness. As often as we ask pardon, we must have a firm confidence in the infinite mercy of Jesus Christ. While God may have ample reason to condemn us for our sins, you and I have to have a firm confidence in the infinite mercy of Jesus Christ. While God may have ample reason to condemn us for our sins, you and I have greater reason to hope for pardon from our merciful Saviour. "Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom." (LK 23-42). Redeemed by his precious Blood, we commit ourselves trustingly and entirely into the compassion of Jesus, our Hope.

"You are the sole Master of the future, Lord, keep me from despair and from the fear of what is to come." (Wed Week 4, intercession at Morning Prayer)

According to Scupoli, the third assault of the Enemy at the time of death is to have ourselves on, a temptation to take credit for our achievements, forgetting that God is the author of any good we may have done. God, in whom we hope, has crowned our poor efforts with success. "Not to us Lord, but to your Name give the glory."

My colleague, Bishop David Walker, alerted me to Scupoli's "The Spiritual Combat." This was a favourite book of Saint Francis de Sales (d 1622), a spiritual classic of our tradition. Scupoli reminds us we are usually tempted according to our predominant passions, so that is why we would be wise to arm ourselves securely in advance and bravely struggle against them so that we will not be overcome at the last in a weakened unprepared state.

Bonhoeffer has this lovely thought about fear in "The Cost of Discipleship" (1993): "So, look to Christ when you are afraid, think of Christ, keep him before your eyes. Call upon Christ and pray to him, believe that he is with you now, helping you. Then fear will grow pale and fade away. You will be free through your faith in our strong and loving Saviour, Jesus Christ."

This all leads me to these positive quotes:

"In my distress, I called upon the Lord and he heard my voice" (Ps 17:7)

"O Lord, do not stay afar off; my strength, make haste to help me." (Ps 21:20)

"Create a clean heart in me, O God, give back to me the joy of your salvation." (Ps 50:12,14)

"Teach me to live, that I may dread the grave as little (as I dread) my bed. Teach me to die, so that I may rise glorious at the awe filled day." Hymn for Compline by T. Ken.

"Guard us waking, guard us sleeping, and, when we die, may we in thy mighty keeping all peacefully lie; when the last dread call shall wake us, do not thou, our God forsake us, but to reign in glory take us with thee on high." Hymn for Compline by R Heber & R Whatley.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in me, will not die forever." (Jn 11:25)

"God loved the world so much, he gave us his only Son, so that all who believe in him might have eternal life." (Jn 3:16)

"If you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet 4:13).

"In life and death, O Lord, abide with me." F. Lyte

"You will have to suffer for only a little while: the God of all grace who called you to eternal glory in Christ will see that all is well again: he will confirm, strengthen and support you. His power lasts for ever and ever, Amen (1 Pet 5:11).

"The corruption of death no longer holds any power over humanity, thanks to the risen Lord, Jesus, the Word made flesh amongst us through his Incarnation restoring us to immortality by the promise of his resurrection." (St Athanasius)

"Let me be with You in heaven in my mind and heart as I await your coming. May I then gaze upon your glory with all the faithful departed." (Breviary hymn)

"The brightness of a holy deathbed, blending with dawning glories of the eternal day." (Breviary Hymn)

"Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom" (LK 23:42)

"We are but travellers on a journey without as yet a fixed abode. We are on our way, not yet in our native land, we are in a state of longing, not yet of enjoyment. But let us continue on our way, and continue without sloth or respite, so that we may ultimately arrive at our destination" (St Augustine d 430). St Mary of the Cross MacKillop (d 1909) expressed a similar idea of being travellers on the journey of life!

"Eye has not seen nor ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love him" (1Cor 2:9).

"We are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed: all we know is, that when it is revealed, we shall be like God, because we shall see God as God really is" (1 Jn 3:2).

Continued page 8

## FEATURES

“I am going now to prepare a place for you and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me so that where I am, you may be too” (Jn 14:2-3).

“At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love” (St John of the Cross. d 1591).

I have struggled, as we do in letting go. Dispossessing myself of my possessions – this must happen because shrouds have no pockets. So many books and resources that I have gathered in order to help me be better at my pastoral ministry – books are tools for a priest – plus other resources for my own spiritual nourishment that can enrich me to help me to try and nourish the spirits of others.

In this Advent of my life, I have had to reflect on who am I when my public role as “Bishop” “priest” is now taken away by illness. What now fills the gap on my journey?

I went through being in denial of the reality of my unchangeable diagnosis. What is left when all else goes? I am blessed to have time to reflect on what can come in to fill the gap on my journey.

The Psalms emphasis the might of God, the futility of opposition to God. I have had time to reflect on the Word made flesh, the death and the Resurrection of Jesus and what the church community has meant to me.

Every Good Friday has its Easter Sunday. “God alone satisfies” (St Thomas Aquinas).

“Lord remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” (Luke 23:42)

As St John Henry Cardinal Newman highlighted, God has created each of us to do him some definite service.

Our illness, perplexity, difficulties may cause some greater purpose quite beyond us to comprehend entirely, but God does nothing in vain. God knows what He is about.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Amen. ☩

*Emeritus Bishop Peter Ingham*



## Where does Infinite Dignity meet finite reality?

BILL UREN

**Bill Uren, SJ, AO, is a Scholar-in-residence at Newman College at the University of Melbourne. In this article (first published in Eureka Street on 24 April 2024, and reprinted here with permission of Eureka Street and the author) Bill reflects on the recent Vatican Declaration on Human Dignity which has occasioned much reaction around the world especially in relation to gender theory. Bill notes in particular the lack of a pastoral approach in this document which has been present in other recent Papal and Vatican teachings. A former Provincial Superior of the Australian and New Zealand Jesuits, he has lectured in moral philosophy and bioethics in universities in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth and has served on the Australian Health Ethics Committee and many clinical and human research ethics committees in universities, hospitals and research centres.**

The recent Declaration of the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Dignitas Infinita’, on Human Dignity (2 April 2024), has had a protracted gestation. An original draft was reviewed in 2019 and found to be unsatisfactory. Since then, there have been at least four further drafts. The final one had direct input from Pope Francis. He insisted that the penultimate draft be expanded to include not only the traditional bioethical issues – abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy, gender theory, sex change, etc. – but also a whole variety of specifically social contexts in which human dignity is compromised: poverty, war, the travails of migrants and the disabled, human trafficking, sexual abuse, violence against women and digital violence. It was as if he was resurrecting Cardinal Joseph Bernardin’s controversial 1983 document on ‘The Consistent Ethic of Life’ (6 December 1983).

As the extensive footnotes reveal, this Declaration draws not only on the final document of the Second Vatican Council, ‘*Gaudium et Spes*’, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7 December 1965), but also on Pope Francis’ recent encyclical, ‘*Fratelli Tutti*’ (3 October 2020), and many Vatican documents on related themes over the past sixty years. It also acknowledges the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948), whose 75th anniversary was celebrated at the end of 2023.

The Vatican Declaration is basically a statement of Catholic principles on human dignity. It draws the line in a whole variety of contexts where human dignity may not be compromised and where consequential human rights must be maintained as inalienable. Because it is exclusively a statement of principles there are no concessions of a pastoral

nature to those whose lifestyles and practices (e.g. LGBTIQ+, transgenders, surrogate motherhood) are at odds with these principles. This, however, is not only disappointing in itself but doubly so in that a more sensitive approach to some of these ‘problems’ has been evident in more recent Vatican documents. In these documents, while there has been no retreat from the basic principles, there has also been evident a willingness both to recognize that adherence to these principles is very difficult for some people and virtually impossible in some situations and that a more inclusive and inductive moral logic that respects individual circumstances must be employed if the Church is to engage effectively with these alienated ‘irregulars’.

This more expansive logic was most authoritatively outlined in Chapter 8 of the encyclical ‘*Amoris Laetitia*’ (19 March 2016), where Pope Francis addressed the situation of Catholics who had divorced and remarried. Instead of invoking the standard Catholic principles and excommunicating such ‘irregulars’ into outer darkness, the Pope insisted that each case must be addressed anew in its singularity to see whether personal circumstances could be discerned which might explain or even excuse this deviation from Catholic principles and practice. For the Pope engagement, rather than judgment and condemnation, should be the preferred pastoral stance

in addressing these ‘irregular’ situations.

Thus, for example, most recently in the Declaration *‘Fiducia Supplicans’* (18 December 2023), priests were encouraged to respond positively to requests for blessings from members of homosexual unions. In *‘Samaritanus Bonus’* (14 July 2020) hospital chaplains were instructed to accompany euthanasia-intent patients right up to the moment of ingesting the lethal potion. Further, in a response (13 December 2023) to a bishop from the Dominican Republic, the Dicastery actively encouraged single unmarried mothers not only to access the Sacraments themselves and to have their children baptized but also to participate fully in the life of the Christian community. In a similar response on 3 October, 2023, the Dicastery indicated that, at least in principle, there was no canonical restriction to transgender persons and children of homosexual couples being baptized or transgender or homosexual persons serving as godparents at baptisms or witnesses at sacramental marriages.

Granted these recent more engaging and compassionate responses, it is somewhat surprising and certainly disappointing that none of these responses and declarations are conceded either in the body of the text of *‘Dignitas Infinita’* or even cited in the extensive footnotes. Perhaps this is because the Declaration has been drafted exclusively as a statement of Catholic principle. But in the Catholic tradition pastoral applications have usually accompanied statements of principle. Not, however, in this case. Indeed, in addition to the customary anathemas on abortion and euthanasia, strong criticism is directed especially to the practice of surrogate motherhood and to gender theory. The surrogate child is characterized as ‘an object of trafficking’ and the subject of an ‘artificially induced origin’. Only the maternal womb is a fit receptacle for continuing procreation, and that even though the genetic mother may be incapable of sustaining a pregnancy. What the Vatican makes of neonatal intensive care units where premature infants are maintained ‘artificially’ for upwards of a third of their lives is not recorded. What they will make of the prospect of artificial wombs that may rescue miscarried fetuses will also be interesting to speculate. But in

dismissing the practice of surrogate motherhood even in its altruistic form, there is little recognition in the Declaration that for some would-be parents this is their last resort. The individual hard case yields before the universal principle. There is no ‘right to a child’.

A similar logic operates in addressing transgenderism. For the Declaration (and personally, it would seem, for Pope Francis) Gender Theory and even its application in individual cases is an abomination. Although it is not explicitly invoked in the text of the Declaration (only in the footnotes), Genesis 1:27 encapsulates the Catholic principle: ‘God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them’.

The Declaration will allow no exceptions to the binary of male and female. Sexuality and gender may be distinguished but not separated. Only where there are ambiguous genitalia is a physical resolution admissible. Psychological discomfort, however intense, where one’s subjectively perceived gender orientation is at odds with one’s biological sex, cannot be resolved by recourse to medical or surgical interventions. Once again, the general rejection of gender theory and ideology seems to take no account of individual hard cases, and this despite the more recent compassionate pastoral statements emanating from the Vatican.

The ethics of both surrogacy and gender dysphoria are currently hotly debated, especially in secular European contexts. At a recent conference in Rome, the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, characterized surrogacy as an ‘inhuman practice’, declaring it ‘a universal crime’. For others, however, it is an example of extraordinary altruism, even though for others it is also a lucrative industry. A wide ranging ‘Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People’, led by Dr Hilary Cass in England, pointed to the inadequacy and general unreliability of data on transgenderism in young people. She urged caution in addressing medical and surgical interventions. Yet in Germany recent legislation has made it possible for people aged 14 and older to

change their first name and gender entry merely by making a declaration to the registry office. Similar options exist in a number of other European countries.

There are obviously strong sentiments on both sides when the ethics of surrogacy and transgenderism are debated. There is little evidence either in the text or in the footnotes of the Vatican’s Declaration that they are aware of the debate or of views contrary to their own. These are issues that will not go away. One might hope that the next time the Dicastery addresses these aspects of human dignity, its footnotes at least might indicate that a wider secular, as well as ecclesiastical, purview has been engaged, and that technology, even at its interstices with the ‘natural’ is to be discerned rather than summarily dismissed. ☞

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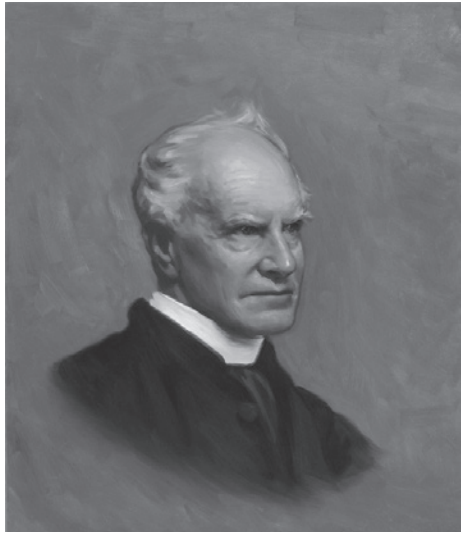
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# Fr John Joseph Therry (1789-1864): A Reflection

DAMIAN JOHN GLEESON

**Dr Damian John Gleeson was the 2022 Australian Religious History Fellow at the State Library of New South Wales. Drawing on primary sources, his detailed examination of colonial New South Wales has identified many errors in the history of Catholic education, the Irish convict settlement, and early Catholic clergy, such as Fr Therry.**



Readers will be familiar with the seminal priestly career of Fr John Therry, who arrived as an official chaplain to the penal colony of New South Wales in 1820. His ministry included many years in NSW and Van Diemen's Land, and a much shorter period in Port Philip. Wherever Therry went he left an enormous mark; he generated friendships of lasting and enormous loyalty, but his personal relationships with church and colonial officials were often dominated by disputes that occupied a disproportionate amount of time. This article does not aim to revise the many errors in historiography about colonial Catholicism (which is something I have attempted elsewhere) but to take a more reflective view about Therry as a person and his relationships with family, clergy, and colonial officials. Despite being portrayed as a 'simple man', Therry was, I believe, a complex character. He was a master at subterfuge and Machiavellianism. He gained unprecedented power in the Australian colonies but was often incapable of working harmoniously with clergy, save perhaps, Fr John McEncroe, who like Therry, would become reformed alcoholics.

Complexity was evident from Therry's early life in County Cork, Ireland. Born

in December 1789, Therry may have been the eldest son in a blended family with at least two older half-sisters, and five younger siblings. His parents, John Therry senior and Eliza Conolly, placed emphasis on education, and John became fluent in French, Latin, and English. We know little of his early working life. It is possible that he studied in France, as did some of his younger siblings, but there is no evidence he undertook religious studies before entering St Patrick's College, Carlow at the age of 21 in 1812. More likely, reflecting a family tradition, John Therry was involved in finance or business, and he maintained these interests during his long colonial career.

Three factors influenced Therry's seminary training. First, his main professor, the Augustinian James Doyle (later Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin) had a large bearing on Therry's sense of social justice. Doyle, a native of New Ross, County Wexford had observed first-hand the tumultuous 1798 Irish rebellion and became the most articulate Irish bishop advocating for fairer treatment of the majority Catholic population. Therry never forget his mentor, nor his resolve to tackle injustice.

Second, while Therry was a secular candidate, many of his classmates were Jesuits. The respect he gained for the Jesuits motivated him to entice the Irish Jesuits to come to NSW, which was achieved through the enormous financial legacy he left them.

Last, Therry's studies were interrupted by 'family embarrassments'. Archbishop Eris O'Brien argued that financial problems explain the 'embarrassment', but primary sources show Therry's seminary fees were paid in full. More likely, a political or social scandal involving an immediate Therry family member was at hand. Ironically, the deeply conservative Archbishop John Troy OP of Dublin, ordained Therry as a secular priest in April 1815.

From his arrival at Botany Bay in May 1820 Therry displayed passion, authenticity, and individualism. His ministry to the convicts, regardless of religion, was without parallel. Therry's strongest supporters were well positioned emancipists who had been members of the United Irishmen. They, too, shared his anti-English views and his (then) drinking habit. Therry put to one side that Troy had excommunicated the 'Men of 1798'.

Therry and his nominal superior, Fr Philip Conolly, represented a challenge to the colony's religion, the Church of England. Governor Macquarie, entering the last year of his position, found Therry burdensome. Twice Macquarie introduced colonial regulations aimed at curbing the ministry of Catholic priests. Conolly respected the governor's decisions; Therry did not, and the two priests clashed. Alarmed by Therry's recalcitrant behaviour, Conolly retreated to Van Diemen's Land for the remainder of his difficult priestly life. Ironically, Therry as vicar general of Hobart in 1838, buried his nemesis.

Despite disingenuous letters when it suited him, Therry generally held the colonial English in disdain. He expressed in word and deed his objection to colonial regulations, such as in the areas of convict marriage, mixed marriage, and religious conversion. While no intellectual, Therry cited the Council of Trent as the basis for his ministry. Therry argued that the council's marriage policy, Tametsi (1563) gave him free will to marry convicts when and where he liked.

Successive colonial governments supported convict marriage as a central plank in improving the general morality of the colony but insisted on a formal application process being made by Protestant and Catholic ministers. Convicts had been transported without details of their marital status, so neither State nor Church had any way of knowing if a convict had a spouse in England or Ireland. As a result, up until reforms by Governor Darling in 1825, many Catholic convicts remarried in what were clearly bigamous cases.

Whereas Fr Conolly attempted to stop bigamous marriages in Sydney and Hobart, Therry took a different stance especially before 1825. Therry's attitude was that a Catholic marriage was better than a marriage outside the church or no marriage at all. Further, because some Irish female convicts had married outside the Church in Ireland, Therry, citing Tametsi, did not recognise their first legal marriage, and thus permitted them to remarry in NSW. In the late 1820s Therry adopted a hard line where he knew a man had a prior family in Ireland. In an era of no legal divorce, Therry took it on himself to separate bigamist couples and have them sign legal deeds that one of his henchmen had prepared. Interestingly, he continued to allow Irish married women to remarry in the colony, despite the second marriages being bigamous.

Therry's relationships with Catholic clergy were generally abrasive. He ignored clear directions from the bishop of Mauritius (who had responsibility for penal NSW before 1832) to avoid public and political disputes with colonial authorities. After Fr Daniel Power arrived as the official Catholic chaplain in late 1826, Therry consistently undermined and harassed him. Far from being weak, Power's surviving papers show that he politely challenged colonial officials on matters where Catholics were discriminated against. After Power's sudden death in March 1830, his successor, the capable Christopher Dowling, was also on the receiving end of Therry's rudeness. Dowling retreated to Windsor before becoming making his mark as the first resident priest in the Newcastle-Maitland districts.

When William Ullathorne arrived as the colony's first vicar-general in 1832, Therry pledged loyalty, but it was lip service. The highly inexperienced Benedictine was no match for the wily Missionary Apostolic (MA). Publicly Ullathorne restrained himself: privately, he was deeply critical of Therry. Hopes that John Bede Polding would bring Therry into line were dashed because the bishop was ill-equipped to manage Therry and afraid of upsetting the latter's extensive supporter base.

Moving Therry to Hobart did little to resolve matters, especially when a nasty

financial dispute ensued between the first bishop, Robert Willson and Therry for 14 years. Polding's intervention amounted to little. What should have been clear to Polding was Therry's inconsistency: in NSW, Therry claimed that property and finances granted to the Catholic Church belonged to him; so, too, did bequests supposedly left for the church's development. In Hobart, Therry argued that the financial problems that beset St Joseph's Church were not his personal responsibility. In any event, Therry's Sydney large supporter base played a key role in supporting him.

In a rare moment of reflection, Therry regretted that he had not had an opportunity in the colonies for theological or priestly development. He had been without a confessor for more than a decade. His enormous workload and devotion to the Irish community shielded inherent loneliness.

Therry's closest friends included Bridget Sullivan, the daughter of Wicklow chief Michael Dwyer and Mary Doyle, and other former United Irishmen such as Andrew Byrne, William Davis, James Dempsey, and Edmond Redmond.

Therry came to realise that his drinking exacerbated personal disputes. Aware that drink had damaged his brother, Stephen in Cork, Therry, through the prominent Irish temperance leader, Fr Mathew, joined Fr John McEnroe in taking the pledge in the mid-1830s. Therry established many temperance branches, especially in Melbourne. Therry and McEnroe became lifelong friends, a rare Therry clerical relationship. But Therry and Mathew fell out because after Therry sent money home to Cork, Mathew skimmed half of the amount, claiming he had cared for the Therry family after the priest's departure.

It is a tragedy that Fr Therry never returned to Ireland. This was despite suggestions from John O'Sullivan, his banker and most loyal colonial friend. Therry had a conflicted relationship with his family. Long gaps in replying to correspondence reflected not only the demands on his time, but similar to many convicts,

Therry had embarked on a new life in the colonies. Had it not been for his forceful sister, Jane Ann, the priest may

have turned his back completely on Ireland. Therry's relationship with his father remains unclear. There was no correspondence between the two men between 1819 and his father's death in 1829. Perhaps the latter was unable to write or read. Mrs Therry held a great love for her son, but after her death (1836), the priest shut down any suggestion of returning home.

Whatever disputes and hardships he endured in NSW or VDL, Therry was a kingmaker with autonomy, power, and wealth. While his behaviour in financial matters was often unethical – today he would probably be asked to appear before anti-corruption bodies – there is little evidence Therry used his wealth for personal satisfaction. When Jane Ann and another sibling, James Therry, emigrated to Hobart, Fr Therry took care of them financially. But when several Therry first cousins sought the priest's support to emigrate, he declined to support.

Fr Therry died at St Augustine's Presbytery, Balmain on 25 May 1864, and was buried from Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral, without unfortunately his sister and brother being present. They remained in Fr Therry's Hobart house until their own deaths in the early 1870s. A focus on money was again evident when Jane Ann Therry launched legal action against the priest's will. In the ensuing mess, the Jesuits, the principal legatees, remained the only executors, and gradually they wore her down.

Meanwhile, Polding accurately complained that the enormous Therry estate provided little for Sydney, but in a further sign of his poor leadership, Polding was impotent when the Jesuits grabbed the whole Therry estate. In death, as in life, John Therry had outsmarted the Benedictine dream. ☪

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# In praise of book launches: Experiences of a lifetime

GERALD O'COLLINS SJ

After a PhD at the University of Cambridge, Gerald Glynn O'Collins, SJ, taught for 33 years at the Gregorian University (Rome), where he supervised the doctoral dissertations of several Australians. A frequent contributor to professional journals (e.g. *Theological Studies*) and popular journals (e.g. the *London Tablet* and *The Pastoral Review*), he has so far authored or co-authored 85 books. The latest include *Letters to Maev* (Connor Court Publishing), *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* (Paulist Press) and *The Beauty of Jesus Christ* (Oxford University Press).



Gerald O'Collins SJ

Launches of books have punctuated my publishing life. They began with a mega event that involved the Prime Minister of Australia, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, and the Ambassador of Ireland.

## Patrick McMahon Glynn

In July 1965, my sister Dympna Coleman (1927–2004) led my other sisters Moira Peters (1925–2017) and Maev O'Collins (1929–2021) in organizing with Melbourne University Press a gala launch for my first book, a biography of my maternal grandfather, a founder of Australian federation: *Patrick McMahon Glynn* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965). I had to miss the launch as I was away in Germany and about to start doctoral studies at Cambridge University.

In a cable from Melbourne, Dympna announced: 'Author acclaimed. Epic launching. Literary social ecumenical spirits rampant. Sisters three'. A letter followed quickly: 'Friday was a huge success, easily the most successful and/or launching imaginable'. She listed such guests as Sir Reginald Sholl (a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria), John La Nauze (professor of history at the University of Melbourne), Davis

McCaughey (master of Ormond College and not yet governor of the State of Victoria) Sir George Paton (Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University), Geoffrey Searle (a leading Australian historian), Sir John Barry (a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria), and Lady ['Elvie'] Curtis [wife of the lord mayor Sir Leo Curtis] oozing charm in the most delightful way. She was marvellous.'

The ambassador of Ireland to Australia had come down from Canberra and did the launch. Dr Eoin White (1923–72) 'spoke at length & I am sending a copy of his speech to you tomorrow.' Dympna added that she had given Peter Ryan, the director of Melbourne University Press 'a bottle of champagne' as a thank you. 'Four hundred copies of the book have been ordered by book sellers, he tells me, and have gone out. I am dropping one into Dame Mabel [Brookes] and to Lady [Baroness Maie] Casey as gifts tomorrow.'

A week later Dympna wrote again to report that 'the book has been given to the Knight of the Thistle [Sir Robert Menzies, still Prime Minister of Australia] as a parting gift by Mother Philippa after his Mercy Hospital sojourn. Sir George Paton said that the party was the most delightful launching he had ever attended.'

A sister of Mercy and hospital administrator, Dame Johanna Brazill (1895–1988), better known as Mother Philippa, helped maintain this hospital in Melbourne as an outstanding centre of health care. Earlier in 1965 I had received a letter from John Andrew, a chaplain to Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury: 'My dear Gerald, we had a most happy trip to Australia, marred only by the illness of Mrs Ramsey that became serious, necessitating surgery at the Mercy Hospital in Melbourne. Those religious

are simply marvellous and no praise is too high for the way they looked after her. It was a religious experience to wait alongside them as Mrs Ramsey began to recover.'

The interest stirred up by the launch, along with a handful of subsequent reviews of the book (almost uniformly positive), prompted me into publishing Grandfather's letters (and noting in the preface several corrections to the biography). That early work on gathering and editing 117 letters for a book of 234 pages, even though I remained unconscious of what was happening, helped lay the ground for reinventing myself years later as a writer and editor of letters.

Grandfather was an attractive figure in the history of Australia. An Irish-born migrant, he reached Melbourne in 1880, just in time to lunch with the presiding judge (Sir Redmond Barry) on the second day of the trial of a legendary bushranger, Ned Kelly. Paddy Glynn, as an elected delegate for South Australia, helped draft the Australian constitution: adding, for instance, to the preamble, 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God'. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1901 and would serve as a minister in three Commonwealth governments. His nineteen years as a member made him the last of the 'Founding Fathers' to remain in the national parliament he had helped to create.

After a fairy-tale launch that involved the best and brightest and the first burst of sales, the biography of Paddy Glynn sold badly, not much over one thousand copies out of the two thousand printed. I consoled myself with what the Roman satirist Juvenal remarked about virtue: '*laudatur et alget* (it receives praise but is left out in the cold)'.

It took time to recognize that I would find my market (and a bigger one) in the United States and the British Isles and through my vocational identity as a theological teacher and writer, not as an historian. The latter vocation had been temptingly put before me by some of the cathedral authorities in Melbourne after Archbishop Daniel Mannix died in November 1963: 'Why don't you write a

life of Dr Mannix? We can open up for you all the archival material we possess.’ But I resisted the temptation to take my academic life in an historical direction.

### ***Man and His New Hopes* (1969) and *Foundations of Theology* (1971)**

*Theology and Revelation*, my first work in the theological area, was published by Mercier Press (Cork, 1968) after being commissioned by Ted Yarnold, SJ (Campion Hall, Oxford) for a series on central themes in Christian theology. It demonstrated not only the size of the international market by selling many thousands of copies but also the possibility of foreign language translations. (A book co-edited with René Latourelle, SJ, *Problems and Perspectives of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) also appeared in French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Italian translations.) *Theology of Revelation* appeared in French and Italian, as well as in the original English. This slim paperback did not receive a formal welcome, but launches greeted my next two theological works.

A summer semester of 1967 drew me to the University of Tübingen, where Jürgen Moltmann arranged for me to meet Ernst Bloch, a venerable, existentialist-style Marxist philosopher who played the role of grey eminence for Moltmann and other theologians of hope. A thatch of white hair, thick-lensed glasses, and his lined face gave him the look of a latter-day prophet.

At the time Bloch was writing *Atheism in Christianity* (1968). I expressed regret that none of his books had so far been translated from German into English and went away to write an article about Bloch’s influence, philosophical and otherwise, in contemporary theology: ‘The Principle and Theology of Hope’. It appeared a year later in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. In the winter of 1967/68, when I was completing my doctoral dissertation at the University of Cambridge, Justus George Lawler wrote out of the blue to invite me to translate (for Herder and Herder of New York) Bloch’s *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (The Principle Hope). I enthusiastically endorsed the project, declined to undertake it myself (mainly because of the sheer size of the remarkable work), and offered to write a study of the theology of hope.

The result was *Man and His New Hopes*, which I completed in November 1968; it appeared in the autumn of the following year. I was teaching within the Boston Theological Institute (BTI) for Weston School of Theology, now located within Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, just across the common from Harvard University.

Harvey Cox (b. 1929; a Baptist theologian famous for his 1965 study of God and the modern world, *The Secular City*), George MacRae (1928–1985, a Jesuit biblical scholar who was to begin an appointment as acting dean of Harvard Divinity School before his sudden death), Max Stackhouse (1935–2016, a prominent social ethicist) shared a symposium to celebrate the publication of my book on hope. We met one evening at Episcopal Theological School. A German television team turned up and filmed part of the evening for a program on Christian theology in the United States.

At the launch Cox contrasted my ‘Protestant’ book with his own ‘Catholic’ book, *Feast of Fools*, which was to be published in 1970. One hundred and forty people attended, compliments flew around, and we enjoyed some hard discussion about New Testament views about the future, the resurrection of Christ, and the dangerous implications of a theologian’s self-interest. ‘All of us’, Cox remarked, ‘take Caesar’s penny’. I went home encouraged, if haunted by one question. A girl left the auditorium loudly demanding: ‘What the hell does the resurrection have to do with life anyway?’ Within a year three thousand copies of *Man and His New Hopes* were sold, and a Spanish translation appeared.

This time round I shared directly in my latest work being launched, while none of family could be present. Almost all of them were gathered in Ballarat, a country city of Victoria, for a ‘clan’ Mass and sumptuous lunch provided by our uncle, Bishop James O’Collins.

But they did notice the newest book and sent a joint letter of congratulations. My younger brother-in-law, Kevin Coleman, a barrister and not yet a county court judge, added a teasing note: ‘Thanks for the book. The first twelve pages are magnificent. I got through them in five days. Kevin.’

My mother and some other relatives could, however, attend the launch at Ormond College (University of Melbourne) of a 1971 book *Foundations of Theology*. Two leading Protestant divines, Harry Wardlaw and Norman Young, offered flattering accounts of a book that was a thinly disguised version of the doctoral thesis I had submitted at the University of Cambridge in 1968. Without saying this in so many words, Harry and Norman confirmed the positive award by the Cambridge examiners, found my account of basic Christian truths (about divine revelation, tradition, and the inspired Scriptures) acceptable, and strengthened a deep mutual trust. All three of us engaged with contemporary German thinkers (including my friend Moltmann whom I was shortly to welcome as a key ecumenical partner at the 1973 international Eucharistic Congress held in Melbourne). The critical engagement by Harry, Norman, and myself with the massive German apparatus also explored its theological and philosophical fault lines. Most Mondays I played golf with Norman; he and Harry ranked high among the ecumenical counterparts who made the Jesuit contribution to the working of United Faculty of Theology (UFT) a happy and successful ministry.

*Foundations of Theology* prepared the way for the 1981 book *Fundamental Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), which also appeared in Italian, Korean, and Portuguese. In the original English and translations, it sold over twenty thousand copies.

### **In Many and Diverse Ways (2003)**

The years in Rome featured a launch of a book that Daniel Kendall, SJ, and I prepared in honour of Jacques Dupuis (1923–2004) on the occasion of his eightieth birthday in December 2003: *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). Eighteen notable scholars contributed to this and included two cardinals (Avery Dulles and Franz König) and two archbishops (Henry D’Souza and Michael Fitzgerald). Dulles and Dupuis had become friends when they both lived at the Collegio San Roberto Bellarmino during their doctoral studies at the Gregorian University.

Continued page 14

A *Festschrift*, published by Dan Kendall and Steve Davis and launched at the Gregorian on my seventieth birthday, *The Convergence of Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), proved a dry run for the Dupuis volume. There were some similarities. Both books contained lengthy, life-long (to that date) of the O'Collins and the Dupuis bibliographies. The Dupuis volume, however, listed reviews (more than one hundred), responses, and other matter relevant to the controversy activated by his 1997 book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (270–81) and its launch. In this and other ways, unlike the 2001 volume, the Dupuis *Festschrift* was definitively an act of ecclesiastical politics. Some anonymous critics of Dupuis, supported if not to be identified with several hostile professors at the Gregorian University, repeatedly tore down notices advertising the launch of this *Festschrift*. Through being exiled to become the papal representative in Egypt, Archbishop Fitzgerald was 'punished' for speaking at the Dupuis launch and contributing to the volume in his honour. He was later created a cardinal by Pope Francis.

Being Dupuis's one official adviser allowed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when they took action against Dupuis, I could follow from the inside the whole story and examine the notably weak theology illustrated by his official critics. Some of them rejected the understanding of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit which Dupuis shared with St John Paul II (pope 1978–2005). If they would not criticize the pope, they could pursue a theologian whose scholarship and many years in India had independently led him to positions not unlike those which the Polish pope was to expound in his 1990 *Redemptoris Missio* (the Mission of the Redeemer). I present Dupuis and the case brought against him by the CDF in *On the Left Bank of the Tiber* (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2013, 213–51).

Built into the launch of *The Convergence of Theology* was the convergence of relatives, friends, and contributors on the city of Rome for the cheerful ceremony in Gregorian's aula maxima that preceded a reception in the spacious atrium. George Carey, who wrote a foreword for the volume, was still

Archbishop of Canterbury. He flew down for the occasion with his wife Eileen and, when the captains, kings, and princesses had departed, stayed on for a leisurely Italian dinner.

Music played its part for my *Festschrift*. To conclude the official launch, a choir from the Venerable English College sang a song, by my request the Cuban patriotic song Guantanamera. Pete Seeger and other folk singers had taken it up in the second half of the twentieth century. Music played a bigger role for a small launch in Rome that I accidentally triggered for my book *Incarnation* (London: Continuum, 2002).

Out one afternoon for a quick walk to the Trevi Fountain after a seminar at the Gregorian University, I paused at the window of a minuscule, ultra-modern bookstore (in the Rizzoli chain). The transparent centre of its glass floor revealed the ruins of a small Roman bath right on the edge of the Trevi Fountain. 'A wonderful location and snappy store', I assured in Italian the young man who ran the store. Then I had a business suggestion to pass on: 'Could you display a few books in English on the city's writers and saints – James Joyce, John Keats, St Philip Neri, St John XXIII and the rest? You could sell them to some of those thousands who walk pass your bookstore each day.' 'A good idea', he replied, 'But what about yourself? Are you a writer? Do you have any current book to launch?' 'I didn't come here to mention that. But, yes, I do: *Incarnazione*' (just published in Italian translation by Queriniana of Brescia).'

A few weeks later that bookstore somehow fitted in nearly one hundred people at a launch, which sold all seventy copies of *Incarnazione* shipped by the publishers. There was no room for a drinks and snacks table. An Irish Jesuit friend, Tom Casey brought along his guitar and sang some popular Venetian songs. A notable colleague at the Gregorian, Giacomo Martina, attended, leaving another Italian Jesuit the task of introducing and launching the book. Martina was intrigued by a Rizzoli store promoting reflection on the incarnation of the Son of God. Martina had spent much of his life writing a three-volume biography of Pio Nono

(pope 1846–78) and became the acknowledged interpreter of the pope who presided at the First Vatican Council. Martina did his best at the Vatican to prevent the beatification of Pio Nono but eventually some powerful figures prevailed in bringing it about.

### The Wisdom and Beauty of Launchers

The beauty of God is incarnate in Jesus Christ. Since beauty is ultimately divine, all beauty shows forth God. Those who respond to beauty are responding, at least implicitly, to God and Christ. A sense of meeting at book launches people who showed forth the beauty (and beautiful wisdom) of God incarnated in Christ grew even stronger after my return to live in Parkville (Victoria) from late 2009.

A long-serving Australian deputy prime minister, former Australian ambassador to the Vatican, and high school contemporary of my eldest nephew, Tim Fischer (1946–2019), towered happily over the audience of relatives, friends, and 'old boys' who turned out for the occasion at Xavier College (Kew, Victoria) when he launched the first volume of my memoirs, *A Midlife Journey* (Connor Court Publishing, 2012). Within a few years Tim developed cancer, and on his path to death was admitted to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, just down Royal Parade from the Jesuit Theological College in Parkville where I lived. On one memorable occasion he slipped out his ward and joined us for the evening meal. He was sick unto death but at the end strode around the common room to shake hands with all the Jesuits, young and old.

I remember with gratitude those who agreed to take on various launches: Dr Barry Jones (a world quiz champion and agent of deep culture) expounding *Saint Augustine on the Resurrection of Christ* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Frank Brennan, SJ., who had lived in Canberra and known very well my sister Maev, launching my *Letters to Maev* (Connor Court Publishing, 2023); Rev Dr Dorothy Lee taking her audience through two collections of New Testament essays *Illuminating the New Testament: The Gospels, Acts and Paul* (Paulist Press, 2022) and *Facing up to Jesus in the Gospels and Paul* (Connor

Court Publishing, 2023); Rev Canon David Richardson (former director of the Anglican Centre in Rome) adding his personal witness beyond what I had recalled in *On the Left Bank of the Tiber* (Connor Court Publishing, 2013).

Two launches took place in a legendary Carlton hotel, 'The Clyde', and more in the modern foyer of Catholic Theological College (Victoria Parade, East Melbourne). Shane Carmody (who directed development at the State Library of Victoria) and Brendan Byrne, SJ (a New Testament scholar who has blessed my life abundantly) enjoyed the best of settings: the back lawn of Jesuit Theological College. Ringed by sturdy trees and lit up by the colours of Australian shrubs, the lawn brought a touch of country bush right into the heart of the University of Melbourne. Behind the speaker, a flock of lorikeets would wait patiently up a fig tree for the end of the launch, and then glide down to drink at a bird bath and wash the dust from their wings.

After my return to Australia in 2009, I arranged for many of my books to be launched, knowing that only a limited number of books would be sold on such occasions but knowing also that I should co-operate in publicising and selling these works. Computers continued to facilitate even further the production of books, but the halcyon period of

publishing inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council was winding down.

During the earlier decades of my theological teaching and writing, I simply took it for granted that publishers would send out for review copies of works I published with them. Subsequently they often shared with me reviews they received. Some of my books received dozens of reviews in English and other languages: for example, *Fundamental Theology* (Paulist Press, 1981), *Jesus Risen* (Paulist Press, 1987), and *Christology* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

At times I gathered together a list of such reviews in an article or in a second edition of my book and responded to them by modifying or explaining further what I had originally written.

Recently the director of a prominent publishing house wrote to me: 'Catholic and religious publishing is coming to the end of the exciting and fertile era inaugurated by the Council, resulting in fewer of us needing to do more to get fewer books out to declining audience sizes. I still love my job and still consider it a vocation.'

He ended by admitting: 'But the saddest part of it is having to pass on many more worthwhile manuscripts simply because we know [that] we will not be able to publish them without losing a significant amount of money on each one.'

This friend might have mentioned the decline around the world of summer schools in theology that packed the campuses of such institutions as the University of Notre Dame (Indiana) and the University of San Francisco. In *Jesuits, Theology and the American Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2020), Dan Kendall and I describe some aspects of the theological golden age encouraged by Vatican II and terminating in the early twenty-first century.

Religious bookstores have suffered a similar demise. They have closed down in cities like New York. In Melbourne, Australia, the world-class Presbyterian Bookroom on Collins Street and the store in Ridley College (Parkville) have shut their doors.

It is in this context that I have put my heart into book launches. The practice is not going to reverse a worldwide trend. But, at the very least, I can express my gratitude to a string of publishers whom I recall with gratitude. Some publishing houses have been taken over or in other ways closed; some continue to battle on in hard times. From the 1960s through the first years of the twenty-first century, they supported me admirably. By practising book launches I am trying to repay a debt accumulated over fifty years. ☺



## Catholic Seminaries in Australia 1835-2023

PETER J WILKINSON

### Part 5: Romanisation of the seminary system

In 1901 eighty-seven percent of the clergy ministering in Australia were born, formed, and ordained in Ireland. For decades most Irish bishops had preferred Irish priests to those born and formed in Australia, even though most of the Irish priests were ill-prepared for the ruggedness of outback Australia.

Moreover, the Irish bishops in Australia had never encouraged their own diocesan priests to work among and evangelise the Indigenous peoples of Australia. They had consigned that apostolate to the religious congregations from continental Europe.

### 1905 Third Plenary Council of Australia

By 1905 Cardinal Moran's diocesan seminary at Manly had been operating for 16 years. It had formed 79 priests for 15 Australian dioceses and a further 54 seminarians from 17 dioceses were in formation. Most had been born in Australia.

In the same year, five religious congregations – Jesuits, Redemptorists, Passionists, Benedictines, and Missionaries of the Sacred Heart – had six functioning seminaries, with small numbers of

candidates being formed for the religious priesthood. The first diocesan seminary in New Zealand opened in 1900 in the Dunedin Diocese.

For many years Moran had envisaged Australia as the base for the evangelisation of Asia and the Pacific region. When the Third Plenary Council of Australia opened in Sydney on 2 September 1905 with 21 Fathers in attendance – 18 bishops (only 2 born in Australia), 1 abbot and 2 priest administrators – and himself as president, he succeeded in persuading the Council to legislate for the establishment of a foreign missionary college to train Australian priests for missions in the Philippines, China, and Japan (Decree 18).

Continued page 16



### St Columba's Missionary Seminary, Springwood

The foreign missionary college which Moran wanted came into existence very quickly, as seminarian numbers at the Manly seminary had already exceeded 100 by 1908. Moran purchased a property at Springwood in the Blue Mountains and in 1909 opened his new Sydney diocesan 'minor' seminary dedicated to the great Irish missionary monk, St Columba. It was designed to prepare priests for the China Mission and its front door was orientated to face China. Boys as young as 12 years were recruited and admitted.

By 1909, Australian-born priests comprised 20 per cent of the total clergy ministering in Australia.

#### Romanisation of the seminary system

In the first decade of the 20th century seminary formation was significantly influenced by two encyclicals – Pius X's *E Supremi Apostolatus* of 1903 and *Pascendi Domini Gregis* of 1907 – and the 1907 Decree of the Holy Office *Lamentabili sane exitu*. In his fierce attack on Modernism, Pius X ordered all professors in major seminaries to swear an oath denouncing Modernism and instructed all bishops and religious superiors to prohibit their seminarians all access to secular newspapers and magazines. These instructions would not only dampen theological innovation in seminaries for decades but would limit the seminarians' social awareness of the world around them. The oath remained

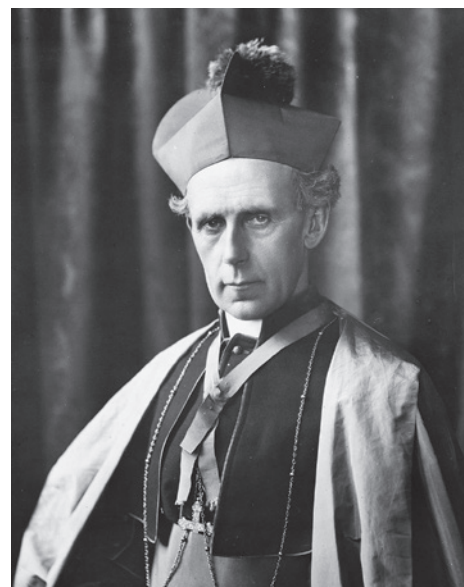
in force until 1967 when it was replaced with a revised Profession of Faith.

In 1908 Pius X had placed all seminaries under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation and Benedict XV later placed them under the new Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities. This was to ensure that the entire seminary system became increasingly standardised, forcing local authorities to be answerable to Rome for all seminary programs, and obliging bishops to provide triennial reports on compliance.

At Manly, as standardisation and institutional isolation from the outside world increased, greater formalism and clericalism resulted. And as the wider community, where priestly ministry was to take place, became irrelevant to those within the seminary, the divide between seminarians and the local citizenry deepened.

#### Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide

From its establishment in 1842 the Catholic Church in Australia had been designated as a 'mission territory' and placed under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide ('Propaganda'). Like other mission territories, such as Great Britain, Norway, Denmark, USA, Canada, Asia, Oceania, and Africa, Australia's bishops carried out their ministry with what were known as 'mission faculties', usually very flexible and generous.



Archbishop Daniel Mannix

However, in 1908, with the Constitution *Sapienti Consilio*, Pius X removed the mission territories of Great Britain, USA, and Canada from Propaganda's jurisdiction, but not Australia and New Zealand. And where previously Propaganda had enjoyed the widest of powers, Pius X removed those relating to doctrine, the sacraments (particularly matrimony), rites, religious congregations, and seminaries.

#### National seminary debate

When Cardinal Moran died in 1911 the Australian bishops had not had an annual meeting since 1894. When they met in 1912 and 1913 under the presidency of the new Archbishop of Sydney, Michael Kelly, their priorities were two: the 'nationalization' of the Manly seminary, and the need for each bishop to receive an annual report on his own seminarian's progress at Manly.

At the 1913 meeting, Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne and former President of Maynooth, Daniel Mannix, argued strongly for the nationalization of the Manly seminary, recommending that: 1) the administration of the Manly and Springwood seminaries (both free of debt) be transferred to the Bishops of Australia, on condition that they be converted into an Australian National Seminary; 2) the Catholic Hierarchy of Australia, as a body, constitute the Governing Board of the national seminary; 3) both properties be vested in Trustees nominated by the Archbishop of Sydney; and 4) any

profits generated be paid to the Board for use of benefiting the seminary.

Almost all the bishops were supportive but hesitated because some senior Sydney priests had concerns about the ownership and control of the assets. Before the issue could be resolved, however, World War I had broken out.

### 1917 Code of Canon Law on seminaries

In May 1917, at the height of the Great War, Pius X approved the new Code of Canon Law which came into force at Pentecost 2018. Among its 2414 canons were 20 (cc. 1352-1371) relating specifically to seminaries, defined as 'ecclesiastical corporations and non-collegiate moral persons, with the right to own and administer property for the purpose of training young men for the priesthood'.

The Code, applicable to all Latin Church dioceses, instructed every diocesan bishop to erect a diocesan seminary, and in larger dioceses, a major and minor seminary: 'If he cannot erect his own seminary, he is to send his candidates to another seminary or join with other bishops to establish a regional (inter-diocesan) seminary or seminaries.

The diocesan bishop is responsible for seminary funding, governance, staff appointments, visitation, familiarity with seminarians' character and progress, discipline, and spiritual formation'.

The Code insisted that candidates for admission should be 'boys of a tender age who give signs of an ecclesiastical vocation'. They are to be 'kept with special care from the contagion of the world, formed in piety and imbued with divine things that will encourage the seed of vocation'.

The criteria for admission were 'documentary evidence of legitimate birth, baptism, confirmation, and evidence of life and morals and characteristics that give hope that they will perpetually bind themselves to fruitful ecclesiastical ministry'.

If they have been dismissed from other seminaries or religious institutes the bishop is to refuse admittance unless he has knowledge (secretly if necessary) of the cause of the dismissal and is satisfied that there is nothing in the morals,

character, and temperament of the applicant inconsistent with the priesthood. Superiors of the dismissing seminary are to provide their evidence to the bishop with a 'gravely burdened conscience'.

Seminarians who are 'disruptive, incorrigible, unruly, whose lifestyle and characteristics seem unsuitable for the clerical state, who are not making academic progress, and especially those who offend against good morals and faith, are to be dismissed'.

Each seminary was to have a rector (for discipline), professors, a bursar (distinct from the rector), at least two confessors, and a spiritual director, all chosen for their outstanding knowledge, virtue, and prudence.

There were to be two committees of priest deputies: one for discipline and one for administration, carefully selected by the bishop.

The formation program for minor seminaries was to include a 'religious discipline' suited to the age and temperament of the students, together with language (especially Latin) and other humanities studies consistent with the general culture and standards of the region.

The major seminary program was to include two years of philosophical and related studies, and four years of theological studies, including theoretical and practical exercises in pastoral ministry.

Specific obligations were laid down for the bishop (cc. 973-1011) when ordaining to the priesthood. He must make a judgment about the candidate's suitability, be satisfied that he is not detained by any irregularity or other impediment, is not being coerced into the clerical state, and is necessary or useful for the diocese.

The bishop is to assure himself that only those who appear likely to be worthy priests and canonically suited are admitted to minor orders, and for 'licit' ordination, candidates have to have been confirmed, have morals congruent with the order being conferred, be of canonical age (21 years for subdiaconate; 22 years for diaconate; 25 years for priesthood), have due knowledge, have received the lower orders, have observed the interstices

(intervals between reception of different orders), and have canonical title.

When the ordaining bishop is sure that all these conditions have been met, he can announce publicly the names of those to be ordained, commission the pastor making the announcement to investigate diligently the morals and life of the candidate from trusted persons and convey his findings in writing and, if necessary, make his own, even private, inquiries.

The candidate has to make known to the ordaining bishop, directly or indirectly, his intention of seeking ordination. A bishop ordaining the subject of another bishop requires dimissorial letters from that bishop but is advised not to ordain the candidate if he feels in conscience that the candidate is unsuitable.

Similar canons (cc. 539-591) applied to the admission of religious candidates to postulancy, novitiate, religious profession, and formation for the priesthood.

From 1917 onwards, the popes and Roman dicasteries gave increasing attention to priestly formation. In 1922 Pius XI issued his Apostolic Letter *Officiorum omnium* emphasising the importance of Latin for seminary studies, and in 1931 promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, accompanied by the Ordinationes setting out a uniform set of goals, methods, and instruction for the reform of seminary studies, and called on religious superiors to raise their standards for accepting new members.

In 1924 the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities promulgated the Decree *Quo Uberiore* requiring diocesan seminaries to prepare a triennial report covering all aspects of seminary administration and pedagogy, and in 1928, under the rubric of 'promoting personal hygiene', counselled modesty in seminary shower rooms and encouraged the promotion of sports.

The control of the entire seminary system – diocesan and religious – by the Holy See was now well advanced and the new laws began to apply immediately in all Australian dioceses and religious congregations. ↻

# An experience of the German Synodal Way

FRANKFURT, GERMANY, MARCH 6-9 2023

SUSAN SULLIVAN BA DIP ED MRE (CHICAGO)

Susan Sullivan was one of two Australian representatives who attended the recent meeting of the German Synodal Way. The other was Sandhurst's Bishop Shane Mackinlay. Susan's report is quite enlightening, given so many conflicting reports of the Germans' meetings. Susan has a background in executive mission leadership roles. She has designed and implemented a range of collaborative mission-focused initiatives including leadership formation programs for Australian health, aged care and social services organisations. She is currently a board member of Marymead CatholicCare in the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese, a director of Campfire in the Heart, located in Alice Springs, and an active member of Canberra's refugee support and advocacy network. This article was published in the April 2023 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-journal of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and is republished with permission of the author, and *The Good Oil*. There is no cost to subscribe to *The Good Oil*: [www.goodsams.org.au](http://www.goodsams.org.au)

Recently I attended the fifth and final Assembly of the German Synodal Way (GSW) at the invitation of co-chairs of the German Synod, Bishop Georg Baetzing and Dr Irme Stetter-Karp. The invitation was an expression of solidarity between local Churches within the universal Church, to enable international exchange, and to offer witness to how lively and diverse is the German Church.

The German Synodal Path was explicitly a response to the findings of what is known as the MHG study on sexual abuse. Four themes arising from the study focused the Synod:

- Power and separation of powers – Joint participation and involvement in mission
- Priestly existence today
- Women in ministries and offices in the Church
- Living love in sexuality and partnership

Unsurprisingly these themes are consistent with those arising from the consultations leading up to the Australian Plenary Council.

## Assembly proceedings

Approximately 210 delegates gathered in person, some participating virtually. The Assembly's composition aimed to account for gender and generational justice. Nevertheless, there were perceptions that the gender balance was skewed by the presence of all the 67 male bishops and not adequately compensated by the remaining 69 delegates from the Central Committee

of German Catholics (ZdK) and the approximately 70 other representatives.

In his opening address, Bp Georg Baetzing acknowledged the hard work leading up to the final assembly, appealing to delegates: "the motions put forward result from an intensive struggle", urging them to adopt the consensus method and to remain focused on being "a church that's close to the people".

The formal opening emphasised the necessity for a prophetic voice which while this comes as disruptive, "take(s) us ... into the reality of the world" whereby "we get touched by the Gospel and find ever new ways how to live the Gospel". Service of mission was clearly articulated in the Assembly documents:

*"The Church must find the way of the people and not determine the ways of the people. She is needed where fractures and wounds mark people's lives. She must be of service to people".*

As the debates unfolded, I was intrigued by the candidness of the bishops, their willingness to openly name hard issues and be honest about what is really happening in the church. On the issue of obligatory celibacy for instance, rather than hiding behind a veil that "we have enough priests, and we can manage the challenges", there was a refreshing honesty that the present situation is unsustainable.

The obvious engagement, activism and confidence of the non-clerical participants was also impressive. The issues around sexuality were confronted frankly and directly, and grounded in sound,

thorough scientific research. These reflect issues articulated in Australia, but yet to be met with such a compassionate, practical and inclusive response. It was astonishing and humbling to listen to the interventions of people who identify as transgender and gay addressing the assembly in a confident and unapologetic way. The success of motions approving blessings for same-sex couples, divorced and remarried Catholics and couples choosing to not marry, prompted a very emotional outbreak of exuberant, sustained celebration.

Throughout the Assembly, I held two key questions. How has the German Church achieved such a contemporary and cogent perspective on issues facing the Church today? And how has it reached such courageous and pastorally sensitive responses? My observations, confirmed through conversations with delegates and others in attendance, led me to conclude that the long-established status, power and access to bishops of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) is a significant factor. It has been vital in nurturing an educated, confident laity experienced in the ways of the Church.

The formal engagement between the lay and clerical 'arms' of Church life has clearly delivered vibrant and respectful exchange on matters of human life and society and their relationship to the mission of the Church in an ever-changing world. It appears to have contributed to reducing the risk of insularity and associated irrelevance of the Church hierarchy.

## Unity or schism

The German Synod has provoked considerable controversy around concerns about the risk of schism. I returned home convinced that 'unity in diversity' is central to the success of synodality.

The Assembly texts recognised that Church teachings and practices must be enculturated into the realities of the local church: "this means allowing and encouraging the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel to be preached "in categories proper to each culture, creating a new synthesis with that particular culture". The purpose of a renewed theology

guiding the universal Church will always be to communicate more vibrantly the vision of Gospel.

There were a number of concrete examples of the Assembly wrestling with the art of compromise in order to preserve unity. The importance of the GSW voice being heard in the wider Church was also articulated as a factor. “In a synodal Church, a balance is struck between necessary unity and legitimate diversity so that the universal Church can hear our voice”.

The text on priestly celibacy was modified to recommend the Vatican re-examine rather than rescind obligatory celibacy, a significant moderation in tone. Texts relating to women in ministry ultimately chose to advocate for diaconate rather than priestly ordination.

When time constraints prevented divergent views being adequately aired, the debate on joint consultation and decision-making was referred to the Synodal Committee for further consideration post-Assembly.

As the formal Assembly opening urged on day one, synodality is not a super-human process. Striving for consensus necessarily draws on our deepest human instincts, light and shadow, and challenges us all to the spiritual discipline of letting go into a new way of seeing, and a new way of being.

Ultimately the Church hierarchy must wrestle with the relationship between universality and the principle of subsidiarity, especially as it intersects with the necessity to “proclaim the message of the Gospel in such a way that we do justice to the people in their respective life worlds” and “listen anew to the Gospel of liberation” (Assembly text).

### Conclusion

It was a privilege to experience the German Synod, and its attempts to forge a new path for a Church undermined by scandal, in a world beset by so many crises. The Lenten Scriptures were a valuable companion, especially those featuring experiences of exile and time in the desert. These texts evoke the experience of confusion, disorientation,

and loss of certainty. Exile undoubtedly captures the experience of those who feel abandoned by the Church. It also suggests the experience of those who lament the Church they love and treasure undergoing challenge and change.

Yet we are all called to be pilgrims, to embrace the horizon beyond the known. In keeping faith with the Spirit, pilgrims are always on the move, sometimes deep in exile and at others resting in a return home. From exile we can be confident we will eventually be guided home: to a renewed sense of belonging, to new ways of seeing, to deeper spiritual nourishment.

Neither exile nor homecoming is ever a final destination for those faithful to the mission and the quest for the divine. On this synodal path as we commit to the call and demands of mission, we remain pilgrims. We alternate between exile and home, yet always confident we are accompanied by fellow travellers, held and propelled by the mystery of a loving, energising God. ☩



## The missionary aspiration of reaching everyone

MICHAEL MCENTEE

Michael is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and former lecturer in theology at Catholic Theological College. His current interest is the theology of Armando Matteo, the secretary of the Doctrinal Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF). Matteo's recent book, “The Francis Option,” appeared in January 2023 marking the tenth anniversary of Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*. Matteo's concentration on Francis' Missionary Aspiration of Reaching Everyone (EG 31) is “The Francis Option” and Michael reflects on this in his review of Matteo's book.



Armando Matteo

“the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone” (EG 31) landed in 2013.

Many pastoral agents will have embraced some or other brief quote, e.g., we are all ‘missionary disciples’ (EG 24); ‘a church

Armando Matteo has written eight books since 2012 exploring the ecclesial and social context into which EG's proposal of

that goes out’ (EG 49). However, the Pope proposes an organic vision of a missionary pastoral renewal, his ‘aspiration of reaching everyone.’

Matteo emphasises the firm request for pastoral renewal from Pope Francis: “All (my proposals) help give shape to a definite style of evangelisation which I ask you to adopt in every activity which you undertake.” (EG 18, emphasis added)

Francis views parishes as flexible enough (EG 28) to realise his “dream of a ‘missionary option’ capable of transforming

everything” (EG 27). Nothing less than a “pastoral conversion” that will review “customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures ... suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation” (ibid.) will do. He invited “each particular Church ... under the leadership of its bishop ... to missionary conversion.” (EG 30)

Globalisation has created a universal mono-culture in so many respects that the author's description of the pastoral reality in Italy closely resembles our own. Matteo analyses this context that filters our evangelizing commitment.

The Pope appealed to DDF in January 2024 to redouble efforts to clarify his ‘definite style of evangelization’:

“It is time, therefore, to **reflect anew and with greater passion** (emphasis added) on certain themes: the

Continued page 20

the swag



proclamation and communication of the faith in today's world (EG 120; 123-125), especially to the younger generations (EG 105-106); the missionary conversion of ecclesial structures and pastoral workers (EG 19-49, esp. 24, 27, 34-35, 43); the new urban cultures with their particular challenges, not to mention an unprecedented search for meaning (EG 71-75); finally and most importantly, the centrality of the *kerygma* in the life and mission of the Church (EG 135-175, esp., 142-144, 164-165)."

### The Joy of the Gospel

Creative and prudent attention to the vision of the Pope will enable the renewal that he desires for the missionary Church.

EG is built on four **foundations**: joy, mercy, Jesus' friendship present in each pastoral reality, and fraternity that embraces all humankind.

EG guides with four **lights**: creativity, courage, the gospel *kerygma*, discernment.

EG warns of four **roadblocks**: auto-referentiality, a gnostic spirit, a pelagian spirit, betraying the gospel by neglect of those 'left-over' by the operation of the economy.

EG prioritises four **strategies or principles**: reality before ideas; the whole before the parts; unity before conflict and time before spaces.

EG assumes a three-faced **context for evangelisation**.

### Change of Era

Francis insists that the 'change of era' "set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology" (EG 52) is not simply 'an era of change'.

Particularly in the western hemisphere, entire populations enjoy personal freedom of choice in tandem with scientific and technological achievements.

An average westerner lives longer, suffers less physical pain, works less and recreates more, has never known hunger, and is in instant communication anywhere in the world. Humanity now boasts of being free, empowered by technology, of being self-sufficient, expressing their uniqueness in leisure and distraction.

Christianity is no longer the source and guardian of culture in the West. A new anthropology is the change of era.

Francis responds with a warning and a gift. "The great danger ... is ... a complacent yet covetous heart, ... frivolous pleasures and a blunted conscience. ... interior life caught up in its own interests, ... no longer room for others. ... This is a very real danger for believers too." (EG 2) Yet Christ does not withhold his gift: "With Christ joy is constantly born anew." (EG 1)

Christianity, the Gospel of joy, is an experience closed off to contemporary anthropology. Believers cannot be complacent: "If anything should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the light, strength, and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life." (EG 49)

### The Culture of Cities (eg 71-75)

A United Nations agency predicts that, by mid-century, two thirds of the population will live in cities. Ever changing complex social interactions make a city the 'home' of freedom, which is fragile and concrete.

EG 71-75 describe opportunities for a new evangelization.

Understanding grows from "a contemplative gaze" on urban life where fraternity and solidarity among individuals and groups, desires for goodness, truth and justice are signs of the presence of God (EG 71) (also see EG 54, 58).

"Evangelisation ... must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities." (EG 74) This is a difficult dialogue (EG 74), but the Gospel "proposes ... the best remedy for the ills of our cities, even though ... (a) rigid program of evangelisation is not suited to this complex reality." (EG 75)

### The broken chain of intergenerational transmission of the faith

Matteo reflects on participation at the Eucharist, emphasising that the generations that have long been most conspicuous for their absence are those born since

1946. Effectively, the faithful who participate regularly in the Sunday liturgy are the elderly and, with their parents, the children who are preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation and first Reconciliation. Otherwise, the parents and grandparents of the children are rarely, if ever, seen in the liturgical assembly.

Once, the gospel was received as a message of consolation in a life marked by brevity, by frequent illness, manual labour, infant mortality. Opportunities for leisure were few. Communications were limited. Pastoral service as an accompanying presence in trials and the associated prospect of eternal happiness were effective.

No more! The human person of this change of era, a clone of 'Peter Pan', enjoys physical, emotional, cultural satisfaction now. To him or her the vanity of bigger barns is incomprehensible! Barns, yes, whilst the spirit atrophies.

### Conclusion

How can the 'missionary aspiration of reaching everyone' come about? Foremost is Pope Francis's insistence upon the necessity of renewal, and his insistence that the familiar pastoral strategy of the era of Christendom is no longer fit for purpose (EG 27).

Our commitment is to share 'the joy of the gospel' with all, with human beings comfortable with their liberty, their power to achieve what they desire, their attachment to their leisure and distraction, to share with them "the primordial and gratuitous experience of knowing themselves loved and held by a God who is mercy." (A Matteo)

By God's gift, the face of this God of mercy is Jesus.

Matteo offers a tentative contribution to the missionary project.

His meditations on some gospel encounters demonstrate that Jesus acted as the meek person who will inherit the earth (Mt 5:5). Matthew's being called, the failed call of the young man, the succour given to the widow of Nain, the attention given to the men who brought their paralysed friend represent Jesus as the meek of the Beatitudes.

Meekness favours social solidarity and responsibility. Humility is descriptive of

oneself, whereas meekness is with regard to and for the other. The meek share maturely in the destiny of a neighbour (EG 177-216).

Matteo notes that Jesus establishes genuine contact with his interlocutors. Jesus 'sees' rightly a 'man', not a 'sinner' (Mt 9:9); he 'gazes at' and 'loves' the young man (Mk 10:17-22). Jesus encounters without coercion, each one responds freely. Jesus has the strength to "let the other be who she/he is". The religion of the meek that Jesus practises and teaches is interwoven with "compassion, nearness, attention to the other, active hospitality."

Could the 'gospel of meekness' be attractive to a post-modern person, conscious of their freedom to choose, conscious of how richly endowed each one knows her/himself to be in their uniqueness? Only when they receive the gospel of joy.

Could 'Peter Pan' be capable of taking up the invitation to receive Christ's embrace in a life committed to meekness with regard to the real needs of all the ones who are 'excluded', 'tossed aside'? Could 'Peter Pan' be capable of committing his or her "riches" of freedom and the several facets of one's unique person for a renewal of life in society building up the common good? Could 'Peter Pan' be capable of gratuitous action, of finding joy in choosing not 'the good life' but a 'life of good' for their neighbour? Only when they receive the gospel of joy. ☺

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## Faith formation and the parish: Finding a way!

PROFESSOR GERARD MOORE

Gerard Moore is the Principal and CEO of BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education, situated in the Caroline Chisholm Centre.

**C**ontinuous is the stream of calls for the faith formation of Catholics in our parishes. Unfortunately, there seems to be little that comes about as a result. It is time to find a way!

### What is a learner today?

Learners today have a set of understandings that govern how they engage with information and formation. The first recognition is that the 'learner' is a participant, with an expectation of engagement in the process of learning itself. This aligns well with a formation approach where formation is seen as a process that involves integrating new knowledge with current experience. Here experience is not to be taken lightly. In terms of faith, it includes reflection on life's journey, the hard times and the good times, along with consciousness of the foundational concepts used to take in events and respond to them.

This is a rich field of piety, sacramentality, unconscious suppositions, family history, preferences, biases and grace. All these and more come into play in any formation program that seeks to bring the ever-fresh challenges of the Gospel into dialogue with individuals.

This formation also has a communal dimension. We learn as individuals, but our learning takes place within a community of prayer and fellowship. Not all communities are created equal, and some have greater tensile strength to hold difference and diversity.

We can overcomplicate our sense of the learner, and the learner in community, but we should not underestimate them. Their expectation of participation is a sign of commitment to conversion and renewal.

It exists across the age groups. It underpins the success of preaching and liturgy. Our learners do not expect to be entertained, but they do expect to be

engaged. They prefer to be 'guided' not 'told'. This is the bread and butter of adult faith formation.

### Our educational imagination

Participants who are engaged, guided, and invited to integrate their experience with knowledge learn better and faster. They remain keen to learn more. In essence they immerse themselves in a process of formation. They also become agents of transformation, perhaps missionary disciples.

They also have an enlarged imagination around the media by which they learn as well as the value of learning. Let me start with the second. Most parishioners who are in employment will be required to participate in professional development and ongoing learning opportunities. They may well proudly show you their many certificates as evidence. Ongoing learning is an expectation and a workplace necessity. This requirement has left them quite comfortable with online learning, whether in their own time or tuning into sessions at set times. These newer and developing learning forms sit aside the established practices of bringing in specialists, attending seminars, participating in conferences, reviewing books or reports, and various forms of live Inservice.

The onset of the Covid 19 pandemic enabled many older parishioners to appreciate the opportunities provided by zoom, 'teams', live streaming and recordings posted online. These are entrenched as staples for funerals, book clubs, book launches, guest speakers and other events.

The opportunities for formation have never been wider, and with these opportunities is an increased interest in taking advantage of the media in use and the multiple devices that can give access. Not to mention the conveniences of time, place, availability and comfort.

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## FEATURES

### On 'selling' formation

Participation in faith formation has to be 'sold'. This means more than advertised. Time for formation is jostling with myriad details of family, church, work and civil life. Parishioners are busy. The parish and the diocese need a sales strategy. It could do with the following features.

### Know what is out there

Naturally enough you will understand that my focus is on Australian content! There are a lot of courses, talks, offerings and programs out there. We are used to Lenten programs. However, there are a lot more directed towards parishioners, liturgical leaders, parish finance members, parish council members, with differing emphases on mission, ecological theology, worship, scripture, justice and the like. They range across bodies such as the Brisbane Liturgical Commission, Yarra Theological Union, Catholic Theological College, Garratt Publishing and yes BBI-TAITE, all of which are alongside the resources and structures within the diocese, not forgetting the Catholic Education office. At present there is a wealth of opportunity at all levels.

### Create a business plan

Yes, this is probably where you want to stop reading, and I will mention KPI's as well, but this is essential to success. So, what does a plan look like?

It contains a public statement of how much of a priority formation is to the parish. If it is not a priority, then now is the time to discontinue reading this article and attend to higher priorities.

*Create and empower a team* to work with you. There are multiple tasks which can be divided between team members. The role of the team is not to do the teaching and formation but to provide the planning and share the work. Members are usually good at promoting the project because they are involved.

*Set a budget* and again make it public. Adult faith formation is expensive for providers, and they cannot work effectively with you unless there is a degree of certainty for them. The parish will also know that a budgeted amount means that formation is taken seriously. It does mean real money and should be set so that it recurs in each annual

round of funding. The budget can be complemented by a financial model that calls on participants to contribute.

*Set a target*, a performance indicator if you will. Make a realistic but challenging target of how many people this year you want to participate in faith formation, with a target for next year as well. The process is ongoing, and a longitudinal approach is essential for formation that brings conversion. Again, this provides a level of certainty to formation providers, and allows them to plan more effectively.

*Implement a set of expectations*. Work up a set of expectations for participation in the various ministries and roles in the parish. Parishioners should be familiar with the scriptures and prayer. St Vincent de Paul and social justice workers should have some exposure to Catholic Social Justice teaching. Leaders, particularly in parish councils and school positions, ought to have a sense of the Catholic governance environment. Parish workers require an understanding of the mission of the church. Liturgical ministers have specialized areas for learning and development. This is something of a larger task and may have already have a place in the diocesan plan for different ministries or diocesan formation itself.

*And when expectations are met?* As you enable the competence of parishioners to be built, so they can be entrusted with aspects of the life and mission of the parish. Learning must be towards outcomes. Missionary discipleship is a foundation for collaborative ministry. Again, if a shared responsibility for parish welfare and ministry is not part of your own approach, this would be a good place to stop reading.

*Collaborate with formation providers*. The steps above have a logical ordering however this one is more intrusive. Contact adult education providers as you are going through these steps. Institutions that offer formation programs have a lot of experience with groups and educational approaches. Call upon them early in the planning process and utilize their wisdom.

In our experience too many groups create interesting and innovative programs which, unfortunately, are impossible to implement. It is practical to be in touch with the experts early.

### Connect across parishes and the diocese

It has become increasingly difficult to run programs for an individual parish, though not impossible. Online events and programs have an outreach beyond groups, yet are able to serve particular groups all at the same time. Some parishes may have effective programs that can be shared. Catholic schools and the diocesan education offices often run programs for teacher and staff formation: this is a good platform from which to build. There may be something going on in other churches that could be ecumenically shared or poached.

### Parish faith formation!

There are a couple of hurdles. There is reluctance in the community. There is anxiety in dioceses about what to do with parishioners who embrace formation. There is always a lot to do, so how can this be fitted within the prevailing constraints.

Yet there is an ever growing imperative to expand the faith competency of the faithful, build them up through formative learning, and extend their own imagination about what the church could, and ought to be.

And there is always formation of sorts going on in the community, particularly through worship, the sacraments, preaching, Lenten programs and presence. The challenges the church is facing, and the possibilities as well as the call for synodality from the Australian Plenary Council and Pope Francis, mean that formation is now an essential aspect of a church going forward.

Where to start? Against all theological wisdom (i) create a financial plan, (ii) establish expectations and outcomes, (iii) get a team, and (iv) already be in touch with providers. ☪

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

# Vatican – Israel rupture over Gaza

PAUL COLLINS

**Paul is an historian, broadcaster and writer. A Catholic priest for thirty-three years, he resigned from the active ministry in 2001 following a dispute with the Vatican over his book *Papal Power* (Harper Collins 1997). He is the author of seventeen books, the most recent being *The Depopulation Imperative* (Australian Scholarly 2021) and *Recovering the 'True Church'* (Coventry 2022). A former head of the religion and ethics department in the ABC, he is well known as a public commentator on Catholicism and the papacy and has a strong interest in ethics, environmental and population issues. This article appeared in John Menadue's *Pearls and Irritations*, 21 Feb 2024 and is reprinted here with Paul's permission.**

The invasion of Gaza, described by Pope Francis as 'terrorism', is causing strained relationships between Israel and the Vatican.

One of the longest-term supporters of the Palestinians is the Holy See, the Vatican. Although the number of Christians in Palestine is small – 2.5% of the population of the West Bank (50,000), about 1,100 in Gaza and 185,000 in Israel – the Holy See has been present since the Crusader Kingdom through the Custody of the Holy Land entrusted by Rome to the Franciscans who arrived in Jerusalem in 1217, sent by Saint Francis of Assisi himself. They are still there.

In 1847, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was re-established as a diocese with a particular concern to maintain the presence of Arab Christians in the Holy Land. The first Palestinian to become Latin Patriarch was Archbishop Michel Sabbah, appointed in 1987.

In 1948, the Holy See had appointed an Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine, who became a Nuncio when formal diplomatic relations were established with the Palestinians in the Comprehensive Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Palestine in June 2015.

Relations between the Holy See and Israel are more complex. In the background lurks the Holocaust and the long history of Christian anti-Semitism. In 1904, as part of his search for support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Theodor Herzl approached Pope Pius X who firmly rejected the Israel proposal.

With the proclamation of the Jewish state in May 1948, Pius XII emphasised the 'international character' of Jerusalem

and called for guaranteed access to Christian holy places, including 'freedom of worship and respect for religious customs and traditions.' Since then, the Vatican has consistently supported a two-state solution.

In 1964, Paul VI became the first pope since Saint Peter to visit the Holy Land. He emphasised it was a 'spiritual' visit and never once mentioned the word 'Israel'. He was followed by John Paul II in March 2000 who had worked hard to build relationships with the Jewish people. He grew-up just 25 Kilometres south of Oświęcim, the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp where 1.1 million people, mainly Jews, died. Pope Francis visited Israel in 2014.

The fundamental change in Jewish-Catholic relationships came during the Second Vatican Council with the Declaration *Nostra aetate* (October 1965) which stated that Jesus' death could not be imputed to the Jews of his time, 'nor to the Jews of our time.' The Council's primary purpose was to repudiate Catholicism's history of anti-Semitism.

Negotiations between Israel and the Holy See continued and a Basic Agreement normalising relations was reached on 30 December 1993, just three months after the Oslo Accords between Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel followed and in 1997 a further agreement was reached which recognised the legal personality of the Catholic Church in Israel. But issues relating to property rights and tax exemption continue raising tensions between local Christian communities and Israeli law.

The Vatican continues to support a two-state solution. Before the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican Secretary for Relations with States (i.e. foreign minister), called for a UN peace plan to recognise that the Palestinians are in a 'very weak position,' because of internal governance problems and 'the increasingly authoritarian and militarily invasive attitude of the State of Israel.'

After the Hamas' attack, both Pope Francis and Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, argued that the Israeli people had a right to defend themselves, but that the innocent civilians of Gaza should be spared. Both repeated the Holy See's call for a two-state solution.

Tensions escalated when Cardinal Secretary Parolin said on 13 February 2024 said that what is happening in Gaza was 'carnage' adding that 'this operation [must] be proportionate. And certainly, with 30,000 dead, it is not.'

This was backed up by the Vatican's official spokesman, Andrea Tornielli. A Vatican website editorial entitled 'Stop the carnage,' spoke of 'Israelis massacred at home' and 'hostages torn from their families,' but also said that 'No one can define what is happening in the Gaza Strip as "collateral damage" in the fight against terrorism.' It spoke of 'innocent civilians – one third of whom are children – killed by the bombing in Gaza.' Pope Francis condemned any anti-Semitic 'manifestation against Jews and Judaism,' but also said that what's happening in Gaza 'is not war, its terrorism.'

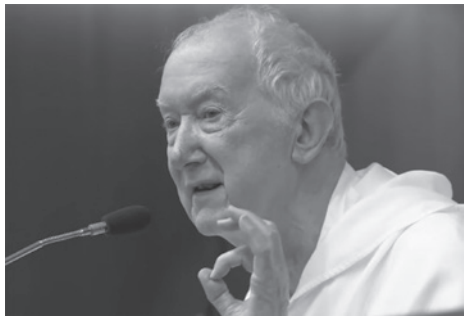
The Israeli Embassy protested and claimed that Vatican diplomats were not sufficiently supporting Israel, leading a Vatican diplomat to comment: 'The Israelis believe we never support them enough. They demand unconditional support, which we cannot give.'

The tension between the Holy See and Israel is palpable and there seems to be no solution in sight while the Netanyahu government remains in power. For the Vatican the two-state solution is the only game in town. ↻

# The optimism of Timothy Radcliffe

JOHN WARHURST

Timothy Radcliffe was an important figure in the first session of the Synod on Synodality. He has made many visits to Australia over the years and during his most recent visit he gave a retreat and public talks in Canberra. The author attended one and this article appeared in Eureka Street, 11 April 2024, and is reprinted here with the permission of the author and Eureka Street. John Warhurst AO is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University in Canberra where he was Professor of Political Science from 1993-2008. Before that he was Professor of Politics at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW, from 1985-1993.



Fr Timothy Radcliffe, the Dominican friar, was chosen by Pope Francis to lead the three-day retreat for all participants prior to the first assembly last October of the Synod on Synodality. This was a position of great trust given the eyes of the Catholic world were gazing at this potentially earth-shattering event.

A former world leader of the Dominicans, Fr Radcliffe is a well-known author with a world-wide following, whose six Synod meditations have now been published. His first meditation on 21 October 2023, called 'Hoping against Hope', laid out his own hopes. Among them was the aspiration that "this synod will lead to a renewal of the Church and not division; the hope that we shall draw closer to each other as brothers and sisters".

He reassured Synod participants that their efforts may be misunderstood, but they should not worry about this.

During our Synodal journey, we may worry whether we are achieving anything. The media will probably decide that it was all a waste, just words. They will look for whether bold decisions are made on about four or five hot-button topics. But the disciples on that first synod, walking to Jerusalem, did not *appear* to achieve anything.

Recently Radcliffe came to Australia as a guest of the Catholic Education Office

of the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn to give a retreat for school principals and a range of public talks in Canberra and elsewhere. The talk I attended was titled '*Where to next with the Synod? An evening with Timothy Radcliffe*'. It was an entertaining evening, full of wisdom, humour, and stories. He is a most attractive personality.

Radcliffe presented his reflections on the Synod from his privileged position as a senior cleric on the inside. He was optimistic in the face of an audience of outsiders far from Rome who were eager to draw him out. But it was a particular sort of optimism, eschewing, as he did in his pre-synod meditations, any hope for immediate outcomes. In fact, he quoted the Australian singer Nick Cave who has described hope as 'optimism with a broken heart'. This should have been a warning sign to all present not to expect too much.

He followed through on his earlier criticism in his meditations of the world's media for concentrating on the wrong things. That is, the hot button issues rather than the deeper reality. Yet as the media, like the rest of us, was frozen out of the proceedings their task was not an easy one.

When pressed it appeared that Radcliffe personally shared some of the aspirations of those in the audience who hoped for church renewal, including for the lives of women in the church. But he was still confident in the working of the Spirit at the Synod and prepared to be patient. He was at one with Pope Francis in seeing the embedding of synodality within the Church as the main priority for the Church. What the world, including the media, would see as 'outcomes' could wait.

His 'hope with a broken heart' seemed

to me to rest on two elements, both of which I rate as problematic. Neither element sits well with the life experiences of everyday Catholics, shut out of the inner sanctum. One was the alleged transformative power of the synodal method, including the conversations-in-the-spirit. Radcliffe emphasized that through listening with an open heart in small groups to the views of other Catholics, including lay women and men, and to each other, the senior bishops and cardinals would be transformed, differences would be healed, and the Church would be renewed. No evidence was offered for this miracle other than his observations. The public statements of some cardinals since then suggest otherwise. Perhaps even an astute observer like him can be caught up in wishful thinking.

We Australians have some other evidence at our disposal. The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, 2018-2022, has been credited with being the inspiration for the Synod methodology, or at least an early exemplar. We can rightly ask whether the bulk of the Australian episcopate experienced a transformation at the plenary council. What evidence should we look for?

To a hopeful observer, such as myself, the evidence of transformation of church leaders seems thin on the ground. The first official report of progress in embedding the synodal method within the Australian dioceses was a thin document, only worthy of a D+. That is not being too harsh on most leaders, though some rate more highly. There must be some tangible evidence of transformation for everyday Catholics seeing their church decline around them to hold onto. Otherwise, we must assume it is lacking in the hearts and minds of our most senior clerics. If that is a misjudgment then it is up to them to correct it. Actions speak louder than words.

The second basis for Radcliffe's optimism seems to be his assumption that it is acceptable for the Church to take its time. Here he shares a common assumption among Catholic leaders. How often have we heard that the Church moves in centuries or that Rome is called the Eternal City because

everything takes an eternity to happen. More specifically it is often said that it takes a century for the outcomes of a church council to come to fruition and that sixty years on from the Second Vatican Council it is too early to expect full implementation of its promises.

Radcliffe had his own unique take on this phenomenon. In response to a question from his audience asking whether there was any 'sense of urgency' in Rome surrounding the Synod, he gave the impression that among clerical members, at least, there was not. In jocular fashion he responded that the Roman Empire took 300 years to fall, but eventually it did. Was the audience to read into this generous timeframe that speed was not of the essence?

It is incumbent upon those, including church leaders and influential clerics, who agree that it is quite acceptable for the Church to move at a stately pace to explain why this should be so. What is so different about the Church? Does it have a special dispensation? No other human organisation in the public or private sector faced with a major crisis of belonging and belief of the order facing the church is given such latitude. Imagine if a government or corporate leader told citizens or stakeholders to be patient and wait decades because that was the natural order of things. They would not get away with it. It would be seen as either incompetence or a delaying tactic to preserve the status quo.

The same applies to the Church. Radcliffe's views are widely held. Church leaders should be open about their intentions. They certainly should be held accountable for inaction. ☞

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## Reimagining God

ROBERT VAN MOURIK

**Robert van Mourik is a Moderator of the St Lucia Spirituality Group which seeks to support those who wish to develop a more mature understanding of what lies at the core of spiritual beliefs. This article is an abridged version of a discussion paper available upon request: slsg4067@gmail.com.**

*"Unless religion changes and adapts to the evolving world, it cannot do what it has the capacity to do: enkindle a zest for life" (Ilia Delio on Teilhard de Chardin).*

Academic studies have found that Christianity, along with other religious traditions, has undergone paradigm shifts every five hundred or so years. As insights arise that do not fit with old data, new paradigms emerge over time. This article draws attention to potential changes to our concepts and paradigms of God. John D Caputo, an American religious philosopher, is blunt: "God deserves better. God has fallen into the wrong hands. Religion has made itself unbelievable, an enemy of common sense, science, and democratic life, and is well on its way to shaming God out of existence."

God is not human, but many persist in describing God with human characteristics. We project onto God human behaviours and expectations (anthropomorphism). Our expectations of God can be naïve and ill-founded. Bad stuff happens and God is often blamed for it. The eruption of volcanoes, for example, are an essential part of the renewal of the earth and important for our eco-system, and not a godly judgement on humankind's behaviour.

Does anthropomorphism contribute to a co-dependent relationship with God, thereby hindering our mature spiritual development? If we are to have a credible religion, do we need a concept of God that goes deeper and is more encompassing than a personalised Supreme Being?

The concept of God we have from long established theology is founded in a worldview prevalent at the time of Jesus, subsequently refined through later centuries. These views influenced doctrines, such as original sin and the belief that Jesus died to save us from our sins, views reflected in our liturgy and prayers.

To be meaningful, our concepts of God need to be founded in good psychology and science and be reflected in good theology. The West has lived with two prominent paradigms for the last several hundred years: the mechanistic worldview and the medieval worldview, and the underlying basis of these worldviews is increasingly being questioned. The mechanistic worldview relies on the certainty of Newtonian physics which led to the science revolution. While this led to a deepening of human powers of reason and knowledge, it assumed a world model that behaved like a giant mechanism, literally a machine composed of separate and externally interacting parts.

However, Einstein's mathematics pointed to the laws of relativity better fitting reality than did Newton's laws of absolute space and time. The subsequent development of quantum physics further challenges this foundation. Quantum physics is the study of extremely small particles or waves and establishes the interrelationships between matter and energy, even time. Scientific experiments have confirmed the principles of quantum physics including that an observer of an experiment can influence the outcome of the experiment.

Contrary to the expectations of Newtonian physics, we are not separate, rather we are relational to everyone, everything, everywhere, "entangled" in the language of quantum physics. We must conceive our place in the world differently. Regarding physics, the Franciscan theologian and scientist, Ilia Delio writes: "Modern physics is, in a sense, a mystical science that stands in opposition to the notion that science explains everything or that science gives us the truth. Physics is, in fact, a description, not an explanation." Quantum physics leads us to consider the world in a way that is radically different from our past education and preconceived ideas.

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## FEATURES

Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, developed his ideas from a theological point of view. Ilia Delio, credited as the foremost authority in the world on Teilhard's writings and their consequences, writes: "Teilhard de Chardin gave us a new paradigm of cosmic evolution, an entangled whole of God and world in evolution which continues to grow with complexifying consciousness. Humanity is part of a mysterious cosmic unity that has an inner active power persistent through birth and death, an unfolding of greater complex life in which God is emerging."

Extraordinarily, Teilhard and the scientists who separately developed the ideas surrounding quantum physics during the twentieth century had much in common in their views. We are all observers as described above, and we can influence the development of the world. Ilia Delio writes: "We live in a world of infinite potential, and we must choose whether we will create a world of love or settle for a world of hate and

violence. If love is our deepest reality, then every breath of every day we must choose to love which is the reason we are all here to begin with and it is this truth alone that makes us desperate for God. Each one of us contributes to the completion of God."

Caputo uses the language of quantum physics: "The Entanglement of God and Me. As opposed to classical theology, we and God are entangled like a pair of particles in quantum physics. God's call calling and our responding are like two particles spinning in the same field, or, more simply, two sides of the same coin. God's being is not necessary but needy, in need of our response. This is a scene of mutual entanglement."

So, we become instruments through which whatever we call "it" – God, the universe, the creator, the universal mind, etc. – becomes aware of itself. Speaking about the divine service that humanity can render, Jung writes in his autobiography it is so "that light may

emerge from darkness, that the Creator may become conscious of His creation, and man conscious of himself."

According to Ilia Delio, both Jung and Teilhard attempted to relocate the God question on the level of human experience and growth, understood in terms of modern science. Any idea of a supernatural God is an abstraction and unhelpful, diverting our attention away from our divine depth toward a projected other-worldly realm.

Remember Jesus's wish for us that we might live abundantly (John 10:10). Is the message of Jesus, as interpreted by Teilhard and Ilia Delio, one of empowerment? That we are empowered, enlivened by the Spirit within and meant to embrace that power, own it and, in fact, become co-creators with God? Is this our response to God's call? If so, wouldn't that lead to changes in our view of "God", our outlook, our liturgy, our hymns, and prayers? ☪



## Reminiscences of Pastoral Visitation

PAT FLANAGAN

Pat is a retired priest of the Diocese of Ballarat. He currently lives in Maryborough, Vic.

One of the ways in which pastoral ministry now is quite different to what it was when I was a young priest is to do with visiting parishioners in their homes. It was accepted as an obligation that the priest in a parish would visit his parishioners. The Anglicans in fact had a saying, 'a house-going priest means a church-going people.'

I was ordained for the Ballarat diocese in July 1960, together with Bryan Coffey. After ordination, we returned to the seminary until early December, to complete our studies.

Just before we commenced in our first parish (mine was Casterton) Bishop O'Collins gave us instructions as follows:

1. Take Mondays off
2. Play golf
3. Visit every home in your parish.

In typical O'Collins fashion, he qualified that last instruction – every home means every home, non-Catholic homes as well as Catholic homes. He had a story to illustrate this: "When I was bishop of Geraldton, I once had a bitter complaint from a non-Catholic, 'the parish priest visited my next-door neighbour who is a Catholic, but he didn't bother to call at my house. He ignored me completely.'"

My own mother was a very strong believer in the priest's obligation to visit his parishioners. And, in fact, if she ever heard that I visited only important parishioners and not the also rans, she threatened that she would disown me.

(Ed's note: Bishop O'Collins lived when most front doors were easily accessible. Today many live in units in multi-story blocks, or in homes behind high security walls where entrances are locked and guarded by security cameras. Ah, the times, they are a-changing. There are other



factors at play. In many cases both husband and wife are working. There is no one home. Many priests will say they are caught up in too much administrative work so there is not enough time in the day!

Another social factor today is the so-called respect of people's privacy. These days people are reluctant to just drop in, as many people expect to be called by phone to see if they are happy to have a visitor.) ☪

Unfortunately this section was overlooked in the production of the autumn edition of *The Swag*. The letters appeared in the online version, but they are printed in this winter edition, together with a few others that have been received.

## Rethinking Australia's Position on the Two State Solution in Israel

The creation of the State of Israel cannot be divorced from the world's horror of the Jewish holocaust under the rule of Nazi Germany. Shame, guilt and a sense that there was a need for a shared responsibility across all European and Middle Eastern countries to prevent future holocaust situations resulted in the creation of the modern Israeli state. The irony is that this step punished the peoples who had for centuries occupied Palestine, requiring the creation of UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for displaced Palestinian refugees.

Few people, however, may be aware that Israel's embrace into the United Nations, officially approved in 1949, was conditional requiring Israel to implement UN **Partition Resolution 181**, which proscribed the responsibility of Israel to 'define the limits of the Israeli State', and UN **Resolution 194**, which set out the right of refugees, displaced by the discombobulation associated with the creation of the State of Israel, to return to their homes and properties in Israel. Much of the turmoil that has characterised the modern history of Israel can be traced to the failure of Israel to comply with these two conditions.

It may be a step too far to say that Israel ought to be expelled from the United Nations because it has failed to implement these two conditions associated with entry of Israel into the UN community. Nonetheless, this failure is the context within which we need to see the conflicts that have characterised Israel's relationship with Palestinians. Some say that a two State solution is apposite. There are arguments either way. But, if these two 'conditions' were to be enforced by the United Nations and complied with by Israel's government, a one State solution may also be a realistic option.

Acceptance of these two conditions would extend to all Palestinians the

same political rights currently enjoyed by Israeli citizens. There would be a period of transition as displaced Palestinians are compensated for what they have lost in the way of property, but this is, surely, preferred to the loss of life and violence that war and displacement have delivered for more than two generations.

It is to be regretted that criticism of the modern State of Israel has come to be characterised as 'anti-Semitism'. The reality is that many Jews and non-Jews share views that are critical of the extreme policies of the current Israeli government concerning Palestinians, including a large number of current Israeli citizens. These same people share unequivocal rejection of the abhorrent policies and actions of Hamas. It is within the ken of the Australian government to make the foregoing views core to the policies Australia takes to the UN and the conversations we have with all parties interested in resolving the Israel-Hamas-Palestinian Gordian knot.

*Prof Joe Remenyi (CEO Development Professionals International Pty Ltd)*

## Thanks

I have just read the latest edition of *The Swag*, and as always it was most interesting and challenging. I write to thank James Clarke for his role as Chairman over two terms and to thank and congratulate John Conway for generously taking on the role for the future. Very specially, I want to thank Sally and Christine who have done so much over many years to produce *The Swag* and indirectly to support all the priests and bishops of Australia. May you both enjoy a blessed retirement, knowing how much you have been appreciated.

*Emeritus Bishop Brian Heenan*

## Congratulations

Congratulations on an excellent Summer 2023 edition of *The Swag*. Of particular note are the articles on Teilhard de Chardin and Robert van Mourik's thought stimulating piece on Atonement Theory. It is of course excellent that you include articles by lay people. We are all equally on the pilgrim path and need to share thought inspiring articles whatever our backgrounds.

*Dr Geoff Lee, Noosa QLD*

## False accusations

Could I supply this letter to *The Swag*: A letter in the recent edition titled 'False Allegations' prompts me to give my own story. I am a retired priest still doing supply on a regular basis in my Diocese. A few years ago our Diocesan Safeguarding people contacted me to say an allegation had been made against me in my last parish from an ex-pupil of the parish school. This person claimed I regularly visited the school to hear his confession which took place in an interview room within the school complex.

There I allegedly sexually abused him. During the time for this to be investigated by the Diocesan Safeguarding I was not allowed to supply for those 8 months. I had to promise not to go near the nearby park or school (a public school). All staff teachers and Principal were interviewed and refuted the allegation. At the end of the process I was cleared. Given the utter falsity of this claim the Diocese refused to compensate this person whose lawyers then threatened to take it to the Supreme Court with its associated heavy expenses. CCI then compensated this person to the tune of \$100,000 for an utterly false claim. No wonder CCI now is not viable. As in the previous letter this person also turned out to have a heavy prison background.

*(Name and address supplied)*

## Re Fr Peter Maher

I was very pleased to read Sr Mary Fermio's letter in the Winter 2023 *The Swag*. I was also at Fr Peter Maher's funeral and fancied that Fr Peter's family would have felt blessed with so many of his brother priests and the Archbishop officiating. And it was lovely to see the little girl present the Archbishop the wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. That little girl, the daughter of a same sex couple, adopted Fr Peter as her grandfather.

As a man in my late 80's, I missed what was really going on, but I wanted to share with Sister and your readers the Peter that I knew as a friend, and as sick as he was, he still found time to ensure that his friends were included in what he was able to share with them.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I first met Peter when he was appointed Chaplain to the Institute of Technology Sydney, a friend and I started the Mass there and the priests who celebrated were friends and family. We had Mass every fortnight and we even changed the survey classes in Civil Engineering to fit in with Mass days! Fr Colin McKay, who was Cardinal Gilroy's secretary, helped us enormously to establish the Mass. With the priests from St Canice's and with many of the wonderful priests from around the area, we used to celebrate Mass fortnightly before a chaplain was appointed. I was given information at Mass that there was a chaplain at every university, but we didn't have one at the ITS. Peter Maher was appointed to that position, and I was amazed at the many organisations he was involved with and how he was able to bring so many guest speakers for forums and discussion groups. I even got to meet Tony Abbott there, Peter was very organised and deeply involved with the St Vincent de Paul Society, Rachel's Ark and Rachel's Vineyard.

Peter got me to go out to St Joseph's Newtown when the 'ratbag community' was demonstrating outside the church while Mass being said for the Acceptance group (LGBT+ Catholics). I was amazed at the insensitivity of these people, and Peter was concerned that they would damage the church windows. I informed one of the 'ratbag community' that they should go up to the church and see that

it was a normal Mass. She said if she entered the church she would "lose her immortal soul", which makes one wonder how uninformed and ignorant these people are when they demonstrate.

Peter and I were good friends and would often share a meal. As I grew older, and as sick as he was, he still made an effort to take me to Mass at St Canice's on a Saturday night and a meal after, and sometimes we took in a movie. I got a phone call from him when a steam train went past the Church at Newtown and 'cock-a-doodle-doo-ed.' He asked what engine it was as he was a steam enthusiast too. Sometimes when I was in his company, Peter would take a call from someone who had got his number from *The Swag*, someone in distress or who needed help. I was always struck by his compassion and empathy in how he listened and the caring words he gave.

In my 88 years and as a practicing Catholic, I have met some wonderful men who portray Christ to us. His removal from the ITS was most unpleasant and done by a bully. No matter how sick he was he still took care of people, and I was able to experience the full reality I was looking for in a priest, and that is, the Face of Christ.

It's been twelve months since he left us, and I am sure that if I get knocked back at the Pearly Gates, that Peter will have a window open for me!

*Hugh Joseph McMahon, East Sydney*

## Fund-raising during liturgy

For all of us the world over I reckon it is time for a healthy leap of faith! At least for us in the land of Oz the leap of faith is needed to arrest the decline in attendances at Eucharistic celebrations and set in place a paradigm shift for 'parish life'.

Let's be honest and admit that the trade-off between fundraising and liturgy has left the latter in bad shape: and if we can agree that there is really no liturgical basis to include fundraising in the liturgy then "collections/sacrificial giving" should be scrapped entirely: the end does not justify the means, even for Holy Places on Good Friday!

This then becomes our leap of faith as none of us know what the Spirit might have in store for us in the way of new directions. Exciting times could lie ahead with the Spirit guiding the formation of new Eucharistic communities perhaps, instead of parishes as we know them today. But we will never ever know until we make the leap.

*Peter Carolan, Bentleigh VIC*

## Where are the Jubilarians?

I'm missing the list of jubilarians *The Swag* used to list. What has happened? I like to get in touch with any I know, to congratulate them.

*Fr Pat Flanagan, Maryborough VIC ☺☺*



It is up to each one of you to let the NCP National Office know when any of your contact details change.

Don't risk missing out on your 2025 NCP Membership Renewal or other NCP news.

## International conference explores ongoing formation of priests

The International Conference for the Ongoing Formation of Priests took place in Rome from 6-10 February. Twelve representatives from Australia recently joined 900 attendees from nearly 60 countries, to explore the topic, “What helps our priests express the Good News effectively throughout their lifelong ministry?”

The aim was to strengthen the formation of priests in four dimensions: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

The conference was hosted by the Dicastery for the Clergy, in collaboration with the Dicasteries for Evangelisation and for the Eastern Churches.

Bishop Greg Bennet from the Sale Diocese, newly elected vice-president of the ACBC, a member of the Dicastery for the Clergy, spoke on the second day of the conference on ‘How can a priest remain an authentic witness to the Gospel?’

He emphasised the need for priests to thrive, find joy, and be inspired by the beauty of God’s creation. Attention to the four dimensions of formation, and the importance of supporting and listening to young priests in a synodal manner, would, he said, help our priests grow in their love for Christ and answer the question, “Who do you say I am?”

## USA Catholic population

Michael Sean Winters wrote in the NCR recently about the latest census figures in the USA. The Catholic population has remained at around 20% since 2014, after dropping off from 24% at the turn of the century. Catholicism is still the largest denomination in the country, but the ethnic and geographic distribution of the Catholic population has changed. Now 29% of all Catholics in the U.S. live in the South and 24% live in the West. Only 26% live in the Northeast and even fewer, 21%, live in the Midwest.

Winters also noted that nearly a quarter of all Hispanics were former Catholics. Some have joined evangelical and Pentecostal groups. Others, especially second and third-generation Hispanic Catholics, follow the path of secularization their Anglo co-religionists have trod. This points to the area of

evangelisation most needed today in the USA. Are there parallels for us in Australia?

Winters also noted “Catholicism needs to generate culture. The power of the Christian faith, manifested in suffering, prayer, obedience, may not capture headlines or clicks, but it is that power which moves silently and unseen, even in a spiritually barren landscape like our own secularized culture. If it is to bear fruit, those of us still in the church need to listen to the Spirit, not to ourselves, and follow wherever the Spirit leads.” Food for thought and prayer!

## The impact of *Dignitas Infinita*

There have been many reactions to the release of *Dignitas Infinita*, the Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on Human Dignity on 2 April 2024. Elsewhere in this edition we reprint the article of Bill Uren SJ in Eureka Street noting his own response especially regarding the lack of pastoral sensitivity in the Declaration.

The Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform has noted a damaging impact on LGBTIQ+ Catholics, especially transgender, gender diverse and non-binary Catholics and their families.

Francis Sullivan, Chair of the Mater group of hospitals and Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, in an article in Pearls & Irritations (16 April), declared “The Pope, along with the other celibate doctrinal advisors, has been spooked into an ideological battle with a ‘straw man’; that being, an alleged movement, ‘gender theory’, that seeks to ‘play God’ over gender reassignment and the equal treatment of transgender people in civil society. Obviously, the ‘Religious Right’, particularly evident in the US Catholic Church, has won the day in the Vatican. Once again the politics of sexuality has trumped the pastoral instincts of the faith.”

Columns in the London *Tablet* (April 20, 2024) also pondered the ramifications of the document. Liz Dodd (p 7) says “the line that broke me was the one that said sexual difference is not only ‘the greatest imaginable difference’ between living beings – despite what Galatians 3 has to say – but also ‘the most powerful of them’. No it isn’t.”

Sebastian Millbank (*Tablet*, April 20,

2024, p 9) began his column: “The declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Infinita*: On Human Dignity, sent shock waves through the secular press. This was, in large part, thanks to its headline-grabbing denunciation of ‘gender theory’. Perhaps this should have come as less of a surprise given Pope Francis’ well-documented and forceful statements on the topic – but there is a difference between the remarks of a pope and a doctrinal declaration, especially one written in such unambiguous terms.”

More recently on 25 April the NCR reported that Catholic students, theologians, ministers wrote an open letter to Pope Francis and Cardinal Victor Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. “We love this church, we love our Catholic faith, and we ground our ministry in our baptismal call to holiness. We are also trans, nonbinary, and queer and those who love and accompany them.” They went on to write: “In its condemnation of gender “ideology” and “sex change,” the document marginalizes the infinite dignity in people of all genders and their authentic self-expression and inadvertently perpetuates the harm it aims to overcome.”

## New Australian, British clergy abuse reports indicate safeguarding having mixed results

Two new major studies on clergy sexual abuse reveal the Catholic Church’s efforts toward safeguarding and child protection are being met with mixed results, with attitudes and awareness varying depending on location and roles within the church.

A newly published study by Australian Catholic University’s Institute of Child Protection Studies found that Catholic clergy scored higher than lay people in their knowledge, awareness and attitudes in responding to abuse.

The research included over 180 participants across six countries and suggests that in responding to the decades’ long crisis of clerical abuse, reform efforts and strategies “have been largely targeted at clergy, who are seen as leaders in the Church, and thus have

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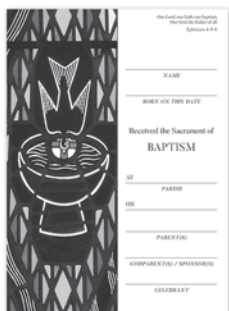


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benefitted from the Church's safeguarding reforms."

In addition, researchers found that participants in Australia and the United Kingdom — countries that have had national inquiries into sexual abuse — responded with more positive attitudes towards the importance of safeguarding than did respondents in Ghana and India.

**International meeting of Parish Priests for the Synod**

An international meeting of 300 priests from around the world took place in Sacrofano (just outside Rome) from April 29 to May 2. In his message marking the conclusion of the meeting Pope Francis emphasized the crucial role they play in bringing about a synodal Church.

In particular the Pope stressed three things. First, he asked them to live out their specific ministerial charism in ever greater service to the varied gifts that the Spirit sows in the People of God.

Second, he suggested that they learn to practise the art of communal discernment, employing for this purpose the method of "conversation in the Spirit", which has proved so helpful in the synodal journey and in the proceedings of the synodal Assembly itself.

Finally, he urged them to base everything they do in a spirit of sharing and fraternity among themselves and with their bishops. Regarding this final point he added, "We cannot be

authentic fathers unless we are first sons and brothers. And we cannot foster communion and participation in the communities entrusted to our care unless, before all else, we live out those realities among ourselves."

**Clergy Pilgrimage to Turkey**

Olive Tree Travel are organising a heavily subsidised Clergy Pilgrimage to the Biblical Sites of Turkey from the 18th to 27th November for AUD\$1795 per person (based on twin share accommodation).

The price includes return airfares (from Melbourne), 7 Nights in 5 Star Hotel accommodation, all breakfasts, all dinners & all touring, Fully Escorted with a Bible Oriented local tour guide.

This pilgrimage is designed to give Church Leaders the first-hand opportunity to visit ancient cities such as Istanbul, Troy, Assos, Thyatira, Pergamon, Laodicea, Colossae, Miletus, Ephesus & more. Gallipoli is also featured on this itinerary.

Olive Tree Travel is subsidising the cost of this trip to encourage parish priests to gather their own group of parishioners to lead back to these sacred biblical lands in future years.

If interested please contact:  
Steven Green at Olive Tree Travel,  
Ph: 03 8488 9696 or 0413 016772,  
email: [steven@olivetreetravel.com.au](mailto:steven@olivetreetravel.com.au)  
or [www.olivetreetravel.com.au](http://www.olivetreetravel.com.au)

**The Swag Spring Edition**

News items, Reviews, and letters to the editor always welcome.

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 5 August 2024

Please email submissions for consideration to:  
[editor@theswag.org.au](mailto:editor@theswag.org.au)

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

Obituaries for deceased priests 350 words.



## Mother Cabrini

**Mother Cabrini – Frances Xavier Cabrini, born in Lombardy in 1850, on mission to New York, 1889, 28 years of enterprising activity, died 1917, beatified 1938, canonised 1946, the first American citizen to be canonised.**



**F**rances Xavier Cabrini established a religious congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, whose motto is taken from St Paul: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.” Forty minutes into this portrait of Mother Cabrini, we hear her say these words. And, by this stage of the film, we know that this is true. But, there are almost two more hours or – an extraordinary extension of “all things”.

The tone is set in the prologue, a young boy, Paolo, close-up on his face, dragging a wheelbarrow, his mother dying of typhus, the New York streets, his calling out for help, in Italian, everybody ignoring him, a policeman accosting him, giving an address where the sick woman could be taken, but she dies. Paolo will later appear in this story.

Then the transition to Italy, a young woman in a religious habit, close-up of her face, the camera dwelling for a long time on her face, inviting us to respond. Throughout the film, the camera will focus on Mother Cabrini’s face, mostly intense, often sad, rarely smiling, but absolutely determined in her goals, and in her confidence on God’s Providence. And she often states that if you begin the mission, the means will come.

Frances Cabrini had a dream of establishing orphanages in China, a compassion for needs in Asia. She has been refused by Vatican officials, eventually visiting Rome, demanding a meeting

with Pope Leo XIII, (Giancarlo Giannini) his acceding to her wish, cup of tea together, his being impressed by her zeal, and the suggestion of a mission in New York. She and her sisters travel, steerage, her looking out on the Atlantic, her fear of water, flashbacks to her almost drowning, being rescued, recovery, but permanent damage to her lungs. Which means that she sees any time not devoted to her mission as, simply, loss.

Mother Cabrini is played by Italian actress, Cristiana Dell’Anna, always intense, an intense interiority, no histrionics. This is a determined woman of faith, the language of faith (though no scenes of prayer and community – and one might have expected some emphasis on her Sacred Heart devotion, though some glimpses of statues and paintings.)

Filmgoers who remember Martin Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York*, will resonate at the reconstruction of Five Points, built on sewers, squalor, many Italian migrants, not yet speaking English, and despised by so many of the locals, called dagos, guinea pigs, seen as less than human, insulted in the streets, denounced by the local authorities, wooden shacks, but youngsters taking refuge in the underground tunnels and channels, put to menial jobs, often in physical danger. Mother Cabrini goes instantly into action, rescuing children, encountering a young prostitute and clashes with her vicious pimp, continually finding accommodation, looking for buildings, looking for support.

There are many scenes of her confrontations with the Archbishop of New York, Archbishop Corrigan (David Morse), Irish background, reluctant to help Mother Cabrini, urging her to return to Italy, but her continually confronting him. Then there are the local powers, the mayor, John Lithgow portraying him as supremely arrogant, politicians and police under his control, the local police who despise the Italians, ride roughshod over a crowd gathered at an Italian festival in a park.

Mother Cabrini is of strong Italian stock, strong Italian attitudes (and grew up in strong anti-clerical times), ready to confront anyone, Archbishop, Mayor... When she enlists the help of an opera singer, moved by Pagliacci, he refuses because of his antagonism towards the church. When she organises a children’s choir to serenade him at his mansion, he relents, joining in the fundraising. Despite opposition and setbacks, her forte was in persuading people to support her. And her mission forte was the continued outreach, confident in her outreach. In the 19th century, while women did not have a place in church governance, there were many strong women who ran hospitals, schools, exercising this kind of church leadership. This is to the fore in this screenplay, Mother Cabrini and being a pioneer in feminism, the film’s dialogue uses convincing feminist language to highlight the power of women: the Mayor suggesting she should have been a man, Mother Cabrini replying that men cannot do what women can do.

The screenplay indicates what was to come, orphanages, but, especially after a deadly subway explosion, the need for hospital, the beginning of Cabrini hospitals in many parts of the world. Despite political sanctioned arson, she keeps going. Final close-up of her, intense, determined, her interior confidence in divine Providence, and the information given about what she referred to as her “Empire of Hope”, 67 institutions, her congregation and its outreach throughout the world.

A cinema biography in the long traditional style of such stories, moving, challenging audience compassion. 🍷

*Peter Malone MSC*

## *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution* by Louise Perry

Reviewed by Iain Radvan SJ, April 2024. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022

This book is a single-handed deconstruction of the feminist narrative that the sexual freedom of today's Western culture has been a boon for women.

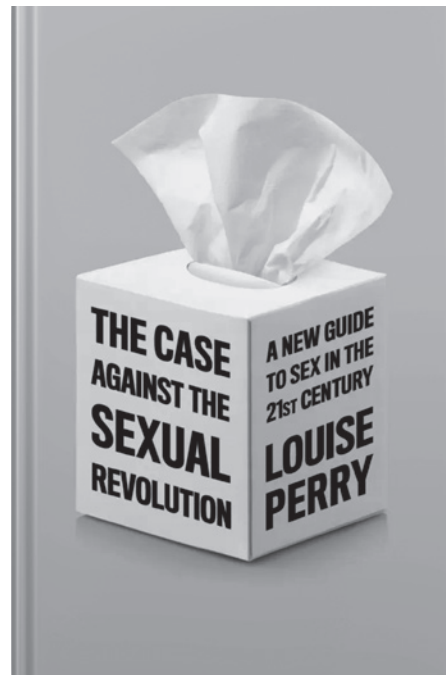
With relentless logic and drawing on a wide array of scholarship Perry argues that women are worse off than men in a culture that endorses hook-ups, loveless sex and pornography. Her position is built on the premise that men and women have evolved to have different needs and desires with sexual relationships.

She proposes that the catch cry of liberal feminists (and many men) that we should have the free choice to do whatever, as long as we have the consent of the other,

serves men's interests above the good of women's, and should be subordinate to human respect and dignity. She backs up her arguments with story after story of real women's suffering from the consequences of unrestrained sexual freedom.

Her aim with this book is to propose an alternative sexual culture – one that seeks the wellbeing of all men and women through the acceptance of social restraints by both sexes.

This enlightening text is a must read for parents, for young men and women, for teachers, and for all who live or work with women who have suffered from sexual coercion. ☺



## *A Goldminer's Fortune* by Anne Ridley

Reviewed by Kevin Reed, East Brighton, Victoria.

This is the Story of Martin Loughlin, Quartz King, Racehorse Owner and Philanthropist, and of his nephew, Thomas O'Loughlin, who inherited the Fortune.

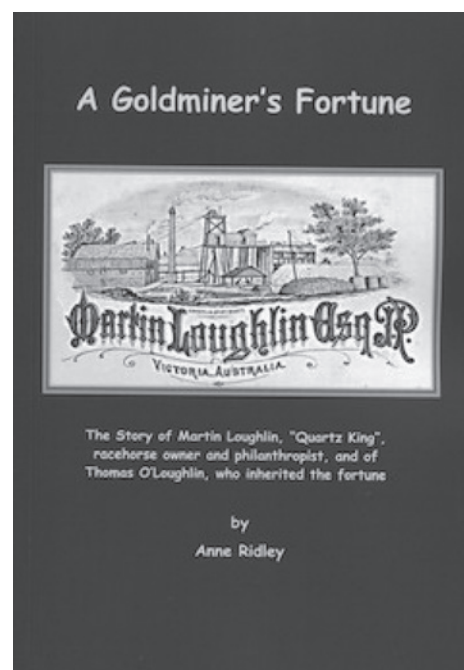
When gold was discovered in Victoria, a young Irish, shipwreck survivor, Martin Loughlin, left Kilkenny again, and, with his cousin Patrick, joined thousands of diggers drawn to Ballarat. Martin possessed a golden touch for he built a portfolio of mines. His wealth facilitated indulgence in racing and he became one of only a few owners to return a profit. His many victories were spread across four States and included the Melbourne and Caulfield Cups and several major steeplechases. The legendary jockey, Tommy Corrigan, rode most of Martin's winners. By the time of his untimely death as a bachelor (1894), he was one of the richest men in Victoria.

Martin's nephew, Thomas O'Loughlin, inherited the fortune and became one of the most generous Catholic benefactors of the early 20th century – particularly in Ballarat and later in Melbourne. Thomas and his wife, Kitty, supported

the range of Irish cultural activities that flourished during that period. He was the Foundation President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Ballarat in 1907. He shunned publicity but was honoured by the Pope with the Order of St Gregory the Great in 1908.

A great supporter of Archbishop Mannix during the conscription controversies that beset Australia during World War I, Thomas travelled widely while closely involved with Church developments in the other States – including Archbishop Duhig's interest in oil-drilling along the Mooga in Queensland.

Thorough and careful research can be seen throughout this detailed, comprehensive study of Irish Catholicism in Australia. The contemporaneous events in Ireland are well covered as is the arrival of the numerous religious orders. The influence of the Loughlin, Cody, Wren, Burke, Slattery and other families can be appreciated as the Melbourne Archdiocese opened churches, schools, colleges and orphanages and established the Central Catholic Library, Catholic Church Insurance, Corpus



Christi Seminary and scholarship schemes.

*A Goldminer's Fortune* is a self-published book, 2020, 479 pages in paperback, with many images, family chart, references and index, plus separate horse index. The book can be purchased directly from the author for \$55 plus PP. Contact author at [ridleyanne244@gmail.com](mailto:ridleyanne244@gmail.com) ☺

## *Heresy. Jesus Christ and the Other Sons of God* by Catherine Nixey

Reviewed by Frank O'Shea, Point Cook, Victoria. Picador 2024.

The author of this book is daughter of a former nun and former monk, who grew up in a practicing English Catholic family. Now a classicist and historian, this is the most recent of her books on early Christianity, moving from the life and death of Jesus to the spread of Christianity.

Initially, she records that the spread was eastwards where it merged with similar beliefs and practices. But when Rome found it useful, it spread to the west and, under Constantine, would achieve mandatory acceptance. The author deals with all those early treatments of Christianity, but the book has greatest interest in its early chapters and the unusual treatment of Jesus and his time.

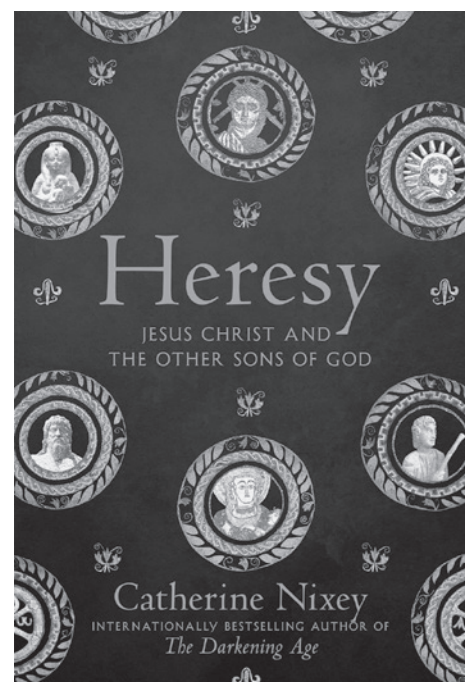
It appears that in the time of Jesus, there was no shortage of healers or saviours or raising from the dead. We read here of people like Minerva, Asclepius and Appollonius among many others. 'By the first century AD, to be revived from death was such a common phenomenon that it even merited a section in the earliest encyclopaedias,' she notes. Walking on water and turning water into wine and

curing people of demonic possession were standard tricks for the 'magicians' of the day.

In Jewish traditions, Jesus was remembered in many ways (not all flattering) but a common accusation was that he was no more than 'a potent magician. The fact that he was supposed as a child, to have spent some time in Egypt – a noted centre of ancient magic – only added to suspicions about him.' In early Christian art, Jesus is seen holding a stick (a wand?) when performing his best-known miracles. Most of the writings of the time in which stories like these are carried out by other magicians were put on the Catholic Church's Index of Forbidden Books.

The other element that appears in the stories of other noted human deities was that of virgin birth. In some early art, impregnation is shown happening through the ear. This may have involved fear of giving prominence to a female or more likely may have been a residue of a feeling that the deity was above sex.

The author is dismissive of the way that the West has treated the many apocryphal gospels or stories in old manuscripts.



'It is understandable that some Christian historians may have wished to ignore them – but it is intellectually indefensible to do so. Do so and you are not writing history, but theology, with dates.'

The book does not go very much beyond the early 400s AD, but it leaves the reader with the wonder that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, has survived to the present time. 🍷

## Fr Marty Larsen, Shepherd for All Seasons

Jamie Collins (Secretary NCP) writes that he recently attended the Vigil for Fr Marty Larsen, a priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane whose Funeral was held the following day in St Stephen's Cathedral.

He wrote: "Originating in Bundaberg but arriving at the Banyo Seminary via Toowoomba, he was intending to be ordained a priest for the Toowoomba Diocese.

After a period of discernment, Marty decided to leave the seminary and seek a career in teaching. Fundamentally a very caring person, Marty's calling remained with the ordained ministry.

He returned to the seminary some years later and was ordained for the

Archdiocese of Brisbane only ten years ago. Fr Marty ministered in a couple of parishes as well as in the Archdiocesan Vocations ministry.

That was where I met up with Fr Marty once again. I was Vocations Director for around sixteen years, with Fr Michael Cooney here in the Toowoomba Diocese. We were both shocked and saddened to hear of Fr Marty's untimely death.

Fr Marty was a wonderful character, full of joy, colour and youthful

exuberance. He was fun, energising and engaging, quirky and unique. A real reminder on Good Shepherd Sunday that shepherds do indeed come in all shapes, sizes and personalities.

A senior priest who worked with Marty said of him: "The white robed messenger of the first Easter has many companions. For this we are grateful". He will be sadly missed by his friends and the clergy and parishioners of the Archdiocese who knew him well."

More details including dates of birth and death will follow in the next edition of *The Swag*. 🍷

# Returned to God

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## EDWARD (DON) MURRAY

24/05/1931 – 31/12/2023

✠ Edward (Don) Vivian Murray was born in Toowoomba on 24 May 1931 to Edward Ernest Murray and Mary Jean Vivian Penrose. He had two brothers, Francis and Henry.

Don attended convent schools in Charleville, Emerald and Taroom. He also attended St Mary's College Toowoomba, Quilpie State School and Downlands College.

In 1951, Don started at Pius XII Seminary, Banyo, for senior and priesthood studies. In 1955, at the request of then Bishop of Toowoomba, William Brennan, Don moved to Rome to complete his studies at The Pontifical Urban University and Propaganda College. Don was ordained on 21 December 1960 in the Chapel at Propaganda Fide, Rome, by Cardinal Gregorio Pietro Agagianian.

Upon his return to the Toowoomba Diocese, Don was in active ministry from 1961 to 2006. His diocesan appointments included time at Chinchilla, Stanthorpe, Dalby, Miles, Augathella, Wallumbilla and Allora. For 18 months, during his Stanthorpe appointment, Don took leave as Chaplain to CBC Training College, Mulgoa. He served on the Diocesan Council of Priests from 2000 to 2006.

Don retired from Allora in 2006 and supplied at weekends in various parish communities in the diocese. He lived privately at Cambooya until ill health in 2019 forced him to move to Vianney Village at Lourdes Home. He died peacefully on 31 December 2023.

At his Funeral Mass, 12 January 2024, Don was remembered as a pastoral and prayerful man with great love and devotion to his family. In his words of remembrance, Fr Terry Hickling described Don's pastoral nature.

Dominic Murray, one of Don's nephews, delivered a heartfelt tribute on behalf of the family. "To many here today, he was Don Murray; to us, his family, he was simply Uncle Don," said Dominic.

On the occasion of his 60th Anniversary of Ordination, Don humbly observed, "There is nothing particularly remarkable about my priesthood, just a fairly ordinary life." Judging by the number of people gathered to celebrate and remember his life, Don underestimated the impact his ministry had on family, friends, and parishioners.

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## RAY POPE

1926 – 20/02/2024

✠ Ray died at Star of the Sea Home for the Aged, Wallaroo, on 20th February aged 98. Seminary studies were undertaken at Springwood and Manly. He was ordained in 1948, aged 22 and gave almost 76 years of service to the Diocese of Port Augusta and then Port Pirie after the name change in June 1951. He was the last priest of the Diocese of Port Augusta to die.

His retirement years were spent at Wallaroo, retiring in 2015. Besides parish responsibilities, other duties included Secretary to the Chancellor, Bishop's Secretary and Vice Chancellor, Chancellor and Vicar General. He completed a Doctorate in Canon Law in Rome in 1960 and often boasted that he was the only Pope in Rome following the death of Pius XII.

Ray was known right across the Diocese and had an active lifestyle – frequently on the road to Port Pirie at the behest of the Bishop, or on the road to Adelaide. One week he drove to Adelaide and back from Kadina eight times (300 kilometres each round trip). People wondered how anyone could do this, but he regarded it as normal.

For over seventy-five years Ray achieved great things for God and his people. He was a man for others. He stated at a celebration held on his sixtieth anniversary that he wanted to reach seventy years as a priest. Most thought he was a bit ambitious.

His Funeral Mass was celebrated in Star of the Sea Church, Wallaroo, followed by his burial at the Wallaroo Cemetery on 27th February.

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## PAUL JENNINGS MSC

11/01/1944 – 03/04/2024

✠ Loved member of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Dearly loved son of James Jennings and Gertrude Williams (both deceased) and cherished by his siblings Jim, Sr. Margaret, Laurie (all deceased) Sr. Kathleen, John, Loretto, Peter and their families.

Paul Jennings was born in Mudgee and as a young boy, was introduced to the MSC by a priest who visited the family and told fascinating stories of the missions. His eldest sister Margaret joined the OLSH and sent home letters with stories that captured Paul's heart about life in PNG. Thus, he was inspired to join the MSC and to minister in PNG.

After ordination on 29 Aug 1970, he was sent to Hagita High School in Milne Bay where he was a dedicated teacher for seven years. He lived in Port Moresby for the following two years (78-'79), authoring textbooks for the Department of Education. He then returned to Hagita as Headmaster from 1980 to 1991. After a well-deserved Sabbatical, he lived at the Provincial House for ten years as Deputy Provincial and then Province Secretary. Paul entered another sabbatical, this time in the US, to be trained to facilitate the Life Healing Journey Retreat, driven by a desire to bring healing and spiritual growth to others. He then prepared the retreat for the PNG context, including for Year 12 students. He returned to his beloved PNG to facilitate these retreats, wrote senior school religious education curricula, and was awarded a PNG medal for this work. His devoted life to education and spirituality in PNG inspired many people.

He returned to Sydney in late 2021 due to ill health and to enter into semi-retirement. After an illness with cancer, he died at Sacred Heart Hospice, Darlinghurst, NSW, aged 80 years.

A concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on 10 April 2024 at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish Church Kensington and his mortal remains will be laid in the MSC Cemetery, Douglas Park, NSW.

Rest in Peace, good and faithful servant of God.

PETER INGHAM

26/04/2024

✠ Catholic Press articles at the time of Bishop Peter’s death revealed the following information: “Bishop Peter studied for the priesthood at St Columba’s Seminary, Springwood, and St Patrick’s Seminary, Manly. He was ordained by the late Cardinal Sir Norman Gilroy in St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, in 1964.

Following parish appointments in the Sydney Archdiocese, he was appointed private secretary to Cardinal James Freeman, and then as the secretary of the archdiocese. Bishop Ingham was nominated as a monsignor by Pope John Paul II in 1986, and in July 1993 he was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Sydney.

On 25 July 2001, Bishop Ingham was installed as the fourth bishop of Wollongong, serving the diocese for 16 years. A spiritual father of the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands, he died on April 26, aged 83.”

Bishop Peter penned his personal reflections as death neared entitled “My Personal Advent” which he forwarded to *The Swag* for publication via his enduring Guardian and Power of Attorney, Julia Cuming. The article appears earlier in this edition. 📖

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

✠ Peter Shannon (Bathurst) .....	03/12/2023
✠ Michael Berbari (Sydney) .....	28/12/2023
✠ William Aliprandi (Broken Bay) .....	29/12/2023
✠ Michael Kelly (Sydney) .....	26/01/2024
✠ Anthony Kelly CSsR (Redemptorists) .....	03/03/2024
✠ Francis P Carroll (Canberra & Goulburn) .....	14/03/2024

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

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

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

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May the souls of the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

## **The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)**

The National Council of Priests (NCP) is an Australia-wide organisation of Catholic Priests and Associate Members (Lay, Religious & Seminarians).

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

### **The Objects and Purposes of the Council**

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