



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

# The Swag

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

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### ABOUT THE NCP

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

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## Paddy Sykes



As I communicate to you, valued readers of *The Swag*, we are all working under the government regulations that have been legitimately imposed on us as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the time the first cases of the virus were being diagnosed in Australia to the time of the lockdown of our country (and other countries locked down a lot harder than we did), we did not have much time to appreciate what was ahead of us nor much time to make appropriate preparations. The locking of our churches for liturgies and prayer was a shock to all of us. Pastors and parishioners alike have been missing the spiritual and social aspects of gathering for the Eucharist. Celebrating Holy Week without parishioners was not only strange but sad.

The loss of our usual ways of being a parish community has encouraged many new ways of being community to flourish. Many parishes are live-streaming their liturgies. People enjoy seeing their own parish priest saying mass in their own parish church. Liturgies streamed from other places are not the same. Meetings of parish groups can continue with Zoom and other internet resources.

Our older parishioners and those more technically challenged are being brought into the 21st Century as family and friends share their knowledge with them so that they are not left out of this internet activity. Baptisms and marriages can be postponed but it has been particularly hard for families who have lost a loved one during the lockdown. Choosing who makes up the 10 people who can attend a funeral is exceedingly difficult. Again, live-streaming has enabled mourners who could not be physically present at a funeral to participate in a remote way. There has been an enormous amount of sharing of

resources. And most importantly, people have been checking up on one another; pastors on their people and visa-versa.

On Tuesday 7 April, the High Court of Australia quashed the conviction of George Cardinal Pell. It was a blessing that we were in lockdown with COVID-19 on that day as it limited the opportunity for people to gather and protest or celebrate the decision and the Cardinal's subsequent release from gaol.

This case lasted for just under three years and caused great division within the Catholic community and the wider Australian society. Let us pray that the wounds that need to heal from this event will be soothed. We pray that the legal rights of individuals will be strengthened and respected and those who have been abused by anyone in our society will receive the support they need to come forward and pursue the justice they deserve. There were no winners from this case.

*The Swag* has enjoyed considerable success in recent years and one of the many factors contributing to that success has been our Editor, Peter Maher. As you can read from his editorial, Peter is facing medical challenges which require ongoing treatment. Together with John Swann, Sally Heath and Christine Moore, Peter has helped publish this edition.

We at the NCP, along with Peter, hope that he can be part of this important NCP work into the future, but his health is the most important focus at this time. Please keep Peter in your prayers for a speedy and complete recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in many ways but there has been a significant impact on the Australian economy. Dioceses, parishes, schools and indeed most Catholic organisations have all been affected in different ways, with many parishes feeling the effect of the loss of cash flow in part because of the cancellation of weekend masses.

NCP is not immune to the COVID-19 impact and so for the economic long term wellbeing of our organisation, I ask two things of all our members:

1. **Please talk to other clergy about NCP and encourage them to take up 2020 membership.**
2. **Continue to support our major annual publication, *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, by purchasing a copy. Order form on the inside back cover of this edition.**

The Golden Jubilee NCP Convention to be held 13-17 September 2021 is something to look forward to for our members. It will be held at the Pullman Hotel, Albert Park, Melbourne, the location of the 2016 Convention.

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

Our keynote speakers are still being assembled and we will keep you informed of our progress in this regard.

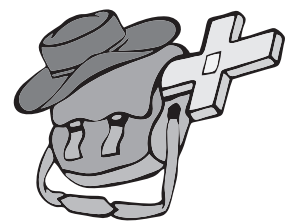
In previous messages, I have talked about the drought and bushfires. The rain has come to transform those two issues although there is a lot of bushfire rebuilding to go and the psychological effects of both these events will linger for some time.

COVID-19 has overshadowed both recent events. It is a reminder that as people of the Resurrection and bearers of the Light of Christ, the current situation will come to an end and we will have been transformed by the experience.

In these dark days, let us look for the many flickers of light around us.

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

*Shalom,*  
Paddy. ☺



## The Swag Spring Edition

Closing date  
for letters and articles  
Monday 27 July 2020.

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

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

## Conversion and the Plenary Council



In these times of heightened health issues filling every aspect of our lives as we fight COVID-19, I have a health story to tell that is unrelated to the virus.

I have been hospitalised for 3 weeks as I write this. I came in for emergency surgery on a bowel obstruction which has resulted in requiring treatment for cancer over the coming months.

This has affected *The Swag* in a couple of ways. Firstly, I have been unable to do all the editing work in the final stages of putting the Winter edition of the magazine together. Much of that final stage has been left to the hard work and dedication of Sally and Chris at the office and John Swann. Sally and Chris do a great deal of the practical work in producing each edition as does John with the proof reading but this time they have had to assist with formatting articles and sourcing some material. Thanks so much for stepping in at this stage. And if we have not got everything right, I hope you will understand the circumstances may mean we miss something.

Secondly, my future ability to support *The Swag* is unknown at this point. Many recover from cancer and return to a full and active life as I hope I will, but I am at a very early stage and there's a lot to learn. I hope to continue to support *The Swag*, even if I am not in a position to continue as editor. Time will tell.

What am I learning in this time of illness and social distancing, a time of unknowing physically, emotionally and spiritually while the world holds its breath to try to see through a pandemic that will change us all?

As many have said, technology is marvellous life saver for those isolated by sickness. I am lucky to be in hospital where human contact is constant, all be it professional health practitioners. They are a marvellous group of people whose care and compassion are exemplary. I am allowed one visitor per day – very different I imagine from if this happened outside the COVID-19.

Without video calls I would have much diminished contact with my family and friends and the mobile phone has enabled me to stay in contact through voice and text calls that has meant a great deal to me.

Both serious illness and social physical distancing has challenged me to consider what's important. We are all being asked to sort out our values, priorities, social and

communal responsibilities, our place in the political economy and how we relate to God and others.

Some articles in this edition of *The Swag* address the changes COVID-19 has made to our faith practice and our ecclesiology and sacramental theology. These questions are far from fully explored.

But for me, I have found solace and deep connection with the living God in the practice of simple Christian meditation (using a mantra), spiritual reading, conversations with friends and the wonder of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick kindly ministered by a priest friend who visited me in hospital.

My values have been pared down to concentrating on my health, dancing with a playful God who darts in and out of my consciousness through things known and unknown, staying in touch with family and friends, letting go and sorting things out so others can take up where I am no longer able.

I look forward to staying in touch with *The Swag* family even though I may not be sure at this time exactly how. Keep me in your prayers as I will certainly have you in mine especially those finding this time of isolation and or illness particularly difficult.

☪



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

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

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

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

*Further details will be published in the Spring edition.*

# The reception of Vatican II in Australia – A personal reflection

ERIC HODGENS

**The 70s was the most exciting decade for the Catholic Church following Vatican II. Three main vehicles of excitement were the catechetical movement, the seminaries and the continuing education of the clergy.**

Melbourne will feature a lot in what I recall because that is the scene I know best. But Melbourne was also the place where most clerical religious orders had their seminaries. Since theologians and scripture scholars in those days were nearly always priests on seminary staffs, this made Melbourne a concentrated focus for those early days of implementing Vatican II.

I mention the catechetical movement first because that was the nucleus of the formation of laity in the spirit of the council. The objective was catechising children, but the main benefit was the deepening of faith and understanding of those who went to the catechist courses. Beyond that, it lit a spark in quite a few of them to do formal courses in scripture and theology. The seminary of my day did not give formal qualifications. Ironically, I ended up being the pastor of a parish that had several members with theological qualifications while I did not.

The first catechetical course I conducted in 1969 was based on a set of notes designed by Pat Crudden who was then deputy head of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office. They were structured round Jesus's 'hour' as a central component of the fourth Gospel passion account. Teaching that course brought as much learning to me as to those attending. Teaching is often the best prompt to learning. We were already all in this together.

Pat Crudden instanced another aspect of Australia's reception of Vatican II. He had been sent to Brussels early after the council to do a course at the new catechetical centre *Lumen Vitae*. Right across the world a rejuvenating church was on the march.

John F Kelly was Director of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office (CEO) at the time. The CEO became a renewal powerhouse. John's insights into the mind of Vatican II bore fruit in the production of new catechetical texts to replace the old catechism. They were called *My Way to God*. I recall the old yarn of the child asking her dad for 'two dollars for *My Way to God*'. 'That sounds like good value for money' was dad's response.

The seminaries of the 70s were also at their peak. Enrolments and retention rates had

started a downward slide that would prove catastrophic. Nevertheless, there was still a significant number of top-quality students who enrolled in the 60s.

Vatican II-inspired staff taught Vatican II in content and spirit. Many were themselves young and recently qualified with overseas post-grad degrees.

Scripture was now a Cinderella subject not like its pre-council ugly sister. The historico-critical method breathed new life into texts which we knew had to be respected but now understood why.

Good lecturers would take you back to the origins, fill in the all-important context and leave you amazed at the movement of the Spirit in those early Christian communities. More importantly, faith was seen as a personal encounter with Jesus rather than signing up to dogmatic propositions. Existentialist rather than essentialist.

The council was being received.

We were not only passing on the content of the council. It was also fundamentally changing the style of discourse. The discourse style of Vatican II was dynamic, pastoral encounter rather than static, dogmatic imposition. Our mode of reception of the council mirrored this change.

Stories of faith replaced memorising of doctrine. Remember the old Act of Faith? Oh my God I firmly believe all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches. I believe these truths because Thou, the infallible truth, has revealed them to me and in this faith, I am firmly resolved to live and die. True as it stands, but not faith as the personal encounter and commitment embodied in *Dei Verbum* – nor as it was thought of by our 1st and 2nd century predecessors who followed Jesus on 'the way'.

The Catholic Education Office was a front runner first under John F Kelly, then Pat Crudden, Frank Martin, and Tom Doyle all providing continuity of vision. Courses for parish and school catechists were early opportunities for renewed education in faith. New publications like *My Way to God* were developed to replace the old catechism. A large array of enthusiastic priests, religious and laity took part in

the production of these texts – themselves internalising Vatican II in the process.

Saturday morning lectures for religious teachers had large attendances as did the catechist courses.

Another CEO venture was the National Pastoral Institute set up with episcopal approval in 1973 as a longer-term, live-in formation program. It was attended by priests, religious and laity.

In Sydney archdiocese David Walker and a team including John Ryan started the Centre for Christian Spirituality in Randwick in 1974. John appears later establishing The St Peter Centre in Canberra.

The teaching religious orders were changed irreversibly by their response to the council. All these ventures were life-centred, and scripture-based, inspired by *Dei Verbum*.

Refresher programs for priests became a feature of the 70s. Several bishops put someone in charge of ongoing education for priests. Archbishop Frank Little gave the Melbourne job to me in 1974. Sydney Archdiocese had a renewal committee with Peter Neville as its executive secretary. Peter was an inspiration to me and gave me a framework to implement the task. His practical insight inspired me to mount an annual, week-long pastoral seminar for priests.

Peter was across similar projects overseas, especially in the USA. The seminary at Menlo Park in San Francisco and Notre Dame University, Indiana ran live-in sabbatical programs for priests. Peter and I started a process which resulted in the establishment of the St Peter Centre in Canberra under the direction of John Ryan. John, a Sandhurst priest, had been leading renewal projects for some time, knew the Canberra scene and was ready and willing to take on the project. As this was to be a national program, Peter and I thought that Canberra was the best location for a national program.

Being a national centre, it needed the support of the bishops' conference. To achieve this, we organised a meeting of priests in charge of clergy renewal round the country. Out of that meeting came the Australian Association for the Pastoral Renewal of Catholic Clergy (AAPROCC). Under its banner we sought, and received, episcopal endorsement. The St Peter Centre came on stream a little late in the game but nevertheless ran courses for eleven years from 1983.

*Continued page 6*

## FEATURES

All of this was part of the Australian church's reception of Vatican II and firmly based on the vision of *Dei Verbum*.

One of the world leaders in the reception of the council was the Office for Divine Worship in the archdiocese of Chicago. Early it spawned Liturgical Training Publications (LTP). The liturgy departments of some Australian dioceses relied heavily on the LTP as a major introduction to English language leadership and documentation. It was a major player in the development of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Ron Lewinski was a priest assigned to this Chicago Office of Divine Worship and later became its long-time Director. He led an early Melbourne Pastoral Seminar which was a major factor in introducing the RCIA to Melbourne and throughout in Australia. Once again, the RCIA is true to *Dei Verbum* in assuming that faith is a personal encounter based on life experience in the light of the scripture.

Chicago archdiocese had always been an early adopter in the USA Church. Another of its initiatives was a Summer Scripture Seminar. This annual seminar brought the best of latest scripture scholarship to many key people in the renewal movement. It drew on the large pool of young scripture scholars who had studied at home and overseas. Many were brilliant scripture scholars and excellent communicators. The Melbourne Scripture Seminar, held during the August school holidays, was based on the Chicago model. Over a period of some years it featured renowned overseas scripture experts including Raymond Brown, Gerry Murphy-O'Connor, Eugene La Verdere, Donald Senior and John Meier.

Many of Melbourne's own scholars from Catholic Theological College, Yarra Theological Union and Jesuit Theological College were generous in their participation – Frank Moloney, Bill Dalton, Mark

O'Brian, Tony Campbell, Brendon Byrne and more. The contribution of this band of scripture scholars carried on a rich legacy which went right back to the early days of Jerome Crowe and Robert Crotty, Leo Branagan, and Eugene Cuskelly. Their eagerness to pass on their own insight and conviction made life for the director that much easier. I only had to ask to get a Yes response.

The Melbourne Scripture Seminars had a tighter focus than the Pastoral Seminars even if a smaller attendance. On reflection, however, I believe that they were the most influential of all my work as Director of Pastoral Formation. They immediately flowed into participants' understanding of homiletic preaching – life realities interpreted in the light of the Gospel. *Fides quaerens intellectum*. Faith not only seeks but needs understanding.

Into the 80s the path of reception of Vatican II started to encounter headwinds. By the mid-80s a new strain of reaction showed up in the graduates of the seminaries and a newly doctrinaire wave appeared in the men being appointed bishops. Renewal movements faltered and a heresy-hunting mood, which had become latent since Vatican II, started to re-emerge. Theologians were once again being silenced and priests delated to bishops for anything from heresy to rubrical casualness. The fightback against the council got more institutionalised by episcopal or papal censure. A new catechism was commissioned, reverting to the dogmatic type of discourse of the pre-Vatican II church. The Ottaviani party, soundly defeated at Vatican II, was mounting a restoration.

Into the new century this movement morphed into a culture war which has fractured the church when it was already facing the challenge of re-adjustment to a confidently secular culture. Reception of

Vatican II had stopped in its tracks until Pope Francis appeared on the scene.

We had been through five decades:

- The awakening 60s.
- The exciting 70s.
- The suspicious 80s.
- The depressing 90s.
- The imploding noughties.

With Pope Francis, Vatican II has reasserted itself – but to a divided and less receptive church. The world of the 50s has gone. There is a new world of political division. As I write we are isolated by plague. The fortress church which had to be reckoned with has gone. The church is now just another voice trying to be heard in a pluralistic world. Despite being weakened by disaffiliation and shame, its message is still one of hope and life – a message articulated half a century ago by Vatican II.

A bird's eye view of the Catholic Church after Vatican II shows a couple of decades of enthusiastic reception of the council. During the hibernation which followed less happened in the local churches, but the theologians kept working and publishing. Two significant new themes have emerged – reception and synodality. Both of these are now established firmly enough to survive the next turn of The Way.

The end of one age and the start of the next is sometimes hard to spot. The COVID-19 plague has put the whole world on hold. Re-starting the world economy will bring a very new scene. Is this the opportunity for the Church to show the worth of its core message and Jesus, its central person? Maybe T.S. Elliot reflection is prophetic: We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. ☪



## The Swag Spring Edition

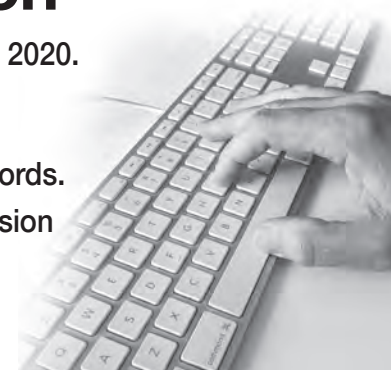
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Please email submissions for consideration

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

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

For more information on *The Swag* policy of submission and publication of articles, please see page 42.



# Christianity in a time of sickness

TOMAS HALIK

Tomáš Halík is a professor of sociology at Charles University, Prague, president of the Czech Christian Academy and a university chaplain. During the Communist regime he was active in the underground church. He is a Templeton Prize laureate and holds an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. Reprinted from *America* 3 April, 2020 with permission of America Press Inc. 2020. All rights reserved. For subscription information, call 1-800-627-9533 or visit [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org).



## Our world is sick

I am not just referring to the coronavirus pandemic, but to the state of our civilization, as revealed in this global phenomenon. In biblical terms, this all-pervasive sickness is a sign of the times.

At the beginning of this unusual period of Lent, many of us thought that this epidemic would cause a sort of short-term blackout, a breakdown in the usual operation of society, one that we would ride out somehow, and then soon things would all return to the way they were. But as time passes, the reality has become clearer: They will not. And it would not turn out well if we tried to make it so. After this global experience, the world will not be the same as it was before, and it probably should not be.

It is natural at times of major calamities that we first concern ourselves with the material necessities for survival, but “one does not live by bread alone.” The time has come to examine the deeper implications of this blow to the security of our world. The unavoidable process of globalization would seem to have peaked. The global vulnerability of a global world is now plain to see.

What kind of challenge does this situation represent for Christianity and the church – one of the first “global players” – and for theology?

The church should be a “field hospital,” as proposed by Pope Francis. The church should not remain in splendid isolation from the world but should break free of its boundaries and give help where people are physically, mentally, socially and spiritually afflicted. This is how the church can do penance for the wounds inflicted by its representatives quite recently on the most defenseless. But let us try to think more deeply about this metaphor – and put it into practice.

If the church is to be a hospital, it must, of course, offer the health, social and charitable care it has offered since the dawn of its history. But the church must also fulfill other tasks. It has a diagnostic role to play (identifying the “signs of the times”), a preventive role (creating an “immune system” in a society in which the malignant viruses of fear, hatred, populism and nationalism are rife) and a convalescent role (overcoming the traumas of the past through forgiveness).

Before Easter last year, Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris burned down. This year in Lent there are no services in hundreds of thousands of churches on several continents, nor in synagogues and mosques. As a priest and a theologian I reflect on those empty or closed churches as a sign and challenge from God.

Understanding the language of God in the events of our world requires the art of spiritual discernment, which in turn calls for contemplative detachment from our heightened emotions and our prejudices, as well as from the projections of our fears and desires. At moments of disaster, images of a wicked, vengeful God spread fear. Such images of God have been grist for the mill of atheism for centuries.

At a time of disasters I do not see God as an ill-tempered director, sitting comfortably backstage as the events of our world play out. Instead, I look on God as a source of strength, operating in those who show solidarity and self-sacrificing love in such situations (yes, including those who have no “religious motivation” for their action). God is humble and discreet love.

But I cannot help but wonder whether the time of empty and closed churches is not some kind of cautionary vision of what might happen in the fairly near future. This is what it could look like in a few years in a large part of our world. We have had plenty of warning from developments in many countries, where more and more churches, monasteries and priestly seminaries have been emptying and closing. Why have we been ascribing this development for so long to outside influences (the “secularist tsunami”), instead of realizing that another chapter in the history of Christianity is coming to a close, and it is time to prepare for a new one?

Maybe this time of empty church buildings symbolically exposes the churches’ hidden emptiness and their possible future unless they make a serious attempt to show the world a completely different face of Christianity. We have thought too much about converting the world and less about converting ourselves: not simply improvement but a radical change from a static “being Christians” to a dynamic “becoming Christians.”

When the medieval church made excessive use of the interdict as a penalty, and those “general strikes” by the entire ecclesiastical machinery meant that church services were not held and sacraments were not administered, people started increasingly to seek a personal relationship with God. Lay fraternities and mysticism proliferated. That upsurge of mysticism definitely helped pave the way for the Reformation – not only Martin Luther’s and John Calvin’s but also the Catholic reformation connected with the Jesuits and Spanish mysticism. Maybe discovery of

Continued page 8



## TARRAWARRA EUCHARISTIC BREADS



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

Self-support is a tradition of monastic life. Since 2000, the monks have been supplying eucharistic breads to parishes and communities all over Australia.

For further information on our range of eucharistic breads, please contact Fr Joseph Chua:

Tarrawarra Eucharistic Breads  
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Yarra Glen, Victoria 3775

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contemplation could help complement the “synodal path” to a new reforming council.

### A Call for Reform

Maybe we should accept the present abstinence from religious services and the operation of the church as *kairos*, as an opportunity to stop and engage in thorough reflection before God and with God. I am convinced the time has come to reflect on how to continue the path of reform, which Pope Francis says is necessary: not attempts to return to a world that no longer exists, or reliance just on external structural reforms, but instead a shift toward the heart of the Gospel, “a journey into the depths.”

Did we really think that we could solve the lack of priests in much of Europe and elsewhere by importing others from Poland, Asia and Africa? Of course we must take seriously the proposals of the Synod on the Amazon, but we need at the same time to provide greater scope for the ministry of laypeople in the church. Let us not forget that in many territories the church survived without clergy for entire centuries.

Maybe this “state of emergency” is an indicator of the new face of the church, for which there is a historical precedent. I am convinced that our Christian communities, parishes, congregations, church movements and monastic communities should seek to draw closer to the ideal that gave rise to the European universities: a community of pupils and teachers, a school of wisdom, in which truth is sought through free disputation and also profound contemplation.

Such islands of spirituality and dialogue could be the source of a healing force for a sick world. The day before his papal election, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio quoted a passage from the Book of Revelation in which Jesus stands before the door and knocks. He added: “Today Christ is knocking from inside the church and wants to get out.”

For years I have pondered a well-known text of Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Madman,” whose titular character – the fool who alone is permitted to speak the truth – proclaims “the death of God.” That chapter ends with the madman coming to church to sing “Requiem aeternam deo” and asking: “What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of God?” I must admit that for a long time various forms of the church seemed to me like cold and opulent sepulchres of a dead god.

It looks as if many of our churches will

be empty at Easter this year. We will read the Gospel passages about the empty tomb somewhere else. If the emptiness of the churches is reminiscent of the empty tomb, let us not ignore the voice from above: “He is not here. He has risen. He has gone ahead of you to Galilee.”

A question to stimulate meditation for this strange Easter: Where is the Galilee of today, where we can encounter the living Christ?

Sociological research indicates that in the world the number of believers (both those who fully identify with the traditional form of religion, and those who assert a dogmatic atheism) is falling, while there is an increase in the number of seekers. In addition, of course, there is a rise in the number of “apatheists,” people who could not care less about religious issues or the traditional response to them.

The main dividing line is no longer between those who consider themselves believers and those who consider themselves nonbelievers. There are seekers among believers (those for whom faith is not a legacy, but a way) and among nonbelievers, who reject the religious notions put forward to them by those around them but nevertheless have a yearning for something to satisfy their thirst for meaning.

I am convinced that the “Galilee of today,” where we must seek God, who has survived death, is the world of the seekers.

### Seeking Christ Among Seekers

Liberation theology taught us to seek Christ among people on the fringes of society. But it is also necessary to seek him among people marginalized within the church. If we want to connect with them as Jesus’ disciples, there are many things we must first abandon.

We must abandon many of our former notions about Christ. The resurrected one is radically transformed by the experience of death. As we read in the Gospels, even his nearest and dearest did not recognize him. We do not have to accept at all the news that surrounds us. We can persist in wanting to touch his wounds. Besides, where else will we be sure to encounter them than in the wounds of the world and the wounds of the church, in the wounds of the body that he took on himself?

We must abandon our proselytizing aims. We are not entering the world of the seekers to convert them as quickly as possible and squeeze them into the existing institutional and mental confines of our churches. Jesus also did not try to squeeze

those “lost sheep of the house of Israel” back into the structures of the Judaism of his day. He knew that new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

On the ruins of traditions, Jews and Christians learned anew to read the law and the prophets and interpret them afresh. Are we not in a similar situation in our days?

We need to take new and old things from the treasure house of tradition that we have been entrusted with, and make them part of a dialogue with seekers, a dialogue in which we can and should learn from each other.

We must learn to broaden radically the boundaries of our understanding of the church. It is no longer enough for us to magnanimously open a “court of the gentiles.” The Lord has already knocked from within and come out, and it is our job to seek him and follow him.

Christ has passed through the door that we had locked out of fear of others. He has passed through the wall with which we surrounded ourselves. He has opened up a space whose breadth and depth has made us dizzy.

On the very threshold of its history, the early church of Jews and pagans experienced the destruction of the temple in which Jesus prayed and taught his disciples. The Jews of those days found a courageous and creative solution. They replaced the altar of the demolished temple

with the Jewish family table, and the practice of sacrifice with the practice of private and communal prayer.

They replaced burnt offerings and blood sacrifices with reflection, praise and study of Scripture. Around the same time, early Christianity, banished from the synagogue, sought a new identity of its own. On the ruins of traditions, Jews and Christians learned anew to read the law and the prophets and interpret them afresh. Are we not in a similar situation in our days?

### God in All Things

When Rome fell on the threshold of the fifth century, there were instant explanations from many quarters. The pagans saw it as punishment of the gods for the adoption of Christianity, while many Christians saw it as God’s punishment on Rome. St. Augustine rejected both those interpretations.

At that watershed moment, he developed his theology of the age-old battle between two opposing cities, not of Christians and pagans, but of two loves dwelling in the human heart: the love of self, closed to transcendence (*amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei*) and love that gives of itself and thereby finds God (*amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*). Our time of civilizational change calls for a new theology of contemporary history and a new understanding of the church.

“We know where the church is, but we don’t know where she isn’t,” the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov taught. Maybe

what the last council said about catholicity and ecumenism needs to acquire a deeper content. It is time for a broader and deeper ecumenism, for a bolder search for God in all things.

We can, of course, accept this Lent of empty and silent churches as little more than a brief, temporary measure soon to be forgotten. But we can also embrace it as an opportune moment to seek a new identity for Christianity in a world that is being radically transformed before our eyes. The current pandemic is certainly not the only global threat facing our world now and in the future.

Let us embrace the approaching Eastertide as a challenge to seek Christ anew.

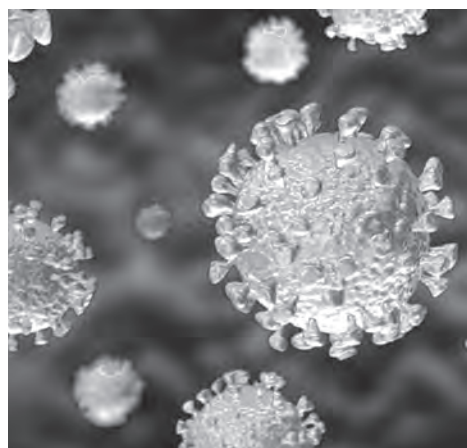
Let us not seek the living among the dead. Let us seek him boldly and tenaciously, and let us not be taken aback if he appears to us as a foreigner. We will recognize him by his wounds, by his voice when he speaks to us intimately, by the Spirit that brings peace and banishes fear. ☩

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

## The Plenary Council: Where to after Coronavirus?

GERRY MCKERNAN AND PETER SHEEHAN

**Rev Gerry McKernan and Peter Sheehan are members of the Melbourne parish of St Kevin’s, Lower Templestowe and are members of the editorial committee of the [senseofthefaithful.org.au](http://senseofthefaithful.org.au) website. How might the pandemic become a parable of hope for the Plenary Council?**



The coronavirus pandemic is changing the world, and the Church, in fundamental ways.

One small effect is that, by delaying the first assembly of Plenary Council (PC) until 2021, it provides an opportunity to reshape a process that is failing in many respects.

After initial enthusiasm, many priests and lay people have become deeply sceptical about the Council. They see few signs of genuine synodality, or indeed of what the Council plans to discuss.

Few signs, in other words, that those holding power are willing to embark on a genuine process of discernment about the future.

The bishops will determine the agenda at the PC, in their own time. On the list of delegates to the Council over 70% have some official position in the Church. The local bishops selected the 76 lay delegates, in a closed process over the summer.

Communication within the PC process has been vertical. Submissions from the parish level go up to the Secretariat, with little intelligible feedback to parishes. There have been few opportunities for serious discussion across parishes.

The six PC Writing Groups provide a case in point. Their draft reports have been completed and sent to Rome for review. There has been no opportunity for the faithful to debate and discuss these

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documents. These reports are strictly confidential for the faithful in Australia, but are available for vetting in Rome.

It is too early to be sure how the pandemic might affect our world. We suggest four trends that seem to be emerging, and to be notable and important.

First, in many ways the forced isolation is driving a hunger for community. Nations whose leaders emphasise individualism have failed dismally with COVID-19. By contrast, those with stronger communal linkages have succeeded. Australians have even surprised themselves with their ability to work together, even across party lines, to defeat this enemy.

Students everywhere are learning that the virtual classroom is no substitute for the real one. Many parishioners in closed churches are yearning for revival of face-to-face parish communities. We might emerge from COVID-19 with a new sense of the key role of community in human life.

Secondly, even as the poor and disadvantaged are out of sight, there is a growing awareness of their plight. We are more aware of their situation: the homeless being told to stay at home, the rising tide of domestic violence, the increased demand at foodbanks, the neglect of temporary visa

holders and the plight of many already lonely before the crisis.

Thirdly, the pandemic gives us a new awareness of the extent to which Christ is found outside the Church. Heroism in serving others beyond the call of duty is evident on all sides, independent of religious belief.

Finally, the pandemic explodes the myth of human dominion over nature. If a single virus can bring the world so low, how much more damaging might serious global warming prove to be? Perhaps it is indeed time to live in harmony with nature.

The extent to which the teachings of Pope Francis relate to these four issues is truly remarkable. It has been a long time since a Catholic leader spoke in such a relevant way to the needs of our time.

Above all, Francis has persistently called for conversion within the Church, from an inward-looking self-referential stance to one looking out to the needs of our communities. Reform starts not by looking at ourselves but at the needs of the marginalised and indeed of the whole of creation. This conversion in mentality is vital and must drive any reform program

The task is to bring Christ's good news and His healing love to those at the margins,

and in turn to learn from them. The changes in the Church are those necessary to serve these groups, to see Christ in them and to learn from them.

One could not say that Australia's Plenary Council process to date reflects this vision. It has been inward looking, debating the changes needed to the life, structures and personnel of the Church. We have not taken seriously the challenge from Francis to convert to an outward looking mentality

The present authors do not claim to know what this conversion really means, or how to achieve it. But, especially in the wake of coronavirus, it is journey on which we all must embark, walking forward together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A group of parishes in Melbourne has established a website – [senseofthefaithful.org.au](http://senseofthefaithful.org.au) – to facilitate discussions between parishes and individuals about the future direction of the PC. We welcome contributions about the questions discussed here, or other relevant matters.

The catch phrase when the PC was launched is that 'it cannot be business as usual'. This enthused over 18,000 of us to make initial submissions. We now seek your help to encourage the people to find their voice once again. ✚



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

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

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

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

*Further details will be published in the Spring edition.*

# Sign of Unity – Instrument of Peace

DR GARRY NOLAN AM

**Dr Garry Nolan AM is a life-long lay Catholic who has continuously been active in Catholic schools, parishes, deaneries and Catholic Social Services agencies, with extensive experience in governance, leadership mentoring and community & organisational development.**

The previous edition of *The Swag* displayed on the cover – *Sign of Unity – Instrument of Peace*. But as a church, in Australia and around the world, we are far from united. The Delegates have been called to the Plenary Council and ‘the battle lines are drawn’. The conservatives and the progressives/reformers see ‘our Church’ very differently and there is little, if any, ground for compromise – unity – on either side.

The conservatives see themselves as the guardians of Catholic tradition, doctrine and the Magisterium. This group is a relatively small proportion of the total Church in Australia, but they are very vocal and influential. They see the progressives as ‘Stone Throwers’ and heretics. “Why don’t they go and join a Protestant Church” we hear. “Everything went down hill after the Second Vatican Council”. “The media is trying to destroy the Church”.

The progressives seek renewal in the Church and to bring Jesus back into central focus. They see themselves as preserving the early teachings of the Church by going back to a pre-Emperor Constantine era, a pre-soldier/male model of church, a pre-monarchist style institution. To establish proper governance, leadership, accountability and transparency standards in our Church. This group represents somewhere in the order of 95% of Australian Catholics. They see the conservatives as Pharisees – more focused on the rules than on Christ’s love. On a male-construct of rules, not based on the Gospels. A group who miss the numerous ‘Galileo moments’ in the Church today.

Developing a deeper level of understanding on a range of topics has been a strong tradition in our Church over 2,000 years. St Paul was not one of the original twelve and he and St Peter had different views on the role of gentiles in the Church. We have had many ‘Galileo moments’ in the history of our Church. I remember a time when ‘definitive Church teaching’ was emphatic that no one could go to Heaven who was not baptised Catholics. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger sought to provide us with a better understanding of ‘Church teaching’ on this topic in *Dominus Iesus* on 6 August 2000 which was intended to “... help

theological reflection in developing solutions consistent with the contents of the faith and responsive to the pressing needs of contemporary culture.”

Our Church has had many terrible times in our history, and yet we have survived – a clear indication of the divine foundations of our Church. But the living presence of Jesus has been pushed aside. We need Christ-like, servant leadership now, if the Church is to recover. The announcement of the Plenary Council was initially received with much hope. But this initial surge of joy, has now mainly been replaced with the comment – heard often – “What is the point, nothing of significance will change”. Many Catholics feel that the bishops have abandoned today’s Catholics – “It’s all just too hard” – and their focus has moved to building a migrant church.

## LGBTIQ and women issues

The two most significant ‘hot button’ topics that divide these two opposing groups are the LGBTIQ issue and the ordination of women.

The conservatives see the LGBTIQ issue as involving intrinsically evil acts against the virtue of chastity such as homosexual practices. But we have looked at the LGBTIQ issue in the past as a one dimensional issue.

Pope Francis has said “It is not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality, but to invite all the Church to grasp the signs of the times that the Lord continually offers us. ... These signs ... must be reread in the light of the Gospel; this is the moment of growth of God’s Kingdom.” I am not LGBTIQ and I do not have children who are LGBTIQ. So I believe I am objective on this matter. But it is far more complex than the superficial approach we have applied to date. It is appropriate at this time to consider the scientific/biological evidence – The World Health Organisation has issued a statement on Gender and Genetics stating “Humans are born with 46 chromosomes in 23 pairs. The X and Y chromosomes determine a person’s sex. Most women are 46XX and most men are 46XY. Research suggests, however, that in a few births per thousand

some individuals will be born with a single sex chromosome (45X or 45Y) (sex monosomies) and some with three or more sex chromosomes (47XXX, 47XYY or 47XXY, etc.) (sex polysomies). In addition, some males are born 46XX due to the translocation of a tiny section of the sex determining region of the Y chromosome. Similarly some females are also born 46XY due to mutations in the Y chromosome. Clearly, there are not only females who are XX and males who are XY, but rather, there is a range of chromosome complements, hormone balances, and phenotypic variations that determine sex.” Some members of the LGBTIQ community have raised the issue that gender on birth certificates should not be based on an individual’s reproductive organs, but based on an individual’s chromosomes.

In addition, there is the testicular feminisation syndrome, also known as the androgen insensitivity syndrome, which is a condition that affects sexual development before birth and during puberty. People with this condition are genetically male, with one X chromosome and one Y chromosome in each cell. Because their bodies are unable to respond to certain male sex hormones (called androgens), they may have mostly female external sex characteristics or signs of both male and female sexual development.

A significantly disturbing point is that, as we have shown no understanding of the above facts, our views are seen as having no validity in relation to the growing number of gender dysphasia cases. This involves giving puberty-blocking drugs and cross-sex hormones to children.

The advantage of giving the drugs to children is that it makes gender changing surgery less severe in later life. But it can also lead to irreversible sterility. We should have a strong voice in this important debate, highlighting the moral and ethical issues in the protection of vulnerable children. But we do not have a voice because we simply focus on ‘sin’ and not on the chromosome composition of the individual.

A religious institution, including ourselves, should not discriminate against people who have already suffered so much. Vilification or causing mental health issues for individuals and their parents is not compatible with our fundamental doctrine to love God and love our neighbour, with Jesus placing no restrictions on who is our neighbour.

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In relation to the issue of the ordination of women, the conservatives see the issue as heresy stating – “the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women”. This is based on the position that all of the twelve Apostles were men. But the most likely explanation for this is that Jesus was simply following the social practice of the day. If Jesus believed that leadership – spiritual, ministry and/or organisational leadership – in His Church should be confined to men, one would reasonably expect that He would have said so – but He did not. It is interesting to consider that for Jesus Himself, as a boy growing up in the first century, it was not possible to go to the temple in Jerusalem every week and, as part of a Jewish family of the day, it would have been His mother who would have been responsible for Jesus’ religious upbringing. Accordingly, Jesus would have grown up recognising a woman as His primary religious teacher on Earth. It is also interesting to note that there was a woman bishop in Naples around the end of the fifth century.

A more significant guide to the role of men and women in our Church founded by Jesus, comes at the end of Jesus’ human life on Earth. The men denied Jesus and ran away (except for John), the women followed Jesus to Calvary, remained with Him during His suffering and supported His body to the grave. But if there was any doubt on the role of women in the Church, it comes clearly in the answer to the question: Who was the first person to whom the Resurrection of

Jesus was revealed? We know this was a woman. Was this an accident or a profound teaching from Jesus?

Men had control over the final versions of the Gospels that would become our official text. So we need to be mindful that the role of women in Jesus’ mission was written as a reflection of ‘a man’s world’, not necessarily reflecting every aspect of the role of women in Jesus’ ministry.

There are many parallels in the emancipation of slavery and the liberation of women. Jesus did not condemn slavery nor did he condemn the subservience of women. Our Church made some valuable contributions to the emancipation of slaves and canonised many holy women. But we left it to other Christians (non-Catholics) to take the front running on these two highly important issues in Christian life. Many men have treated women as if they were slaves for most of history. If we truly understood the teachings of Jesus to love all human kind, would we have left it to others to bring about these two critical reforms in the civilisation of our human society?

We are a faith tradition which believes that the human person is comprised of two elements – the body and the soul. The body is simply the vehicle that carries the soul through life and which comes in different forms to allow humans to continue to exist through time. The soul is where God resides in all of us. The soul has no gender, so we must ask ourselves – why are we so obsessed with the body?

It is the soul that we should be focused on.

Australian Catholics recognise that the Australian bishops have no power, on their own, to act in relation to the ordination of women to the priesthood. But as a minimum, they expect the Australian bishops to make strong representation to the Vatican outlining that the vast majority of Australian Catholics see no impediment to the ordination of women to the priesthood, women deacons and women being appointed to senior leadership and decision making roles at all levels in our Church.

The final word on this topic must come from scripture in St Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”.

Looking more broadly at our Church, if we were a car manufacturer and a large number of people had been seriously injured, a number of injuries leading to death, due to failures in our car’s safety features, we should be focused on redesigning the car at this time.

We must all ask ourselves, in these and other complex issues, are we following the teachings of Jesus or are we being modern day Pharisees? The conservatives and the progressives must find a way to come together if we are to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus “It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognise you are my disciples.” ☪



## The Road to Emmaus

TONY DOHERTY

**Tony Doherty, Sydney priest, offers a reflection each Sunday on the gospel for his parish community at Neutral Bay, Sydney. This is a transcript for a reflection on the Third Sunday of Easter.**

**Available on YouTube – Monsignor T Doherty: <https://youtu.be/4TOdezBlgiM>**

**He is also author of a Podcast of short biographies of 50 priests who have died but whom he has been privileged to work with in Sydney over fifty years in the ministry. Priests such as Ted Kennedy, Grove Johnson, Kevin Hannan, Brian Yates, Roger Pryke, Ed Barry, John McSweeney and many more.**

**They can be accessed on: Sound Cloud – Priests I have known.**

Let me begin with a story. There was a young and famous teacher, a Rabbi, who was to visit the town. All the people began to gather their questions: about life, about death and misfortune, about the crops, about love, about envy, about everything on earth.

The great day finally arrived and the village

packed into the hall to have their questions answered by the holy man; ‘listen to the young Rabbi,’ they said. He came up on the stage and just looked at them – silently. Then, after three minutes of silence he began to hum softly, then more loudly.

Then he began to sing, softly, then ever more loudly and they all began to sing the

Rabbi’s lilting refrain. Next, he began to move his body in a rhythmic way, ever so slowly and then more quickly he began his slow dance and they all began to dance.

It was only then that the Rabbi said his first words. ‘I trust you have had all your questions answered’. He stepped from the stage, out the back door and then disappeared from their midst.

Let me say something about today’s gospel. There are several intriguing stories in the gospels of Jesus appearing to people after the resurrection. Each of them mysterious and fascinating.

The risen Christ seems to glide into people lives- almost like a dancer – and then disappear. Today’s story is my favourite. It’s The Road to Emmaus.

Two young men are walking away from Jerusalem seven miles to a small town called Emmaus; when a stranger looms up beside

them. The young men were weighed down by serious depression. They were hurting. Crushed.

That young teacher from Nazareth had opened up a dream to them. A dream that had crashed and burned on Calvary. The two of them were in flight from the crash scene. The stranger catches their stride, catches their mood. But most significantly listens to their story. Gives them his complete attention.

He then takes on the role of teacher. 'Don't you understand the sacred writings about the necessity that new life will come from death'. That the seed planted in the ground must die before a new green full of life shoot breaks through the soil.

His words penetrate their fog. The stranger says goodbye and moves to go on and leave them with their questions. But they wouldn't let him go. His words had stirred something deep within them. They couldn't let him go. 'Come and share a meal', they insisted.

It's amazing how often sharing food comes up in these stories of the Risen Christ.

And so as the mysterious stranger takes the loaf, he blesses the bread, breaks it and gives it to them. Suddenly like a bolt of lightning it all becomes clear. He is Risen. He is here with us. As soon as they recognise him, he disappears from their sight.

What's this story all about? The story of road to Emmaus may have a very contemporary ring for us today. Given our recent history the experience of being a Catholic Christian in these days can sometimes be quite dispiriting.

Our dreams, like those two young men, have been shaken. Even crushed. Yet for them, a stranger has drawn them out, listened to them, invited them to look again at the scriptures and encourages them to support one another in the breaking of the bread.

For me there are three practical implications of this story.

Never underestimate the sacredness of genuine conversation; even when it comes out of the blue with a stranger. Nor fail to value the importance of story telling and story listening.

Be quick to recognise that graced moment when sharing a meal with friends; of breaking bread while at the same time breaking open ourselves with the stories of the road we are on.

But finally to understand Easter a little more clearly as a time when the essential truth of the belief that shattered dreams, no matter how broken can be healed and be brought to life again.

An English poet and songwriter Sydney Carter, it must have been back in the

sixties, composed a song entitled. Actually, it was taken from an old Shaker tune composed in the deep south of the United States. Carter put lyrics to the music.

In his final verse of the song, Carter catches the mystery of the resurrection:

*They cut me down and I leapt up high  
I am the Life that will never, never die  
I'll live in you if you live in me  
I am the lord of the dance, said he*

Those young men had met the Lord of the Dance on the road to Emmaus. At first slow to recognise him – but then their hearts were opened. Their minds unlocked. Easter is a treasured time to open our own hearts and minds. Perhaps it may even cause us to move our own stiff bodies, to sway to the music, to move our feet and to join the dance:

*I'll live in you, if you live in me  
I am the Lord of the dance said he.*

Prayer: For those who have died by the thousands throughout this bleeding world of ours – often the elderly and those who sorely grieve their deaths – there exists an ocean of grief.

For the people of the majority world, the third world, who find social distancing unimaginable in their crowded villages, and cramped homes, who lack clean water to wash, and now recently unemployed have insufficient food to put on the table for their children.

For those millions of people who have insufficient medical help in good times, much less in the midst of a pandemic.

As caution causes us to secure the borders of our continent, let us be careful not to create walls in our hearts and imaginations to fail to appreciate that we are in the midst of global tragedy which threatens the world at large.

As this is Anzac weekend let us reflect on the admirable national ritual of praying for those young people who have given their lives in times of war. Lest we forget.

Lord – the pace of our days has slowed; the rhythm of life has become more human. Let us re-discover the wisdom of this time of Sabbath this sacred time when we are invited to cease of our normal activity.

Quieten our minds so that we might recognise your mysterious presence as the stranger on the road, in the simple encounters of each day, below the surface of each moment which disguise your gentle existence.

We offer you this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen ☩

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# Timothy Radcliffe OP

**Coronavirus is depriving us of touch, the nourishment of our humanity. Timothy Radcliffe OP ponders the 'new world' being created by necessary social distancing. First published in La Croix, 25/03/2020 and reprinted with permission.**

Queuing up to go through security in Tel Aviv airport last week, I was fascinated by the balletic movements of the man in front of me.

He almost danced as he maneuvered his suitcases so that no one could be nearer to him than two meters.

He was probably wise, but for me he vividly evoked two aspects of the new world in which we live as best we can.

First of all, insecurity. The menace of death hangs in the air, literally. We are vulnerable.

## Living well now and being grateful

When I had cancer three years ago, I was confronted with my own mortality. This is different since it touches all whom we love.

The two people to whom I am closest in my community in Blackfriars are both at high risk. One of them is only fifty. But he already has an illness, which means he has no immunity at all.

Both of them are the brothers with whom I have been on holidays every year for many years. Maybe I never will again.

The only way that I can respond is to enjoy them now. Their lives are a gift for which I can give thanks every day.

I went and bought a bottle of wine so that I can have a drink with the one who can still share space with me.

Gratitude floods my being. We shall have a wonderful evening. But he has just phoned to say we must delay since he is not well.

## We need proximity and touch, hugs and kisses

The young man with the suitcases also was an image of isolation.

Every stranger, and even friend, is seen as a possible threat to one's life, and I to him or her. Safety is found only in keeping apart.

But how can we live in isolation? We need proximity and touch, hugs and kisses, to be really alive.

In the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo shows God's finger touching Adam into life. We are all the hands of the life-giving God when we touch others with kindness and respect.

Touch is the nourishment of our humanity.

Grandparents and grandchildren who cannot hug each other are living a deep deprivation!

## Cyberspace is not the same, but...

I am deeply grateful, as never before, for living in a community, so that even in this terrible time, I can leave my room and find brethren.

And I live in a beautiful city filled with parks in which I can walk and see the signs of spring. I have no reason to complain.

But millions of people are deprived of the physical closeness that we need to flourish.

On the other hand, cyberspace is filled with messages expressing love and care. 'Are you alright?' 'Have you got back from Israel?'

I have received three since I began to write this short piece.

Suddenly, when I must not touch, I am in touch with people whom I have not seen for years. Yes, there is isolation, but also a new and wide communion of those who care. Of course it is not the same. I miss the faces of those whom I love.

## Confessions of a first-time 'Skypers'

Yesterday for the first time in my life – what a confession! – I used Skype.

I contacted a friend who lives abroad to find out how he was.

In the evening I skyped the other brother who is isolated from us all. It was better than nothing, but it is not the same as seeing a face three dimensionally.

Usually we do not sit in front of screens staring each other.

Faces are best seen in side-glances, unexpected glimpses, caught unawares when one enters a room.

We do not stare at the faces of those whom we love, as we focus relentlessly at the screen when we Skype or Zoom.

When we are physically together, we look at each other gently, discreetly, from every angle.

The brother whom I first skyped told me that in Hebrew, faces give light. It is as if the light shines forth from our eyes, illuminating those whom we love.

We bask in their radiance, like sunbathers on a beach; we rest in their gaze. I miss so many faces at the moment.

## Fasting from the shared intimacy of the Body of Christ

And touch! Yesterday we celebrated the last of our public Eucharists for a while. As we processed out a friend waved.

We will be fasting from the shared intimacy of the Body of Christ.

The early Christians shocked the pagans by the intimacy of our touch in the kiss of peace. It was really a kiss on the mouth! All that stops for the moment.

How can we deprive people of the Eucharist?

Interiorly, I rebelled against the Church's decision to close all public liturgies, even though rationally I know it is unavoidable.

Of course, pastoral work and the hearing of confessions still continue, often discreetly on benches in gardens, letting the fresh air keep us from mutual contagion.

## The joy of preaching comes from faces

As members of the Order of Preachers we must find every way we can to proclaim the gospel.

Our Dominican students are exploring new ways of reaching out on the web; our university classes will be on-line.

Never has there been such a vast effort to reach out with the gospel on the digital continent. Wonderful!

And yet most of the joy of preaching comes from the faces, the smiles and the laughter, of the people one is addressing.

St Augustine says that we should teach with Hilaritas, exuberance and even ecstasy.

It is intensely mutual. When the occasion is blessed, the preacher and the people inspire each other.

A fifteenth century Sufi imam, Mullah Nasrudin, said: "I talk all day, but when I see someone's eyes blaze, then I write it down."

So for me this is both a time of intense communion but also of deprivation, of rediscovered friends and of absence, of reaching out but not touching.

All that we lose in this time of plague will,

we hope and trust, be recovered before too long. The coronavirus will pass.

**Something good from this contagion**

But something is in the air that may be contagious for the good. I pray that we in Britain may look back to this time as when we recovered some sense of being a single national community.

The Conservative government made an extraordinary announcement: If a company lays off an employee from work, rather than dismissing them, the government will pay 80% of their wages.

This is an intervention of the State that is unparalleled in the history of Britain and the cost of which is hard to imagine.

But slowly our politicians are coming to realize that unless such drastic action is taken in favor of the poorest, the people on zero hours contracts, those who earn least, the result might be a social unrest that Europe has not seen since the French Revolution.

**A single human community from which we cannot exit**

We can only survive as a society by radical change. The vast inequalities of wealth have so weakened our common bonds that extreme financial suffering could provoke social dissolution.

The cry of conservative politicians ever since the financial crisis of 2008 has been ‘We are all in this together’. But it was not true.

Maybe at least some of the political elite needs to see that if we are not really all in this together, the consequences will be almost unthinkable.

Of course, as unshakeable European, I hope that we may eventually come to see that we cannot flourish without our European friends as well!

Brexit could not have happened at a more unfortunate moment.

Let us hope that we shall discover that just as the virus reaches beyond national boundaries and does not need visas, so we shall renew our sense that we belong to a single human community from which no exit is possible. ☺



# Most prominent issues for the Plenary Council agenda

PETER WILKINSON

**New research into the written submissions to the Plenary Council shows that among the issues raised, some are more prominent than others. This report is by Peter Wilkinson. Note: All reports cited can be accessed at [www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)**

**Listening and Dialogue**

Preparations for the Plenary Council began in May 2018 with a ‘Listening and Dialogue’ phase aimed at ‘listening to the voice of God speaking through the voices of the people’ and ‘gaining a sense of their faith’ (*sensus fidei*). Australian Catholics, and others, were invited to reflect on and respond to the question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* By 13 March 2019 over 220,000 persons, mostly Catholic, had responded in 12,758 individual and 4,699 group submissions.

The National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPDR) subsequently published several reports on both their content and authors. It found individual respondents were: more female (49%) than male (29%); slightly more numerous in the older age groups (23% – 15-29 yrs; 22% – 30-59 yrs; 32% – 60-80+ yrs); predominantly Australian-born (65%) but with very few indigenous (143); more from non-English-speaking countries (11%) than from other English-speaking countries (6%); predominantly Catholic (72%); other Christians (3%) and non-Christians (1%); significantly regular Mass attenders (76%); and most numerous from Brisbane (1890), Melbourne (1649), Wollongong (1244), Sydney (1103), and Perth (1082).

Group respondents were: more female (50%) than male (41%); more numerous in the under 50 age group (78,000) than in

the over 50 age group (73,000); in groups varying in size from 5 to 17,000 persons; and their submissions were most numerous from Melbourne (791), Perth (519), Sydney (447), Brisbane (379) and Broken Bay (343).

**Listening and Discernment**

In its July 2019 *Final Report*, the NCPDR identified 119 ‘themes’ or issues raised in the 17,547 submissions. These became the foundation for the second phase – *Listening and Discernment* – of the Council preparations and from them Council organizers developed 6 National Themes for Discernment (NTDs):

- Open to Conversion, renewal and reform
- A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- Humble, healing and merciful
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- Inclusive, participatory and synodal
- Missionary and evangelising.

Six Writing and Discernment Groups are currently using the NTDs to prepare working documents to guide the formulation of the Council agenda.

**Diocesan Reports**

In its *Final Report* the NCPDR provided no weighting to the original 119 ‘issues’ (I will refer to them as ‘issues’ to distinguish them from the 6 NTDs). Nor did it rank them

in terms of which were the ‘most prominent’ or ‘most widely discussed’ by the respondents. But the NCPDR’s March 2020 *Diocesan Reports* providing new data on each of Australia’s 28 territorial dioceses, show which issues were the ‘most prominent’ and ‘most widely discussed’ in by respondents both within and across dioceses. They also contain data on the respondents from each diocese, the texts (de-identified) of their responses, and the issues ‘most widely discussed’. They cover 77 of the ‘most prominent’ issues, and group them under 6 ‘topic areas’ (A-F below):

- A. Love God, Love Neighbour (11 issues)
- B. Leadership and Church Governance (14 issues)
- C. Sacraments (8 issues)
- D. Mass and Eucharist (9 issues)
- E. Social Justice and Environment (9 issues)
- F. Outreach and Other (26 issues)

Each report lists the topic areas discussed in each diocese, and the order discussed. Table 1 shows topic areas A, E and F were discussed in all 28 dioceses, B and C discussed in 27 dioceses and D in just 6 dioceses. The # 1 most discussed topic area within dioceses was A (in 24 dioceses) followed by E (3 dioceses) and B (2 dioceses).

**Most widely discussed issues across all dioceses**

As each *Diocesan Report* indicates which of the 77 issues were the ‘most prominent’ or

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**Table 1: Topic areas ‘most widely discussed’ by respondents in 28 territorial dioceses**

Topic areas discussed in dioceses	Most discussed within dioceses					Total dioceses where discussed
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Love God, Love Neighbour	24	4				28
Leadership & Church Governance	2	10	5	8	2	27
Sacraments		6	17	3	1	27
Mass & Eucharist		1		4	1	6
Social Justice & Environment	3	7	5	9	4	28
Outreach & Other						28

Source: NCPR, *Diocesan Reports*, March-April 2020

‘most widely discussed’ by respondents, it is possible to give each issue a ‘prominence’ ranking both within and across dioceses.

Table 2 indicates the degree (#1–#6+) to which an issue was ‘most widely discussed’ within a diocese. It also shows the total number of dioceses where it was ‘most widely discussed’.

For example, ‘Greater inclusion for all’ was

the #1 ‘most widely discussed’ issue within 27 dioceses and ‘most widely discussed’ issue across 28 dioceses. Table 2 also lists the top 20 ‘most prominent’ or ‘most widely discussed’ issues across all dioceses and ranks them (1-20) according to the total dioceses where they were discussed.

The degree to which the issues were ‘most widely discussed’ within the dioceses is also important.

‘Greater role for women’, for example, was the #1 ‘most widely discussed’ issue within 21 dioceses, ‘Fighting for human rights issues’ was #1 in 18 dioceses, and ‘Ending compulsory celibacy & allowing priests to marry’ was #1 in 15 dioceses. ‘Care of Neighbour’, however, although ‘most widely discussed’ across 25 dioceses, was # 1 within just 4 dioceses.

Other ‘most prominent’ and ‘most widely

**Table 2: Top 20 ‘most prominent’ or ‘most widely discussed’ issues in submissions: within and across Australia’s 28 territorial dioceses**

Ranking of ‘most prominent’ and ‘most widely discussed’ issues (Topic area)	Most widely discussed within dioceses						Total dioceses where discussed
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6+	
Greater inclusion of all (A)	27	1					28
Greater involvement of the Laity (B)	2	6	9	2	3	5	27
Remaining faithful to Church teaching (A)	3	2	2	5	8	6	26
Greater role for women (B)	21	3	1	1			26
Ending compulsory celibacy & allowing priests to marry (C)	15	9	2				26
Ordination of women (C)	2	14	9	1			26
Care for neighbour (A)	4	4	4	5	3	5	25
Greater trust, faith and hope in God (A)	6	7	5	3		3	24
Greater focus on Jesus Christ (A)	12	6	5	1			24
Better faith formation (A)	1	7	5	3	2	6	24
Fighting for human rights issues (E)	18	5					23
Greater outreach to youth (F)	11	6	3	2		1	23
Greater sharing of the faith with others (F)	7	7	5	2	1	1	23
Greater focus on the Word of God (A)			4	6	3	9	22
Greater leadership from bishops (B)		4	3	4	7	3	21
Greater emphasis on prayer & sacraments (C)	9	8	3	1			21
Care of the environment (E)	1	2	13	3	1		20
New leadership & governance model (B)		3	5	4	4	3	19
Ending clericalism (B)	3		4	6	2	3	18
Greater leadership from priests (B)			2	3	1	12	18

Source: NCPR, *Diocesan Reports*, March-April 2020

discussed' issues across dioceses (in order) were:

21. Need to modernize church teachings (in 18 dioceses)
22. Teaching authentic Catholic faith (17 dioceses)
23. Being a witness in society (15 dioceses)
24. New model of church, diocese and parish (15 dioceses)
25. Ending LGBTIQ discrimination (15 dioceses)
26. More transparency and accountability around child sexual abuse (15 dioceses)
27. Renewed call to holiness (13 dioceses)
28. Inclusion of divorced and remarried (13 dioceses)
29. Listening to each other more (12 dioceses)
30. Stronger parish communities (12 dioceses)
31. Better selection and formation for candidates for priesthood (10 dioceses).

The 'most prominent' and 'most widely discussed' issue within and across dioceses was 'Greater inclusion for all'. Significantly, 5 of the top 6 most prominent issues relate directly or indirectly to the role of women in church ministry and governance.

While most of the issues are self-explanatory, 'Greater inclusion for all' has a particular meaning for those responding to the Question: What God was asking of us (i.e. the Church) in Australia as this time? They want their Church: to be more inclusive of persons of all sexual preferences and genders, marginalised persons, refugees and poor persons; to make these persons feel included, welcomed, and valued equally, regardless of their sexuality or marital status; to reach out to people and be 'Christ' to them; to welcome and embrace persons of different ethnicities, cultures, faiths and sexual orientations and promote unity among them; to be more caring and respectful to persons with disabilities, recognising their equality and gifts, and facilitating their access to the sacraments; and to be non-judgemental on relationships (e.g. same-sex) and moral issues (e.g. premarital sex, divorce, and contraception).

As the bishops move closer to setting the Council's agenda, it is hoped they will give careful consideration to those issues which Christ's faithful have prioritised. ☪

## COVID-19 calls for creativity

PATRICK FLANAGAN

**Patrick Flanagan, retired priest, from Red Cliffs, Victoria looks at creative ways to support people in their homes. He claims people must come before rules.**



The drive north from Hamilton, Victoria to Horsham or vice versa, takes about 90 minutes. An area called Glen Isla is actually closer to Horsham, but is in the Hamilton parish. I was stationed in Hamilton three times, the third time as Parish Priest. A great Catholic couple, Martin and Ella Hynes lived at Glen Isla. They used to drive south to Cavendish for Mass each Sunday. Then, when the Cavendish Mass became fixed on Saturday evening, they chose to drive to the Sunday morning Mass in Hamilton. Ella became feeble, so that Martin had to stay at home with her, and could not get to Sunday Mass at all. Given distances, it was unfair to ask any of the Lay Ministers to take Communion to them Sunday by Sunday. So I decided to take to Glen Isla a book with Communion Services in it to them, together with a ciborium full of hosts. That way, Martin was able to give Communion to Ella and to himself every day. Every six weeks or so, I would drive up there to replenish the ciborium.

Eventually, Ella died. Martin resumed driving to Hamilton for Sunday Mass. As time went on, Martin himself became no longer able to travel. So, once again, I took the ciborium to his home at Glen Isla, and Martin was able to give himself Communion each day.

Martin Hynes died on New Year's morning 1991. His son, not a Mass-goer, still realised that the ciborium was sacred. That afternoon he drove down to Hamilton to give the ciborium to me.

My last posting was to Red Cliffs, just south of Mildura Vic. on the Murray river. Because it's a long way from anywhere, to help the Mildura priests get their annual leave, as well as to keep Red Cliffs getting Mass Sunday by Sunday, I decided to remain here when I retired in July 2011. In fact, most Sundays since I have celebrated the Red Cliffs Mass.

There is an irrigation area about 40 kilometres from Red Cliffs called Colignan. There are probably a number of Catholics in the Colignan area, but there was only one Mass-goer, Helen Ackland. Her husband Bill described himself as 'nothing', but he used to drive Helen to Mass each Sunday, and wait in the car for her.

Then, without warning, that stopped. It took us a while to find out why. Doctor Verrenda Grover, the local eye-man, had decided Bill's eyesight had become too poor for him to be able to drive.

Helen received Communion at Mass, every Sunday. In theory then, she should have had Communion brought to her home

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Sunday-by-Sunday now that she was no longer able to get to Mass. I tried to get others to share with me the work of taking Communion to Helen, but, apart from a one-off, no one did. So I decided to try leaving Communion there in a ciborium so that Helen could give herself Communion each day. It didn't work. Next time I went there, Bill told me that Helen was too nervous to be ready to give herself Communion. So, after anointing her and giving Communion to her then, I brought the ciborium home with me. About every 2 months I'd take the run out to Colignan to anoint Helen, give her Communion, and have a cuppa with them both. Then just before last Christmas, Bill had to put Helen in a nursing home in Mildura.

I told them both I would call to see Helen, but kept having something else to do; and now the Coronavirus has closed off all of the many nursing homes in Sunraysia to visitors.

Obviously I broke some rules in all of this. It is not that I disrespected the rules. I thought that people matter more. Rules are for helping, not hindering. And

remember that, in the early Church, before people became scared of Jesus, in some places people used to take Holy Communion home with them from Sunday Mass, and give themselves Holy Communion each day.

There was another bit of rule breaking here. A lay minister here had undertaken to visit an invalided parishioner, but she could not receive Communion on Sundays – it would have to be on Mondays.

To save the Lay Minister, who lived some kilometres out, from having to come in on Monday, I would give her the Host for the invalid on Sunday, and she undertook to keep the Host in a safe place at home. But a priest visiting here in my place refused to give the Host to the Lay Minister, informing her that only priests are allowed to keep Holy Communion in their residence. Are priests allowed to? Whatever, it was a case of sad, domineering clericalism.

Well, the Coronavirus has called for a lot of creative thinking. I know of one parish in the archdiocese of Melbourne where priest and parish leaders decided on a way parishioners would take part better the

Easter Triduum than simply watching from home the liturgies celebrated in an empty church. They found out from the Mass-attending families who would be home over the Triduum, and whether they would like Communion brought to them.

The Holy Thursday Mass to be watched from home in the evening was actually celebrated on Thursday morning, as here in Mildura the Sunday Masses are actually being celebrated on Saturday morning.

The family who told me about it had three at home. Late Holy Thursday afternoon there was the ring at the front door they were expecting. When they opened the door, there was an ordinary white envelope, with printed on it 'Holy Communion.' Inside the envelope were 9 hosts – 3 for the Holy Thursday Mass, 3 for the Good Friday liturgy, and 3 for the Easter Mass. At all stages of this process, proper social distancing was observed, as was also sanitary handling. No doubt, in many Catholic parishes around the world even more creativity has been shown. ☺



## Key challenges for the Plenary Council – the restoration of trust and relevance

DR GARRY NOLAN AM

**Dr Garry Nolan AM is a life-long lay Catholic who has continuously been active in Catholic schools, parishes, deaneries and Catholic Social Services agencies, with extensive experience in governance, leadership mentoring and community & organisational development.**

In order for the Plenary Council to be successful, each of the six Themes will need to be viewed through the lens of two critical questions: How do we restore trust in the Church and what is the relevance of the institutional Church in Australia today? The questions are not stand alone questions – they are intricately linked.

When I was young, the priests, brothers and nuns taught us that God was a vengeful God and they tried to keep us 'in-line' through fear. This caused great anxiety for children who were constantly told they were sinners when they had done nothing wrong. For some, this caused mental health issues that carried on into their adult lives. This was in reality a form of child abuse and it damaged the trust between the children and the Church – a loss of trust which for many, still continues

today and is at the core of why the vast majority of Catholics no longer attend Confession/Reconciliation. Fortunately, my parents taught me a different image of our God. A loving God who embraces all and moves in ways we may not understand but who indeed does move in our lives. Fortunately, many in the clergy today recognise God as a God of love.

As we sadly know, 89% of Catholics in Australia no longer attend Mass on a regular basis, and this figure may now be out of date and underestimated. When one discusses this disturbing statistic with various bishops, the response is often that we now live in a more secular and pluralistic society – external reasons. But when one discusses this matter with the Catholics themselves, the initial response is often rather superficial, but as the discussion continues – the reasons are always internal. *I did not*

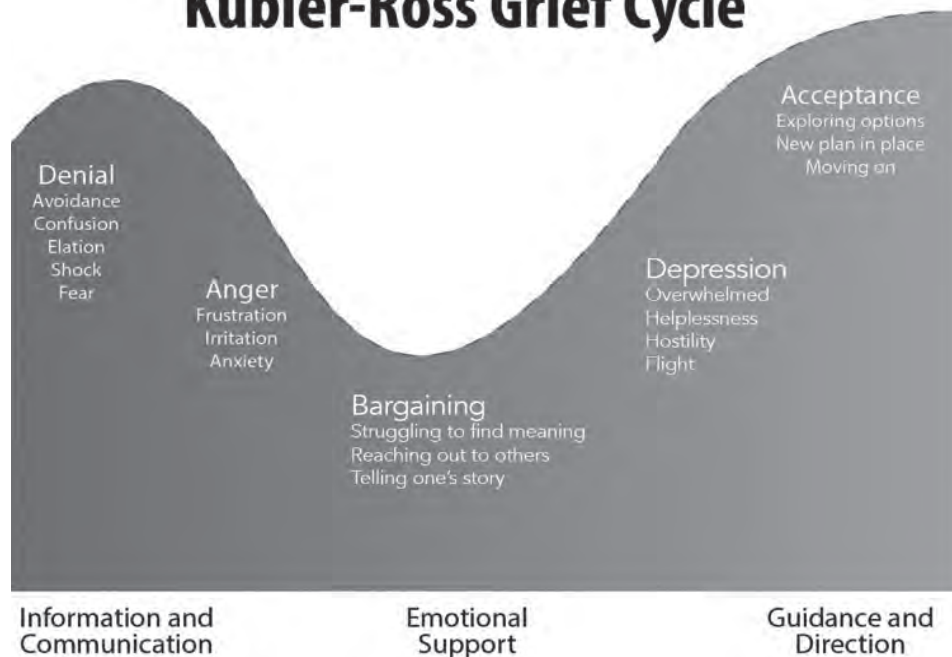
*leave the Church, the Church left me* is an expression we hear often. Here we have a significant paradox with a number of Catholics feeling God's love in their parish community but not seeing a reflection of Jesus in the institutional church.

Catholics who no longer attend Mass on a regular basis have not lost their faith in Jesus, they have lost their faith in the leadership of our beloved Church. Pope Francis has given both Catholics and non-Catholics great hope for the future, but it appears as if he is heavily restrained by the modern day Pharisees in our Church today.

### Church credibility is under fire

We live in an era where there is a loss of trust in political leaders, financial institutions, etc. But this loss of trust is minuscule, compared with the loss of trust in religious leaders, particularly in our Church. The most significant reason why the majority of Catholics have chosen to continue their relationship with God outside of the buildings of our churches, is because Catholics today are the most well educated and well informed of any

# Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



Catholics in history and they find great difficulty in recognising the teachings of Jesus in the various actions and attitudes of many in the leadership of the Church around the world. Yet many of the 89% are still active in Catholic Social Service agencies.

In August 2005, Pope Benedict XVI issued a warning that mainstream Christianity was dying out more quickly in Australia than anywhere else in the world. It would be interesting to know who provided Pope Benedict with this information, as it was certainly not accurate in relation to Christianity generally. At that time, the Hillsong church was expanding significantly and Steve Fielding had been elected to the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australian, running on a Christian platform. Christian spokesmen were quick to claim that Australia was undergoing a religious revival. But child sexual abuse scandals, and particularly the cover ups, dashed any hope of a Christian revival. Our Church was significantly damaged by the governance failure of the 'pontifical secret' – the obstruction and refusal of the Vatican to release files to police on child sexual abuse around the world. The 'pontifical secret' was later amended to provide an exemption, only if the civil law required such reporting. Pope Francis has now removed the 'pontifical secret' – a great illustration of leadership in difficult times.

The following message on social media apparently resonated with young people and was reposted many times: *God is not Church. Church is not God. Church May Reject You – God Celebrates You. You Can*

*Leave that Church – And Just Take God Right With You.*

## The relevance of the Church today

Young people will no longer be told, do this or else you will go to hell. A more intellectual approach must be found and dialogue between the clergy and the people, and between the young and the old, is the only effective way to achieve success in this regard. Young people today have a deeper sense of spirituality than any previous generation. Our task is to find ways of blending such spirituality with the teachings of Jesus.

The outcome of three major debates around the world is highly pertinent to the questions of trust and relevance:

- *The Catholic Church is a force for good in the world.* October 2009 in London. Speakers: Stephen Fry, Archbishop John Onaiyekan, Ann Widdecombe, Zeinab Badawi and Christopher Hitchens.
- *Religion is a force for good in the world.* November 2010 in Toronto. Speakers: Tony Blair and Christopher Hitchens.
- *The Catholic Church is a force for good in the world.* November 2011 in Melbourne. Speakers: Senator Helen Coonan, Julian McMahon, Sister Libby Rogerson IBVM, Peter Kennedy, Anne Summers AO and David Marr.

All three debates were lost. This outlines the enormous challenges facing our Church, our bishops, and all of us, for we all have an obligation to bring our Church back to Jesus. There was possibly no stronger Catholic than the late Syd

Tutton, a former Australian President of the St Vincent de Paul Society, who died in December, 2010. In a letter to Vinnie's members from his death bed, he stated: *at a time when the Church is engaged in a battle for relevance, it would be better to follow the simplicity of St Francis than the triumphalism of a Church that continues to see itself from a medieval vantage point and therefore prides itself in a haughty display of grandeur and power.* Richard Stone, a Papal Knight who passed away a few years ago and as loyal a Catholic as you could get, had said that the bishops are too disconnected from the people and do not understand the challenges facing the Church today.

The Knights of the Southern Cross publicly state that they are 'the Archbishop's men'. But in private, many of the Knights express grave concerns regarding the ability of our bishops to meet the challenges facing the Church today. Some bishops are unfairly tainted by the appallingly bad pastoral care, governance and leaderships of their predecessors. But many of the bishops around Australia today have terrible reputations for not responding to phone calls, letters or emails – a major failure in leadership.

Bishop Eugene Hurley articulated these key questions very eloquently when he called on all to strive, with love, to close the chasm between the Church and Christ; to heal the wounds, warm the hearts, and be closer to the people, since 'the blazing glory of the Resurrection far surpasses any human weaknesses and their effects'. Bishop Eugene reinforced this point in 2013 when he quoted the findings from a United States research study which found that when people were asked to respond spontaneously to the term 'Jesus', they responded: compassionate, cares for the poor, forgiving of sinners, loving. But when asked to respond to the word 'Church', they responded: irrelevant, negative, out of touch, powerful, lacking in understanding of ordinary people's lives.

The Australian bishops are already aware of the issue of the loss of relevance. In October 2007, Bob Dixon, Director of the Pastoral Projects Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference published a Research Report on *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass*. The report listed the following Church related factors as the main concerns to the participants in the research who no longer attend Mass:

- A perception of the irrelevance of the Church to life today
- The misuse of power and authority in the Church

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## FEATURES

- Problems with the leadership or moral behaviour of a parish priest
- A loss of a sense of belonging in their parish
- A sense of being excluded by the Church rules.

The good news was that most of the participants in the research project still identified themselves as Catholic and were open to returning to active participation if they could see that the issues for them were being addressed. The research report concluded: 'very few of the reasons given by participants in the project refer to matters that the Church can do nothing about'. That is, the Church in Australia had, and has, the power to do a great deal about the issues raised.

However, the issues have not been addressed in the last twelve years – until the Plenary Council was announced. The conclusion in the Pastoral Projects Office research report, and the lack of follow up action, reflected a denial of responsibility and a refusal to be accountable by the leadership of the day.

Trust, once lost, is very difficult to re-establish. The opportunity for the 'People of God' to participate in the Plenary Council through the Listening and Dialogue sessions and submissions was a wonderful first step in rebuilding that

trust. Phase 11 in the preparation for the Plenary Council is the Listening and Discernment phase. This is also open to the 'People of God', but the main activity will be undertaken by the Writing groups. There are many good people involved in this phase, but one concern for many Catholics is that a number of the members of the Writing and Discernment groups are either clergy, religious, current employees or recent employees of the Church or one of its agencies. This gives rise to 'group think' and many Catholics have raised the question: who is there to express my point of view. Many of the people appointed as consultants/advisors to bishops had been appointed because they generally held views consistent with the bishop making the appointment. We have heard on numerous occasions from employees of the Church: 'I cannot say that, I would be sacked' and 'if they can get rid of Bishop Bill Morris what hope do I have?'

### Is there a way ahead?

It is clear that considerable change is necessary in our Church to take us from where we are today to where God is asking us to be in Australia at this time. Throughout the history of our Church, we have seen that as clericalism has grown the focus on Jesus has declined.

The bishops should look to the people whom they perceive will put them 'well

outside their comfort zone', and if that means they will receive some flack – so be it. This is the test of good governance, good leadership, and is fundamental to developing trust.

The fact is our Church is a church in mourning following the child sexual abuse scandals. All Catholics, around Australia and the world, are at different stages of grief concerning the state of our Church today. Please see the Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle below. But there are hopes for recovery. The first step has to be an acceptance of accountability by the bishops around the world and there are signs of this with a number of archbishops and bishops in Australia acknowledging that there have been failures in leadership and governance.

A clear and accurate understanding of how we got to one of the darkest times in the history of our Church is essential before we can move forward, and refocus our efforts on evangelisation. Some of our priests and bishops are beautiful bridges between the people and God. But some priests and bishops are blockers between the people and God.

A final word must come from scripture in St Paul's words in Corinthians 13:13: *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.* ☪



## Cardinal Pell and Australian Catholicism: Where does the centre of gravity lie in the Church?

JOHN WARHURST

**John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn.**

Cardinal George Pell is often called the public face of Australian Catholicism. Catholics of all stripes and persuasions therefore have a considerable investment in what can broadly be called the Pell affair as it affects all of us directly or indirectly.

There have been several developments, to which the Cardinal himself has contributed, in the aftermath of the unanimous High Court decision making Pell a free man. One has been the critical attention directed to the culture and operations of the Victorian justice system and its police force. Another has been the criticisms



calling to account numerous individuals and institutions said to have given a one-sided anti-Pell representation of the Pell case, including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and various senior journalists, biographers and authors.

Cardinal Pell has widened the debate during his first post-release interview on Sky News with Andrew Bolt by his characterisations of Australian society and his place within it. This debate is important even though it has been dampened by the COVID-19 pandemic which dominates our media.

Australian society, according to Pell, is one in which there is a systematic attempt underway to dismantle the Judaeo-Christian tradition. He describes this situation as a culture war.

Secondly, Pell situates himself within Australian society as a social conservative and believes he became a victim of criminal charges because of his advocacy of social conservative positions on issues like marriage, gender and sex.

Thirdly, Pell believes that his situation was caused in part by widespread anti-Catholicism in Australian society. It is Catholicism versus the rest, even though, he says, Catholics pay taxes too.

These characterisations raise the stakes in the Pell affair, not just for Catholics but for all Australians. Catholics are burdened with an interpretation which will be seen by many in wider society as THE Catholic position.

Wider society, too, may see Pell's serious accusations and interpretations as ones which are held by all or most Catholics.

Yet many, possibly most, Catholics don't share Cardinal Pell's views and don't want the church in Australia to be identified as a bastion of social conservatism.

Most Catholics don't consider themselves to be foot-soldiers in a culture war against secular society, but rather as useful contributors to it from their unique perspective.

Australian Catholicism is by general agreement a broad church. Yet we don't have the scientific tools to determine just where the centre of gravity of church members lies in Australia.

Its leaders, the bishops, wishing away the philosophical diversity of the church, have been at pains to say in the lead up to the Plenary Council 2020, that numbers don't matter because the church is not a democracy. But numbers do matter in determining where the balance, the centre of gravity, lies. We, Catholics and non-

Catholics alike, all should be interested in that.

The 17,500 Plenary Council 2020 (PC2020) submissions from the Catholic community were not subjected to quantitative analysis, but the official qualitative analysis suggests that the average Catholic doesn't sound like George Pell. Most Catholics, even those who have serious criticisms of him, want justice for Cardinal Pell, but they don't want his social views to represent them.

The issues that Pell has mentioned as leading to his situation are marriage, gender and sex. These are big and varied categories to unpack. The category of marriage would certainly include divorce, same sex marriage and the ability of divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Communion.

The gender category would include the role of women in the church, gender diversity, homosexual rights and women priests and deacons. The category of sex would include the use of artificial contraception and sexual relations outside of marriage.

What do Catholics in general think about these issues? There are some statistics about Catholics' widespread failure to adhere to official church positions like the ban on contraception. There has been analysis of federal election voting by Catholics and of Catholic YES voting in the 2017 same sex marriage plebiscite.

There are the many voices in the PC2020 submissions supporting women priests and divorced and remarried Catholics. There is also the decline in church attendance, some at least of which follows dismay at some of these official church positions.

Another test of this proposition may be coming in the form of PC2020. But will it be a true test? We may never know because we have no way of knowing how representative of the church in Australia PC2020 will be.

Not only will the delegates be unrepresentative because lay Catholics are heavily outnumbered by clerics, but the lay Catholics themselves have been chosen by diocesan bishops.

The evidence may not be conclusive but from what we know the centre of gravity of the church in Australia is well to the left of Cardinal George Pell and close to the moderate centre.

The general community should be aware that Australian Catholicism is not a right-wing church and shouldn't be characterized as such. ☞



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# Unpacking priesthood

PATRICK KIRKWOOD

Are there are too many functions and responsibilities concentrated in one ordained person who does not necessarily have the skills, training, energy and time to fulfil them all? Patrick Kirkwood is a former Head of Religious Programs for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and has specialised in sacred music and liturgy. He has also been a media consultant and producer for Catholic Schools in the Sydney Archdiocese.

I worked in the media and lately I had a dream that, sometime in the future, I am interviewing people for a television documentary about new ministry.

## Q Marlene, what is your role at St Mary's?

**A** I am a House Leader and counsellor. St Mary's is a girls' secondary school both boarders and day girls. As well as my daily duties, I take groups away for a retreat to one of our bush camps. The girls' House Committees always work out the themes and styles for the various retreat venues. Then each girl picks the locale and the theme which best suits her taste, needs and talents. Of course, they are also prone to choose the locale where their best friends are going! So sometimes we have to adjust the lists.

## Q And I believe this year's retreat is going to be a special one for you.

**A** Yes. We will ride in a bus as usual to the camp. It takes about four hours to get there. Up until now we have always had to invite a priest to make the journey to the camp to celebrate the Eucharist for us. This year for the first time it will not be necessary.

I have been commissioned and ordained to preside at the Eucharist with my girls. Our Principal and our school Chaplain recommended me for this ministry and I was overjoyed to accept it. My husband and children were thrilled for me too and were so proud to see me ordained at the Cathedral by the Bishop just six weeks ago. I have been a Religious Education teacher for nearly twelve years and RE Coordinator for the whole school for the last three years. To be a coordinator I studied theology and scripture and gained my Degree.

I specialised in pastoral care and sacramental celebration, and I have a flare for things liturgical. I can sing and speak well and know how to encourage others to participate.

## Q Does this mean you can celebrate the Eucharist anywhere?

**A** No, I have been commissioned especially for the girls under my care at my school. They appreciate the fact that I am like them – that I understand the way they think and feel and that they can trust me to be sensitive to their sorrows and joys, their beliefs and doubts. But sometimes we (myself and other special celebrants) will concelebrate the Eucharist together with our neighbourhood parish priests, and with our bishop, as a sign of our united ministry to our communities.

## Q At the camp you will also be the retreat director for the girls?

**A** Yes, at the camp we will work together to understand the presence of God in our lives and in our beautiful surroundings. We will study the scripture and choose readings and songs for our liturgy. What a joy it will be to bring Jesus present amongst us as we do what he asked us to do in remembrance of his great love. There will be other counsellors at the camp too.

## Q Mark and Patricia, you are counsellors at St John's College?

**A** (Patricia) Yes, there are about a thousand students at St John's which is co-educational. We are both trained psychologist counsellors and share the work of counselling the young people in the big and small crises which so often occur in schools. It is demanding work and the students are making more and more calls on our time as they realise what benefits they can get from talking to a good listener.

**Q** Mark, you told me earlier that your ministry at the college has an added dimension now.

**A** Yes, recently I was sorting through a problem with one of the boys. It became obvious that the boy was troubled in his conscience about what had happened. After listening to the boy's description of the events and suggesting a way forward, it seemed right and natural to be able to say 'And now would you like to place your problems in the hands of God and to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation which Jesus has promised us?' The boy was relieved and glad to accept the grace of the sacrament and I am sure that he left the room with a renewed commitment to his Christian life.

**Q** How does this affect the confidentiality of the sacrament?

**A** (Mark) We always make it quite clear to the students that what they tell us is confidential, and if they seek forgiveness in the sacrament, then we are bound by the extra traditional 'seal' of confidence. (Patricia) If we wish to help them in any way outside this situation, or if we recommend some course of action, we must have their explicit permission to do so openly after the session has ended. This was made very clear to us in our training before we were ordained to minister the sacrament of reconciliation at school. The bishop ordained us at the Cathedral with a group of other trained counsellors. Some of them also minister the sacrament to adults who come to the Family Care Unit for help.

**Q** Vanessa, you have been a Civil Celebrant of marriage for many years.

**A** Yes. Qualified people in Australia have had this power to officiate as Civil Celebrants at marriages for many years. These ceremonies have become very popular. Our bishops realised that some people wanted to marry in special places that were sacred to them, not necessarily in a church building. Of course, in Australia, couples at remote farms, hundreds of kilometres from the nearest church, have often been married by visiting clergy.

**Q** But they were exceptions to the norm, this case is different.

**A** Yes. What the bishops have done is to make sacred and sacramental a rite which has developed in society over a long period of time. We now have a text which almost identical with the traditional church wedding ceremony. If Catholics approach me to marry them, I am at liberty to offer them the opportunity to exchange their promises or vows in the sacramental way. Of course, they must be counselled about their intentions and they are requested to attend the church's pre-wedding instructions with me and another qualified person, usually a regional priest.

**Q** How long have you been able to do this?

**A** About two years now. Of course, I do not 'administer' the sacrament. The couple themselves are the celebrants of the sacrament. What the church has done is to allow celebrants with recognised civil powers and with special training to offer the chance of a Christian sacrament in a situation where many people were missing out on the grace-filled support which priests had traditionally celebrated in church. And, quite often, they have chosen to keep this connection with the Church community and return to regular attendance.

**Q** Margaret, how long have you been a hospital visitor?

**A** About four years now. In our parish we have two teams – one for the hospitals and nursing homes, the other for home visits to people who aren't able to get about any more.

**Q** And what do you do?

**A** We offer many kinds of assistance like material help, like food and shopping, but, more importantly the sharing of the parish sacramental life, with anointing and communion. Quite often we will visit as a group if we are to offer the anointing of the sick. This echoes the advice of James: 'Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the

Lord.' (5:14) It is a joy to see the transformation which often occurs when they are anointed and receive the bread of life.

**These are some of my 'motivations' for these stories.**

In the 1970s I interviewed the scripture scholar Sandra Schneiders in San Francisco. We spoke about many things, eventually the ordination of women.

I have not forgotten what she said, in that twangy American accent of hers: 'We must not make the mistake of ordaining them into the current clerical structure'.

And so, the ideas in these stories suggest ways in which this might be achieved. An article by Herve Legrand OP in *Worship* magazine (Collegeville Minnesota) November 1991 which quoted another author suggesting that the reason which led the ancient church to exclude women from the ministry was 'irrisio infidelium' (scandal).

And does that not suggest that today their absence from this ministry is provoking that same 'irrisio infidelium' (scandal) which had commanded their exclusion in antiquity?

Cardinal Avery Dulles book *Models of the Church* in which he notes that the expectations and demands of priests (their talents and gifts) go way beyond what most men can bring to that office.

So why not spread out the load across more people of both sexes, married or not. ☺

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# A Communiqué to the Catholic Bishops and Religious Leaders of Australia

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC COALITION FOR CHURCH REFORM

**The Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) issued a communiqué to the bishops and church leaders of Australia on 1 May 2020. They offer it as an open letter to all the People of God.**

The Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) calls for sweeping changes in the Catholic Church. The Coalition urges Church leaders to return the church to the path of love and inclusion set by Christ. The Coalition wants the Church's leaders at the now deferred Plenary Council to renounce autocracy and unaccountability.

The Plenary Council must not enable the Church to return to 'business as usual'. As Pope Francis has recognised, the culture of clericalism has stifled the spirit of Christ in the Church.

The 15 organisations that comprise the national reform coalition are calling for the Church and all its people to model the Christian ideals that reflect a caring and open society, including equality for women in church leadership and ministry, and transparency and accountability with inclusion in decision-making.

## The Communiqué

Dear Bishops and Religious Leaders of Australia – An Open Communiqué

As our pastoral leaders, you preside over a dying church. As committed Catholics from across Australia seeking a Christ-centred Church, we are dismayed by the state of the institutional Church.

We are speaking out because, as baptised members of the people of God, we have a serious responsibility for our Church stressed by Vatican II: 'The holy people of God share also in Christ's prophetic office... The entire body of the faithful... cannot err in matters of belief' (Lumen Gentium, 12). We share responsibility for the Church's failings and sins, and are concerned that a pervasive and destructive culture of clericalism, supported by autocratic and unaccountable leadership, and compounded by the sexual abuse crisis, has left the Catholic community ashamed and heart-broken with what has happened to our faith community. We embrace co-responsibility.

Our voice is informed by the concerns of the many committed people we represent and by the lived realities of Australian Catholics who feel disenfranchised by the

church's leadership, or who have been alienated and abandoned in the practice of their faith; these concerns reflect the sense of faith of the Australian faithful (*sensus fidei fidelium*) reflected in the submissions to the Plenary Council.

Catholics have been estranged from the Church by poor presentation of the faith. The faithful of today reject inappropriate biblical interpretations and outdated theology. As an institution the Church needs to embody the vision of Vatican II which respects local cultures and circumstances and leads people to a mature faith. Our leaders must reflect that vision.

Our Church must reject the "business as usual" model and commit to a truly Christ-centred Church in all its doctrines and governance. Pope Francis' synodal approach is a path to an inclusive church. This approach will only succeed if there is less episcopal control and more co-responsibility. The time for change is now; a crisis is upon us.

We can no longer accept the patriarchal attitude towards women within our Church. Women must be included in all decision making. Clericalism is reinforced by patriarchy and it, in turn, promotes a masculine image of God. To avoid being eternally patriarchal, it is essential that we reject maleness as the normative image of God.

Immersed in the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis says that this is a time of testing, 'a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not' (2020 *Urbi et Orbi* blessing).

Understandably, the Plenary Council has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the process up to this point has not inspired confidence that all the bishops support the need for a Plenary Council. Few bishops have authentically discussed the Council with their diocesan faithful. Most bishops even reject the use of canonically endorsed pastoral councils and diocesan synods or assemblies. This does not inspire confidence in Plenary Council 2020/21.

Whilst in communion with the universal Church, your primary responsibility as leaders is for our Australian churches. With Pope Francis' synodal approach encouraging you to assume that responsibility, we call on you, bishops and religious leaders, to accept and adopt the following essential proposals:

- The fundamental importance of good governance with accountability, inclusion in decision making and appointments, equality and transparency, with synodality and subsidiarity, with the very best models of leadership, and with ongoing and open dialogue with all Christ's faithful;
- The need for gender-balanced and diverse diocesan and parish pastoral councils and assemblies, with diocesan and parish planning, financing and reporting – open, inclusive and accessible;
- Equality of women in the Church, welcoming women and their gifts equally into all roles of leadership and ministry, so that all share co-responsibility in the mission of the Church – a matter of equality and good governance at all levels, that goes well beyond the recent welcome increase of women in parish, diocesan and dicastery administration;
- Every diocese should have a women's council and inclusive language adopted throughout the Australian Church as recommended by the ACBC (*Woman and Man – one in Christ Jesus*, 1999);
- There should be disciplinary measures for those who limit women's involvement at any level;
- God's gift of difference in sexuality and the place of LGBTIQ+ people to be welcomed, as in the requests we have made regarding women, recognising the innate dignity of every human person;
- Embrace first nations people, asylum seekers, and survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones;
- There should be a national council for the laity with responsibility for the Australian Church in partnership with the ACBC, with equal representation of men and women;
- Formation of clerics and laity to be completely reformed with candidates for ministry and priesthood pastorally prepared, after obtaining a theological

degree, by experienced people already working in ministry;

- Liturgy to be designed to support an educated population in developing mature spiritualities;
- The teaching and preaching of scripture to be informed by modern biblical scholarship;
- Church doctrine to address social and environmental priorities;
- Divorced and remarried Catholics to be welcomed within the communion of the Church;
- Pastoral commitment including the full reinstatement of the Third Rite of Reconciliation (we are a faith of forgiveness);
- Reforms properly beyond the competence of the Australian Church to be referred to the Holy See;
- A lay woman committed to church renewal to be a co-chair for the Plenary Council 2020/21.

The Plenary Council provides an opportunity for renewal of the Church both in Australia and universally, with universal matters referred to the Holy See. In particular, the Holy See must be apprised of the Australian faithful's desire for a priesthood which includes women in addition to married clergy.

We all want to put aside the practices of the past that are not Christ-centred and to identify the reforms that God expects of us in ensuring a Christ-centred Church, a Church that reflects the Christian values of love, justice, compassion, peace, equality and freedom. Our Church must reject 'business as usual'. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss our concerns.

### **Yours in Christ**

Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (Catholics Speak Out, Catholics for Renewal, Women and the Australian Church, Australian Reforming Catholics, Inclusive Catholics, The Cyber Christian Community, Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry, For the Innocents, Women's Wisdom in the Church, Voice of Australian Catholic Laity, The Cardijn Community, Concerned Catholics Wagga Wagga, Communities of the Way, Toowoomba Catholics for Church Reform.)



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## **Fourth Plenary Council of Australia and New Zealand, 4-12 September 1937**

PETER J WILKINSON

**This is Part 2 of the article on the 1937 4th Plenary Council of Australia and New Zealand, the seventh in the series on the particular councils of the Catholic Church in Australia held between 1844 and 1937. It examines the preparation, proceedings and decrees of the Council, the decisions which followed it, and the efforts to evangelize Australia's Aboriginal peoples.**

### **New Norcia Abbey Mission, WA**

In 1905 the Benedictine mission at New Norcia was flourishing. It had 18 priests, 38 religious brothers, and 11 religious sisters, as well as 5 churches and 3 schools educating 180 Aboriginal and other children. In 1902 Abbot Torres had set up a special Australian College at the El Miracle Priory in Spain to supply a continuous stream of Benedictine missionary priests and brothers to New Norcia. In 1903 Propaganda, with the support of Bishop Gibney of Perth, had added extra territory to the abbey-diocese and transferred four Perth parishes to its jurisdiction.

After Episcopal ordination in Rome in 1910, Abbot Bishop Torres secured the Marist Brothers to staff the new St Ildephonus College for boys, the Australian Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart to teach at St Gertrude's College for Aboriginal girls and young European ladies, and the Spanish Teresian Sisters to take charge of St Joseph's Orphanage for Aboriginal girls.

Between 1910 and his premature death in 1914 Torres, as Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley Vicariate and Abbot of New Norcia, opened new churches at Bindoon, Gillingarra, Moora and Goomalling, as well as a Josephite convent and parish school at Moora, and a Presentation Sisters convent and parish school at Goomalling. He also purchased large tracts of land which has previously been leased, to give the Benedictine community financial security, and cleared hundreds of acres for cultivation and planting.

St Gertrude's College, originally planned for Aboriginal girls, was opened in 1907 with one wing as a boarding college for European girls. However, its superior reputation grew so quickly that, in a short time, all the Aboriginal girls were moved to another building to make way for the young white ladies arriving from all over WA and overseas. By 1915, they numbered 115. This situation was repeated with St Ildephonus. By 1920 it had 204 white male boarders from throughout WA.

St Joseph's Orphanage for Native Girls was an enclosed institution initially run by the

Spanish Teresian Sisters until 1912, then by the Oblate Benedictine Sisters. Its first intake was the Aboriginal girls who had been moved out of St Gertrude's, then others, mainly half-caste girls. It could accommodate 44 boarders, and by 1937 some 500 had been raised and trained at the orphanage. They left St Joseph's when they married or secured employment.

St Mary's Orphanage for Native Boys, built in 1847, was replaced in 1914 with a new building, and the first Aboriginal boys were accepted in 1924 under the care of the Benedictine community. In the late 1930s there were 24 boarders.

When Abbot Torres died in 1914, World War I was already underway and the normal process to elect a successor abbot was postponed. In 1915, the Abbot Visitor, Dom Anselm Catalan, who had been appointed to preside over the election, was himself chosen as the new abbot, and he attended the 1937 Plenary Council.

### **Drysdale River Benedictine Mission (Kalumburu), 1905-1937**

Abbot Torres's offer to establish a new mission in the Kimberley Vicariate with 'nullius' jurisdiction and annexed to New Norcia, was approved by the 1905 Council. In 1906 Torres found a suitable site, uncontaminated by European or other traders, at Drysdale River, obtained a 50,000 acre native reserve from the WA Government and, with the Holy See's approval, established a priory mission at Pago in 1910 (moved to Kalumburu in 1971) with its primary goal the "conversion of the wild tribes around them".

Initially, the local tribes were hostile and in 1913 attacked the missionaries twice, injuring several but killing none. The Queeni, one of four local tribes, was responsible and they, in time, called themselves "the Mission's boys".

By 1914 friendly relations between the missionaries and Aborigines had developed, aided by a constant supply of fresh food. But this also created dependence. The Benedictines added a further 100,000 acres

Continued page 26



Benedictine Aboriginal Mission at Kalumburu, WA, transferred from Drysdale River (Pago) in 1971

on lease to the original native reserve, but the WA Government provided nil financial support. All expenses were borne by the New Norcia community.

By 1937, the Drysdale River Mission was on a solid footing with adequate food supplies for the missionaries and Aboriginals, provided by a secure agricultural base. Catechetical instruction was the missionaries' main ministry with the first baptisms administered in 1921.

### Aboriginal missions in the Diocese of Victoria and Palmerston, NT, 1905-1937

Australian-born Bishop William Kelly of Geraldton had asked to be relieved of the administration of the vacant (since 1888) Diocese of Victoria and Palmerston (NT) at the 1905 Plenary Council. He was given this responsibility in 1898 when the Jesuits could no longer support their Aboriginal missions. After the last Jesuit left the diocese in 1902, Kelly stationed one of his priests there for a time, but when he returned to Geraldton the small local Catholic community had to rely on priests passing through.

At the 1885 Plenary Council, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), with charge of the Vicariate Apostolic of Melanesia and Micronesia, had sought and

received approval to establish a missionary seminary in Sydney and in 1904, a novitiate at Douglas Park (NSW). In 1906 they established an Australian province and German-born Fr Francis Xavier Gsell MSC was appointed apostolic



Bishop Francis Xavier Gsell MSC (1872-1960). Source: missionaries.griffith.edu.au

administrator of the Victoria and Palmerston Diocese (NT). It was intended that he would resume the former Jesuit mission to the Aboriginals at Daly River and expand Catholic ministry in Darwin.

In 1911 the MSC congregation was offered the Pallotine Beagle Bay Mission in the Kimberley Vicariate, but turned it down. Gsell preferred to open a mission to the Aboriginal people on Bathurst Island instead and the same year organised a multinational group of MSC missionaries for the Tiwi Mission. Unlike the Pallotines, Gsell could rely on a good supply of Australian-born missionaries from the Sydney seminary, and were not subjected to the same strict surveillance during the war years.

Gsell's mission policy on marriage closely followed that of the Jesuits: Aboriginals should not marry Asians, whether Macassans, Japanese or Filipinos. When racial conflict erupted at Caledon Bay in the 1930s, Gsell became fearful for the Tiwi mission. He sought and obtained permission to open new missions at Port Keats (later moved to Wadeye) in the Daly River district in 1935, at Alice Springs (Little Flower Mission, later Santa Teresa Mission) in 1935, and at Tennant Creek (a Pine Creek parish opened in 1907 had languished) in 1936.

Gsell attended the 1937 Plenary Council as Apostolic Administrator of Victoria and Palmerston Diocese.

### Queensland Vicariate Apostolic for Aboriginals

After Brisbane Bishop Quinn had expelled the Sisters of St Joseph, who were caring for Aboriginal orphans in Mackay, from his diocese in 1880, no further serious attempt to evangelize the Aboriginal peoples of Queensland was undertaken until the 1920s. The Vicariate Apostolic of Queensland had been renamed the VA of Cooktown in 1887, but confusion remained. Quinn's successor, Bishop Robert Dunne (1882-

1917), was unsure whether his diocese was coextensive with the Queensland Vicariate, and in 1927 Apostolic Delegate Cattaneo was still referring to the Queensland Vicariate for the Aboriginals.

In 1918, after a cyclone had devastated the Aboriginal Reserve at Hull River near Tully, the Queensland Government created a new Reserve on Great Palm Island. Prior to 1918 few Aboriginals were living there and, on establishment, the Government ignored all tribal distinctions and brought Aboriginals from all over North Queensland and beyond, even from the NT. By 1926 the Reserve had 600 residents, many making their livelihood from tourism. But it had also become a 'dumping ground' for Aboriginals with social and health problems, and soon, part of the Reserve had become a quasi penal colony with nearby Fantome Island set up as a 'lock hospital' for those with venereal disease. The population grew, but deaths surpassed births.

Between 1918 and 1924 priests from Rockhampton diocese visited Palm Island on the tourist steamer, and ministered to those Aboriginals who had been baptised elsewhere. When the steamer service ceased in 1924, the parish priest of Ingham visited by launch. In 1926 Rockhampton Bishop Joseph Shiel (1913-31) sought permission from the Queensland Government to establish a mission for the Aboriginals on Palm, but was refused. The next year a small freehold property on the island was purchased but, as there were insufficient priests to permanently staff a mission, pastoral responsibility passed to the parish priest of Halifax and Catholic life was kept alive by two Aboriginal leaders, Emily Prior and Louie Bamfield, who gathered the faithful each week to recite the Rosary.

When the Diocese of Townsville was established in 1930, one of the first acts of the new bishop, Terence McGuire (1930-38), was to visit Palm Island and ask a visiting priest, Fr Paddy Molony MSC, to give a 4-day mission to the 15 Catholics among the 1,100 population. Molony, feeling guilty for his personal neglect of the indigenous Australians, returned the following year, stayed for 18 months and dedicated a new Mission to St Anne. By 1933 there were 262 baptised Catholics, a transformation which caused sectarian jealousy, hostility, and accusations of subterfuge.

The St Anne's Mission was promoted as a missionary concern for the whole Catholic Church in Australia, though Townsville Diocese made special efforts. In 1933 Archbishop Kelly of Sydney sent his diocesan Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians to work at the Mission, and in

1934 blessed their new convent. They focused on hygiene, family visitation, sewing, catechesis, and education and, with Kelly's financial help, opened St Michael and the Holy Angel's School for some 100 students. Bishop McGuire attended the 1937 Plenary Council.

### Plenary Council proposal and preparation

The Australian bishops found many excuses to delay holding another plenary council, including World War I and the 1930s Great Depression. At a plenary meeting of the bishops of Australasia held in Melbourne in 1922, Apostolic Delegate Cattaneo proposed holding a plenary council to bring all the decrees of the previous plenary councils into line with the new 1917 *Code of Canon Law*. The bishops agreed, and the plenary council was set for 1925 in Sydney. Cattaneo also proposed a special committee of archbishops and bishops to draw up a *schema*, but no substantive action followed.

At the same meeting, the bishops agreed to have triennial plenary meetings, as well as a bishops' standing committee which would meet annually to discuss important or urgent matters, and have authority to speak and act for all the bishops when circumstances called for unified action. It was a defiant decision by the bishops, for they were already feeling that the Apostolic Delegate was attempting to control them, by convoking and presiding at their meetings, and referring matters to the Holy See on his own initiative. They were also aware that Propaganda was drawing up special plans for Australia.

In 1925, instead of the proposed plenary council taking place, the bishops held their first triennial plenary meeting, at which Delegate Cattaneo insisted on presiding. The bishops yielded, but passed a motion that "as a matter of principle the Apostolic Delegate [who is held in esteem] should not attend or preside at the ordinary meetings of the hierarchy unless specifically invited".

No further plenary council proposal surfaced until 1932, when Archbishop Kelly proposed holding a Sydney provincial council. His seven suffragan bishops, however, advised that a plenary council would be more appropriate and, when consulted, the other metropolitan archbishops agreed.

Kelly then requested the Holy See, through the Apostolic Delegate, for permission to convene a plenary council and it was granted. Cattaneo was appointed Papal Legate to preside at the council, and instructed to commence the preparations and to appoint a committee to prepare a *schema* for the 'issues to be discussed' and

'the decisions to be taken', subject to approval by the Holy See.

In 1933 Cattaneo was replaced by Archbishop Philip Bernardini (1933-35), who saw his first priority as 'upholding the dignity of the Apostolic Delegation'. In practical terms this meant taking personal and full control of drafting the plenary council's *schema* and dismissing the five provincial committees which Cattaneo had specifically set up for that purpose. By 1934 Bernardini had personally completed the draft *schema* and sent it to the bishops for their approval, explaining that it was intended to 'follow the order of the *Code* as far as possible', not that of the 1905 Plenary Council, as Kelly had wanted.

For Bernardini the *schema* was more important than the holding of the Council, and its focus was on clerical discipline, the selection of bishops, and diocesan visitation. The bishops, on the other hand, were more concerned about common pastoral action than the Plenary Council, and when Bernardini learnt they were planning a bishops' plenary meeting for May 1935, he objected, saying that such a meeting required the approval of the Holy See. The bishops' response, drafted by Mannix, stated that they were not proposing a 'legislative body', but only trying to organise Catholic Action and the Lay Apostolate, as requested by the new Pope, Pius XI (1922-39). Nevertheless, Propaganda insisted that such plenary meetings of the bishops required the Holy See's approval and, in 1935, the next Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Giovanni Panico (1935-48), immediately sought clarification on the bishops' meetings. He was instructed that he had the right to be present, to be notified in advance of their time, place and agenda and, if not in attendance, sent a copy of all decisions.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1936 a slightly amended *schema* for the Plenary Council was approved by the Holy See and, at their meeting in Adelaide, the bishops decided to hold it in Sydney in September 1937. But they had already concluded it was a council outside their control and not worth their time deliberating on it.

### The Council

By June 1937 Apostolic Delegate Panico had completed the preparations for the Council and, as Papal Legate, called the bishops of Australia and New Zealand to attend. He also advised that they could each bring a personal 'theologian consultor', and one other priest from their diocese elected by the diocesan clergy. Vicars and administrators apostolic, as well as the superiors of clerical religious congregations, were also invited to attend.

The Council was to be celebrated from 4-12 September 1937. There was to be one preliminary meeting, three public sessions – opening and closing and promulgation of the decrees – in St Mary's Cathedral with the prescribed solemn Masses, homilies and formalities, seven meetings of 'Fathers' only, and two general meetings of bishops and priests.

The 32 Fathers present at the Council, including Papal Legate Panico, were: the 7 Australian Archbishops – Kelly (Sydney), Duhig (Brisbane), Mannix (Melbourne), Killian (Adelaide), Prenderville (Perth), Simonds (Hobart) and Gilroy (Coadjutor, Sydney); the 17 Australian Bishops – Carroll (Lismore), Foley (Ballarat), McCarthy (Sandhurst), Dwyer (Wagga Wagga), Ryan CM (Sale), Barry (Goulburn), Norton (Bathurst), Byrne (Toowoomba), Coleman (Armidale), Gleeson CSsR (Maitland), O'Collins (Geraldton), McGuire (Townsville), Farrelly (Coadjutor, Lismore), Fox (Wilcannia-Forbes), Hayes (Rockhampton), Raible PSM (Kimberley), Henschke (Auxiliary, Wagga Wagga); 1 Abbot – Catalan OSB (New Norcia); 2 priests – Gsell MSC (Administrator, Victoria & Palmerston) and Clune (Vicar Capitular, Port Augusta); 1 New Zealand Archbishop – O'Shea SM (Wellington); and 3 New Zealand Bishops – Brodie (Christchurch), Liston (Auckland) and Whyte (Dunedin).

While the Fathers included 9 Australian-born (2 archbishops and 7 bishops), the Irish-born dominated (5 archbishops, 8 bishops, and 1 Vicar Capitular). Other nationalities included 2 New Zealanders, 1 Italian, 1 German, 1 American, 1 Spanish, 1 English, 1 USA, and 1 French.

Also present were 53 priests, including 22 theologian consultors to the bishops, 14 superiors of clerical religious congregations, and just 17 diocesan priests from the 28 dioceses and vicariates.

At their private meetings the bishops did little more than read the 685 draft decrees in the *schema*, propose some small modifications, and approve them. Of all the draft decrees, dealing with faith, clerics, religious, laity, the sacraments, sacred places and times, liturgy, teaching and education, over a quarter were either repeats of canons in the 1917 *Code* (117 or 17%), or referrals to canons in the *Code* (59 or 9%). Many were trivial or impractical for the Australian context. Yet, despite this, at the two general meetings of the bishops and priests, all 685 draft decrees were read without any substantive debate or open discussion, and unanimously approved with

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only three suggested amendments. This was a clear recognition by the Fathers and priests that the Council's agenda and decrees, which had been drawn up by the Apostolic Delegate in collaboration with Propaganda, was outside the Council's control, as was its direction and outcome, and that blanket acceptance was the only option.



The three suggested amendments were: 1) that parish priests should consider their assistant priests as 'co-workers' and to be vigilant for them; 2) that the latitude permitted by the *Code* regarding mixed marriages should take precedence over the previous harsh policy and practice; and 3) that the prohibition on listening to sermons of non-Catholic ministers not extend to hearing them on radio broadcasts. The Fathers also insisted that their concerns regarding the decrees on fast and abstinence be accurately conveyed to the Holy See.

Aside from these interventions, the only signs of local autonomy were the decisions of the bishops to elect a small committee of three archbishops to draft the usual Plenary Pastoral Letter, and to meet together on the day after the close of the Council to plan for a general catechism, a convalescent home for priests, chaplains for the Knights of the Southern Cross, and initiatives for Catholic Action.

### Approval of Council decrees

After the close of the Council, Papal Legate Panico sent the Council's *Acta et Decreta* to the Holy See and, after the usual review and some non-substantive amendments, Pius XI approved the decrees on 13 March 1938 with the Decree of Recognition (approval) issued the following day. Panico had the *Acta et Decreta* printed, and promulgated them on 25 March 1939 to take effect on 25 September 1939.

With their promulgation, Decree #4 effectively abrogated all 371 decrees legislated by the previous Plenary Councils, except those few 'explicitly or implicitly contained in the new decrees'. In one stroke, almost all the laws developed with 93 years of synodal effort to suit the local Australian context with its unique culture, climate and vast distances, were abrogated. They were replaced by a Euro-centric *Code of*

*Canon Law* via a Council planned and orchestrated by the Holy See's Australian-based Apostolic Delegate.

### Australian bishops' failure

Ian Waters (2006) is convinced that 'the Australian bishops must bear part of the blame' for the 1937 Plenary Council's agenda not being set by the local Church in Australia. 'The bishops had been urged repeatedly to prepare for a plenary council, but they kept procrastinating. If they had accepted the invitation, firmly taken control, and actively determined the agenda and procedure, an Apostolic Delegate would have found it much more difficult to have a Rome-centred and controlled Council'.

Moreover, when Delegate Cattaneo set up the 5 provincial committees in 1933 for the preparatory work of the Council, the bishops acquiesced to his imposition of 'grave secrecy' on all the members, and a year later they showed no opposition to Delegate Bernardini dismissing all the provincial committee arrangement as 'too difficult to implement'.

Also, whereas at previous councils the priest members had played an active role in the various committees drafting the decrees, in 1937 there was no encouragement for priests to be present, and those who were present were not appointed to council committees. They were little more than token participants and passive observers.

The decrees of the 1937 Council reflected little of the pastoral vision and governance of the Australian bishops.

### Pastoral Letter of the Plenary Council

As at previous councils, the bishops issued a Joint Pastoral Letter. In it they acknowledged the vast changes that had taken place since 1905, highlighted some significant events – the establishment of an Apostolic Delegation, the 1928 and 1934 International Eucharistic Congresses in Sydney and Melbourne, and the opening of the completed St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney – but their main focus was on the growing influence of atheistic Communism, its threat to the total subversion of Christian civilization, and the need for 'a sincere renewal of private and public life according to the principles of the Gospel'.

The Letter warned that Communism 'strikes at the very foundations of society, ...aims at the overthrow of religion, ... robs human personality of all its dignity, ... makes man a mere cogwheel in its system, ... denies parents the right to educate their children according to the dictates of their conscience, ... and denies children any right to a knowledge of God'.

While they recognized that the effects of Communism were not yet present in Australia and New Zealand, its effects in Russia, Mexico and Spain should put youth and working men on their guard against its crafty propaganda, especially as the national and state governments were asleep and silent. The views of the bishops in the Letter were almost certainly influenced by the *Catholic Worker*, a broadsheet started in February 1936 by the young Campion Society law graduate of Melbourne University, Bob Santamaria.

### Catholic Action

Probably the most significant decision of the bishops in 1937, taken immediately after the Plenary Council, was the establishment of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action (ANSCA). It was proposed by Archbishop Mannix, funded by the Australian hierarchy, based in Melbourne, and had Santamaria as its first deputy-director.

In a very short period ANSCA had established four separate organizations which would have a huge and lasting influence on Australian Catholic youth: the Young Christian Workers (YCW), the Young Christian Students' Movement, the National Catholic Girls' Movement, and the National Catholic Rural Movement. All flourished, particularly in Victoria, and made a generation of young Catholics acutely aware of justice and equity in their world of work and in society at large. But the Secretariat also exposed a division between Melbourne and Sydney on how Catholic Action should be structured and to what extent it should be under episcopal and clerical control. Sydney preferred parish and diocesan lay organizations controlled by the clergy; Melbourne wanted the laity to have more initiative and autonomy. ☪

*Acknowledgment: In preparing this article many primary and secondary sources were consulted. However, special acknowledgment is given to the original research of Dr Ian B Waters published in his article "The Fourth Plenary Council of Australia & New Zealand" in Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum, Vol. 38 (2006) No. 2, pp. 451-466.*

1. Note: This tension between the authority and governance of the local hierarchy and the Holy See's official representative continued until Vatican II (1962-65), when local Episcopal conferences were formally endorsed and legislated.

## Easter in a time of virus



ERIC HODGENS

**Eric Hodgens, Melbourne priest, reflects on a very unusual Easter with some meaning added by the paradox of this Easter.**

**E**aster is one of the biggest holidays of the year throughout much of the world. It was originally a Holy Day. But its significance is changing.

In Western culture Easter has morphed from being a great cultural festival to being just another public holiday. In multicultural societies this applies even more so.

With the widespread shutdown due to the COVID-19 virus, Easter 2020 has been largely shut down. Just an empty break.

For the practising Christian, however, the sense of loss if much greater as communal liturgies are banned. Holy Week is the annual peak of Christian celebration. Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem for the fateful week. Christian churches re-visit this theme with processions. Holy Thursday recalls Jesus's Last Supper with his followers. His present-day followers celebrate the *Lord's Supper* – the older title given to the Eucharist or Mass. Good Friday mourns the crucifixion of Jesus with the veneration of the cross.

The climax is Easter Sunday. Jesus is risen from death to life. Christians remember Him not as dead, but living, by celebrating the Eucharist and attributing to him the instruction to do this in his memory.

Holy Week therefore is essentially a communal celebration of believers one in faith in Jesus dead, but risen. With COVID-19 blocking communal celebration, believers are at an enormous loss.

The virus and Easter share that eternal theme; *life v death*. It was that theme that gave rise to Christianity. People lived in an

oppressive, unjust, poverty stricken, grubby world. Over the three years of Jesus's public life his message of hope for the ordinary person attracted followers. He announced that God's Kingdom of peace and justice was coming.

The heightened hope of that story was shattered by his death at the hands of the powers that be. It was then that they found an even better hope as they came to believe that Jesus was still alive – but in a different way – in a different dimension.

In Greek they called it the life for the ages, translated into English as "Eternal Life". A shrunken translation, but that's what happens when imagination struggles for verbal expression.

The flow-on from Jesus's resurrection is that those who believe in him also share in this different sort of life. They get it when they first come to belief, and it endures beyond the believer's earthly death. This reinforces Jesus's idea of God's coming kingdom of peace and justice par excellence.

Over time, the believers' ideas developed. Central to Paul's message in the mid-60s was Jesus risen to new life and the disciples' sharing in it.

Then we see stories that developed in various Christian communities over the ensuing decades in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke written ten or twenty years later than Paul. John's Gospel emerges round the turn of the century and gives the most extensive attention to Jesus's resurrection and the consequences for the believer.

This new life for the ages (eternal life) is a major theme of John. John is a great constructor of pointed stories full of allusive images and links. He believes in

this theme so passionately that he has Jesus as the main teacher in many of his stories.

Jesus instructs Nicodemus that gaining this new life is like being born again (Chap 3). The woman at the well is instructed on the living water that Jesus will give (Chap 4) – with clear allusions to baptism.

The discourse on the Bread of Life in chapter 6 demonstrates that faith in Jesus is the nourishment of this new life, eaten when believers celebrate the Eucharist. The healing of the blind man in chapter 9 ends in a discourse by Jesus on faith as the new insight into this new life.

Those without this faith are blind. The story of the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11 is the most dramatic object lesson of faith leading on to life in a new dimension with Jesus being the ultimate orchestrator of the whole phenomenon.

Easter 2020 will go down in history as a dispiriting experience. No sport to follow, no entertainment to attend, no getting away for a break. For church-going Christians and for Jewish families at Passover, it will be desolate. Still, it is good to remember its origins – Exodos and Passover for Jews, Resurrection for Christians.

With communal liturgy and extended house gatherings ruled out, it leaves plenty of time to reflect on the Christian meaning of the holiday. A good place to start would be a slow, reflective reading of John's gospel.

Forced by circumstance to confront death's threat to the living, the Easter liturgy hymn paints a triumphant scenario.

*Mors et vita duello  
Conflixere mirando.  
Dux vitae mortuus  
Regnat vivus.*

*Death and Life – engaged in momentous  
conflict.  
The Life captain dead  
Now reigns alive. ☞*

## The Swag Spring Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 27 July 2020.

Please email submissions for consideration

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

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

For more information on *The Swag* policy of submission and publication of articles, please see page 42.



# Eucharist and the Cosmos: Jesus Christ Lord of Creation

FRANK O'DEA SSS

This is a chapter from Frank's online book, *Eucharist the Basic Spirituality* which can be found online at [www.theeucharist.wordpress.com](http://www.theeucharist.wordpress.com)

**God said: "Let there be light and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)**

When God speaks, things happen because God's word is so powerful; so powerful we call it God's Word or God's Son. John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being ... and the Word became flesh and lived among us". (John 1:1-3, 14)

These truths were formulated by the early Church Fathers into the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Father, Son (or Word) and Holy Spirit are one God. The Son (or Word) became human, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. We call him Jesus. This Jesus suffered, died and was raised by the Father into a new life. He won the victory over sin and death and is now called the Christ, the anointed one.

Of him, Paul says: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him." (Colossians 1:15-16)

I find this startling statement of cosmic proportions a wonderful help to my understanding of the risen Christ. My spirituality is further stimulated by what Paul says next: "He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything." (Colossians 1:17-18)

Paul now links the Christ of the cosmos to the Church, and through the Church to the Eucharist. The Church, the body of Christ, is formed by the gathering of people around the table when we remember Jesus who died and rose again. The Christ who becomes present to us in that gathering is the Lord of the extraordinary universe in which we live.

This Christ is also the human embodiment of the Word (Son) who was with God from 'the beginning' (John 1:1). I understand 'the beginning' not to mean the moment when creation took place (called by

scientists the 'big bang') but in the eternal now of the life of God, that is, totally independent of the material universe.

'The firstborn from the dead' is Jesus who was raised from death into a new and more glorious life as the risen Christ. God started a new era when he raised Jesus from the dead, but the benefits of the death/resurrection event extend back into human history as well as forward and are applied to all. Christ is 'first' in so far as he is the one who is responsible for our new life; he is the prototype. Our usual ideas of time are stretched when dealing with these eternal realities.

I feel the Eucharist is the best means we have of gaining the fruits of the new life won for us by 'the firstborn from the dead'.

We could spend a long time reflecting on this magnificent hymn of praise, allowing the words to soak in, being open to the full implications of what they are saying – if that's ever possible! Many people have reflected deeply and extensively on these words and have come up with some surprising conclusions.

## Eucharist and the Lord of Creation

Among those who have reflected on these words is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest and scientist (1881-1955). For him the risen Christ is the cosmic Christ, the Lord of creation. Reflecting on the words of consecration, Teilhard wrote: "When the priest says the words *This is my body*, his words fall directly on to the bread and directly transform it into the individual reality of Christ. But the great sacramental operation does not cease at that local and momentary event. Even children are taught that, throughout the life of each man and the life of the Church and the history of the world, there is only one Mass and one Communion. Christ died once in agony." (*The Divine Milieu*, Wm Collins & Sons, London, 1964, pp.123-124)

He then points out that the individual acts of receiving communion by different people are the dividing up of one unique act in order that all may benefit from Christ's saving action. "In fact, from the beginning of the Messianic preparation, up till the Parousia [the coming of Jesus in glory], passing through the historic manifestation of Jesus and the phases of growth of his

Church, a single event has been developing in the world: the Incarnation, realized in each individual, through the Eucharist." (*The Divine Milieu*, p.124)

This is a wonderful insight into the place of Christ in our lives, namely, that the Word of God became flesh in Jesus (Incarnation) and now through the Eucharist becomes embedded in the flesh of each one of us. Teilhard then has this grand vision: "All the communions of a life-time are one communion. All the communions of all men now living are one communion. All the communions of all men, present, past and future, are one communion." (*The Divine Milieu*, p.124)

Pope John Paul II picked up this wonderful panoramic vision of the Eucharist. He tells of the many different venues where he has celebrated Mass: basilicas, chapels on mountain paths, lakeshores and seacoasts, stadiums, city squares. Then he says: "This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation." (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 8, italics in the original)

What a grand vision! 'On the altar of the world' gives me a picture of the blue planet with a large bread and a chalice of wine poised above it, and the risen Christ offering himself as spiritual food and drink for all the people. Then I see Christ as Lord of all creation lifting his eyes to include all the stars, all the galaxies, all the black holes, all the as yet undiscovered material, all the 'dark matter' of the cosmos. The Eucharist has a cosmic character. Yes, cosmic!

When Teilhard was in China in 1923 on a scientific expedition he was unable to celebrate Mass, but his cosmic vision helped him to make up for the loss. "Since ... I have neither bread nor wine nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself. I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it I will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world ... I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour. Into my chalice I shall pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits." (*The Prayer of the Universe*, quoted by Fr Dr George Praseed IMS, *Vadyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, December 2006, p. 907)

At times when we are unable to participate in the Eucharist, we can always take time to pause and be aware that in many parts of the world, the Eucharist is being celebrated and we can be there in spirit if not in person.

### Garden: a Mini-Cosmos

I like to feel I have a mini-cosmos in my garden of native plants. Here, the light of the sun, the nutrients in the soil, the alternation of night and day, the round of the seasons, the rain, all combine to produce an extraordinary diversity of plant life and a beautiful display of colour at almost any time of the year. In spring it's dazzling! The four hundred plus plants include all the principal genera such as Eucalypts, Acacias, Banksias, Grevilleas.

Why am I talking about this in a book on Eucharistic spirituality? Because the Eucharist is so inclusive of all our activities. More specifically, because a garden is a work of nature and 'the work of human hands' With my hands I dig compost into the soil, insert the plants, spread mulch, grow plants from cuttings and seed, prune after flowering, pull out the weeds. The actual growing is the work of the Creator Spirit.

Through the cooperation between the creator and evolutionary chance we have a diversity of plant life that is astonishing, and perhaps Australia has the most diverse flora in all the world, much of it endemic to this land. I see my gardening as an extension of the Eucharist. I ask the Creator Spirit who transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ to help in planning the layout and in caring for the plants. The Creator Spirit can transform a dull suburban block into a work of art. 'Nature is the living, visible garment of God'. (Goethe)

The earth, then, has a sacramental character: it symbolizes the divine that is present in it. Ambrose of Milan sees the Spirit not only as the Life-Giver but also as the one who brings beauty to creation. Beauty is a gift given by the Holy Spirit. Basil of Caesarea develops something of a Christian ecological attitude to creation when he writes: "I want creation to awaken such a profound admiration in you, that in every place, whatever plants you may contemplate, you are overcome by a living remembrance of the Creator". (Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life, a Theology of the Creator Spirit*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll USA, 2004, p.128)

I read somewhere this sentence which beautifully summarises this chapter: *The Eucharist is cosmic thanksgiving.* ☪

## Bicentenary of Australia's first legal priests: Fr Philip Conolly and Fr John Joseph Therry

EDMUND CAMPION

200 years ago two Catholic priests arrived in the New South Wales colony. Edmund Campion charts their ministry and life in Sydney and Hobart. Campion dedicates this history to Tony Baine.



On the third of May 1820, 200 years ago, the ship *Janus* sailed into Sydney Harbour with two Irish priests as passengers, Fr Philip Conolly, aged 34, a Maynooth College man, and Fr John Joseph Therry, aged 30. They were our first legal priests. Fr Therry's story is well-known: he said he would stay here for four years and in fact he remained for 44 years, dying in 1864 as pastor of Balmain in Sydney. By then, Balmain was a settled parish such as we knew until just the other day: daily Mass, weekly confessions and Sunday night devotions.

Fr Conolly's story is somewhat different. When he died, 19 years after arriving here, he had been suspended *a divinis*, i.e. barred by the Bishop from saying Mass, preaching, celebrating the sacraments and struck off the government's list of chaplains and so without a settled income. Therry was by his bedside to give him the last rites and then to bury him, putting on his gravestone the psalmist's doleful lament, 'My days have declined like a shadow and I am withered like grass.' (Ps.101.12)

The two priests began together in Sydney and after ten months Conolly sailed to Hobart, where his initial Mass drew nine worshippers. He stayed with Edward Curr, a Catholic storekeeper who would become a nabob, accorded a long entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. The Lieutenant-Governor gave Conolly five

acres on the edge of town to build a church and presbytery. Within six months he had raised nearly 100 pounds, so he built a house with a lean-to chapel attached to it.

In Ireland, Fr Conolly had circulated an appeal for prayerbooks, catechisms, vestments, altar requisites and books 'for the use of the poor convicts'. His biographer, the late Fr Terry Southerwood<sup>1</sup>, claims that Conolly baptized more than 650 persons in Van Diemen's Land (VDL); however a visitor in 1833 found the ramshackle lean-to chapel a mess, its altar cloths filthy, the sacred vessels black and three of Edward Curr's children unbaptized. The chapel seemed a symbol of pastoral failure. And the promised church remained unbuilt. [Note: W. T. Southerwood: *Lonely Shepherd in Van Diemen's Isle*. (George Town, Tasmania: Stella Maris Books, 1988). This book, in minuscule type, is best read with a magnifying glass. Fr Southerwood's chapter on Conolly's landholdings is a masterpiece of historical research. See also his articles in *Australasian Catholic Record* 1977, 1983, 1984, 1985. He corrects earlier writings on Conolly, such as Cardinal Moran, Archbishop Ullathorne and H.N.Birt OSB. Fr Southerwood was parish priest of Launceston in Hobart diocese. One of his ancestors had been a marine on the First Fleet.]

On the other hand, Fr Southerwood says that Conolly's main work was counselling the convicts: in two years he stood on the scaffold praying with 34 men sentenced to execution, an unnerving experience. One of these was Alexander Pearce. With another convict, Pearce had escaped from Macquarie Harbour; then, feeling hungry, he had attacked his companion with an axe, striking him four times, and afterwards sliced a fillet from his thigh, which he roasted for dinner. Asked what was said from the scaffold, Conolly wrote his report in Gaelic, a mystery language to government men, who thought it might be Hebrew.

Conolly also acted as a pastor to captured members of the Brady gang of bushrangers who maintained a reign of terror in the colony for two years. When Matthew

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## FEATURES

Brady was captured, he was found to have a multitude of admirers, who sent him flowers, fruit and sweets in gaol. They petitioned the government for a reprieve and applauded Brady on the scaffold.

Patrick Dunn was a friend of Brady's and a notorious drunkard. The police may have fitted him up on a criminal charge because he wouldn't pay them bribes, so he became a folk hero to many Catholics. Dunn went to his death wearing a white alb made by Mrs Curr, with a black cross on its front, and he mounted the scaffold with a crucifix in his hands saying the rosary. Catholics took up a collection to buy an expensive coffin for him and packed out his funeral in Conolly's chapel.

Fr Conolly did not approve. He thought executions should be deterrents against crime, not gateways to glory. His sympathies lay with the lonely settlers who were targeted by the Brady gang.

Ninety per cent of Irish convicts had been sent to New South Wales but the ten per cent who went to VDL kept Conolly busy. Some of the women had committed crimes in Ireland in order to join their husbands in the antipodes. Once here, they often re-offended, prostitution, vagrancy and drunkenness being common crimes. Half the women in the House of Correction

were Catholics who did the washing for government institutions and spun wool and horsehair.

With a parish the size of Ireland, Conolly soon realized that he needed priests to help him. The trouble was, he did not seem to get on with other priests. The first of these was Fr Therry, whose relations with the government were frequently strained, leading to his being put off the government payroll for 12 years... sacked as chaplain. In this, Conolly sided with the government and sought Therry's recall. In letters to Bishop Poynter of London, he denigrated his brother priest, saying he was imprudent, vain, unlettered, conceited, affected and – worse! – money-hungry. Therry ignored such complaints, secure in his people's affections.

Then there was a Carmelite priest, Fr Samuel Coote, who arrived in May 1824, with government approval but without church faculties from the Bishop of Mauritius, in whose diocese VDL then was. He brought with him a case of church plate and vestments, but lacking church faculties he could not be gazetted as a chaplain. Acting as Vicar-General, Conolly allowed him to say Sunday Mass and catechise the children *pro tempore*.

In the meantime, Conolly bad-mouthed Coote to the Bishop, saying he was 'very illiterate' and 'a man of no manners' who 'blundered through' the Mass. The Bishop supported his Vicar-General and recalled Coote, who had travelled through the countryside gaining signatures to a petition against Conolly. The government supported Conolly too. By this time, the Carmelite had got a bad name as a receiver of stolen goods and a tavern-singer with 'the lowest class of convicts', as Conolly said. Coote escaped to Sydney and thence to Mauritius, where he passes out of our history.

Ten years later another religious order man turned up in Hobart. This was John Bede Polding OSB, the newly appointed bishop for New Holland, on his way to take up his appointment in Sydney. Bishop Polding was dissatisfied with Conolly's ministry and so he left behind in VDL a young Benedictine monk, James Ambrose Cotham, to augment the work. [In 2019 a biography of Cotham was published in England, *The Indomitable Mr Cotham: Missioner, Convict Chaplain and Monk*. See Dr Colin Fowler's review in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 2019.]

Conolly and Cotham did not get on. One reason may be the secular priest's disdain for religious priests. Another reason

may be that Cotham lent a friendly ear to the complaints of Conolly's enemies. Within a year this tension would explode.

Conolly's closest friend in VDL was the Anglican priest, Robert Knopwood, a Cambridge man and a landholder, who was 24 years older than the Irishman. For the last 35 years of his life, Knopwood kept a diary, a valuable historical source. Conolly is named in it 588 times, an index of their friendship. They formed a habit of having Sunday dinner together, sometimes sleeping overnight in each other's homes. And, as friends will, they often drank together. Knopwood's biographer says 'his liquor bills provide plenty of evidence of his conviviality'. [Today a waterfront pub in Hobart is called The Bobby Knopwood.]

Before Bishop Polding's arrival a lay committee, calling itself 'The Friends of the Roman Catholic Religion' was set up to get rid of Fr Conolly. These activists were, you might say, an unusual church committee: a forger, a shoplifter, a swindler, a street brawler, a convicted libeller... They filled Fr Cotham's ear with their complaints and before long he was writing a long report to the Bishop detailing the Irish priest's failings, which may be summarized as sloth, drunkenness and, *mirabile dictu*, *satanism*. The young monk threatened the Bishop that if he did not intervene he, Cotham, would leave VDL. [Note: 12 March 1836. Cotham to Polding, 'Entre nous, I really sometimes have taken him to have dealings with his Satanic Majesty; nay, really one night when he was *inebriatus*, I thought by what he said, his countenance, and the figure he cut, that he was the devil incarnate.' (H N BIRT: Benedictine Pioneers. Vol I, p 104)]

Apart from the young monk's allegations, there was a question about the chapel land – did it belong to Conolly or to the Church? Strangely, there were no government documents to answer this question; it depended on people's memories, which changed over time and, in any case, were contradictory. Fr Conolly insisted that the land, which he had improved, was his and some government officials supported him; others disagreed.

Thus when Bishop Polding came down to Hobart with his Vicar-General, W B Ullathorne, a fellow monk, he required Conolly to give an account of his administration and to answer charges about his lifestyle.

Ullathorne sent a report of this encounter to Rome, saying that the priest had answered the Bishop 'insolently'; to which the Bishop had responded by stripping him of his priestly faculties – *suspensio a*



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*divinis*. Which means, as I have said, that he could no longer say Mass, nor preach, nor celebrate any sacrament. On his part Conolly sued Bishop Polding for libel, but that was unsuccessful.

In the Catholic community their pioneer priest was now a pariah.

The sentencing read over Fr Conolly in a packed chapel will interest students of history: *Whereas you, the Rev. Philip Conolly have contumaciously persisted in refusing to us, your ecclesiastical superior, an account of the property of the Church in your holding or possession, as in obedience and duty you are bound to render; and whereas you have contumaciously refused to place in our hands a sum equal in amount to the collections made in the chapel, or otherwise obtained from the faithful for religious purposes and not yet carried into effect; and whereas having refused to render the same account and to give into our hands the*

*said monies, you have also contumaciously disobeyed our requisition on your obedience that you should testify to the correctness and completeness of the account rendered and of the monies given in; and whereas in answer to a charge affecting your moral and sacerdotal character, and to which we directed your attention – you returned an insolent reply as regards us your superior, insolent and highly disrespectful as regards the charge; vague, irrelevant and unsatisfactory – a charge of harshness and cruelty towards certain individuals; – as regards the period within which the said answer was required to be delivered, knowingly and purposely deferred beyond the time by us specified; and whereas in your communications to us of the 23rd and 25th inst. you have advanced propositions false and subversive of ecclesiastical discipline and destructive of all order and subordination in the Church of God; now we, having given Canonical admonition and being invested by the*

*Supreme Head of the Church with full authority for the same, do suspend and hereby declare you, Rev. Philip Conolly to be suspended from the exercise of all sacerdotal functions, no authority, save that of the Holy See and our own, can absolve you.*

So he remained for the last three years of his life. Polding had the good sense to send the other pioneer priest, Fr Therry, as Vicar-General to VDL to charm Conolly back, which he did.

And thus Conolly died, fortified by the last rites, on 3 August 1839, aged 53, a few months after his friend Bobby Knopwood.

Therry sang his Requiem while all Hobart stood still; and Therry buried him, putting that apt quotation from the psalmist on his gravestone, 'My days have declined like a shadow and I am withered like grass' (Ps. 101:12). *May he rest in peace.* ☩



## Cardinal Pell and the Victorian Criminal Justice System

FRANK BRENNAN SJ

**Frank Brennan, Rector of Newman College at The University of Melbourne, is a Jesuit priest and lawyer who attended some of the Pell court proceedings.**



Cardinal George Pell has been acquitted of all charges of child sexual abuse by Australia's highest court – the High Court of Australia. In criminal cases, they usually sit only a bench of five judges. In Pell's case, the full bench of seven sat. They knew the world was watching. They often write separate opinions. But in the case of Cardinal Pell they all put their name to one judgment. They unanimously upheld his appeal and in almost record time.

At the appeal, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for the State of Victoria where Pell was charged appeared in person. She submitted to the court that if the judges were minded to uphold the appeal, they should at least refer the matter back to the Victorian state court for final determination. All seven High Court judges described that submission with one word: 'specious'. This highlights why the Pell trial needs some background legal context to be readily understood by readers who have not been closely following parliamentary inquiries, court cases and royal commissions in Victoria.

Readers need to understand that all is not well with the system of criminal justice in Victoria. Cardinal Pell has been a major casualty in this clash and decline of institutions. The unsuspecting complainant who brought the case against him has had to suffer untold additional trauma because of the shortcomings of the Victoria Police and the office of Public Prosecutions.

Some background is needed. In Victoria, there is a long running royal commission investigating how the Victoria Police came to enlist a defence barrister as a human source to inform on her own clients. In the area of criminal justice, the abuse of

process does not get much worse. It's estimated that this gross abuse by the Victoria police brings into question about 1300 convictions, including some of the most awful criminals in the state. One of the key persons with involvement in this perverse police operation was Graham Ashton who is now the Victorian Police Commissioner.

The Victoria Police went to great lengths to disguise this operation. In an earlier case in the High Court of Australia, Commissioner Ashton suggested that the defence barrister had been signed up as a human source only in 2005, and that this extraordinary step had been taken to counter the emergency of dealing with gang warfare killings on the streets of Melbourne.

However, other evidence submitted to the Royal Commission revealed that, in fact, she had been signed up as a police informer long before that. At the royal commission, the DPP rightly submitted: 'The Chief Commissioner made no attempt to correct the record of facts before the High Court so as to make clear to the Court that (the human source) had, in fact, been formally registered prior to 2005; even though the fact of that earlier registration would have contradicted the Chief Commissioner's submission in that Court that (she) had become a registered police informer only because of 'assurances' made to her in 2002 and 2003.'

Continued page 34

When the media got onto this, they reported: 'Victoria's Director of Public Prosecutions has accused senior police, including Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton, of misleading the High Court and the Supreme Court of Victoria about the full history of its relationship with (the) barrister-turned-informer'. Curiously the DPP then issued a press release saying: 'At no time did I accuse senior police, including Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton, of misleading the High Court and Supreme Court. Both myself and the Office of Public Prosecutions continue to enjoy a strong and close working relationship with Victoria Police.' This demonstrates what a complex web there is in Victoria between the police and the DPP.

It's important that readers also appreciate that when George Pell became Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, he took immediate steps to set up the 'Melbourne Response' with a series of expert panels to deal with issues of child sexual abuse in the church. Between 1996 and 2012, the church and the Victoria police worked closely together on protocols dealing with this vexed issue. The church's Commissioner, the late Peter O'Callaghan QC, worked closely with high ranking state and police officials to ensure that the Melbourne Response complied with all state requirements. In April 2012, the Victorian Parliament set up a parliamentary inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations. It found that 'there was no indication at any time before April 2012 Victoria Police told the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne that it had any concerns about the Melbourne response'. In October 2012, Mr Ashton appeared before the committee and expressed serious concerns about the Church's mode of dealing with abuse allegations. He was less than honest. The parliamentary committee reported: 'It is clear that Victoria Police paid inadequate attention to the fundamental problems of the Melbourne Response arrangements until relatively recently in April 2012 and that, when they did become the subject of public attention, Victoria Police representatives endeavoured quite unfairly to distance the organisation from them.'

From then on, the Victoria Police set out to get Pell, and they did. Some Australians, including many victims of child sexual abuse, revile George Pell. Others hold him in high esteem. The High Court decision is unlikely to change personal views of the man, but this judgment concerns the administration of the criminal justice system in Victoria as it impacts on everyone, both accused and victims, who deserve justice according to law.

The Pell saga has now run for over four years, ever since the Victoria Police commenced an operation on Christmas Eve 2015 seeking evidence of any wrongdoing by Pell around his cathedral during the years 1996-2001 when he was Archbishop of Melbourne. This extraordinary trawling exercise turned up only one complainant whose allegations were taken all the way to trial. The complainant gave evidence that he and his now deceased companion were sexually assaulted by Pell in the priests' sacristy at the cathedral immediately after solemn Sunday Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral in late 1996. He also gave evidence that Pell assaulted him in the sacristy corridor after another Mass a couple of months later. These are the five charges that the High Court threw out. Thus, the anger and relief at the decision.

The High Court has spoken definitively, unanimously and with one voice. The seven Justices have agreed that in relation to all five charges, 'there is a significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted'. The court ordered that Pell's 'convictions be quashed and judgments of acquittal be entered in their place'. Pell is now home in Sydney having celebrated Easter at the seminary. The complainant, having undergone extensive periods of stress, is left to get on with his life as best he can, wondering what was the point of this protracted legal trauma. He is the hapless victim in this showdown between institutions.

The court accepted that the jury had assessed the complainant's evidence 'as thoroughly credible and reliable'. In the Victorian Court of Appeal, that step was enough for two of the judges to uphold the convictions. But the dissenting judge, Mark Weinberg, Australia's most experienced criminal appeal court judge, thought that was only the first step of a court's inquiry, and not the last. All seven High Court judges agreed. The court needed to examine the record of all the evidence in the case 'to see whether, notwithstanding that assessment, the court is satisfied that the jury, acting rationally, ought nonetheless to have entertained a reasonable doubt as to proof of guilt'. The court unanimously decided that any jury acting rationally must have had a reasonable doubt.

In addition to the complainant, there were many other witnesses called by the prosecution in Pell's case. They included 23 witnesses 'who were involved in the conduct of solemn Mass at the Cathedral or who were members of the choir in 1996 and/or 1997'. Many of these witnesses were also thoroughly credible and reliable,

though their reliability faltered at times given that they were trying to recall what they would have been doing after Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral on a particular Sunday 22 years before. The honesty of these witnesses was not questioned by the prosecution.

The High Court found that many of these witnesses had given consistent evidence that placed Pell on the steps of the Cathedral for at least 10 minutes after Mass on 15 and 22 December 1996, the only possible dates when the first four offences could have been committed. The prosecution 'conceded that the offences alleged in the first incident could not have been committed if, following Mass, (Pell) had stood on the Cathedral steps greeting congregants for ten minutes.'

The court also found that there was unquestioned evidence by honest witnesses that placed Pell in company with his Master of Ceremonies when he returned to the priests' sacristy to disrobe. Furthermore, there was abundant evidence of 'continuous traffic into and out of the priests' sacristy for ten to 15 minutes' after the altar servers returned to the sacristy at the end of the procession at the conclusion of Mass. There was no 5-6 minute hiatus for the offences to occur with Pell, the complainant and his companion in the sacristy alone, together and uninterrupted, straight after Mass.

The tragedy of this case for everyone, and especially for the complainant, is that a police investigation is expected to identify problems with a complainant's account. In this case it did not.

When interviewed in Rome back in October 2016 by Victorian police officers who were being supervised by their Deputy Commissioner Shane Patton, Pell told the police that the sacristy was 'a hive of activity' after Mass with altar servers, sacristan, assistant sacristan, money collectors and any concelebrating priests coming and going. He said he would have been accompanied at all relevant times by his MC Charles Portelli. Incidentally, Patton has now put his hat in the ring as Ashton's successor when the Commissioner position becomes vacant later this year.

The police returned to Australia and interviewed Portelli and the sacristan Max Potter who basically confirmed all that Pell had said about the 'hive of activity'. But the police did not bother to interview one single altar server. They made no inquiries about money collectors or concelebrating priests. They proceeded to charge Pell – with great media fanfare. They went ahead building a case on the basis that the priests' sacristy might have been left vacant

and open on this one particular day – contrary to all church routine and ritual. Yet the High Court rightly observed that ‘adherence to ritual and compliance with established liturgical practice is a defining feature of religious observance.’

The farce of the case was the belated attempt by the Director of Public Prosecutions to create the space for the necessary 5-6 minute hiatus. At trial, the prosecutor had suggested, contrary to the evidence, that the altar servers might have adjourned to another room, for no reason, for 5-6 minutes before being called back to the priests’ sacristy to resume their duties at the end of Mass.

He had to withdraw that suggestion before the jury. In the High Court, the DPP submitted once again that the servers might have adjourned to another room or to the sanctuary to assist the sacristan. The High Court dealt with this suggestion kindly but firmly: ‘The submission comes close to repeating the submission which the prosecutor withdrew at the trial. There was no evidence that the altar servers went to their room to disrobe prior to returning to the sanctuary in order to assist in clearing away the sacred vessels and other objects.’

In the end, there was just not the evidence to support the complainant’s account. There never was. For the good of all victims and complainants, the Victorian Police and DPP need to review their procedures in cases like this. Those who neither canonise nor despise George Pell should be grateful that the High Court has finally delivered justice according to law in this protracted Victorian saga.

We all need to spare a thought for the complainant in these proceedings. There can be no doubt that he has suffered serious trauma in his life. I am sorry for the added trauma he has now suffered through the processes of the law. Much of it was avoidable.

These processes have also re-traumatised many other people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse and who have placed hope in our legal system. Their situation would have been assisted if the police in this case had undertaken competent, objective policing. The DPP could have helped by complying with its own published policy that it ‘not put forward theories that are not supported by evidence’. These failures in due process caused needless pain and avoidable harm to the complainant, Cardinal Pell and the community. Meanwhile, the Victorian criminal justice system cries out for reform.

☪

## Lasting effects of COVID-19?

JOHN SWANN

**John Swann, retired priest of the Archdiocese of Adelaide ponders what the future holds for the Church post COVID-19.**



Many of us would have seen Pope Francis delivering his *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to us all in St Peter’s Cathedral on Easter Sunday – he stood as a lonely small white figure in the huge empty expanse of the Cathedral.

As it was for many of us, celebrating the Easter Ceremonies without a congregation was a rather surreal experience. The closure of our churches, the difficulty of ministering to the dying and even visiting the sick at home or in nursing homes has been hard to accept. And what about Masses in our schools and colleges? The need to stay at home, as we have been urged, may have meant for some more opportunity to read, hopefully not too much time wasted in front of the TV screen. And of course let’s not forget the financial impact on our parishes and dioceses.

But what of the future?

We don’t know when the many restrictions will be lifted. Some suggest not until a successful vaccine is developed. And that may be 6 or 12 months away!

Even when some restrictions are lifted, attendance at Sunday Mass will be problematic for some time into the future. Really it would be hard to think of a system that poses more dangers of infection and spreading contagion. Not only are people together in a confined space – so much for social distancing – but think of our various practices! Apart from congregating before and after Mass, there are hugs and shaking of hands at the sign of peace, and there are the risks associated

with giving and receiving communion, even if it be simply communion in the hand. Sharing the cup poses added problems, as does the practice of intinction. And perhaps parishioners won’t have the freedom to choose where they sit – they may have to be guided by an usher in order to maintain proper distances.

No doubt new rules will have to be developed and strictly enforced.

In the meantime many people have really appreciated the availability of Masses streamed on-line from our various cathedrals and many local parish churches. For many it has been and continues to be a very prayerful experience. Anecdotally I have heard some people say the liturgy on line has been more impressive than in their local church.

Again, what will the future hold? Some may be really fearful of coming back to church, especially if they have health problems. There may be some real challenges to improve our liturgies. There will, I believe, need to be some serious discussions about how we face the future.

We know the COVID-19 will have widespread and long-lasting effects on our economy and many aspects of social life. Hospitality, entertainment and travel will be severely affected for a long time to come. Attitudes to meetings and conferences will no doubt change. Plans for our Plenary Council have already been drastically challenged. And of course our national debt will hang over us for many years to come.

In the meantime as people of faith we are called to be people of hope, called to build up trust and mutual cooperation and support within our communities. Thankfully there have been some positive outcomes from the pandemic in the many examples of social responsibility and Christian charity. May the God of Peace and the Spirit of Wisdom guide us and help us in our endeavours. ☪

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# Who are we really?

CHRISTA MURPHY SSPS

**A born questioner, Christa Murphy SSPS often asked God: ‘God, why did you become one of us in Jesus? Why did you empty yourself totally, and become fully human, even to accepting death, death on a cross?’**

While I treasure my Catholic Faith, I have never been satisfied with the traditional answer to my question. I cannot believe that the God revealed to us in Jesus is an angry, demanding despot who needed the cruel sacrifice of his beloved son to once and for all atone for the sins of humankind. Jesus’ *Abba God* “wanted mercy, not sacrifice”, and showed it ceaselessly. (Matt. 12:7; Hos.6:6)

Over the years I’ve come to realise there are others who echo my question. After lots of prayer, study and reflection, I sense I may have an answer. Here it is.

We take it for granted, but do we actually believe it? We each come into existence because our loving Creator Spirit God breathes the breath of life into us. And that ‘breath of life’ is God’s own creative energy, Who IS the Spirit. Hebrew *ruah* means spirit, breath, wind.

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

Each of us is born with our own unique share in God’s Spirit/Breath. Each of us is a Beloved Son or Daughter from the very first moment of our existence.

We are not just body and soul, but body/ soul with the Spirit of our loving God pulsating through us at every breath soma, psyche, pneuma (1 Thess. 5:23). (Even if we never come to know it!) And this is the true ground of our basic human dignity and equality.

“For you love all things that exists, and detest none of the things you have made... You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living. For your immortal spirit is in all things.” (Wisdom 11:24-12:1)

I sense in this Truth the deepest reason for God becoming one of us. Our God longs for us to know Who We Really Are, at the deepest level of our being. Even Jesus

himself, as truly man, had to come to full consciousness of it.

A devout worshiper in the synagogue at Nazareth, there was obviously nothing too remarkable about him before he was thirty, (even if his twelve year old interlude in the Temple showed signs of promise!).

At age 30, Jesus has his great awakening. He realises that the God of his life wants him for something special. But what, where, how, when? He follows his inner prompts and comes to the Jordan where John is preaching a baptism of repentance. Jesus listens.

He recognises his own vulnerable humanity and desire for forgiveness, affirmation, guidance and strength. He surrenders himself and his future to Yahweh, the God of his life.

Jesus steps into the Jordan, and is baptised by John. Coming up out of the waters, “he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.’” (Mark 1:10-12).

In those moments, the Spirit within Jesus from the very beginning of his life takes total possession of him. And he hears the voice of a loving Abba God claiming him as Beloved Son. Jesus is overwhelmed by the loving power of the Spirit, and discovers his life’s mission.

He is to BE the embodiment of our Abba God’s boundless love and respect for every person; to reveal in his every action and utterance the overflowing compassion, mercy, forgiveness, patience, generosity of this awesome, tender God of Life and Destiny.

Impelled by the Spirit, Jesus goes about ‘doing good’. Even more than preaching his Good News of Love and Kinship, Jesus lived it, with everyone he encountered.

No wonder his religious enemies hated him. This so-called prophet from Nazareth went around totally up-ending the official image of the Lord God, and who and what is ‘holy’.

He challenged his enemies every time they

criticised him, and usually won. And he didn’t have to be God to know what death he would face if he kept shaming them. A nobody from Nazareth would have to end up on a Cross.

Yes, Jesus did die because he loved us all so much. He wanted us all to come to know, as he did, who we truly are. And being as all of us are, he paid the price of total commitment to his life and mission through his death on the Cross.

Grace and Truth have come to us through Jesus, our Brother and Lord.

He reveals to us the Truth about Ourselves. Breathed into existence as a Beloved Son or Daughter through the Spirit of a loving Creator. Accompanied through life by that God who has given us free will, respects our choices, yet NEVER disowns us, no matter what.

His Good News tells us that we are ALL Grace-filled persons. “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16,NRSV). Sanctifying Grace is the abiding presence of the Spirit within us. Actual Grace is the workings of the Spirit within our lives day by day. “The Spirit is with you; the Spirit is in you” (John 14:17).

And in the Spirit (as Jesus himself discovered), we can be amazed at what becomes possible. We are not created to face the challenges of life alone. Someone greater lives within us!

Many of us may never come to know this. But our God doesn’t hold that against us. And there may be times when we ‘sin’. But God never cancels our deepest identity. Jesus’ life assures us that his God judges us on the fruits of our lives.

Anyone who keeps trying to lead a life of goodness is ‘moved by the Spirit’, and God’s arms are open wide to *all persons of good will*.

“Grace is at work invisibly in every person of good will...And God offers salvation to every person of good will” (The Church in the Modern World par. 22). Do we actually believe this yet?

Thank you, God, for becoming one of us in Jesus. Thank you for revealing our amazing dignity and equality as Your beloved Sons and Daughters, brothers and sisters in the human family and the kinship of all Creation.

Thank you for your Spirit within us. ☪

# A priest living in aged care during COVID-19

FRANK O' DEA SSS

**Frank O'Dea SSS, is over 90 years of age and living in aged care. He reflects on a time without the celebration of Mass and the distractions of regular activities for the residents in this age of Coronavirus social distancing.**



I am a member the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. I am in my nineties and I live in the Mercy Care home in Parkville, Melbourne. It's the best place to be in these Coronavirus times. No shopping. No cooking. My medications are brought to me at the right times. I have a good room, Goldilocks size, and my favourite photos are hung up on the walls.

I praise God that I'm so well looked after!

The nurses and carers are wonderful. It's fascinating that most of the staff are from overseas. Would you believe the country most represented is Nepal with five or six on my floor. I like to ask them, 'How many times have you climbed Mt Everest?'. In the whole home there are 30 plus from Nepal!

There is also one from Bhutan which is in the same area. It is a mostly Buddhist country of less than a million people and has the reputation of being the happiest country in the world.

There are also carers and nurses from India, Africa, Brazil, Turkey, the Philippines. I like to look up the details of these countries on the internet. This helps me to have a conversation with these people about their country.

One African is a Muslim who wears a veil. I call her my Darling Muslim Cousin. We are people of The Book along with the Jews.

Many of the carers are attractive young ladies.

I would never have dreamed years ago that I would be showered and helped at the toilet by a woman.

Before the Coronavirus struck, there were lots of activities: Mass every Wednesday, communion service every Monday, exercises, movies, scrabble, trivia, carpet bowls (modified), ten pin bowls (also modified).

Most of these have now been cancelled or at least modified because of the 1.5 metre rule. So, I spend most of the day in my room. I could leave my room if I were able, but I can only walk with the walking frame accompanied by a carer.

One of my most urgent needs is to strengthen my legs. A physio comes most days to give me exercises and this is very helpful.

Another problem I have is restless legs which is a major nuisance at night. One or both legs twitch uncontrollably. However, the doctor has now given me some medication to take at night and it's working. Alleluia! A good night's sleep is a great start for the day.

I have to take care of my eyes because they get very dry but I've learned how to manage them. A very capable doctor, Jean, comes every Tuesday.

I have a good radio so I can listen to the classical music which I love and this entertains me. I also have a TV so I can watch the news and whatever else is on channel 2.

The only commercial channel I watch is channel 9 for the quiz program at 5.00 with Eddy McGuire as the host. He is a very good entertainer.

He likes to tease the contestants by keeping them in suspense, not telling them straightaway if they are right or wrong.

I thank God I am in good health apart from the various weaknesses I've mentioned. I don't have arthritis or multiple sclerosis or any of those very serious problems. I am very fortunate.

I have several meditations every day. I really miss celebrating Mass. I haven't celebrated the Eucharist for months now.

I find this story about Teilhard de Chardin very helpful. Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit priest, a scientist and a mystic.

When Teilhard was in China in 1923 on a scientific expedition, he was unable to celebrate Mass, but his cosmic vision helped him to make up for the loss. He said: *Since ... I have neither bread nor wine nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself. I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it I will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world ... I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour. Into my chalice I shall pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits.* (The Prayer of the Universe, quoted by Fr Dr George Praseed IMS, Vadyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection, December 2006, p. 907)

I find this very inspiring as I am in a similar situation. I can't celebrate Mass because of my frailty. I can't even attend Mass because of Covid 19. However, in my prayer time I can reflect on the wonders of the Mass and imagine being present at the celebration.

When the gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar, there is a 'holy exchange of gifts' as some of the prayers over the gifts say. I surrender myself to the Lord with all my frailties and he gives himself to me.

In these serious times we must retain our sense of humour. Robert Mickens, the journalist, offers these comments from biblical and historical people:

- Stay calm and don't lose your head. (St. John the Baptist)
- This is not the Apocalypse. (St. John the Evangelist)
- Wash your hands often. (Pontius Pilate)
- Avoid greeting people with a hug and kiss. (Judas)
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, mouth or any open wounds. (St. Thomas the Apostle)
- Pets and other animals cannot spread this disease. (St. Francis of Assisi)
- And, finally: Avoid going to China. (Matteo Ricci)

Oh, and don't forget: if someone from China tries to forcefully shake your hand, call Pope Francis! ☺

# An apostle to one, an apostle to all...

NIMMI CANDAPPA

**Nimmi Candappa is a university researcher and enjoys the challenge of living out her faith and writing about faith. In this article she explores the role of women in the first Easter story. Where is it calling us today? She also has a poem elsewhere in this edition of *The Swag*.**

With the flame of the Easter candle extinguished for the year, I slip in to the ordinary times of the Liturgical calendar, feeling spiritually renewed despite the all-encompassing ramifications of COVID-19 on our celebrations of the Triduum. Regardless of the low key in-house celebrations of the Holy Week services, I experience a soaring of the heart on Easter Sunday, a triumphant reminder we believe in a resurrected Christ. And yet an inconvenient niggle persists too, zapping some life out of an otherwise wonderful Season, as I am reminded that the perspective of faith presented to us is essentially all male.

Typically, I often restrict my activity on Holy Saturday, keen to in some way meditate on what the followers of Jesus experienced on Good Friday and Holy Saturday: despair at the death of their friend and teacher, guilt and disappointment with their own actions, no doubt terror at any trial by association. Perhaps numbness would have followed the burial, as realisation of the significance of the day's events seeped in. And then, deep loss. Loss of beloved friend, loss of freedom, loss of purpose and identity, loss of hope. Perhaps the future appeared bleak, if not threatening. Even if they managed to survive the furore of the Roman army intent on sterilising the community of any remnant Christianity, there would be reputations to rebuild, family ties to restore. Did thoughts surface of the promise made by Jesus that He would rise on the third day? If so, they would likely have been quickly squashed, the disappointment should it not eventuate probably too great to bear straight after the day's harrowing events.

What do the apostles think then when Mary Magdalene bursts in, claiming this very thing – she has seen the risen Lord. Or, more accurately, the Lord has shown Himself to her. Confusion, doubt, restrained excitement? Caution? After all, she was a woman, hardly seen as a credible witness in those times. Can she be trusted, could she simply be deranged with grief, hallucinating?

Yet Jesus chose to show Himself to her. Recorded in history as the first witness of

the Resurrection. We are constantly reminded that as Jesus chose only men as his immediate apostles, priesthood cannot be open to women. Interpretation of this choice of apostles neatly steered away from the heavily patriarchal times, to focus specifically and only on gender. What then of Jesus choosing to show His risen self to a woman first, not his chosen apostles? Jesus chooses to show Himself first to Mary Magdalene. In fact, Gospels of Matthew and Luke record the appearance of angels to several women, and in the Gospel of Matthew, the women are commissioned by the angel to 'go quickly and tell the disciples' of the message of Jesus' resurrection. No men were included in this exchange, the message of resurrection first passed on only to women. Surely there must be a significance to this? Mary Magdalene is granted the title 'Apostle to the Apostles' yet we see no flow on effect of this to all women – if you are apostle to one, you are apostle to all are you not? Again, the 12 male apostles bar one, flee in terror at the crucifixion, the women standing firm under the Cross, but we see no flow on recognition of this to all women. Or, Mary the mother of Jesus, is the only human born immaculate, and yet we see no flow on recognition of this to all women. In these situations, gender is quietly ignored. Yet, Jesus selects only men as apostles and we construct a flow on effect, or a positive interpretation of this, to all men.

To be clear, we can rarely claim with certainty to know God's will in these matters. There are numerous situations where God's approach to things does not always seem sensible or logical to human eyes and yet, the situation turns out to be perfect and whole, a grander plan in God's eyes. So I readily accept that current conclusions may well and truly be, in fact, God's will.

Nonetheless, the lack of a deeper and open exploration in to the context of this choice of apostles by Jesus is to our detriment. We have averted our eyes from the damaging influences of Jewish and Roman patriarchy on our resultant Catholic faith framework, and we bear the stains of it to this day. St John Paul II writes of the "genius of the



feminine", but this source of genius has remained mainly untapped by the Church. As Catholics in Australia, we fought for traditional marriage, maintaining that both the mother and the father contribute to the well-being of the child, yet we leave the spiritual well-being of the Catholic laity under only masculine responsibility. As Catholics, we hear the words that we are created in God's image, male and female, yet we shirk from publicly criticising the words of St Augustine and St Aquinas that diminish women, words that very early on cast a shadow on the equality and dignity of half of God's creation, with long-lasting negative effects on women's involvement in the Church. We are physically and visually excluded from the altar (some priests even opting for only male altar servers), we are verbally excluded from liturgical wording (some still persisting with gender-exclusive language), and we are, for the main, excluded from leadership and influence on the faith. While many of the characteristics desirable in a priest – communication, community building, listening, teaching, nurturing of faith – are often more readily found in women than men, we sternly curb any further discussion on whether early interpretations of apostle choice are indeed correct. All the while, the numbers of those identifying themselves as practising Catholics dwindle rapidly, along with priest numbers. Yet we point-blank refuse to consider whether a lack of a significant role for women in the Church can be a contributing factor in a less than flourishing Church. A case of cutting one's nose to spite the face, a failure to join the glaringly obvious dots.

We lack much when half of God's creation is not brought to the table. There is a sense in many women in the Church of being undervalued and neglected: a Mother Superior of a Carmelite convent – an order

## Clem's carvings inspiring Blackwood parish

LINDY MCNAMARA

**Clem Colla, a woodcarver from Hawthorndene, SA, has realised a boyhood dream by handcrafting a wooden set of the Stations of the Cross which now adorn the walls of his local church. Reprinted with permission: The Southern Cross, Adelaide. Photographer – Nat Rogers.**



known for its orthodoxy and loyalty to the Church – once said to me, ‘sometimes as women we need to look outside the Church for our sense of worth’. This is reinforced by unchecked prejudice, a priest, now further up the ranks, reputed to have said ‘women should only be involved in the cleaning and flower arranging’. There can be also an unintentionally skewed approach: a wonderful, kind and good priest, in response to my pitiful cry that many women are suffocating in the Church, said he had never thought about this, giving credence to the argument of power imbalance and lack of sensitivity in an all-male hierarchy. And unintentional yet hurtful consequences might follow when all our God-given skills are not pooled to help create on earth the Kingdom of God, a priest in France suggesting historical abuse in the Church would have been less likely if women had more power in the Church.

Women in the Church outnumber men in every category, from congregational numbers to volunteers. A quick look around any parish and it is easy to see the hunger of women to give back to our faith; and a noticeable lack of opportunity to do this. We have faith in abundance but are not invited to share. We want to partake but are relegated to the bench. We yearn to nurture, mould and develop the faith of others, but are forced to watch from the sidelines. There are many roles that can be created to address this, including the following example: currently we have a clear means of faith-sharing from a male perspective through weekly sermons; we need a means of learning also from the female’s viewpoint. Perhaps we can include a female reflection of the Gospel in the weekly bulletin. Or maybe even, dare I say it, through sermons by female deacons. Not only for the growth in faith of the wider community of believers, but also for the uplifting of the women who are stifled by the Church they love, the women who feel excluded and diminished in male-defined peripheral roles.

Faith grows when our hearts can expand to embrace more and more this wonderful Creator of ours, while a constrained heart shrivels, shackled by chains of control and fear, and bereft of opportunities to soar to mighty heights. The desire to bring people to God surges from an inner yearning to share the love of God with all, it is not gender based, but faith imbued. Mary Magdalene was not restricted by her gender when she rushed back to spread the news that Jesus is alive. Jesus appeared to her so she could do just that. ☺

Since being installed in February, the 14 stations have provided a talking point for parishioners at Our Lady of the Way Church in Glenalta.

Not only do they provide an inspirational representation of the path Jesus bore on his way to the crucifixion, but the remarkably intricate stations also reflect Clem’s superb woodcarving skills and the hundreds of hours he devoted to making them.

A retired cabinet maker, Clem, 72, used the Intarsia woodworking technique to create the stations. This involves fitting together different shapes, sizes and species of timber to produce a mosaic-like picture with an illusion of depth.

Many of the 30 timbers he used in the project had a real ‘local’ flavour, with some being offcuts from jobs he had undertaken for parishioners. For example the Australian oak used for the characters’ skin came from Peter Van Leeuwen’s laundry, the beech for Mary’s clothing was from Geoff Sugar’s old rocking chair, the teak was brought from Indonesia by Chris Wright, while the European oak for the soldiers’ uniforms was from Peter and Ytte Smaile’s backyard tree.

Fittingly, a branch from a local Blackwood tree was carved to form the base of each station.

For Clem, the many hours he spent crafting the stations was a “labour of love” as it was a project he had been planning to complete for most of his life.

“Making the stations was something on my bucket list from the age of 16,” he admitted. He recalled how as a young apprentice he had helped to mount a set of stations in a church in Belmont, in Geelong, Victoria.

“It was then I thought that when I am old and can only sit on a stool, this is what I am going to do,” he said.

The stations Clem made are based on that initial set in Belmont. Planning for the project began a few years ago when he started to dry wood offcuts in his workshop and embarked on the process of design and composition of the timber to be used in each station.

Looking at the finished set you can see how in his depiction of the crucifixion story Clem used the gravelly appearance of huon pine to replicate the ground, while he opted for the wild grained burl from a myrtle tree to convey the dark confusion and despair that the followers of Jesus may have felt at the time he was in the tomb.

The 11th station where the soldier stands over Jesus and drives in the nails took the most time to complete as Clem

*Continued page 40*

painstakingly tried to recreate the recoil of the hand. In the 6th station where Veronica comes forward to wipe the brow of Jesus, Clem depicts her with some of her hair escaping from her headpiece as he believed she would have been an “outgoing” person.

Reflecting on the year-long project, Clem admitted he got completely absorbed in the process.

“I am sure it deepened my faith. When you think about putting the nail here in Jesus’ hand, you think about how much it must have hurt. Because I was retired I guess I had more time for reflection.”

Parish priest Fr Tony Telford-Sharp was delighted to have the completed set installed and the feedback from fellow parishioners has been very positive.

Clem said the first time he went to pray in front of the new stations it was “very special”.

Born in Holland, Clem and his 10 siblings and parents emigrated to Australia when he was seven years old.

The staunch Catholic family settled on the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria and Clem eventually followed his heart to Adelaide, marrying Barbara in 1973.

The Collas have been active members of the Blackwood parish since 1976, with Clem serving as a minister of the Eucharist, as a former member of the Parish Pastoral Council and unsurprisingly, on the maintenance committee.

He has used his woodworking skills to make other items in the parish including the baptismal font (dedicated to his late mum), a bookshelf and screen holder for the overhead projector at Glenalta, and the main altar at St Paul of the Cross Church, Blackwood.

Those attending St Francis Xavier’s Cathedral will see Clem’s handiwork in the candle holders at the front and rear of the church.

Not ones to sit idle, the Collas ticked off another bucket list item when they went to Cambodia two years ago.

Over the six week period Clem helped to build five houses while Barbara, who is a retired teacher, volunteered at the local school.

With the stations project now complete, undoubtedly there will be other bucket list items to fulfil. However, none are likely to provide as much inspiration and prayerful reflection as the 14 pieces of art that are Clem’s heartfelt contribution to his church community. ☪

## The journey towards the Plenary Council in October 2020

RENE POLS

**The article below is a preamble to a longer submission to the Plenary Council regarding the six themes identified by the writing groups. It was prepared by Dr Rene Pols on behalf of the TEAMS movement.**

### Preamble: The importance of the Australian secular context

*“Then Micah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountain, like sheep that have no shepherd”; and the Lord said “These have no master; let each one go home in peace.” (Kings: 22: 17)*

*“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (Matt: 9: 35-38)*

The rise of scientific, atheistic, rationalism (Taylor 2007), even in its most generous and considered, humanistic variety, has resulted in a neglect of the Spirituality that underpins the universe, our solar system, our planet earth and all life. In Australia we have a society that subscribes to this rationalistic view of the world. It is not because the many individuals who comprise our community have created this view of the world; no, we were born into it and it has been “normalised”. It is the way that things are: it is ‘the real world’ and it is “OK”. We live in the ‘Lucky Country’ (Horne 1964), envied by many in the world. We are privileged indeed.

Yet all is not well because it seems as if someone has stolen our spiritual and moral Global Positioning System in our journey as a species! And that someone is in fact our ever-changing secular society with its faith in global economics, data and informatics and the key performance indicators that describe them. The mantras of “growth; security, projections and the wisdom of the markets” that will respond to “determined policy pursuits” and our “human ingenuity, and research”, and if not now, then in the future, we will find “scientific and engineering solutions” to the problems that we confront. The whole world is watching, waiting; but we seem to be inevitably being drawn into an ecological reality that will ultimately spin

out of human control and may well result in the extinction of our and many other, species.

Spiritual reality cannot be measured; its subjective, anecdotal data cannot be entered into equations and therefore does not exist. Scientific rationalism would argue that our frequent, awesome, spiritual experiences are simply a complex manifestation of brain chemistry and thereby the periodic table of elements and the laws of chemistry and physics! We know it is not so from our own experience of our spiritual lives; of God in nature, the Universe and in our deepest relationships; in the miracle of life: “The Goldilocks enigma” indeed as Professor Paul Davies described the physics of our sub-atomic and cosmological universe (2007)!

Our 21st century world seems to be on a precipice, sliding down a slippery slope of entrapment within our complex, interrelated, global market network. Ethical behaviour in business and politics is clearly wanting. When prime ministers and presidents can go to war on the basis of lies about “weapons of mass destruction” and vice presidents say that “a little bit of torture is OK” if it is done anywhere but in your own country, or that “waterboarding” is not torture: “black” seems to take on a “white hue”! Profits go clearly before people and the planet. The structures of Civil Society are being subverted. Lobbyists, donations and financial influences upon national, state and local council political decision-making are rife. Graft, corruption, nepotism and all the above influences, result in much decision-making not being made in the interests of the “common good”. Our “security is paramount” and men women and children are made to suffer in interminable imprisonment on Manus Island and Nauru; something we would have revolted against only 15 years ago, as “un-Australian and morally abhorrent.” The “ends” now seem to “justify the means” - or do they?

And what of our social media with bullying and harassment of thousands of young teenagers; or the accessing of pornography on line by a large proportion of the Australian population; or the “dark web”

where guns, women, men and children and their images can be bought; drugs will be sent and delivered by Australia Post and worse still internationally: where child slavery at work or in sexual exploitation, or as child soldiers are readily able to be seen or found out about, but nothing seems able to be done to stop or change any of these troubling realities? What is worse, is that anything can be obtained if desired and “the price is right.”

And what of our Social media organisations that collect and mine our personal data to direct the personalised advertising to us, resulting in even more purchases by us and the “mining” of such data that then results in distorting political decision-making and producing potentially catastrophic outcomes with Brexit and the election of President Trump, as examples, that are causing increasing political instability and chaos internationally? And let alone the “Global market” which intertwines slave labour conditions in the third world with the purchase of goods by first and second world people, so that all of us are de-facto accessories in the processes of the enslavement of the poor.

And what then of our most trusted institution; Our Church? We have little or no credibility left. The message of love and the care for and protection of children and the vulnerable has been defiled by the scandal of institutional collusion with the sexual abuse and exploitation of vulnerable children by people in positions of trust: most horrifically by clergy and consecrated men and women. We must also not forget that 90% of all such abuse occurs in families. This is but the most recent horrific scandal to emerge. It follows upon many others across the ages: the inquisition; witches burnt at the stake; “holy” wars; persecution and murder in the name of God; the scandal of the reformation where “good people” did very bad things. We have an educated people in the 21st century and Christians simply cannot get away from these facts of history.

Until the Church makes a genuine, believable, objective, real, public act of contrition and does meaningful penance and restitution, it cannot start to regain credibility; or with it the capacity to influence anything. It is little wonder that parishioners are “harassed and helpless” (*Matt: 9: 35-38*) and “scattered on the mountain” (*Kings: 22: 17*). The message of the love of neighbour and the beatitudes which underpin all the institutions of Western “Civil Society” cannot be heard above the anguished crying of those who have been harmed by these grievous failures over time and most recently.

If Jesus was here today, it is easy to imagine him being very angry indeed, as he was with the Scribes, the Pharisees and the businessmen in the temple. It is clear, he would call all of us, especially our Church leaders and the leaders of Civil Society, to repentance and renewal as he did then.

### **The Council as a response to the call by the Spirit to the Australian Community**

It was Australia Day when this discernment was put together and the Council is a national event. It was important because it helped in seeing the Plenary Council and the signs of the times in Australia somewhat differently. I have been thinking about the 2020 Council a great deal (as have we all) and realising the momentous nature of what will be the Plenary Council, in Australia of all places, spurred me on. We are possibly the best integrated, well-educated multicultural nation in the world and the Spirit needs to be heard by all nations; all peoples; we are a natural target where the Spirit would want to be heard! We and the Plenary Council are the vehicles of His mission! I deeply believe the Spirit is at work within the Australian Community; not just “the church” as we usually define it. Our God is not limited by our human structures, but works through all of us.

One sign of the times is the outrage with which our Australian Community has responded to the sexual abuse scandal. We are the only nation that has had the courage to call it for what it is, with the Royal Commission and following through with prosecution and conviction of a senior prelate, as well as providing a scheme for contrition and reparation. (We do not necessarily agree or disagree with the verdict of Cardinal Pell, but the High Court will add to the lessons that we and the whole world need to learn).

The Royal Commission process and community and Catholic responses of outrage and shame are surely responses to the Spirit who is moving us all in the depth of our souls. Because we are so caught up in our shame, pain and defensiveness, we do not see it as such and often interpret it as being an attack on the Church by all who are anti-Catholic. This reaction by our community and at the same time the 220,000 represented in the submissions to the consultation for the Council, are both signs that our community is demanding change. They are the sentiments that come from discernment, listening to the Spirit from deep in our hearts. Had the Spirit or Jesus been asked for a submission, or had been witnesses to the Royal Commission,

they would have been even more outraged than what we have seen. At the same time, they would have said to each person submitting to the Council consultation: “well done good and faithful servant” (*Mat 25:21*). We need to listen; the Spirit is speaking to us in our pain and sadness; our outrage, anger and shame!

Two weeks ago at a Teams working party discerning a Teams Movement response to the writing groups, we realised something so obvious, that it had escaped us: the “Family Model of Church” being comprehensively applicable to the first theme; “Missionary and Evangelising” and that this model underpinned all the other themes. Yet there has been no real discussion of Models of Church in the preparations leading up to the Council; there are no writing groups looking at it; perhaps it has not been thought useful. Our submission also did not make it clear even though Our Married couples’ Movement lives by it all the time. It is perhaps so obvious that we cannot see it or name it. Yet Our Mother Mary like a giant icon spells out the reality of the “Family Model of Church”, and has been from its earliest days. The Spirit is asking us to return to our roots in family and community: prayerful, joyful, hopeful, inclusive, humble, healing, merciful, servant, open to conversion and renewal; gathered around the Eucharist. All these are family values reflecting, emulating, making present the love of Our God for the world. It is also marketable and in the 21st century the Spirit is also asking us to use God’s gifts in the wonderful technology of the media for His Glory to be seen and His Spirit felt by all the world.

The Australian Bishops’ Conference was bold indeed and was clearly listening to the call by the Spirit for renewal and repentance when they called us to assemble as a Plenary Council in 2020. In the dreadful, demoralised milieu within our Australian society, it takes great courage, faith and belief in the goodness of our Christian people and faith in Our God, to even think that renewal is possible. The deliberations of the Council have the possibility of new beginnings and a way forward to turn around the hopelessness and helplessness that undermines us at every turn. The openness to date will leave any manipulation and political shenanigans exposed; Australians will not tolerate it just as we currently do not tolerate the politicking with sports funding. Australian are not fools. Those who are afraid and do not trust Jesus when he said: “I will be with you for all time” (*Mat 28:20*) and may have ambitions to

*Continued page 42*

## FEATURES

manipulate the Council process and obfuscate the real need for change, will be caught out. Brennan (2018) warned those preparing for the Council and Council Fathers about representation and their Canonical responsibility to represent the faithful in their deliberations (canons 127, 212 and 443).

We all need to dig deep within our hearts as to what Our God is asking of us; to teach not only ourselves but many others suffering the same malaise within other societies and in Our Church. We are reminded of Jesus' promises to those who follow Him at the end of the beatitudes:

*"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*  
(Matt: 5; 11-12).

We need to find and recalibrate our spiritual and moral GPS and this needs to start here within each Christian person in the community and parish where we live: it is our part of the Kingdom; it is our responsibility. ☪



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## I am for you are

NIMMI CANDAPPA 2020

My lungs expand, for you breathe life into them and in and over the oceans, into the trees and the wildlife, the swell of life no more than a recognition of you.

Blood flows through me because your heart of hearts pumps, solid powerful eternal, the generator of all life its beat reverberating in all life, my heartbeat a mere response to yours.

I think a thought and synapses flash, connections meld, crowds might applaud and generations remember, and yet it all "seems like straw" relative to one thought of yours – mighty incomprehensible complete.

I am for you are, yet you look directly at me as though none other exists.

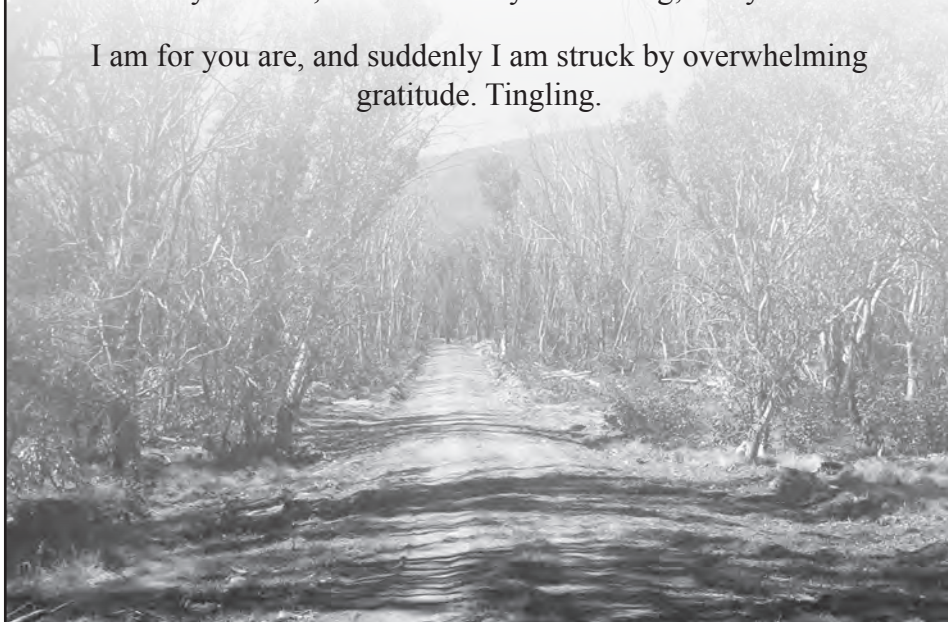
I am for you are, yet you seek my company, relish and delight in it.

I am for you are, and for a moment there we are one in exquisite harmony, twirling in the depths of your eternal heart – until my pride, fear, uncertainty, worry accentuate a fading faultline.

I am for you are, yet I am now alone consumed by myself and my fears, folding in on myself. You hover caress cajole and beckon – yet I am inaccessible. Your voice audible yet engulfed by the other voices, I stumble.

I am for you are, yet you sit close beside me – still – so as to not frighten me further; yet very much there, your warmth, your surging love gradually parting the seas of destruction. Revealing your love, constant steady everlasting; ready.

I am for you are, and suddenly I am struck by overwhelming gratitude. Tingling.



## New Archbishop of Adelaide announced

The Holy Father recently appointed Most Reverend Patrick O'Regan, current Bishop of Sale, as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Adelaide.

In taking up office, the new Archbishop succeeds Archbishop Philip Wilson who served the Archdiocese from 2001 until his retirement in 2018.

### At the time of going to press ...

From Bishop Gregory O'Kelly SJ, Apostolic Administrator: "It is with great joy that I inform you that the Installation Ceremony of Bishop Patrick O'Regan DD will take place in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral on Monday, May 25th 2020, at 10.30am, Solemnity of Our Lady Help of Christians, Patroness of Australia. Because of the restrictions arising from COVID-19,



the Ceremony of Installation will necessarily be a reduced one, with the Cathedral closed.

Officiating clergy will be Fr Philip Marshall VG, Fr Anthony Adimai (Cathedral Administrator), Monsignor Robert Rice (Senior Consultor) and myself as the Apostolic Administrator. In the absence

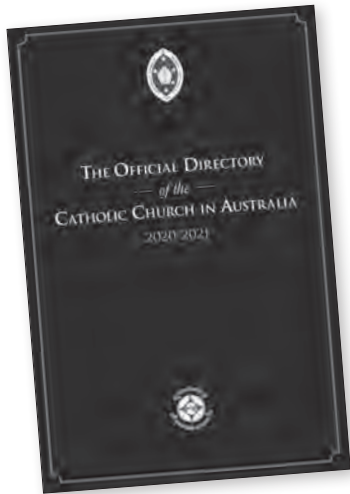
of the Apostolic Nuncio, because of the quarantine provisions, I will read the Bull of Appointment as Ordinary and witness the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity of our incoming Archbishop.

If well enough, we hope Archbishop Wilson will be able to be present.

We have applied for permission to have officiating clergy and attendants at the ceremony which will be livestreamed.

Later in the year we do hope to have a more formal and representative Liturgical Reception for our new Archbishop, associated with the Mass of Chrism so that the presbyterate may concelebrate with the new Chief Pastor and Teacher.

The Installation Ceremony should be a moment of grace for the Archdiocese. I am sure your prayers will be offered for him on that day."



## The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia

Sally and Chris are currently working on the new edition of *The Official Directory* – the official and historical record of the Catholic Church in Australia which NCP publishes on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as a service to the Church.

The directory, a 1 July publication, gives the rich picture of the Australian Church, listing all Diocesan information – parishes, schools and Catholic organisations as well as the key personnel for each.

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

Priests coming from overseas to work in Australian Parishes find the directory particularly helpful. Over 40,000 changes are made annually, so \$85.00 is a small price to pay for up to date information.

For the complete picture of the Australian Church and to keep connected...complete the attached order form on the inside back cover. **Do not** send payment. A tax invoice will be emailed to you. ☺

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Placing the priest on a pedestal?

In the Summer 2019 edition, Cardinal John Dew suggests priests should not be called 'Father'. In the Letters pages, Rob Eggar suggests reducing 'sartorial trappings' of bishops would be a good thing.

Both moves would find a lot of support from many of us Australian lay-people, with our tradition of egalitarianism. But I'm not sure they would be wise moves. Anglo-Celtic Australians, 'Skippies' as some migrants call us, people like me and like most of the contributors to *The Swag* would accept such moves easily. We need to be careful that we don't think we Skippies are the Australian Church.

Many other Australian Catholics do put the priest on a pedestal, do think it is right, for example, to kiss his hand and then

claim a blessing by placing that hand on their own foreheads. Many Australian Catholics would find it difficult to call the priest anything else but 'Father'. Many priests now working in Australia, and probably under-represented among contributors to *The Swag*, would not be comfortable if not being addressed as 'Father...'. One African priest working here told me his ordination day was the last time his mother did not call him 'Father'. We Skippies might think that weird, even unhealthy, but it is a reminder that we need to be respectful of the personal and cultural realities of people's lives.

Rob's little ditty celebrates the possibility of our being 'no longer Byzantine'. It's true that we members of the Latin Rite have a liturgy marked by 'noble simplicity' (Vatican II). But there are plenty of Australian Catholics, not to mention

Orthodox Australians, who love and glory in their Eastern or Byzantine Rites with liturgies that so impressed early Russian envoys to Constantinople they thought they had been transported to heaven.

As we move towards the Plenary Council, Skippies, myself definitely among them, need to be careful we are not thinking the Australian Church is made up of people with a distaste for tall poppies and whose ancestors may have carried a swag and fought at Gallipoli.

*Gerard Hore, Toowoomba QLD*

### Presumed guilty

One issue crying out for mention at the Plenary Council is Australian procedures in the Church for handling accusations against clergy; gravely unjust on a whole

*Continued page 44*

range of levels. For starters we totally ignore the Scriptural requirement (Mt 18:16 and other texts in both Testaments; hence a point of commonality with the Jews) that any accusation, to result in a juridical decision, must be advanced by at least two purported witnesses. Indeed the Bible gives many examples in which, even with this condition satisfied, the accusation is still false!

I always remember hearing a former Swag editor saying 'I may not like the man [an accused cleric] but if I think him wronged, I'll defend him'. Words each of us can take to heart.

*Rev David Watt, Malaga WA*

### "Noli timere" Sisters

I always made sure that I had equal representation of women on my pastoral council. Women who were prepared to speak their mind! Would I have welcomed a parishioner who was a member of WWITCH or CSO? The first acronym and what both organisations stand for seems scary: Women's Wisdom in the Church, and Catholics Speak Out! The words 'Women's Wisdom', 'Speak Out' convey to me that these are women who spell trouble! It is therefore no surprise that the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference declared both groups as defunct on grounds of "financial difficulties". The church sure knows how to pick it words in 'resolving' or 'dissolving' a prickly problem!

Flynn in her article: "Women still listening for leadership from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference" (*The Swag*, Autumn 2020, pp 13-14), mentioned Pope Francis taking 'concrete actions' to give women a greater presence in the church, by appointing a woman as undersecretary at the Secretariat of State. Please note, as: "undersecretary"! Our Melbourne Archbishop, Peter Comensoli, has appointed 4 women as Directors of Missions, his Office, etc, and 4 others as Exec. Directors, and Consultants. Women also have significant leadership roles in Catholic Education, CatholicCare, Catholic Hospitals and Aged Care. Would any of them belong to WWITCH or CSO? I wonder!

Flynn stated that women constitute 70% of the congregation and enumerated a host of ministries they are involved in. Women comprise over 73% enrolled in theology courses. Besides some are lecturers with doctorates in Scripture. What kind of message do these facts, cited by WWITCH and CSO convey to a very traditional clericalised hierarchy? The message,

I get is: 'Let us get our foot into the Bishops Conference and we will tell the bishops how to run the church!'

Ever since the Constantinian Era, the rudder which directs the church is not Christology, but Ecclesiology. Wherein the hierarchy has an exalted position as teachers and administrators and the laity as obedient believers. This classic paradigm is deemed sacred and immutable. Pope Francis is having a difficult time to rid the church of the 'Cancer of Clericalism'. Will the Plenary Council achieve the equality of the laity and in particular of women in the church?

Noli timere, Sisters! Our Plenary Council 2020, has overlooked the ecumenical dimension of the church. "It is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of appendix. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of the Church's life and work, and consequently must pervade all she is and does." (Pope St John Paul II) Befriend the Protestant Churches and organisations. Participate in their services and ministries. Before long they would request you to make your contribution. I was invited to speak and preach in Protestant Churches in Pakistan, before I came to Melbourne. And here too I have done the same. Launch into the deep, into a ministry wide open for you!

*Rev Arnold Heredia PE, Melbourne VIC*

### Ministry training for lay ministry has already been done

In the first part of the Robert Mickens article in the Autumn 2020 edition of *The Swag* he claims that, despite the bleating of the Catholic Bishops, the 'Seminary System' is still broke and can only be fixed by serious involvement of the faithful.

He says that the lay communities are best qualified to identify suitable candidates for the priesthood and best equipped to monitor their progress towards ordination. He seems to be saying that unless this happens, we will continue to have misfits ordained to the Catholic Priesthood, some of whom will finish up doing jail time.

In the second part of his article, he says even if it were physically possible, he points out that not only for priests and bishops to provide for all the spiritual needs of their community it is not the way things are meant to be. He quotes Romans: 12 which says that we all have been gifted differently and have the obligation and the right to use these gifts.

Mickens then goes on to point out that the

ones who best know the spiritual needs of the community is the community itself and that they are also best placed to identify who among them have the charisms to best serve those needs.

Now gentle reader may I tell you a good news story. The people of the island of Bougainville first encountered white people at the turn of the twentieth century. They were Catholic missionaries. They came lived among the people, became fluent in their languages and became one with them. The sisters, brothers and priests set up an education system and a health service and they trained people. They had nurses' colleges, teachers' colleges, seminaries and catechist schools. Within seventy years they had Australian registered pilots, doctors, lawyers, university lectures, about ten native-born diocesan priests and several native-born bishops. About 80 percent of the population were Catholic.

The colleges for catechists were started within a few years of arrival. In those days in accordance with local custom all catechists were men. Each village would select an outstanding candidate and that person would attend the live-in colleges for two years of intensive instruction in theology, liturgy, scripture, the sacraments and basic canon law. After graduation they returned to their villages and led daily prayer services each morning and night; they buried the dead; they instructed those preparing for the sacraments; they were a bit like a 'Para priest'. They were magnificent, but by the time the seventies came around the money economy had taken over Bougainville and their brightest could no longer afford to be away from their farms, families and businesses for two years and the Catechist System had done its work.

What was the community to do? The catechists were getting old and dying out, priests were leaving and getting married, but the communities still had spiritual needs. Someone came up with the idea of 'diversification of ministry'. Gifted people who could not afford to take two years out of their life were more than willing to dedicate two weeks to be trained in one particular ministry. Bishop Gregory Singkae, a native-born man with a Roman degree, set up a Ministry College. There would be intensive training for two weeks in one particular ministry. The communities would determine what ministries were needed and select the appropriately gifted person, by this time either man or woman. The Ministry College ran block courses for prayer leaders, readers, musicians, catechists etc. Whenever there was a special need the Ministry College would write a course to

cover it. That was the seventies and I am told that fifty years and one civil war later it is still functioning.

How is my story relevant to Robert Mickens article? Well Australia now like Bougainville then is blessed with a shortage of priests and what was done there, can be done here.

Some are squandering this Spirit given opportunity to do church as Paul wanted us to do (cf Ephesians 4) by 'going shopping' for priests who are so badly needed in their home communities.

Where do we go from here? Well you don't have to be the smartest chook in the pen to know that chucking a book to a gifted member of the Catholic community and telling them to start leading worship celebrations is going to end in tears. Proper professional training is essential.

Where to from here Robert Mickens?

Many pundits are predicting that the Australian Plenary Council will be yet another talk fest with no practical outcomes but I look at all the dedicated and talented people being employed by the Catholic Church and I ask myself: How hard would it be for a diocese to set up an online Ministry College with all the digital bells and whistles?

Will those with the power to do something have the smarts and the bottle to do something. I am not holding my breath.

**Rev Harry Moore SM, Herston QLD**

I was born on 7 October 1935 in Sandgate Queensland and baptised John Justin Peter Dwyer. My father was Thomas and my mother was Kathleen (Muldoon). In 1938 we moved to Caloundra. My brother Des was two years older than me and together with his wife Mary (Slattery) they had nine children.

There was one primary school in this small coastal village which we attended, followed by Marist Brothers College for one year. I worked in Caloundra and then in Brisbane until 1961 when I was recruited to be a teacher in Wewak Diocese in Papua New Guinea by Fr Peter O'Reilly, Education Director. In the 1960s the Australian Bishops Conference opened St Paul's Seminary in Kensington Sydney.

A fellow lay missionary read about this in the Catholic newspaper and approached Bishop Leo Arkfield on my behalf, resulting in him flying to Biwat where I was teaching. The upshot was he sent me to the Seminary. I arrived in Caloundra and there met by appointment Bishop elect

Eugene Cuskelly MSC who advised me to do a years study, which I did, and I entered St Paul's in 1970.

After four years I was ordained in Caloundra Church and returned to PNG where I remained working for over 20 years. The mission station at Wewak was quite large, embracing workshops of every trade, an airstrip, offices, a health centre, a trade store, a large well-built cathedral, a dairy farm, Holy Spirit Sisters Convent and other residences.

When I returned to Caloundra, I found the Church in Australia in a state of turmoil with a right wing and a left wing – bishops from the right and with the left predominant. The leadership of the Church was embroiled in an effort to hide the priests who had embraced paedophilia – a world-wide trend, happening unfortunately in many countries.

Many young priests left the priesthood in dismay. The general run of Catholics were shattered and many also turned their back on the Church. The only great light that appeared was the election of Pope Francis, who strove to return the departed and enliven those who remained. The advent of Cardinal George Pell being sent to jail was a great mark in what was taking place.

I saw that Francis was the clone of Jesus Christ. To follow Francis was to follow Jesus Christ. As the Australian Church moves toward the Plenary Council I hope this Australia-wide council will address with success the problems that the Church in Australia faces, so Jesus the Christ will resound in the next generations.

**Rev John Dwyer, Little Mountain QLD**

### The 'abominations' in scripture need attention

Abomination! What a euphonious word! It fills the mouth, especially when it is pronounced in the manner of the televangelists; 'a BOM in ation'. Older versions of the scriptures loved it also.

A quick glance at my concordance shows that God found over one hundred things abominable. Some preachers cherry pick the abominations they might wish to condemn. I try to be even handed and condemn each abomination as I come across them.

A friend of many years approached me in the street. He was wearing a beautifully cut, three-piece, cream suit. 'That is one impressive suit of threads,' said I.

'Feel the quality of the fabric,' invited my friend. 'What is it?' asked I. 'It's a wool

linen blend,' he explained.

I drew my hand back in horror. 'It's an abomination, burn it! Or our years of friendship are over.' 'What has got into you?' gasped my ex-friend. 'Deuteronomy 22:11 has got into me!' I shouted and stormed off. 'Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.'

A very attractive female member of parliament appeared on television dressed in a smart pants suit. A polite letter was written to her office drawing her attention to Deuteronomy 22:5: A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the Lord your God.

I received an equally polite, but may I say rather condescending reply. A priest friend invited me to view a plaster marquette of a statue of the Risen Lord that he hoped to cast in bronze. I asked him if he believed in the divinity of Jesus.

With a puzzled look he replied, of course! I kindly responded, My dear Monsignor, I suggest you consult Deuteronomy 7:29: The images of their gods you shall burn with fire.

Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the Lord your God.

I then took a hammer and smashed that graven abomination so avoiding the 'curse of God.' For some reason I have never been invited back and I can't understand why.

The book of Leviticus is not happy with those who enjoy eating prawns and lobsters and those who misuse our God given gift of sexuality in its many forms also get a good workout.

These seem to be well catered for by others. I prefer to get the balance right and ensure my ranting for less known but equally important abominations.

**Rev Harry Moore, Herston QLD**

### CORRECTION

In *Creatively receiving the Aboriginal gift* by Rev Dr Gregory James Moses in the Autumn 2020 edition of *The Swag*, an editorial note was mistakenly added in the first sentence. The author originally wrote: *I suggest we might need to do this not just as individuals but as believing and worshipping Australian church.* The word 'this' refers to the title – *Creatively receiving the Aboriginal gift*, not 'process theology' as mistakenly added by the editorial team. Editor.

## Spirituality of the heart

*The Eyes of God, Living Discernment* (2019), Brian Gallagher MSC, Coventry Press.  
Reviewed by Peter Maher.

Two models for human and spiritual transformation that have guided my life in the last 40 years are Cardijn's See, Judge and Act method and the reflective practice adult education model sometimes known as experiential or transformative learning, that underpins the approach I use in pastoral supervision. Both these methods engage in a process of discernment for action either in social change and justice advocacy or in personal decision making, action and planning in vocational identity and ministry.

I was surprised to see the similarity in method explored by Brian Gallagher in this book on the spiritual life and spiritual direction. Some struggle to maintain the distinction between spiritual direction and pastoral supervision and mentoring, so I was interested to see the confluence here. Gallagher says that discernment or the sifting of the, sometimes contradictory, inner movements in oneself, is an essential function of healthy life-giving relationships.

Gallagher calls this tendency to life and love the 'Spirit of God' or the 'good Spirit'

and notes that the act of accessing this spirit *calls for a habit of reflection, listening and noticing movements, then coming to understand from experience the direction in which they lead us* (p11). Spirituality and spiritual direction focus on the inner movements of the Spirit and discernment of these in order to attain the inner freedom that leads inevitably to a more life-giving Christian life and affects the relationships and behaviours that create a more loving and just world.

It seems that facilitating learning through reflection on experience to transform personal, social and work worlds is common to both spiritual direction and pastoral supervision. However, in this book, Gallagher shows how they differ. The emphasis in spiritual direction seems to be on inner discernment and contemplation to discover the inner freedom that reveals God's Spirit working in the human person.

This may lead to authenticity, compassion and mercy which results in a genuine freedom for life. In pastoral supervision,

the process engages the supervisee in a wider vision unmasking the assumptions around the Christian as engaged in work, their context, culture and religious/spiritual world. This hopefully results in a clearer sense of direction, pastoral strategy and confidence in vocational identity.

I found this book a delightful freewheeling between the deepest sources of Catholic tradition from the past and the present assisting me to understand the heart of spiritual life and how we might engage in it. Although scholarly, drawing on Theresa of Avila and Augustine just as easily as Rahner, Lonergan and Pope Francis, it is the way Gallagher guides us through the essentials of the spiritual life that would bring joy to all readers.

This is a book for all spiritual searchers, no matter their familiarity with the masters, both spiritual and theological. It is written in a language that makes for easy understanding, without compromising the mystery and the challenge of the topic – engaging in the inner dialogue between the God spirit and the human enquiry to find the authentic inner life-giving voice essential to true human freedom. ☪



## The chequered history of China and the Vatican

*Sino-Vatican Relations: From Denunciation to Dialogue*, (2019) Ambrose Mong, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Reviewed by Sr Trish Madigan OP.

In September 2018 Pope Francis signed off on a historical 'Provisional Agreement' (the terms of which have not yet been revealed) between the Vatican and the People's Republic of China over the appointment of bishops in China. It was the first such public agreement between the Vatican and China since the Communist Party came to power in October 1949.

The agreement has been hailed in some quarters as an important step toward rapprochement and in others as a betrayal. In his recently published book, *Sino-Vatican Relations: From Denunciation to Dialogue*, Ambrose Ih-Ren Mong, a Chinese Dominican who is a parish priest in Kowloon and lecturer at the Chinese University Hong Kong, discusses the complex relationship between the Vatican and China over the centuries, and what might be realistically hoped for as a result of this historically significant moment.

In his book, dedicated to recently deceased Bishop of Hong Kong, Michael Yeung

(1945-2019), Mong explores the long and complicated history of Christian missionary endeavours. These range from the first Nestorian Christian arrivals in China in the seventh century during the Tang dynasty, and the efforts of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci during the late sixteenth century after a period of Christian absence, followed by the age of Western imperialism. The twentieth century in China experienced an evolution of religious policy as Chinese authorities adapted religious policy to the changing economic, social and political situations in the nation. Most of Mong's work is centred on understanding what has happened in China during this later period during which the Catholic Christian community found itself torn between the official church and the underground movement with the creation of the Communist controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Against a background of the current Chinese government policy of 'sinicisation' of religion Mong gives a clear

account of what the Catholic Church has to gain from a resolution of the most contentious issue – that of how bishops are appointed.

In the Epilogue the reactions of prominent sinologists and church people concerning the Provisional Agreement are discussed. The author views the Agreement as breaking the impasse and moving forward towards normalisation of Sino-Vatican relations in spite of obstacles, misgivings, and uncertainties. 'Our trust', he says, 'ultimately is not in statecraft or diplomacy, but in the Holy Spirit guiding the Church.' He provides a framework for understanding the Vatican-China relationship in its contemporary unfolding which will be of value to anyone wishing to be better informed regarding the possibilities and dangers of the current situation. ☪

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and because of you!**

## 118 years of priests in the movies

**Screen Priests: The Depiction of Catholic Priests in Cinema from 1900 – 2018 (2019), Peter Malone, ATF Press, hardback and softcover. Reviewed by Peter Maher.**

Peter Malone, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, is a veteran film reviewer, film commentator and theologian. He has taught at the Melbourne College of Divinity and served as President of the Pacific region of OCIC (International Catholic Organisation for Cinema), and became the first president of SIGNIS (World Catholic Organisation for Communication) from 2001 to 2005. This wealth of experience and knowledge is found in this formidable work of 700 pages.

I am indebted to Tony Doherty, Sydney priest, for alerting me to the following story about Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia, who on May 23, 1934, called on all Catholics living in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to boycott motion picture theatres.

He called the motion picture theatre 'perhaps the greatest menace to faith and morals in America today.' Dougherty and many others felt that most of the movies being shown were indecent and that drastic action was need to send a message to Hollywood.

The boycott meant ticket sales dropped around 20 percent. In spite of calls from theatre owners and even the State Senator McCreesh and Democratic Committee Chairman John Kelly (Princess Grace Kelly's father), he refused to remove the ban.

While the boycott failed as more and more people ignored it, in June of 1934, the Motion Picture Association of America agreed to stronger self-censorship and it is believed that many of the movies around that time with favourable depictions of priests was in some way attributed to the movie moguls trying to bring more and more Catholic bishops to stop such boycotts. It did lead to the creation of the Production Code Administration, headed by Catholic layman, Joseph Breen and the growth in power of the Legion of Decency, a Catholic organization which reviewed and rated movies (see *Dougherty's Movie Boycott*, Feb 6, 2019 on the Philadelphia Archdiocesan website).

This may be why such great films as *Boy's town* (1938) and *Going My Way* (1944) exist. These and many others of this era are explored in Malone's book that covers thousands of movies from the USA and all over the world.

The movies of more modern times were not so docile and positive. Malone also covers the films that later would have Archbishop Chaput and Cardinal Law only dream of the power to raise an effective boycott for *Spotlight* (2015) and *Our Fathers* (2005), both explored by Malone.

This book is of deep significance not just

for all interested the cinema and the catholic church but for those interested in how the intersection of the two have shaped the way Catholics and the broader society have responded to the trajectory of the church and its credibility over the 20th century.

The book covers depictions of priests from over 120 years in English and other cultural contexts including many foreign language films and, not surprisingly, a very comprehensive look at Australian films, Malone's homeland.

This is a comprehensive reference book filled with detailed information and commentary on hundreds of films.

One very useful addition is the Indexes of film titles, directors, and actors who have played priests.

On the back of the book Richard Leonard SJ sums it up well when he says: *From saints to sinners, martyrs to missionaries, exorcists to confessors, over time the portrayal of priests on the silver screen has changed dramatically. Peter Malone's encyclopaedic knowledge of film has produced to date the most comprehensive, readable and engaging book on this topic. This monumental study, however, also equally maps social history and theological developments with the critical insight of an insider, both priest and film critic. Malone writes with the assurance of an authority, because he is an authority.* ☪

## A way ahead for survivors of sexual abuse

**Come Forward! Bold Enough to Heal: A Spiritual Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Abuse using Scripture, Visualisation and Art Therapy (2019), Jane N Dowling. Coventry Press. This is a follow-up volume to Child, Arise!: The Courage to Stand. A Spiritual Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Abuse (2015). Reviewed by Peter Maher.**

Recently at a symposium discussing trauma, I was challenged when one gay participant said that every time he enters a Catholic Church he is retraumatized. The building itself makes him relive the times of vilification, silencing and belittling that has characterised his relationship with the church, faith and God. The power of trauma around our sexual identity and experience is something that runs deep and extends over a long period of time.

Jane Dowling's first book broke new ground in exploring the way forward for sexual abuse survivors. As a survivor of sexual abuse herself, the book offered a genuine authenticity and empathy. Both her books are handbooks for those traumatised by sexual abuse

particularly when the abuse happened in a religious context or affected their relationship with God, their faith or the church.

Her second book relies heavily on visualisation and art therapy to promote healing of the emotional and spiritual damage done through sexual abuse. While these are based on biblical texts, Dowling carefully explains that those using this handbook need to rethink their presuppositions about religious language and use the texts more as ways to access images and metaphors to use in the exercises. She warns readers that often the symbols and language of religion and the bible are triggers for those who have been sexually abused. The way Dowling uses the biblical texts aims to reclaim the healing

and loving meaning rather than being words of judgement or manipulation. While this may take some work, Dowling does offer a pathway for readers to follow should this triggering occur.

The exercises themselves are wide ranging and carefully structured. Each step is explained carefully and fully. My only question is that sometimes it seems too many options are offered and it feels a bit like leading the reader. On the other hand, some may need this level of suggestion particularly if they are new to this kind of work. The exercises are designed for individuals to carry out on their own or with a mentor to support them. They could be used in groups with a facilitator.

Pastoral carers or spiritual guides will find this book invaluable either as a resource for them in working with survivors of sexual abuse or to recommend to survivors for them to work through on their own. ☪

## A way forward for Catholics?

*A Ministry of Mary? The Question of the Ordination of Women Revisited in Light of the Theology of Complementarity.* Chapter 14, pages 181-197 of the collection *Leaning into the Spirit: Ecumenical Perspectives on Discernment and Decision-Making in the Church*, edited by Dr Virginia Miller, The Most Rev Sir David Moxon and The Rt Rev Prof Stephen Pickard (Palgrave, Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland, November 2019). Reviewed by Gregory Moses.

Dr Virginia Miller is an Anglican theologian and Biblical scholar based in the Centre for Public and Contextual Theology, Charles Sturt University, Canberra. Chapter 14 of the collection is a publication coming out of papers delivered at the Fourth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism held in Canberra in November 2017, but somewhat edited. The book was launched also in Canberra in February this year by Archbishop Christopher Prowse, who made what seemed to me to be favourable comments on this very paper. Hopefully the collection is or will be soon available in good theological libraries.

Dr Miller has recently (2016) written a book arguing that women can achieve equality in the Church by means of ordination. In this article or chapter, in what is obviously an ecumenical outreach to us Catholics knowing our situation, she makes use of a psychological model developed in the previous work in relation to the notion of complementarity, different but equal. 'The general finding of this article is that women can also achieve equality in the Church without the possibility of ordination. This finding is important in terms of ecumenism, given that the ordination of women has stalled ecumenical progress' in so far as the Catholic Church refuses to ordain women (p. 181). Dr Miller firstly acknowledges that in theory or verbally at least the Catholic Church is committed to ensuring that justice is done to women in the Church. On the other hand, as she strongly argues, in concrete fact, our governance and liturgical performances and all kinds of other things in our present lives as church, contribute strongly to a core unconscious apprehension of the world which thoroughly undermines what might be our best intentions.

On the other hand, while she has little trouble (in my opinion) in demonstrating that in concrete everyday fact we are not doing justice to women in our present Catholic Church, she does think there is something to be said for the Theology of Complementarity. I think so too. I think 'progressives' themselves are not entirely consistent about this. For example, when people argue that there should be more women on boards of companies and corporations on the grounds that statically

and overall the board as a whole is likely to have gifts that it wouldn't otherwise have. This is complementarity.

What to do? Many people in the Church, including the Catholic Church, believe that justice for women will be realised with the ordination of women. On the other hand this seems to have been comprehensively ruled out. Dr Miller notes two main arguments used in justification: firstly that Jesus chose only male Apostles; and secondly, a priest, as in persona Christi, must have a natural resemblance to Christ, who in fact was a man.

I have always thought both arguments were rather silly. Among my old Banyo Seminary colleagues, I am noted for my spontaneous response, What would Jesus have had to have been if he wanted both? Given her previous book, Dr Miller probably thinks so too. But for the sake of ecumenical outreach she seems to be prepared to let the arguments go through to the keeper. For my reflections I will do that also.

If we really are committed to doing justice for women in our Church, then, the only way forward is to find new roles for women which, though different and complementary, are in every way equal, not just theoretically but symbolically, visibly, and visible to people's unconscious apprehension, all the little and sometimes big cues, as well as to the conscious gaze.

By way of suggestions for how this might be done, she thinks that a new role for women in our Church that is both just and grace filled might best be modelled on the role of Mother Mary. She then goes on to sketch briefly something of how a ministry of women modelled on the role of Mary, firstly in our Liturgical life, and then in our Pastoral life, might look, before concluding with some reflections on what significance doing something like this in the Catholic Church might have for the Ecumenical Church.

Before I finish the review part of this paper: not long after reading the article but unconnected to it, just another item on my Coronavirus isolation reading list, I happened to be reading the text of Pope Francis' response to the Amazon Synod, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 'Querida Amazonia'. Imagine my surprise to discover some paragraphs towards the end which would

seem to indicate that Pope Francis might be on the same page! See particularly paragraphs 99-103, under the heading *The strength and gift of women*. Read it and see what you think. Of course, neither Dr Miller nor Pope Francis can be held responsible for the thoughts provoked in me by the article, which I go on to express below!

So probably well worth a read if you can get a hold of it. And possibly something that might be fed into the deliberations of our Plenary Council?

### Some suggestions for a way ahead

The thoughts I would like to share are provoked by the article as a whole but particularly by a paragraph on page 193 on liturgical roles. Let me quote this at some length:

*Therefore, it would seem that women must be included in the Mass, but in what manner can they be incorporated into this liturgical celebration, in a way that is equal in dignity and truly represents the ministry of women in the Gospels? It could be that the representative of Mary walks alongside the representative of Christ, speaks in the service and is equally attentive to the Eucharist – however this may be interpreted. It is important to keep in mind that this role must not do an injustice to women, so the role cannot reinforce the patriarchal idea that women are inferior to men. The sense of inferiority is not reduced by the visible representation of women as readers or altar servers, or even as ordained deaconesses as these roles are not central to the Eucharistic celebration, or in the case of ordained deaconesses they are lower in the hierarchy of the Church...*

Firstly, a bit of logic. If you think, Christ was a he, so anyone acting in *persona Christi* has to be a he, then by parity of reasoning you should also accept The Church is a she, so anyone acting in *persona ecclesiae* has to be a she. I think it is more than a parity of reasoning argument. I think it is an *fortiori* argument. It is not by roles typical of adult males like being a human husband or a human father that Jesus redeems us, but as a human being, one like us. This is implicit in the Creed, in the use of the Latin word *homo* and in the parallelism between the *propter homines* and the *et homo factus est*. As our Canonists know very well, Latin has a perfectly good word for adult male human being, and any ambiguity that might still remain is taken away by the parallelism. On the other hand the roles performed by Holy Mother Church, like the roles of Holy Mother Mary on whom the church is modelled, are intrinsically feminine.

The thought I had by way of one thing we

might be able to do fairly quickly, even before the Plenary Council, is along the lines of subtly reshaping the role of Commentator into something more like a spokesperson for the assembled community and in this manner performing a ministry modelled on that of Mary. And then to make sure that all Commentators happen to be women. Something like the following.

The Commentator gets up before Sunday Mass and does the normal commentating, but before telling people to stand says something like: On your behalf, I now welcome into our midst our Parish Priest to lead us today in our celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. This would replace: Our celebrant today is...

The Commentator or local community

spokesperson, possibly wearing some ensignia of office, then joins the Entrance Process, either alongside the priest as Dr Miller suggests or leading the procession in, just behind the cross bearer. The latter might better reflect the complementary but equal role, not a ministry within the service alongside the other ministers and therefore less than the priest, but someone who so to speak calls the celebration into being.

The Commentator then joins the Readers on the sanctuary, a local custom I have seen in lots of places. But whereas the Readers go back to their places once they have performed their roles, the Commentator stays up there for the whole Mass, as she performs other roles such as inviting the celebrant to lead the congregation and

other significant and symbolic possibilities such as after the Prayer after Communion, asks people to please be seated, and then reads out the Parish and local community notices. And then invites the priest to offer a blessing. Then she walks out alongside the priest in the procession.

Other possibilities would be for women to take significant roles in the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council, rather than just the person who does the rosters. The woman in this role could be a signatory on official parish or local community documents.

To have women speak and act sometimes in *persona Christi* for the sake of our communities, is something we could encourage in creative ways. ☪



## Deacons: humble servants or bishop's delegates?

*Deacons Today: New Wine & New Wineskins* (2019), Anthony Gooley, Coventry Press.  
Reviewed by John Scanlon.

Anthony Gooley is a deacon of Brisbane Archdiocese, a member of the Mission Directorate of Catholic Health Australia, and an adjunct academic at the University of Notre Dame. His contention is that the nature and function of the permanent diaconate have been poorly understood and wrongly applied. The scope of the book is best summarised in his own words: *When the Second Vatican Council approved the restoration of the permanent diaconate, there seemed to be broad agreement about the nature of this function within the hierarchy of the Church. 'Deacons Today' challenges this assumption, arguing that such a restoration will only be effective if there is a deeper understanding of the nature of diaconate in the witness of the New Testament and the history and tradition of the ministry in the earliest centuries of the church's life.*

The author says efforts at restoration, based on inadequate appreciations of the nature of diaconate, are like pouring new wine into old skins. He asserts that if we want to see this ministry flourish for the good of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel (as the Council intended), we need to pour the wine into new wineskins. He argues that we have wasted the new wine because the dominant ideas about deacons are based on false foundations. We have either attempted to pour it into the wineskins of a servant of charity or social work – inherited from a mistaken identification of the deacon group with those for charity and care; or we have poured it into the wineskins of transitional deacons and parish ministry as a kind of 'half-priest'.

*Only by fashioning new wineskins – based on an understanding of the true profile of the deacon words, as well as a deeper encounter with the theology of ministry and Holy Orders – will we recover and build upon a clear understanding of the motives and intentions of the Council in restoring the permanent ministry of deacon,* Gooley says

Fundamental to Gooley's argument is the determination by Vatican II that episcopal ordination is something different to priestly (or, more correctly) presbyteral ordination and that there are therefore three distinct types of ordination. Next, presbyters and deacons are both delegates of the bishop, but with different responsibilities; the presbyter for parish leadership and celebration of the Mass for the parish community; the deacon for diocesan-determined works mainly focussed on evangelisation. For many deacons, these works may include, but are not defined by, participation in parish liturgies.

The idea of the deacon as a kind of ordained social worker, whose work is symbolised by a towel and basin, derives from a Lutheran ministry which developed largely in 19th century Europe. Gooley claims that to call this ministry the diaconate is an error, caused by a lack of understanding of what the word actually meant to the Greek speaking communities around the beginning of the Christian era. His main support for this view is the work of the Australian biblical scholar John Neil Collins, who has researched the meanings attached to the deacon word group in the Christian and secular literature of the time. The main meanings of the

deacon word group, according to Collins, are a delegate or ambassador of a figure of high authority, who carries out his duties with the mandate of that authority. Under this view of the diaconate, the appropriate symbol is not the towel and basin but rather the book of the Gospels.

Gooley has decided and well-documented views on various issues concerning the diaconate that are the subjects of current debate. Perhaps the most arresting is his view that the transitional diaconate, conferred as the last step before the ordination of a presbyter, should be abolished. The diaconate is not the lower of two grades of presbyteral ministry, but a completely separate ministry with its own appropriate training and its separate, distinct ordination. The transitional diaconate is not a true diaconate and only leads to confusion.

An issue that will not go away is the possibility of ordaining women to the diaconate. Gooley is an enthusiastic supporter of the concept of women deacons, and considers the existence of women deacons in earlier eras of church history to be proven beyond doubt. It is of course possible that those who oppose the ordination of women to the diaconate do so because they fear it will lead to increased pressure for female ordination to the presbyterate. Gooley argues that this further step should not and cannot ever take place. In his view, the rulings of the last three popes have closed the door on women presbyters for ever.

There is more value and interest in this book than there is space to mention. I encourage anybody with an interest in Church ministry to read it. ☪

# Returned to God

## JOHN BATHERSBY

26/07/1936 – 09/03/2020



Archbishop Bathersby served as the Bishop of Cairns for five years before taking on his role as Brisbane archbishop for 20 years. He was remembered for his emphasis on prayer, the Eucharist and the centrality of Jesus as well as a commitment to ecumenism and the laity.

Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge said in Archbishop Bathersby's 20 years as archbishop, he was "no high-powered administrator or fiery preacher". "What he brought to the office was something deeper and more enduring," he said. "John was consumed by the desire to know and love Jesus, and he spoke of this more and more as time went by. "This is his greatest legacy to the archdiocese. "It led to a focus on deepening prayer, not only in his own life but in the life of the archdiocese. "The mystic shone through in the little Aussie battler; and the effect of that is hard to measure but impossible to deny. "From this there flowed his passion for Christian unity: he understood that the Jesus whom he had met knocked down the walls that divide. "His deep sense of communion extended not only to other Churches but to the community as a whole."

Archbishop Bathersby was born in Stanthorpe in 1936 to John Thomas, a shopkeeper and publican at the Country Club Hotel, and Grace Maud Bathersby. He entered Pius XII Seminary, Banyo, after his schooling and was ordained in Stanthorpe parish by Bishop William Brennan on June 30, 1961. His first seven years as a priest were spent in Goondiwindi before he was sent to Rome for further studies in 1969, where he completed a licentiate in Theology and a Diploma in Spirituality.

Returning to Brisbane, he worked as a spiritual director at Pius XII Seminary for seven years before, again, he was sent to Rome; this time to complete a Doctorate in Theology/Spirituality. He was appointed Bishop of Cairns in 1986 and then became Archbishop of Brisbane on January 30, 1992. When Archbishop Bathersby retired in 2011, at the age of 75, he said it had been a "privilege" and a "lasting joy" to have been archbishop.

He is survived by his three sisters; Carmel Mahoney, Sue Nolan and Anne Johnson; his brother Michael Bathersby, and numerous nephews and nieces.

*May he rest in peace.*

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## ANTHONY (TONY) JOHN CASEY

08/03/1929 – 08/01/2020



Anthony, the third of ten children of Bill and Ada Casey (nee Gaudron) received his early schooling at Urunga, Dorrigo, Bellingen and St. John's College, Woodlawn, before moving on to his theology studies at Springwood and Manly. He was ordained to the Priesthood in 1954.

Tony worked in many parishes across the Lismore Diocese before taking up his longest and most fruitful appointment in Coffs Harbour. As Parish Priest of Coffs Harbour from December 1972 to December 1993, he was the longest serving Parish Priest in the history of the Parish.

Tony died in Ballina and was farewelled at a Requiem Mass on January 16 in St Augustine's Church Coffs Harbour, in accord with his wishes. The Mass was a fitting tribute to a priest who had done so much in his 22 years in Coffs Harbour for the church and for his people through his spiritual, sacramental and pastoral care and in his development of Catholic education and aged care in the community.

Bishop Gregory Homeming OCD, Bishop of the Lismore Diocese, concelebrated the Requiem Mass with 20 priests of the diocese.

*May he rest in peace.*

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## FRANCIS CLIFFORD BELL

29/05/1925 – 17/02/2020



Born in Narrandera, NSW in 1925, Frank was educated at St Joseph's Convent Narrandera and St Patrick's College, Sale, Victoria, before heading to Rome for Theological studies at the Pontifical Urban College of Propaganda Fide.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga on 21 December 1951 in Rome by Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni Biondi.

Frank (known to many as Cliff) served the people of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in the parishes of Yenda, Griffith, Wagga Wagga, North Albury and Holbrook for 10 years. During this time, he developed a great love for the poor and the needy and the mission aspect of his work was shown in his kindness and generosity and his love for the Lord.

He was always a missionary and was able to develop that calling by volunteering to go to Peru in 1962 where he worked for 12 years before returning to his home Diocese of Wagga Wagga to serve in the parishes of Albury, South Wagga and Narrandera. Frank loved conversing in Spanish and continued to use his knowledge of the Spanish language in various situations until he died.

Frank was a very quiet achiever in many ways – he loved people – to talk to people – to be kind and generous – to help wherever he could and he encouraged others to be generous to the needy both near and far. Frank's last appointment was to Narrandera – a place he loved so much. He retired to Narrandera in 2000 and lived many peaceful years there in his retirement. May the good Lord reward Frank for his life of faithfulness and good work and welcome him into the Kingdom of everlasting life.

*May he rest in peace.*

**PETER HUGH CONROY****12/05/1938 – 16/03/2020**

✠ Peter Hugh Conroy, born in Brisbane, Queensland, was one of four children born to Edward Conroy and Alma Margaret Conroy neè Martin. He attended Marist Brothers College, Ashgrove and studied at Pius XII Provincial Seminary, Banyo, Queensland. Following his studies, he was ordained On 30 June 1962 and began his first appointment in the Brisbane Archdiocese as an Assistant Priest at St John Vianney Parish, Manly. Following this, Peter went on to serve as an Assistant Priest for St Joseph's Parish, Murgon. He later became Hospital Chaplain for Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital where he spent twelve years.

Peter's association with the Yeronga Parish extended over 38 years, commencing in 1978 and continued up until his retirement in July 2016. Peter loved the Priesthood and as a result, was interested in supporting his brother Priests in times of illness. This led to his assistance in making provision for the retirement living of Priests.

A Vigil and Funeral Mass were held at the Yeronga Parish Church and St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane, followed by a burial at Nudgee Cemetery. Peter will be remembered as a dedicated Pastor who was well loved and respected by parishioners, his brother priests and family.

*May he rest in peace.*

**RAYMOND FARRELL****11/10/1946 – 27/03/2020**

✠ Parish priest of St John of God in Auburn, NSW Raymond Farrell died early on 27 March at St Joseph's Village in Auburn. Ray was born in Wellington, NSW and entered St Columba's College, Springwood in 1967 but his studies were interrupted by the need to care for his parents.

He resumed his studies at St Patrick's College Manly (1991) and was ordained to the priesthood at St Felix De Valois Parish, Bankstown on 13 September 1996. He served as assistant priest at Liverpool and then at St Mary's Cathedral in 2001. Ray was appointed the administrator of St John of God, Auburn in 2002 and then parish priest the following year, a role he served until his death.

During his time as parish priest of Auburn, Ray served as dean of the Auburn-Bankstown deanery from 2003 until 2016. He has been the chaplain to the Catholic Women's League since 2003 and to the archdiocesan council of the St Vincent de Paul society since 2011. He served on the Council of Priests from 1997 until 2019.

*May he rest in peace.*

**MILTON JOHN (TIM) FOSTER****11/10/1931 – 03/01/2020**

✠ Tim worked as a bank teller and was a promising AFL player when he heard the call to the priesthood. He studied at St Charles Seminary, Guildford in WA and at St Francis Xavier Seminary, Adelaide.

Tim Foster was 'different' and all who knew him would agree. His innate creativity and sense of adventure affected all he did as a priest. In his first year as assistant priest he purchased a one-wheel bike and rode it around the parish and in the school playgrounds. It made him an instant celebrity especially among the kids! The friendships he made there lasted a lifetime. Where ever he went his creative mind always found new and effective pastoral initiatives. Once in a remote country parish, when boredom threatened, he ran the caravan park – including the shop.

Tim knew he had a talent for teaching and for artistic expression. He put himself through Teachers College and obtained a B Ed which led him to become the art teacher in two Catholic secondary schools. He left a large number of his own art pieces behind, mostly small paintings and delicate sculptures that came from his own deep spirituality. Tim loved travelling, and together with Archbishop Barry Hickey, made the most of Archbishop Hickey's required trips to Rome, visiting many of the world's remote wonders like Lake Titicaca, the Iguazu Falls and the Basilica in Africa the looks like St Peter's in Rome.

In his later years Tim lost the use of his legs and developed Parkinson's disease which led to his death earlier this year. His funeral drew people from all walks of life who had known his joy, his sense of fun and his genuine love. They came to grieve with his devoted carer and his family, and to thank God for the privilege of having known him.

*May he rest in peace.*

**PATRICK MCAULIFFE****24/10/1930 – 24/04/2020**

✠ Pat was educated at the Patrician Brothers School at Waterloo, and Marist Brothers schools at Darlinghurst and Church Hill. He studied for the priesthood at St Columba's College, Springwood and St Patrick's College, Manly and was ordained on the 21 July 1956 at St Mary's Cathedral by Cardinal Gilroy. He served as an Assistant Priest at Surry Hills, Eastwood, (1962), Pagewood (1965), Lane Cove (1967) and Kingsgrove (1972).

In 1974 Pat was appointed Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Parish, Cabramatta and he remained there until his retirement in 2016. He became a legendary figure in Cabramatta during the years in which it became the vibrant centre of Vietnamese life in Sydney and even in retirement, Pat continued to visit schools and to provide supplies in his old parish. Pat's funeral was led by Archbishop Anthony Fisher at Cabramatta on Thursday 29 April. May Pat now enjoy the fullness of life in the Christ he served so faithfully for so many decades.

*May he rest in peace.*

Continued page 52

### BERNARD MELVILLE OAM

12/03/1929 – 02/04/2020



Bernard was born in Tenterfield to parents Mary (McDonagh) and Charles Melville and is survived by his sisters Patricia and Margaret and brother-in-law Robert Blomfield. He received schooling in Katoomba (Primary) and Tamworth (Christian Brothers College).

In 1947 Bernard began studies for the priesthood at St Columba's College, Springwood and St Patrick's College Manly. In the seminary he was nicknamed "Prof" (Professor) due to his excelling in academic studies, a beginning of his lifetime reading in both religious and wider fields. The serious studies he pursued led to his later renown for preaching homilies of high quality.

Bernard was ordained priest by Bishop E J Doody on 22 July 1953 at Sts Mary and Joseph's Cathedral, Armidale. He served as an assistant priest, first in Quirindi and later in Armidale. He was then appointed administrator of the parish of Moree. He later became Parish Priest of Bingara, and then of Manilla, where he served from 1975 until retirement in 2017, a stint of some 42 years, crowning his 64 years as an active priest.

Bernie was renowned for his involvement in many aspects of towns in which he lived, community service which led to him being awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1999.

Bernie was willing to become involved in unpopular issues, such as concern for the Aboriginal poverty-stricken communities on the edges of towns in the 1960s. He became involved in Aboriginal advancement in Moree, which led him to be labelled by some as "the nigger priest". Bernie said he would gladly carry that slur as a badge of honour. When Charlie Perkins led the 1965 Freedom Ride of Sydney University students into Moree, Bernie met with Charlie and they became good friends.

*May he rest in peace.*

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### JOHN O'KELLY

07/01/1939 – 13/01/2020

✠ Passion for ministry and a zest for life were hallmarks of John O'Kelly. Ordained on 27 July 1963, he served in several parishes in the Diocese of Sale: Maffra, Sale and Bairnsdale as assistant priest; and Omeo, Newborough, Orbost, Iona/Maryknoll and Leongatha as parish priest. He combined a very good mind with a big hearted love for people. He put much effort into celebrating the liturgy and preaching the gospel, inviting people into the mystery of God's love for us and the call to respond in faith filled living.

John's grandfather and grandmother were pioneering teachers in Warragul and Sale. A sense of that history led to his transferring, while still a seminary student, from the archdiocese of Melbourne to the diocese of Sale. He came to love Gippsland and perhaps East Gippsland in particular.

He brought his gifts to serve in several capacities. In early years he inspired young people with the vision of Vatican II and their life within the church. For some years he was involved in marriage preparation courses. With an engaging style he was a gifted adult educator. For some time he was a member and then chairman of the Council of Priests. He was also the inaugural President of the Priests' Welfare Foundation. Priests owe him much for that as they are now well provided for whether sick or in their later years.

In these roles he combined a pastor's heart with an active and capable mind. And along the way he was great company; cheerful, happy and fun loving. Many learned that if we had an issue John, with his sharp mind and good judgment, was a good person to run ideas by.

Another notable aspect to John was his great range of interests. He had a knowledge of geology and forestry, and music – especially Gilbert and Sullivan. He was an avid bird watcher, he engaged in ham radio, he loved trains and boats. It was fitting that a yellow tailed black cockatoo saluted his burial in the Bairnsdale cemetery.

*May he rest in peace.*

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### ANTHONY PAPPS

28/02/1954 – 18/02/2020

✠ Anthony Cantwell Papps was born in North Adelaide, the son of George and Patricia Papps (nee Cantwell). He attended Christian Brothers College in Adelaide and his training for the priesthood was St Francis Xavier Seminary, Rostrevor, SA. He was ordained in St Francis Xavier Cathedral on 9 February 1978.

Anthony began his ministry as an Assistant Priest at Morphett Vale. From 1983 he served as Parish Priest of Pinnaroo and later at Hallett Cove, a rather new parish where he built the Church and presbytery. He developed lasting bonds with this parish and its people, so much that it was from here he expressed his wish to be buried.

He held a number of leadership positions, including part time Director of the Priests Continuing Education Committee and an ex officio member of the Council of Priests. He also served in the national committee for the Further Education of Priests. In September 1997 he moved on loan to Darwin Diocese where he served as Vicar General.

On his return he was appointed Parish Priest of Aberfoyle Park. Then he began to experience a number of health issues. So at the beginning of 2004 he took up a part time position as Consultant in Faith Formation at the Catholic Education Office. At the same time he was appointed Priest Assisting in the Emmaus Parish. He died in Flinders Private Hospital on 18 February 2020 and according to his wishes, his Funeral Mass was celebrated at Hallett Cove on 28 February.

*May he rest in peace.*

## RODNEY PITTS

26/11/1942 – 15/02/2020

✠ The French poet Charles Peguy says this: “When you love someone you love him as he is.”  
Rod was brilliant, funny, a great cook, deeply committed and faithful to his priestly vocation, a man of integrity with a deep love for, and understanding of, scripture, nature, liturgy, theology and a hoard of other interests.

He believed totally in the right of the people of God to be involved, engaged and knowledgeable about their Church, its history, rites and rituals.

Most of all, Rod wanted us to find and know the Jesus of the Gospels; and know Jesus as a man of his time and to understand the social, political and religious context in which he lived.

Lest I present Rod as a few steps away from canonization, he could also be pedantic, stubborn, eccentric, easily offended, and was at times a complete and utter pain!

Martin Buber’s statement, “One eats in holiness and the table becomes an altar”, was what many experienced when sharing meals with Rod. Here conversation centred on those who were excluded, rejected and disenfranchised. These themes ran very deep and from a very personal space within Rod himself.

Sharing meals was a form of sacrament to Rod. He would invariably comment on the origin of the various ingredients or go off into a description of meals he had cooked for himself on his many rambles and camping expeditions. Bushwalking, camping holidays and his caravan site at Cape Paterson filled Rod with joy. They took him out of his head and into beauty.

Friedrich von Hugel once wrote, “Caring is the greatest thing. Caring matters most.”

Rod was a man who cared deeply. Many things mattered to Rod which was why he was so pedantic about particular issues. He never was the type of person for whom near enough is good enough. It is what drove him to make unpopular statements and behave in ways that did offend and alienate at times. Rod was a deeply passionate and caring individual, but one who found it impossible to compromise his position on any subject.

Rod’s friend, Fr Gerry McKernan commented shortly after Rod’s death, “Well you know, I think Rod will now understand things ... and will also finally be understood.”

*May he rest in peace.*

## MARK RYAN OCSO

23/05/1932 – 24/10/2019



Fr Mark Ryan, of Tarrawarra Abbey, Victoria, the last of the resident Irish founders died, aged 87. Dublin born Mark, the son of James R Ryan and Irene Boyle, was one of eight siblings – seven sons and a daughter. One brother, Thomas, was a Dominican who spent a lifetime of service in India. Another, Richie, was a member of the Irish Parliament, Treasurer of Ireland (nicknamed Richie Ruin by those who didn’t appreciate his stringent financial policies), and an elected Irish representative at the European Union.

Mark entered the Cistercian community at Mt St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea, County Tipperary, at the age of 18. Four years later, he was one of eight founders of Tarrawarra Abbey who arrived in Melbourne on 31 October 1954 on board the S.S. Esperance Bay. At that time, it was definitely a one-way ticket down-under but Vatican II mercifully opened the way to several trips home to Ireland, family and the motherhouse. Mark became an Australian citizen in August 1976, but “the old sod” remained in his bones and accent and close to his heart to the end.

As a founder, Mark had to combine his monastic and priestly studies with hard labour providing the infrastructure and upkeep for the nascent community. He made his Solemn Profession at Tarrawarra on 7 October 1955, and was ordained a priest on 3 January 1957, in the newly completed Abbey church, on which he had worked.

Together with his fellow founders, Mark became a stabilised member of Tarrawarra when it was raised to Abbey status on 28 November 1958, and participated in the election of the first abbot the following day. Mark served his community in a variety of ways on the farm, as water engineer, and most importantly as organist.

Mark also exercised a ministry to priests, through prayer groups and retreats. Archbishop Chris Prowse was one who expressed his appreciation of the service he offered in this field: “He was humble, attentive and challenging and a truly blessed channel of the Holy Spirit for me”.

*May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face  
The rains falls soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

## RETURNED TO GOD

### PETER JAMES ROBINSON OAM

13/01/1933 – 13/03/2020

✠ Peter James Robinson OAM PE passed away on Saturday, 14 March 2020 at Box Hill Public Hospital aged 87 years. Peter was ordained a Catholic priest at St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne on 25 July 1964. He was appointed Assistant Priest at St Patrick's Cathedral (1964), Clayton (1968) and then appointed as Chaplain to the Deaf Community in 1972. In 1983, Peter was appointed Administrator of Ringwood East followed by Parish Priest and, in 1993, appointed Assistant Priest at Macleod and then Parish Priest later that same year. Peter was appointed Pastor Emeritus in 2009.

Peter was much loved and respected for his ministry. In 1984 he was awarded a medal in the Order of Australia in recognition of his work for people with a disability.

He was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour and a genuine love for life and will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

The Archdiocese is most grateful for the untiring service to the Church of Melbourne of this cheerful and generous man.

*May he rest in peace.*

### JOSEPH COLMAN WALSH OSA

29/09/1932 – 04/03/2020



Joseph Colman Walsh OSA had five brothers and a sister and was raised on a dairy farm near Fethard, County Tipperary. He completed his secondary education at the Augustinian College, St Augustine's, County Waterford, undertook his novitiate in 1954-1955, studied philosophy at Raheny in County Dublin and his theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, in which city he was then ordained a priest on 10 July 1960.

The Irish Augustinian Province assigned him to minister in Australia, where he arrived in December 1961. He commenced the first of his two teaching periods at the Order's Villanova College at Coorparoo in Brisbane, where in all he served for over 12 years. The majority of his Australian appointments, however, were to the three then-Augustinian parishes of Echuca, Rochester and Kyabram in northern Victoria (Diocese of Sandhurst), and the two then-Augustinian parishes in tropical Mareeba and Innisfail (Diocese of Cairns). Joe was Parish Priest at the Parish of Rochester in 1982-1986.

In a retirement precipitated by the onset ill health, Joe was assigned a third time to Villanova Priory at Coorparoo, Brisbane, which proved to be the final Augustinian community of which he was a member. While there, he marked his sacerdotal golden jubilee in 2010 with celebrations in Brisbane and again soon afterwards when on vacation in Tipperary. As his health deteriorated further, Joe was admitted to the Marycrest aged care facility at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane where he died peacefully, only four months short of his sixtieth anniversary of priesthood. His Requiem Mass took place on 11 March 2020 at St James's Church at Coorparoo, the first church in which Joe had served upon arrival in Australia fifty-nine years earlier. He was buried in the Augustinian section of Nudgee Catholic Cemetery, Nudgee, Brisbane.

More important that giving the chronology of Joe's pastoral ministry is attesting to the qualities of the person himself. Whenever in a parish, he was appreciated as a gentle pastor. He felt at greatest ease when ministering to the sick or the housebound, and in visiting the elderly. Joe was a supporter and exemplar of Augustinian community life, calm natured and ever diligent in his obligations therewith, and always a man of routine. Anything that was his responsibility was well executed.

*May he rest in peace.*

#### Returned to God, we hold them in prayer.

✠ Raymond John Brain CP, (Passionists).....	11/01/2020
✠ Christopher Colman, (Diocese of Bunbury).....	17/04/2020
✠ Peter V Morrissey, (Archdiocese of Sydney).....	28/04/2020
✠ John Norman Rasmussen, (Diocese of Rockhampton).....	10/01/2020
✠ Michael Slattery, (Diocese of Bunbury).....	01/04/2020

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## Caritas Australia Prayer for the COVID-19

May we who are experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia  
and are coming to terms with a new reality,  
remember the words of scripture:  
**“Be still and know that I am God”.**

May we who as adults struggling to process what is happening in our world,  
remember children who are fearful of a reality they cannot comprehend.

May we who complain about the scarcity of commodities,  
remember those who are working to maintain the supply chain.

May we who observe the long queues of those seeking support,  
remember those for whom there is no government assistance or financial aid.

May we who rely on essential services, especially those in the medical profession,  
remember all those working on the front line.

May we who work to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity,  
remember those living and working in vulnerable communities.

May we who are working from home,  
remember those who have no employment or home from which to work.

May we who have access to medical facilities and services,  
remember those who do not have basic health care.

May we who are beginning to experience border closures,  
remember refugees who cannot return home.

May we give thanks for those who are working to help or bring some kindness,  
joy or humour to others, showing us the light of Christ lives.

During this time of isolation as we close our doors, may we continue  
to keep our hearts open to our family, friends, local and global communities.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.