



Quarterly magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia

The Swag

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ABOUT THE NCP

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

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

James Clarke



This is my last message as Chairman of the National Council of Priests. I write this message with a sense of bitter-sweet feeling. I have enjoyed my tenure as Chairman of NCP and as this has been my second stint in the role, I feel that it is time for someone else to take over the helm. I am happy to inform the members that the new Chairman of the National Council of Priests will be Fr John Conway. John, a priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, is currently on the NCP executive and has graciously accepted the invitation to become Chairman. I wish John every blessing and success in his new role.

As I write this article the news of the failure of the “Voice referendum” is resounding around the country. I feel a great sense of sadness at this lost opportunity. It would appear that the

indigenous peoples of this country have been further entrenched in their status as “second class citizens”. The opportunity for First Nations peoples to have a say in the administration of their affairs has been denied them.

The blame game will undoubtedly begin. What was the country afraid of? Are we as a nation afraid of change? This fear of the unknown is also entrenched within our Church. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council are constantly being resisted. This is evidenced in the way that the Synod on Synodality has been received.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, is endeavouring to make the Church more accessible and more inclusive. Those who are opposed to his agenda believe that the Holy Father is leading the faithful into doctrinal error. They are limited in their scope, and cannot see beyond their own myopic ecclesial world view. The late former President of the United States, President Franklin D Roosevelt, in his inaugural address in 1933 said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”.

The “nay-sayers” in society and in the Church will always resist change, and attempt to hold back the momentum of history. The First Nations people of Australia have been denied the opportunity to make decisions which affect their lives and to direct their own future. The era of paternalism from “White Australia” is at an end. In our Church the Second Vatican Council set in motion the idea

of reform. Not change for change sake, but reform and renewal in conformity with the values and teachings of the Gospel and within the tradition of the Church.

In concluding this message, I would like to thank the members of the current NCP executive for their support of me during my current tenure.

I also extend my thanks to Sally Heath and Christine Moore for their support during my time as Chairman. I have enjoyed their friendship and hospitality and benefitted from their pastoral wisdom.

Sally and Chris are retiring. They have been devoted and faithful supporters of the mission of the NCP and have made an outstanding contribution to our organisation. I thank them for their professionalism and unwavering commitment to NCP.

In addition to all the work they do for our organisation and members, the publication of 26 editions of *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia* is a testimony to their skill and dedication to the mission of the Church. Sally and Chris, you will be sorely missed. May the Lord continue to bless you both.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the membership of the National Council of Priests. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to lead this organization, and I thank you for your trust and support.

Yours in His Priesthood,
James Clarke ☩

RE-CONNECT | RE-ENGAGE | RE-ENERGISE

14-17 October 2024

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

The Great Southern Hotel, George St, Sydney – right in the heart of Chinatown and 100 metres from Haymarket Parish. Further details in the Autumn edition of *The Swag*.

SAVE THE DATE – NCP CONVENTION



Peter Matheson



With regret I sadly announce that Sally Heath and Christine Moore are retiring. This will be the last edition of *The Swag* to be prepared for publication by them. These two ladies, who have kept the NCP headquarters going for the last nearly thirty years, and managed so many conventions, need a break.

On your behalf, and on behalf of the many priests who have benefitted from their administration over these years, I thank them most sincerely. We will miss them. My first working encounter with Sally was during the 2000 Lorne Convention of the NCP.

Sally and Chris's departure is a sign of a changing NCP, and perhaps another sign of a church that is changing on many levels, personal, local and international. As we go to press, the Synod on Synodality is proceeding in Rome. We are on the road together. This is Pope Francis' way of being church.

We know there are different roads, not necessarily going in the same direction, and like many of our roads at the moment, they will have many potholes. We await the next steps of the journey.

The deadline for articles for this edition of *The Swag* fell two days after the referendum. Frank Brennan had written a book on the Voice, and brought out two further new editions, while arguments swirled to and fro as we waited for referendum day. Frank advocated a YES vote.

The country has voted otherwise. In the two days following the referendum, Frank has pondered the journey, and

prepared an excellent analysis as our first article. He proposes two lessons for Church Leaders and Social Justice Groups from the Referendum.

Sr Carmel Pilcher RSJ has had a long involvement in Aboriginal and liturgical issues and has written a history of the "Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit," and how Aboriginal Mass settings have developed since permission was given for the first Aboriginal Mass to be celebrated at the Melbourne Eucharistic Congress in 1973.

Frank O'Loughlin, who spoke to us at the 2000 Lorne NCP convention on reconciliation, has penned an article on Children's First Confession which I am sure will ring bells for many of us priests. Bill Uren offers an important probing reflection on the Transgender person and the Church.

Sr Patty Fawkner SGS writes of how her Good Samaritan Sisters and staff were called "dogs", "witches" and told they were "going to hell," when they agreed to the request of our former editor, Peter Maher, to have a Mass in their chapel for the LGBTQI+ community during Sydney's WorldPride 2023.

Following on from the abuse the Good Samaritan Community suffered, Br Mark O'Connor, the vicar for communication in the Parramatta Diocese, reflects on a sickness abroad in our Church and society where some few people have a lust to punish others. Mark was in Rome during the Synod brilliantly reporting on the event.

John Warhurst from Canberra offers a reflection on Catholic schools as Australia's ecclesial future following interaction with many staff from many schools in recent times. Schools have long been a major arm in the Church's evangelisation mission.

We know that in parts of our country Catholic schools are being closed on the grounds of being no longer financially viable, but many more are being planned for the burgeoning outer suburbs in our big cities.

We are grateful to Peter Wilkinson who continues his series on the history of Australian seminaries, this time on the Vaughan and Moran Seminary Visions.

In other matters of Catholic education, Paul Collins is scathing of ACU's decision to axe dozens of humanities

jobs. "Where is Cardinal George Pell when you need him?" he begins.

Michael McGirr offers a lovely reflection on the French Jesuit Palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It is 100 years this year since Teilhard wrote "The Mass on the World." It was not published until 1961, six years after he had died in New York, a forgotten man.

Articles on sexual abuse in the church are rather common, but John Crothers offers a probing reflection on another form of abuse that many in the church experience. Are we guilty of it ourselves?

Just before the Synod on Synodality began in Rome the anti-Francis Cardinals presented their Dubia to the Pope once again, requesting one word Yes or No answers. They got more than a one word response almost immediately.

We reprint the response to Dubium 2 in this issue. The response was 412 words long, following their question about blessing same-sex relationships, which was 142 words long.

There are other articles which we hope will engage your interest from different authors. I have also offered a story of the first priest I met as a very young boy, the brother of the lady who is on the way to becoming Australia's second saint. ☺

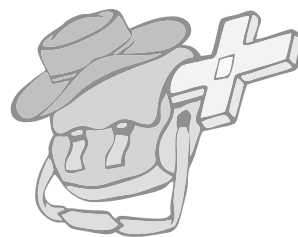
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and articles is

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

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



Two lessons for Church Leaders and Social Justice Groups from the recent Referendum

FRANK BRENNAN SJ



Frank Brennan is the author of *An Indigenous Voice to Parliament: Considering a Constitutional Bridge*, 3rd edition, Garratt Publishing. The photo shows Frank handing a copy of his book to Pope Francis.

At the recent referendum, we priests all knew parishioners and fellow priests who voted ‘Yes’ with enthusiasm, others who voted ‘Yes’ with reservations, others who voted ‘No’ with conviction, and others who voted ‘No’ with regret. If you were like me, you were happy to recommend that your fellow citizens vote ‘Yes’ with hope, rather than ‘No’ with despair.

Some ‘Yes’ voters thought the proposed change to the Constitution was perfect or at least safe and worthwhile. Others of us thought the wording imperfect but thought the whole thing had dragged on too long – since 2007, and that there was no guarantee that any proposal would be improved in the next 5 or 10 years.

The people spoke loud and clear on 14 October 2023. The referendum was lost in every state and the vote for ‘No’ was 61% with ‘Yes’ limping in at 39%. I presume the Catholic vote was much the same.

At the Prime Minister’s press conference

acknowledging the loss of the referendum on Sunday 15 October, a journalist asked Mr Albanese: ‘Why do you think Australians voted No?’ He simply answered: ‘The analysis will go on for some time, no doubt. But the truth is that no referendum has succeeded in this country without bipartisan support. None.’

There’s really not much need for further analysis than that. We all knew that from Day One. And the Prime Minister thought it worth a shot without bipartisan support.

Three months after Mr Albanese made his post-election announcement at the Garma Festival on 31 July 2022 that he would proceed with a referendum this year, two of the respected leaders of the Uluru Dialogues spoke at the National Press Club. One of them, Professor Megan Davis, spoke about the proposed wording announced at Garma and said, ‘It’s not set in stone, but it’s a good beginning.’

When asked about the Opposition Leader’s failure to commit at that stage of the process, she said, ‘That’s in some way the job of an Opposition, to raise these questions. Questions about detail are perfectly legitimate questions.’

Professor Davis insisted that the First Nations leaders of the Uluru dialogues had decided to ‘leave the politics for the politicians’. She told the national audience that from their discussions with Opposition members, ‘There’s strong support from members of the LNP.’

Like many observers that day, I presumed Megan Davis was right. But I was very worried. From my discussions with Opposition members, I knew there was considerable disquiet that the Prime Minister had not set up any process for engagement with them. So I wrote to the Prime Minister making two suggestions:

1. Now is the time to set up a parliamentary committee process allowing anyone and everyone to have their ‘say’ on the proposed words of amendment to place in the Constitution.
2. Now is the time to return to formal bipartisan co-operation between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition so as to maximise the prospect of Coalition support for the referendum.

The government decided it was not time for any of that. They waited another five months before setting up a parliamentary committee. By then the cement had dried. The words of the proposed amendment were set. The formal opposition of both the National and Liberal Parties was set. And voters were starting to turn off the idea of a Voice. They had no idea about what it was, how it would work, and what it would achieve.

Andrew Bragg was a key Liberal Party supporter who served on the parliamentary committee eventually established in April and expected to work on an impossibly short time line. He said: ‘The committee process we had was a joke. It did not provide a proper opportunity to improve the wording. I mean, the idea that this wording is

Continued page 6

perfect, I think, is intellectually insincere.’ He told Parliament: ‘I think it was a bad process, mainly because there was no effort put into trying to develop a set of words by the parliament. Rather, what was given to the committee was a government bill. We were asked to review a government bill in five weeks, which was a policy of the government.’ He said, ‘The idea that the way the Voice has been drafted in this bill is perfect is intellectually unsound.’ Having appeared before the committee, I agree with Bragg’s characterisation of the committee process and outcome. After the referendum, Bragg told the *Sydney Morning Herald*: ‘The committee process was a last-chance saloon. That’s when the government could have pivoted and tweaked the wording and brought a whole bunch of Liberals across [to Yes]. The government wouldn’t compromise on anything. The wording they wanted was the wording they got.’

From there, the referendum was doomed. The first lesson for church leaders and church social justice groups is: don’t just sit back and trust government when they depart from the tried and tested processes for constitutional change, when they abuse parliamentary process, and when they ride roughshod over citizens of goodwill wanting to enhance government processes and proposals. The government’s novel approach of going it alone with a handpicked group of Aboriginal advisers was never going to work. It was always going to end in disaster.

They were playing roulette with the nation’s soul. They should have been challenged or at least questioned. The church leadership and church social justice groups were largely silent or implicitly trusting of the government’s approach. Don’t forget: this was Labor’s 25th failed attempt to amend the Australian Constitution. Their one and only success was back in 1946.

The second lesson is that we all have a lot of work to do to educate each other and our fellow citizens about the entitlements of First Australians. We all know parishioners and fellow priests of good will who simplistically assert that all that is required for justice is to treat everyone the same. If that were all that the gospel and Catholic social teaching

required, we would of course vote ‘No’ to any constitutional amendment which accorded a special place to First Australians. We would be readily tempted to think that any special recognition of First Australians would divide the nation.

This problem became manifest 35 years ago when the 14 Australian church leaders sponsored an initiative during the 1988 bicentenary year. They asked that the Australian Parliament pass a resolution in the new Parliament House affirming (a) the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage; and (b) the entitlement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to self-management and self-determination, subject to the Constitution and the laws of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Hawke Labor government was very supportive. At the last minute the Coalition parties in opposition expressed their concern that the entitlement to self-management and self-determination should be qualified by the words ‘in common with all other Australians’. This qualification was not acceptable to the church leaders nor to the Aboriginal leaders with whom we were liaising. Thus the motion was passed without the support of the Coalition parties.

Fred Chaney, one of the Liberal Party’s most enlightened and passionate advocates for Aboriginal Australians was leader of his party in the Senate. He told the Senate: ‘We, like the Government, have made mistakes but I think one mistake we are not prepared to make is to hand a weapon to people who might use that weapon as a stick to beat a path towards the concept of two nations in this country.’

The very clear view of the Opposition is that that is a totally counterproductive way to go and the great bulk of Aboriginal people that I have met agree with me.’ That’s the same sort of thing we heard from the ‘No’ advocates during the recent referendum campaign. Fred’s 1988 words could well be taken up by Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price.

For his part, Fred Chaney has developed his thinking these past 35 years and since leaving the Parliament. During the referendum campaign, as a passionate Yes advocate, he wrote: ‘The reality is

Indigenous Australians, with their unique cultures, are a permanent and distinct part of Australia. The past discredited assimilation policies assumed they would be absorbed and cease to exist in their difference. The old Australia did everything it could to make that happen.

Thankfully, it didn’t happen. Indigenous people maintained their identities against all the odds that were stacked against them. Now, with even the “No” proponents supporting some form of recognition, and Native Title reminding us and them that Indigenous people already have distinct legal rights, we know that the world’s oldest living cultures are here to stay.’ Not every member of the Coalition parties has made that change in recent years. I daresay that most ‘No’ voters, whether or not they be church goers, would be more comfortable with Fred’s 1988 declaration rather than his 2023 observations. This is where we have real work to do.

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis wrote: ‘it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed.’ His predecessor John Paul II at Alice Springs in 1986 said: ‘The establishment of a new society for Aboriginal people cannot go forward without just and mutually recognized agreements with regard to (your) human problems, even though their causes lie in the past.’ Let’s hope that, by the next time we have a referendum on this issue, those in our pews will be convinced that First Australians deserve a special, distinctive place at the table.

Let’s be guided by NATSICC who have said, ‘With this hope in our hearts, we will continue to advocate for the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We are certain that our family, the Catholic Church continues to walk alongside us.

...We believe that together, with love, understanding, and the grace of God, we can build a future where every individual is recognized, respected, and cherished.’ ☪

Children's First Confession: constructive or destructive

FRANK O'LOUGHLIN

After hearing children's first confessions, I always find myself asking questions about the value of the practice. I keep asking myself whether it makes sense or not? Whether it is constructive or destructive of the formation of children as believers? And whether this practice fits into the overall sacramental life of the Church? I also find that such questions reflect discussions which often take place among the priests, teachers and catechists involved in these celebrations and their preparation.

Almost universally, the children are quite happy about the celebrations, which are significant occasions in the course of the children's schooling and are occasions for which their immediate family and other relatives and friends gather around them.

The real question is: does the practice of first confessions feed into and promote the Christian life of these children and the conversion which is part of that life and which this sacrament celebrates.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, first confessions were a taken for granted part of Catholic children's formation. New historical circumstances have undermined that earlier practice. Today by and large confession is no longer part of the lives of the vast majority of families from which the children are drawn. And moreover, the use of confession has largely died out among practicing Catholics. The non-use of the sacrament is not really a matter of laxity on the part of the faithful but rather it witnesses to the fact that the earlier practice of confession no longer finds a significant place in the faith and mentality of contemporary practicing Catholics.

In that earlier period, the practice of confession was a part of the Catholic ethos, one might almost say that it was part of Catholic identity. This was the context in which first confessions took place and it made sense of the practice. It was introducing the children to something which was part of the Catholic life into which they were being introduced. But that context has changed and there is now no real

context for the practice. It becomes an isolated moment in the Children's life and education and lacks a real point of reference within normal Catholic life. It is often said jokingly that the children's first confession is also their last.

The practice of first confessions was part of the overall role of the sacrament of penance in the Post-Tridentine Church, and it reflects an approach to the sacrament which sees it in terms of morality, and perhaps spirituality, rather than seeing it specifically as a sacrament of the Church.

Like all seven sacraments, penance manifests an aspect of the Church's identity. It has an essential relationship to baptism, confirmation and Eucharist; and is in parallel with anointing of the sick, marriage and orders, each of which has its own specific purpose.

Penance began its life as second baptism. That was its founding purpose to which we are not limited but in any consideration of the meaning of the sacrament that origin must be taken into account. The much later moral and spiritual approach to it has shaped not only the more recent practice of the sacrament but also its understanding – at least since the Council of Trent.

The sense of sin in the Post-Tridentine period and indeed throughout Early Modern times was individualistic, legalistic and often prone to scrupulosity. Following the Council of Trent, the sacrament was seen to be a means of bringing about moral reform in the Church. It also increasingly came to be seen as a means by which Christians could be rid of their daily sins, which was in strong contrast to the initial, founding form of the sacrament in which daily sins were not in play. This sacrament was also a means by which the Church exercised a form of control over its members.

Individualism was in the cultural air in Early Modern times. Luther's individual understanding of salvation is testimony to that but it was a pervading element of the culture of the time and so was influential in Catholicism.

Looking at an understanding of sin which reflects more accurately its deeper meaning as is found in the Scriptures and earlier tradition, we can see sin as a deep and pervasive element of the human condition than cannot be dealt with in the confession of a few faults and a fairly meaningless penance as a pledge of conversion.

In renewing the sacrament, there needs to be a pervasive and practical understanding of it as a celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus by which we are redeemed from sin as we are from death. This does not lead to a diminished sense of sin but to a realistic appraisal of the continuing influence of sin in human affairs as is seen in the human attitudes and decisions which led to the death of Jesus. It is a power at work within human beings and human structures. But Christ, the Lamb of God, and victim of human sinfulness, takes away the sin of the world.

I would suggest that the age at which children make their first confession actually trivializes the meaning of sin and the purpose of the sacrament. Nor does it leave any lasting impression on the children involved or on their parents. It may be 'cute' but is it effective? Trivialization diminishes the sacrament and the sense of sin.

Another problem that is manifested in the practice of Children's first confession is that over recent centuries confession has too often been separated from conversion. Conversion is a process. It is a constant dimension of the Christian life and vocation which begins in the sacraments of baptism/confirmation and continues in the constant celebration of the Eucharist. Penance is not about Christian initiation – which its present positioning suggests – but about reconciliation with the Christian community and its Lord when a significant break in that relationship has occurred. Penance is 'second baptism'. It is about a renewing what has been celebrated in the sacraments of Initiation.

The later historical developments of the sacrament in Irish tariff penance and the rise of medieval individual penance are

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FEATURES

interesting because they arose from attempts to meet different situations in different times. Such creative initiatives in the Church of those times sought to take a new mentality and context into account, which is just what we need to do in our own times.

The emergence of the importance of the individual person in the history of Western culture is a humanizing step forward but an aspect of the Individualism which we see around us in contemporary culture can be dangerous as it can threaten the social fabric of society and the social nature of human beings. Our Catholic tradition has a strong sense of the communal nature of being human and we need to bring to light the deep inter-relatedness of human beings without which there cannot be an adequate understanding of the human. Thus regarding sin, we need to show how ingrained it is in human existence and stop isolating it to just actions and choices. We are dealing

with 'the sin of the world', from which the Lamb of God has redeemed us.

The deeper understanding and presentation of sin needs to be embedded in our pastoral and sacramental practice. So communal celebrations – strictly sacramental or not – are crucial instruments to give the celebration of penance the place it deserves in the life of the Church. Our understanding of sin and the sacrament of penance needs to be more in tune with the deeper dimensions of the biblical and Catholic tradition.

In asking the question whether first confessions of children are constructive or destructive, I would suggest that they set children off on the wrong path to a discovery of redemption, forgiveness and sin. And in practice it seems to be a path that leads nowhere!

Looking at penance in its origins as second baptism, it would make much more sense to introduce young people

to this sacrament at a later age at around the time when confirmation is frequently celebrated today. Confirmation is often presented as the time for young people to affirm their faith and commit themselves to it: but it does not have that nature; we are bending it to our own uses. The sacrament of conversion would make much more sense at such a time!

As it is, are we not making both of these sacraments ineffective because they do not and cannot do what we are asking of them? ☪

Frank O'Loughlin is a Melbourne priest, now retired, formerly director of the Melbourne Liturgy Office, parish priest of Sandringham, and lecturer in liturgy and sacramental theology at Catholic Theological College.

For a more extensive presentation of sin, see his recent book, *Does Sin Matter? Separation, Reconciliation, Redemption* Coventry Press 2022.



Mass of the land of the Holy Spirit

A TIMELINE BY CARMEL PILCHER RSJ

Following Vatican Council II, missionaries in the Broome and Darwin Dioceses were already adapting the liturgy for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assemblies. This is the story of how Mass texts in aboriginal languages came to be.

1971–1977

Preparation for and celebration of the Australian Aboriginal Mass in Melbourne during the Eucharistic Congress in February 1973.

4 October 1972. The Mass is sent to Rome for approval.

1 November 1972. Cardinal Bugnini (Secretary of the Worship Office) writes to Cardinal Knox (Archbishop of Melbourne) with permission to use the Mass with a few modifications.

30 May 1973. Permission is granted for the Diocese of Broome to experiment with a special liturgy for Aborigines, with a request for a report after a suitable length of trial.

27-31 August 1973. Australian Episcopal Conference Minutes, 80.

The Holy See had granted approval for use in the Diocese of Broome of the Mass prepared for the Australian Aboriginal Liturgy at the Melbourne International Eucharistic Congress. It was proposed that the bishops avail themselves of the faculties granted by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship on 21st March 1972 and approve the use throughout Australia of that Mass for Aborigines (with the exception of the Eucharistic Prayer) whenever they consider it would promote the pastoral welfare of Aborigines in their dioceses.

MOTION: That the Introductory Rite, Offertory Rite, Communion Rite and Concluding Rite of the Mass used at the Aboriginal Liturgy of the Melbourne International Eucharistic Congress be approved for use in Australia whenever it would promote the pastoral welfare of Aborigines. CARRIED.

August 1977. Bishop's Commission for Aborigines is set up.

Resolution 4. We recognise that Aboriginal Groups would greatly benefit from a liturgy and prayer forms more attuned to their religious genius and adapted to their conditions of living.

1978–2016

THE LA GRANGE TRANSLATION OF THE MASS

The Missa Kimberley originated at La Grange (now Bidadanga) in Western Kimberley. At the time at La Grange, five major language groups made up the community: Garadyari, Nyangumada, Yulbaridya, Dyuwalyiny and Mangala.

Beginning soon after the Second Vatican Council, the late Fr Kevin McKelson, Pallottine missionary and linguist, worked with the late Tommy Dodds and other Aboriginal elders from the five tribes who had settled in the area. Together they carefully interpreted the English version of the Mass of the Roman Rite in each of the five languages spoken in the community.

The unique methodology used for the preparation of the texts by Kevin McKelson needs some explanation. McKelson sat with elders from these tribes (including Tommy Dodds). They took the Roman Missal and turned the texts into thought patterns and content that would be understood by the people. This was done orally, of course, but then McKelson, a skilled linguist, wrote down the texts in each of the five languages.

Kevin McKelson also consulted with liturgical scholars, local and visiting social sociologists and anthropologists, and even toured the world visiting indigenous communities.

For forty years McKelson continued to refine the Mass with the support of the diocesan bishop (initially John Jobst 1959-1995). The Missa Kimberley, as it eventually came to be known, was used extensively in the Broome Diocese, the Darwin Diocese and beyond.

September-October 1977. Correspondence between Kevin McKelson and Cardinal James Knox in Rome, with supportive letters from Bishop Jobst, set up a meeting in Rome.

5 December 1977. McKelson meets with Cardinal Knox, Prefect of the Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship in the Vatican. He is well received and the cardinal said he would set up a Commission on Aboriginal Liturgy in WA with the Abbott of New Norcia in the chair.

7 December 1977. The Cardinal sends McKelson this letter:

Thank you very much for your visit last Monday. I was pleased to have had the opportunity of meeting you and hearing of your work among the Aborigine people. As I pointed out, in the matter of liturgical adaptation, the considerable and important work involved, according to existing norms, would need to be taken under the auspices of the local Bishops and I suggest that the matter be taken up with the Bishops of Western Australia through Bishop Jobst. The material eventually prepared could then be forwarded to the Congregation through the secretariat of the Australian Episcopal Conference, and we should do whatever is possible to be of assistance.

28 March 1978. Fr Kevin McKelson prepares 'A Case for Inculturation

among Australian Aborigines'. Copies are sent to Archbishop Goody (Perth) and Bishop Leo Clarke (bishops' liturgy committee) among others. Clarke replies saying in part, *A study of the principles in adapting the liturgy for use among Aborigines as outlined in the document makes very interesting reading. I shall bring the submission to the notice of the National Liturgical Commission at the next meeting which is set down for April 18-19.*

15-21 May 1978. Australian Episcopal Conference Commission Minutes, 103.

Texts for Mass for Aboriginal People. The Episcopal Liturgical Commission referred to the approval given by the Holy See, for use in the Diocese of Broome for a period of three years, to the English and local language texts of a Mass for Aborigines which was, in essence, that used at the International Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne. For pastoral reasons, these texts had been revised and improved and a further experimental period of five years was considered necessary.'

MOTION: That the Holy See be requested to approve, for use in the Diocese of Broome and for a period of five years, ad experimentum, these revised and improved Mass texts. For 32. Against 0. CARRIED.

7 June 1978. Fr Patrick Doherty (secretary of Australian Episcopal Conference) asks for two or three copies of the text of the English and Aboriginal language Mass so that an application for approval can be sent to Rome.

29 June 1978. Doherty asks McKelson to let Bishop Jobst know that the 'request for approval will be sent to Rome within a few days'.

29 June 1978. Fr Patrick Doherty writes to Cardinal Knox in Rome on behalf of Cardinal Clancy (president) requesting a further five years of experimentation for use in the Broome diocese. No response to that request can be found in the ACBC archives.

21 May 2001. Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Francesco Canalini visits Balgo and witnesses the Mass in Kukatja. The parish priest reports that he is pleased.

14 March 1996. Bishop Saunders writes to Kevin McKelson suggesting that the

time has come to formalise the Kimberley Aboriginal Liturgy, both for *communio* with the Holy See and to enable future missionaries to receive formation in its use and application. He commissions McKelson to prepare a text in language with an English translation to be presented to Rome in 'an authentic and convincing manner'.

In 1997, after consultation with pastors and practitioners on matters such as posture, gesture, seating and ritual gestures, a definitive form of the Missa Kimberley is submitted to the bishop.

In 2003, the Missa is further discussed and modified. The bishop wishes to present it to the Australian bishops and then to Rome. Fr McKelson continued his work on the Missa until he retired in 2006. He died in 2011.

2015–2018

THE MASS OF THE LAND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (MLHS)

In 2014, Carmel Pilcher is invited by the Bishop of Broome to prepare a single version of the Missa Kimberley. She begins by visiting various remote communities, listening to their stories, and collecting all the versions in use.

Carmel then calls the first meeting of some interested liturgists, who generously agreed to be part of the project. Those on the original committee were Tom Elich, David Orr, Barry Craig, the late Joan Henricks and Carmel Pilcher (chair).

In 2015, this reference group comes together for a 2-day meeting in Brisbane. They are joined by Bishop Paul Bird who generously gives a day of his holidays to assist.

The team sets about preparing a version of the Missa that would be liturgically acceptable. This is eventually renamed the *Missa Terra Spiritus Sancti, the Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit*. While working on the project, Carmel Pilcher continues to visit Broome and consult and update leaders.

In 2018, Liturgy Brisbane publishes the Missa and generously agrees to cover the cost for this publication, which they have continued to do.

In 2018, the priests of Broome are called for a weeklong liturgical formation workshop in Mirilinki, run by

Continued page 10

Barry Craig, David Orr and Carmel Pilcher. At the end of this workshop, the MLHS is ritually presented to the priests and their communities, in the Diocese of Broome by two elders from the Bidadanga parish: Maureen Yanawana and Madeleine Jadai.

All then celebrate the MLHS for the first time with the Warmun community. The MLHS is well received and, ever since that time, continues to be used by the faith communities in the diocese.

Following its publication the Missa moves across the nation and is now celebrated in various Aboriginal Catholic Communities.

2022–2023

December 2022. The reference group, now expanded to include Tom Elich, David Orr, Barry Craig, John FitzHerbert, Clare Schwantes, Evelyn Parkin, Cynthia Rowan and Carmel Pilcher, meets again for two days in Brisbane.

The group decides to work towards the possibility that the MLHS be approved by the ACBC for use in the Diocese of Broome.

In 2023, Bishop Michael Morrissey, Episcopal Administrator of the Broome diocese, is preparing a request for the National Liturgical Council proposing that the MLHS be approved for use in the Broome Diocese and, if favourably received, be endorsed by the ACBC at the Plenary meeting in November.

September 2023. The reference group meets to finalise the material needed for the BCL to take this project forward. Various versions in local language are to be collated and background material prepared.

May 2024. It is hoped that the ACBC will move on this question at their plenary meeting. ☺

Dr Carmel Pilcher RSJ has a special interest in areas of liturgical inculturation. This article first appeared in Brisbane's *Liturgy News*, and is reprinted here with permission of the Brisbane Liturgy Office.

The Catholic Church and the transgender person

BILL UREN

This is a difficult subject, and I enter upon it with more than a little trepidation. The Catholic Church traditionally has been notably unsympathetic to what is known as “gender theory”, that is, the belief that one’s gender is not necessarily determined by one’s sexual characteristics, that gender is a “social construct” and is defined, not by one’s sex, but by the autonomous choice of the subject.

Successive Popes have been outspoken in condemning gender theory. Pius XI, Pius XII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have all explicitly addressed and condemned gender theory. Magisterial and doctrinal statements have been equally dismissive. While recommending that transgender persons should be treated with respect, sensitivity and pastoral care, there is no tolerance of gender theory as such. For the official Church, our gender is defined by our sexual characteristics. As the first chapter of the Book of Genesis stipulates: “Male and female he created them”. We are not at liberty to change or alter God’s creation.

Recently (March 20th, 2023) the Committee on Doctrine of the American Bishops’ Conference addressed the topic of transgenderism in a *Doctrinal Note on The Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body*. Subsequently at their Spring session, they voted on June 16th to review their *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care*.

These *Directives*, first published in 1971, substantially revised in 1995, and most recently amended in 2018, are recognized as authoritative guidance on ethical matters for US Catholic healthcare institutions. It was to incorporate the Committee’s *Doctrinal Note* into the *Directives* that moved the Bishops’ Conference to vote for an extensive review of the *Directives*, especially that part that addresses the relationship between Catholic medical professionals and their patients. In effect, the force of the *Doctrinal Note* is to prohibit Catholic healthcare facilities

from engaging in hormonal or surgical procedures aimed at changing the biological sex characteristics of potentially transgender patients. Transgender procedures are a hotly debated area of current medical practice. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the Tavistock Centre, the leading clinic in transgender medicine, was closed after a number of former patients expressed regret in their early twenties that they had consented to transgender hormonal interventions in their early teens.

While the optimal time to initiate these interventions is prior to the onset of puberty, it is arguable that genuine informed consent to such life-changing and, in some cases, irreversible interventions is difficult, if not impossible, to elicit at such an early age. Nor is this a case where parental consent is seen to be an adequate substitute for, or supplement to, the child’s own consent.

Sexuality and gender are so integral to personal identity that one needs personally to appreciate fully the consequences of opting to transgender before embarking on such a momentous decision. Can a twelve- or thirteen-year-old child, it was argued, really appreciate the implications of such a hormonal transition prior to puberty, even though surgical interventions may be delayed to a more mature age?

The bishops’ informed consent concerns, however, are only incidental to the main thrust of their *Doctrinal Note*. At the outset, the *Note* proclaims the indivisible complementarity of soul/mind and body as the basis for personal identity.

The body is not, as it were, merely an add-on to the soul/mind: “In opposition to dualisms both ancient and modern, the Church has always maintained that, while there is a distinction between the soul and the body, both are constitutive of what it means to be human, since spirit and matter in human beings ‘are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church 365)”.

So, the body is not, as it were, merely an instrument to be manipulated by the soul/mind. As a corollary, sexual differentiation of the body is a given, part of the “natural” order, “... a fundamental aspect of a human being expressing a person’s unitive and procreative finality”. It is not susceptible to being changed or manipulated. Biology thus determines gender.

There are only two scenarios, the *Doctrinal Note* argues, in which technological interventions on the human body may be justified morally: 1) when such interventions are to repair a defect in the body – the “therapeutic” exception; 2) when a sacrifice of a part of the body is necessary for the welfare of the whole body – the “totality” exception.

Therapeutic interventions are morally justifiable under the first category, e.g., reconstructive surgery to repair a cleft palate; and removal of a diseased or malfunctioning organ is morally justifiable under the second category, e.g., removal of a cancerous uterus in a total hysterectomy. The *Doctrinal Note* also discusses at some length whether more cosmetic interventions may be subsumed under the first “therapeutic” category, e.g., breast or buttock reduction or enhancement.

Where these can be construed as restoring “normality” (inevitably, culture dependent), such interventions would seem in some sense therapeutic. Where they are more “perfectionist”, enhancing rather than restoring the “normal”, such interventions are more morally questionable, so the *Doctrinal Note* opines. If one has watched the TV series, “Botched”, and the extraordinary interventions performed on willing subjects all in the name of beauty rather than therapy, one might be inclined to agree with the *Note*’s moral qualms.

So, biology is subject to manipulation and technological intervention for therapy, even for enhancement, and for the body’s “totality”.

But not, according to the bishops, for gender change. Whereas other body parts and organs are susceptible to the two categories of intervention, the hormones and organs specifically related to sexual

differentiation remain inviolate, at least to any radical change of function as in gender reassignment. It is part of what the *Doctrinal Note* calls “the fundamental order”.

To be sure, the bishops conceded at their June meeting that the Church must be alert to provide sympathetic pastoral care to the transgender person, but it must not be at the cost of accepting gender reassignment as morally legitimate.

With the American bishops so resolutely opposed to technological interventions except in the two scenarios outlined above, is there any possible wriggle-room for those who conscientiously believe that their biology and their gender are misaligned?

Perhaps they could represent that the bishops’ *Doctrinal Note* is overly and exclusively physicalist in confining the two categories of exception to biological interventions only and in stipulating that the hormones and organs of sexual differentiation are intractable to change, even despite the psychological and personal orientation of the subject. They could suggest that the totality exception in particular should be expanded to include not only strictly biological concerns but also the psychological orientation of the whole person.

If it is legitimate in terms of the totality exception to ablate breasts to ward off the possibility of cancer, why in terms of the same exception is it not legitimate to intervene hormonally and even surgically to forestall lifelong psychological distress in the transgender- oriented subject? And if we may (and the Church commends this) give blood and even a functioning kidney to another as a member of an even wider “social” totality, why is the totality category so intractable when it comes to a person’s sexual differentiation?

As I indicated at the beginning of this investigation, the bishops, invoking the testimony of the Popes and the Magisterium, have anticipated this expansion of the totality exception by stipulating that sexual differentiation is a “natural” order. “a primordial duality”, “a fundamental aspect of existence as a human being, expressing a person’s unitive and procreative finality”. It is not subject to technological intervention

aimed at gender reassignment, not even hormonal, let alone surgical.

Of course, as with other parts of the body, one may intervene therapeutically to correct malfunctioning sexual organs, e.g., testes not descending, prolapsed uterus, fertility problems, but not to change the hormones and organs of sexual differentiation. They are the intractable elements of a person’s soul/body identity. Gender and sex on this construal just cannot be misaligned.

All of which leaves the question: Why is sexual differentiation so intractable a feature of our personal identity that even in the name of personal and psychological totality one may not “interfere” to change hormonal and organic biological structure?

No one disputes, of course, that sexuality is a very significant aspect of our personal identity. The specific abhorrence that rape and other forms of sexual assault, abuse and harassment evoke testifies to the quasi-sacred status of our sexuality. But it is not just our sexual organs that may be injured in such assaults.

More importantly even, it is our personal identity that is compromised and humiliated, even if our sexual organs remain intact. We know, too, that our sexuality may be assaulted without our sexual organs being violated or compromised, e.g., the unlicensed sharing of sexually intimate photos on social media or abusive remarks directed at us involving sexualized obscenities. Sexuality is a wider construct than our sexual hormones and organs.

Is it in this wider construct and in the expanded exception of totality that the transgender person may find moral solace – despite the bishops’ apothegms – for the perceived misalignment of his/her sexual hormones and organs with his/her consciousness of gender? ☪

Bill Uren SJ is scholar in residence at Newman College, The University of Melbourne. He forwarded this article to the editor in early September as *Eureka Street* had initially knocked it back. It has since been published in *Eureka Street*. We publish it here with the permission of *Eureka Street*, and the author.

Catholic schools: Australia's ecclesial future?

JOHN WARHURST

Catholic schools are the jewel in the crown of the church in Australia. While parishes continue to decline, the school sector is often booming. The contrast between ageing congregations and young students is stark. Equally striking is the contrast between relatively youthful school staff and ageing church leaders.

Twelve months ago, with the Plenary Council final assembly still fresh in my mind, I reflected in *Eureka Street* that if church renewal is to take place, then Catholic schools must embrace and actively support church reform. My own recent engagement with Victorian Catholic school principals convinced me then that their status, credentials, and ties to young people gave them a pre-eminent place in any such reform.

Twelve months later, in July 2023, as the Synod on Synodality first assembly came closer, another wider speaking engagement with almost 2,000 staff of a dozen Victorian Catholic secondary schools over three weeks, confirmed my belief. These staff, including but not restricted to leaders and team members in Catholic identity and religious education, have crucial responsibilities and unparalleled opportunities in their daily contacts with teenagers, whether Catholic or from many other backgrounds.

My presentations covered topics like Pope Francis and the Universal Church and the Church in Australia. If the outcomes of Pope Francis' 2023-2024 Synod on Synodality, based on the themes of its Working Document, are to penetrate more than skin deep into the Catholic community, schools must be at the forefront. If not, the Synod will be a wasted effort and a missed opportunity. It will be wasted because it will not catch the attention, much less the enthusiasm, of the next generation.

The task is challenging. Students in Catholic schools represent the face of the present and the future. They are extraordinarily diverse in terms of ethnic and faith backgrounds. The vast majority, reflecting official surveys of the wider

Catholic community, are 'unchurched' in the sense of not being regular churchgoers outside of school. Teachers are confronted, but not really surprised, by the dismal official figures (6 per cent) of church attendance for their former students, Catholics aged 20-34.

They themselves represent the equally dismal official figures for church attendance of those aged 35-60. That applies to the Catholic teachers. The anecdotal evidence offered to me by the school communities and by various priests was that 10 per cent church attendance may be generous.

Some staff could see a future in which the school rather than the parish was the heart of the church.

Yet the Catholic identity of the schools, often expressed through different charisms, remains profound, even if the challenges posed by student and staff diversity are enormous. These staff development days were couched in beautiful liturgies and inspiring messages from school leaders.

Notably our schools are more open and inclusive than our parish and diocesan churches are. They are a sign of where the church should be on matters like inclusion and there is no going back. These schools occupy a world in which value statements such as 'all faiths, genders, sexualities and cultures are respected, accepted and welcome' are predominant. Outdated church teaching about sexuality and gender is implicitly and explicitly rejected. Most students and staff would have it no other way.

The challenges that I threw out were often tossed back at me through tough but respectful table-talk and public questioning. Occasionally my openly pro-renewal stance was thought disrespectful to church tradition and teaching. For some panellists and respondents my message of dramatic church decline in Australia was too dark and hopeless; for others my own hope in what I called the universal church's 'experiment with synodality' was too optimistic because they thought change

was impossible. They could see little sign of reform happening around them; and made clear that even when there were signs of progress it was happening much too slowly.

Frequently I was asked when the church would accept equal rights for women. The general tone of voice was that the church should just get on with it because the status quo was indefensible.

Often, I was specifically asked when the church would allow women priests. My response that the best we could hope for in the short to intermediate term was the introduction of the female diaconate was hardly satisfactory. When I presented as a breakthrough by Pope Francis the fact that there would be 54 women among the 363 voting members of the Synod in Rome in October my audiences still wanted much quicker progress on gender equality.

Catholic secondary schools are a parallel universe as far as the diocesan and parish churches are concerned. Their staff take no pleasure in the decline of the latter and recognise the implications for their schools; but, even in the middle of World Youth Day (which some current students were attending as had some staff on previous occasions) they could see no obvious ways of halting the decline.

Some staff could see a future in which the school rather than the parish was the heart of the church. But one teacher told me to my face that my suggestion that schools were the future of the church was not just unlikely but 'vacuous'.

Most staff, teaching and non-teaching, welcomed an opportunity to enhance their own learning by discussing present developments and future aspirations for the church. They are at the coalface where church and society meet, and they taught me a great deal about the real world of schools and church. ☺

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Has Australian Catholic University just lost the right to call itself “Catholic”?

PAUL COLLINS

Where’s Cardinal George Pell when you need him? Gone to God, I know, but as one of the founders of Australian Catholic University (ACU), he would be horrified at what is currently happening there. Why?

Because, as media outlets reported, ACU has decided “to axe dozens of humanities jobs ... entirely disbanding institutes in philosophy and [early modern] history” (The Guardian).

With a net loss of some 32 full-time jobs, theology, gender studies, social sciences and religion will also face cuts. Eighty full-time positions were cut earlier this year.

I mention Pell because this is something he wouldn’t have tolerated. He’d have insisted that being called Australian Catholic University means that history, philosophy and theology are central to its academic mission.

ACU’s own faith and values statement is unequivocal: “As a Catholic university, we draw our inspiration from the “heart of the Church”, building on the ancient tradition which gave rise to the first universities in medieval Europe.

This Catholic intellectual tradition proposes an integrated spiritual and philosophical approach to the most enduring questions of human life.”

It adds: “As a Catholic university, we are stewards of our Catholic tradition and our unique Australian heritage.” In other words, history (including medieval history), philosophy and theology are central to the university’s mission. Otherwise, it is not a Catholic university.

By “Catholic” here I mean a university that draws on the Catholic tradition. By “tradition” I don’t just mean living in the-good-old-days. Theologically, tradition means drawing on the past to nurture the present and develop the vision that can imagine the future.

The previous federal Coalition government decimated the humanities by making Arts courses cost double the so-called “job relevant” ones, as though deeper cultural knowledge and the ability to think critically are irrelevant in today’s job market. This indicates that nowadays the vandals are not just at the city gates, but occupy the citadel. The present Labor government has done nothing to remedy this aberration.

A quick look through the courses on offer at ACU indicates that there are many other areas like law, business and exercise physiology that are very adequately covered by other universities. To established budgetary balance, they should be trimmed or cut long before philosophy, history and theology.

An ACU deputy-vice chancellor, Abid Khan, a nanotechnologist and, according to the ACU’s website, “a passionate advocate of industry and enterprise,” claims that there’s been “inaccurate reporting” and that these job losses achieve the balance that “brings us closer to sector norms” and to “a sustainable level of staff to students.”

Sure, of course you have to pay your way, but not by destroying what is at the heart of your *raison d’être*. Sorry, Professor Kahn, but history, philosophy and theology are central to the reason why your university can call itself Catholic.

There are plenty of places to make cuts. I’ve already suggested a couple of course areas that could be jettisoned, given they are adequately covered in Australian education. And just how much is ACU spending on a Rome campus in what your webpage calls “the trendy suburb of Trastevere?”

Having stayed in Trastevere often, I wouldn’t call it “trendy”, but there you are. Surely ACU could rent some rooms at Rome’s Domus Australia, the “pilgrimage centre” the university’s previous Chancellor, Cardinal Pell, established? And it is actually in a “trendy” area!

It’s true that the disciplines that ACU is decimating are taught at the University of Notre Dame Australia and at the ecumenically-based University of Divinity in Melbourne. It’s also true that financial pressures are forcing students to focus on so-called “vocational” courses, as though the ability to think critically was not a human calling.

The crisis that we face nowadays is the loss of our cultural tradition and of the deeper realities that make human life meaningful. Precisely because Australian universities largely neglect the courses ACU is cutting, a genuinely Catholic university should be focussing on them.

Sure, the humanities have not done themselves any favours by their widespread adoption of incomprehensible, post-modern jargon while focussing on endless epistemological gobbledegook, or theories of how we know what we know, leading in the end to us knowing virtually nothing.

What an understanding of the broad sweep of Western history, theology and philosophy does is broaden our minds, so we can comprehend what is happening and escape from the atomised individualism that drives so much of our economics, politics and art. The studies being cut or axed are the very ones that lead us to enlightenment and self-transcendence.

Come on ACU! Make sure you maintain the fundamental Catholic element of your ethos. Otherwise you’ll be just be another run-of-the-mill Australian university. ☺

Paul Collins is an historian, broadcaster and writer. A priest for thirty-three years, he resigned from the active ministry in 2001 following a dispute with the Vatican over his book *Papal Power* (1997). This article first appeared in *Pearls and Irritations*, 23 September 2023 and is reprinted here with permission of the author.

The other form of abuse in the Catholic Church

JOHN CROTHERS

When we hear the term “abuse” in relation to the Catholic Church, we immediately think of crimes of a sexual nature committed against children by the clergy.

But there is another form of abuse taking place in the Church and it’s just as real. It’s called emotional abuse, and is most evident in the attitude of the Church hierarchy towards women.

It is characterised by such things as patronising language, silencing of voices, refusal to engage and failure to empower.

It can be subtle and may even go unnoticed. That’s because it is structural in nature, camouflaged within the rules and guidelines of the institution.

An example of this structural abuse is the Church’s exclusion of women from ministry, particularly ordained ministry, and the silence that surrounds it. There is no dialogue, no come back. Women are simply told that the Pope has spoken. The case is closed. No discussion will be entered into. The silent treatment is often used by the Church hierarchy as a way of avoiding an uncomfortable exchange. I have experienced it myself.

Over my thirty-eight years as a priest in the Sydney Archdiocese I have written four personal letters to various bishops. Some of the issues I addressed were certainly contentious, but the letters were written respectfully and affably.

I didn’t receive a reply to any of those four letters.

A friend told me recently that some years ago she wrote to two consecutive parish priests in her parish asking for an explanation as to why women couldn’t be formally instituted as acolytes or lectors. She received no response from either priest.

It is true that Canon Law has now been changed to formally allow women to be instituted as acolytes and lectors, but the long delay in implementing the new policy seems to be another exercise in power and control by the hierarchy.

It is more than eighteen months since Pope Francis made the change, but no

bishop has yet installed a woman as acolyte, at least in the Sydney Archdiocese, and no satisfactory explanation has been given for the delay.

Earlier this year I enquired as to the reason for the delay but only received a vague response saying that there is still no plan of how to exactly proceed with the matter.

Clearly there is a lack of will on behalf of the bishops to do anything to support women’s greater participation in the Church, even when the issue pertains to lay ministry rather than ordained ministry, as in the case of acolytes and lectors.

The same attitude was seen at last year’s Plenary Council when the Australian bishops voted down a motion asking them to accept women deacons in their dioceses if at some stage the Pope should allow women to be ordained to the diaconate.

In essence the bishops were prepared to defy the Pope rather than welcome women into their dioceses as deacons.

They later changed their vote after seeing the response by other members of the Council, particularly the women members, but how could they not have anticipated the hurt and sense of betrayal that would follow their decision.

The bishops’ unwillingness to bend in the area of inclusive language in the liturgy is another example where women are being subjected to indignity, and constantly having their self-esteem undermined.

Being told that words like “brothers” and “men” actually refer to women, is akin to saying “You are not important enough to even be mentioned.”

How easy it would be to make a change to more inclusive terms, but the bishops refuse to compromise in any way and expect women to simply grin and bear it.

Why is it that the Church hierarchy shows so little empathy with Catholic women and their struggle for greater participation in the life of the Church? Why do they never advocate on their behalf?

At least part of the reason is that most Catholic clergy spend little time conversing with women in any depth. Their world is a very male world.

They don’t understand the hurt experienced by women who feel let down by the hierarchy. They never feel their pain.

Added to that, most clergy have little or no experience of being marginalised. They don’t know what it’s like to have their voice silenced.

Bishops in particular have never felt the distress of being excluded, of being ignored, of being disempowered.

Then there is the broader patriarchal culture that pervades the Church hierarchy. It produces a club mentality among the clergy that is exclusive and elitist.

In the context of structural abuse in the Church, it’s a perfect storm.

The Catholic Church sees itself as a promoter of human rights. Pope Francis has spoken on numerous occasions defending the rights of women.

But there is an inconsistency here. As long as women are excluded in our Church, whether it be from ministry, from language, or any other type of exclusion, we are giving a message to the world that women should not have the same recognition and opportunities in life as men.

Until that changes, until women are given the same dignity, respect and opportunities as men, the Church will continue to contribute to the scourge of emotional abuse against women, which sadly is still so prevalent in our world today. ☪

John Crothers retired a few years ago after 16 years as parish priest of Penshurst and Peakhurst parishes in the Sydney Archdiocese. He worked as the promoter of Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese during the 1990’s. This article appeared in *Pearls and Irritations* on 13 August 2023 and is reproduced here with the permission of the author.

Catholic Seminaries in Australia: 1835-2023

PETER J WILKINSON

Part 3: The Vaughan and Moran Seminary Visions

The Vaughan Vision

Well before he closed St Mary's *Lyndhurst* Benedictine seminary in 1877, Archbishop Bede Vaughan OSB had prepared a plan to form a 'native clergy' at St John's College at the University of Sydney. He had already set up theological schools and conferences at St John's for the on-going training of his priests and in 1876 had written of looking 'hopefully towards a future successful seminary'. But when he sought to have St John's function as a seminary, the University Statutes would not permit it.

In 1878, when the Jesuits arrived in Sydney and began building their new St Ignatius College at Riverview, he arranged for the education of 'some ecclesiastical students' at the school. But nothing eventuated.

Subsequently, Vaughan developed his grand vision for the 'training of Australian ecclesiastics'. It was to be 'one great, central, and influential university for all ecclesiastical students in Australia' led by 'men of mark and character' allowing the Church to 'spring forward with invigorated life'.

Vaughan was convinced that isolated diocesan seminaries could not accomplish this vision, and that their best service would be to act as 'feeders' to the central university, like Maynooth in Ireland and Ushaw in England. 'Nothing' he said, 'can take the place of numbers to ensure discipline and create an *esprit de corps*'.

As the foundation for his vision, Vaughan established a comprehensive Australian Catholic education system with a network of Catholic parish primary schools, staffed by religious sisters and brothers, and multiple Catholic secondary colleges to prepare young people for university and his central ecclesiastical university.

Vaughan planned to build his 'great, central ecclesiastical university' on the prime 60-acre site at Manly which Abbot Gregory OSB had obtained in 1859 and which the Deed of Approval specified exclusively for educational purposes.

Whether he could have persuaded his fellow bishops to embrace his vision was not to be known, for he died suddenly in England in 1883.

The Moran Vision

Vaughan's successor as Archbishop of Sydney was Patrick Francis Moran, appointed in 1884. Moran was the Irish-born nephew of Cardinal Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin (1852-1878), had been educated in Rome, had served as Cullen's secretary, and had witnessed Cullen refashion the Church in Ireland to the Roman mould. Cullen had established the new Tridentine seminary of Holy Cross in Dublin and ruled over it with total control.

Before arriving in Sydney Moran had personal experience with three seminaries: the Irish College in Rome as a student and Vice-Rector; Holy Cross in Dublin, as a professor; and St Kieran's in Kilkenny, as bishop of the diocese. Like Cullen, Moran believed that to achieve ecclesial goals a bishop must have full control over every aspect of Catholic life in his diocese and over all its members – priests, religious and laity. In Sydney, he intended to do that and more.

In the United States, the three Baltimore Plenary Councils had made key decisions on seminaries: the 1852 Council called for a major seminary in every province; the 1866 Council called for preparatory and 'greater' (major) seminaries in dioceses; and the 1884 Council called for a 'principal' seminary or university under the management of the episcopate. As the Roman authorities, particularly the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide ('Propaganda'), saw the Australian and US Missions as similar, the decisions of the Baltimore Councils would almost certainly have been encouraged for Australia.

Before arriving at Sydney, Moran had made two key decisions: to convene a plenary council for Australasia, and to establish a Sydney diocesan seminary with a national reach. He consulted none of his Episcopal colleagues on his seminary decision but intended to use

the plenary council to obtain their endorsement. Like Vaughan, he planned to build his seminary at Manly, intending it to be 'the finest Institution in the Australias [sic]'.

First Australasian Plenary Council, Sydney, 1885

When Moran convened the First Australasian Plenary Council in Sydney in 1885, the Catholic Church in Australia had 2 ecclesiastical provinces – Sydney and Melbourne – with 14 dioceses (3 new dioceses had been erected since 1869: Ballarat and Sandhurst in 1874 and Rockhampton in 1882), 1 vicariate apostolic (VA of Queensland erected in 1877), and the *Abbacy Nullius* of New Norcia. As the Church in New Zealand had no established hierarchy, Propaganda instructed Moran, as Metropolitan Bishop, to call all the NZ bishops to attend the Council.

Under Moran's influence, the 18 Australian and NZ bishops in attendance agreed that while it was 'highly desirable that each diocese have its own Major Seminary, given that the state of the Provinces and Dioceses did not permit this as yet [and] the Metropolitan [Archbishop] of Sydney has proposed to erect a Major Seminary worthy of the Australian Church and in keeping with the demands of Propaganda, every effort should be made to ensure this seminary flourishes, [and] all bishops [including those in New Zealand] who do not have their own seminaries are most urgently exhorted to send their ecclesiastical students to this new seminary' (Decree 64).

The Council also legislated that it be a Tridentine seminary operating according to the rules set down by Propaganda, with a two year philosophy and a four year theology course including scripture, canon law and church history. It was to have the best professors, sound textbooks, and lectures in Latin.

In 1859, in response to the invitation of Pope Pius IX, the US bishops had established the North American College (seminary) in Rome. At the 1885 Council many of the Irish bishops wanted some of their seminarians to receive a Roman education, so the Council expressed a

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desire for an Australian National College (seminary) in Rome where select students could be sent to study. They assured Pope Leo XIII and Propaganda that the Manly seminary would not interfere with this proposal, but simply act as a 'feeder'. However, the Council did not take a vote to proceed.

Moran's vision for the Australian priesthood was candidates who were born in Australia of preferably Irish parentage, largely Australian trained, but with a Roman gloss.

However, until the Manly seminary opened, the Catholic Church in Australia had only one diocesan major seminary in operation – the Tridentine St Charles Borromeo Seminary in Bathurst, which had been forming candidates for the priesthood since 1875.

The Tridentine seminary

When the Council of Trent opened in 1545 a critical problem it had to confront was the appalling state of the secular clergy ministering in parishes. Their intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual formation was haphazard and minimal, most were secretly married or living with concubines, and the vast majority were ignorant and infected with heresy.

To remedy this scandal, Trent legislated the establishment of training schools or 'seminaries' in every diocese (Canon 18) and placed full responsibility on the diocesan bishop to establish them. These seminaries, based on a model pioneered in England in 1555, were to prepare young boys, especially poor boys, for the secular priesthood.

To some extent they were an update of the medieval cathedral school which initiated students into the practical operations of church life and provided moral protection.

Trent did not specify any length of training or level of proficiency, nor insist that every candidate attend the seminary. But boys admitted to the seminary had to be at least 11-12 years old, able to read and write, and be of good character. Trent wanted the seminaries to prepare very young male virginal candidates for a celibate clerical life with the highest standards of moral and ecclesiastical discipline.

Though primarily for poor boys, others

were not to be excluded, provided they paid their own expenses. The academic program was to include grammar, singing, church accounting, scripture, church documents, homilies, liturgy, and administration of the sacraments, particularly confession. Trent wanted not only an educated clergy, but an upright and moral one. Though Trent had set a low academic bar, bishops could set their own standards which rose gradually, not due exclusively to the seminaries, but to the general improvement of schooling across Europe.

Archbishop Charles Borromeo established the first Tridentine seminary in Milan in 1564 and instigated rules called *Institutiones ad universum Seminarium regimen pertinentes*, which became the prototype for the Tridentine model in Italy, Europe, and the mission territories.

In 1565 Pope Pius IV founded the Tridentine Roman Seminary and in 1588 Pope Sixtus V placed all diocesan seminaries under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for Roman Universities. Pope Clement VII did the same for religious seminaries in 1603, for both popes wanted closer conformity to the Tridentine model under strict control of the Holy See.

In France, where the bishops had meagre success with establishing diocesan seminaries, but between 1625 and 1670 three secular priests, – Vincent de Paul, John Eudes, and Jean-Jacques Olier had founded religious congregations – Vincentians, Eudists, Sulpicians – with Tridentine seminaries which separated 'major' seminarians (studying philosophy and theology) from 'minor' seminarians (studying the classics) and permitted the seminarians to study at universities located nearby.

But all their religious, moral, and spiritual formation had to take place in the seminary. Before the close of the 17th century multiple Tridentine seminaries staffed by these new congregations had opened across France.

In Ireland, following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Catholic bishops could not establish Tridentine seminaries due to the Penal Laws. For over 200 years Irish men wanting to become priests had to study at Irish seminaries located in Rome, Spain, the Spanish Netherlands,

Portugal, Hungary, and France. These produced hundreds of well-educated secular and religious priests who returned to Ireland to maintain the Catholic tradition. However, with the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 – who staffed most of the continental seminaries – and the French Revolution in 1789, almost all the Irish seminaries in Europe were closed.

At around the same time the Penal Laws in Ireland were lifted, and three Tridentine seminaries – St Kieran's Kilkenny, St Patrick's Carlow, and St Patrick's National Seminary in Maynooth – were established in 1782, 1793 and 1795, allowing the Catholic Church in Ireland to once again form its own clergy at home.

More seminaries followed: St John's Waterford (1807), St Peter's Wexford (1811), All Hallows Dublin (1842), St Patrick's Thurles (1842, and Holy Cross Dublin (1861).

But All Hallows was different. It prepared priests specifically to serve the Irish diaspora in English-speaking countries outside Ireland, and by 1882 some 250 of its ordinands were ministering in Australia and New Zealand. The various Irish seminaries produced the bulk of the priests who volunteered to minister in the Australian Mission in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and by 1900 All Hallows had supplied 574 priests to the Australian Mission and St Patrick's Carlow over 300 priests. ☞

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Calls are growing for a Church more inclusive of the LGBTIQ+ community

PATTY FAWKNER SGS

My Good Samaritan Sisters and staff were called “dogs”, “witches” and told they were “going to hell”. When I agreed for our chapel to be used as a venue for a special Mass, I did not anticipate the fracas that would ensue, writes Patty Fawkner.

Twelve months ago, Father Peter Maher, a friend and colleague, asked if LGBTIQ+ Catholics, their friends and supporters, could hold a Eucharist in our Good Samaritan congregational chapel during Sydney WorldPride 2023. I did not hesitate to agree. Sadly, Peter died in November 2022.

On a beautiful evening in February this year, about 70 people gathered for the Eucharist. Mass was about to start when five uninvited protestors arrived. When they were refused admission to the chapel, these members of a Catholic group began verbally abusing attendees and the Sisters and staff who were welcoming registered guests.

We called the police, who managed to encourage the protestors to move on. According to a subsequent posting on social media, the protestors claimed they were the ones badly treated and discriminated against.

To say that LGBTIQ+ people and their supporters, such as Good Samaritan Sisters, are going to hell, akin to severing their relationship with God, reveals a belief in a punishing, vindictive God, unrecognisable from the God of Jesus Christ.

This disturbing incident reminded me that LGBTIQ+ people, ridiculed as the “alphabet people” by the protestors, continue to experience bullying, harassment and discrimination within the Catholic Church. One cannot help but wonder about the source of this profound hostility.

Around the world, we are witnessing an alarming increase in the suppression of the LGBTIQ+ community, from bans in the US on medical care for trans and gender diverse youth to a new law in Uganda, which some refer to as the

‘Kill the Gays’ bill. This legislation allows severe penalties for homosexuality, including the death penalty or life imprisonment. The Anglican Church in Uganda supports the bill. In that country where nearly 40% of the population identify as Catholics, the Catholic bishops’ deafening silence on the matter serves to legitimise the new law.

In Australia, I have spoken with members of the Church hierarchy who roundly condemn overt discrimination against members of the LGBTIQ+ community and are committed to pastorally caring for all. However, I have heard reports of covert discrimination regarding employment opportunities within Catholic organisations.

It occurs to me that there is a disconnect between the Church’s moral teaching and pastoral practice. Until this disconnect is resolved, some will be emboldened to weaponise Church teaching found in statements in the *Catholic Catechism* and will continue to use religious language to harass and discriminate against members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Calls for a Church to be more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community are growing. This was evidenced during the Fifth Plenary Council of the Australian Catholic Church and now within all phases of the Synod on Synodality. The October 2022 document, *Enlarge the space of your tent*, a synthesis of discussions on synodality around the globe, reveals the desire of Catholics world-wide for a more inclusive Church.

This document states: *“The vision of a Church capable of radical inclusion, shared belonging, and deep hospitality according to the teachings of Jesus is at the heart of the synodal process: ‘Instead of behaving like gatekeepers trying to exclude others from the (Eucharistic) table, we need to do more to make sure that people know that everyone can find a place and a home here’”*.

The subsequent Synod document, released within the past few weeks,

the *Instrumentum Laboris (IL)*, was hugely significant simply for using the term “LGBTQ+” twice. The Vatican is now respecting the term preferred by the members of the community and also acknowledging various gender and sexual identities.

The *IL* document is first and foremost about inclusion (regrettably, its language for God is exclusive). Respect for all, pastoral care for all and dialogue runs like a golden thread in every section. Core to the Church’s mission is noted as “walking with people instead of talking about them or solely at them”.

One of Pope Francis’ most cherished terms, “encounter”, is picked up beautifully by the *IL*: “When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God.”

In the *IL*, the pastoral care of all within the Church is paramount, especially for those who “feel” excluded. However, any change in the Church’s moral teaching on sexual identity is not on the table, resulting in real and ongoing exclusion.

While appreciating much of the *IL*, one commentator said that this ultimately sets a “tragically low bar” for truly welcoming LGBTIQ+ people.

Early in his pontificate, Pope Francis lamented that many Catholics were “obsessed” with homosexuality, abortion, divorce and contraception. Sexual activity is placed at the pinnacle of reasons for exclusion from the Eucharist. Is it too churlish of me to point out that such Church Law has been created by celibate males?

Recently, in an address to the Pontifical Alphonsian Academy, a graduate institute of moral theology in Rome, Pope Francis lamented the “cold morality, theoretical morality, I would say a ‘casuistic’ morality” he studied as a seminarian.

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He went on to say that moral theologians “are required to enter into a living relationship with the People of God, engaging in particular with the cry of the least, to understand their real difficulties, to look at existence from their perspective, and to offer them answers that reflect the light of the eternal love of the Father”.

Our Thanksgiving Mass was a celebration of inclusivity. Each of us present was seen and affirmed just as we were. A few hours later, we received a Facebook message from one of the attendees. The message, full of gratitude and joy, said:

“For a long time I felt disconnected from my church ... I stopped attending mass

because I felt judged ... Tonight at the pride mass I was greeted happily by all members at the church. I felt included and so did my brother. We felt like we were at home ... I will never forget the smiles from everyone. Smiles that told me that it was OK for me to be like this and that I was a beating heart too.”

I imagine that this person and other attendees would feel even more included if there was no judgment in the *Catholic Catechism* about their sexual orientation. To become a truly inclusive, welcoming, synodal Church will require conversion of heart and mind.

It will require a conversion of culture and pastoral practice to be sure.

It is to be hoped that such conversion

will eventually lead to a conversion of structure and law.

The experience of holding the Mass during Sydney WorldPride has strengthened my resolve to support members of the LGBTIQA+ community. It is equally important that I neither vilify nor demonise those who would protest against them. If I were to encounter one of our protestors again, I would like to do so in love. Hopefully, I might also “learn something new about God”. ☺

This article by Sr Patty Fawcner SGS was published in the July 2023 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-journal of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and is republished with permission.



Fire on earth: A centenary of Teilhard de Chardin’s essay ‘The Mass on the World’

BY MICHAEL MCGIRR

It is rare to celebrate the centenary of the writing of an essay, especially one as brief as ‘The Mass on the World’ by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. To be fair, *The electrodynamics of moving bodies*, the paper Einstein published in 1905 while he was working at a droll job in a patent office in Bern is even shorter. Nobody who has seen *Oppenheimer* will doubt the impact of those few pages.

Teilhard was in the same league as Einstein as a creative thinker, especially with regards to the possibilities of matter and the energy hidden within it. Teilhard’s work, however, was always towards a coalescence, a bringing together of the energies of the world rather than a splitting them apart. He believed in an ultimate convergence, an omega, a final point towards which all things were evolving. It’s a mystery to me that he was the one who was considered threatening.

‘The Mass on the World’ was not published until 1961, six years after Teilhard died. Like many of his works, including another exquisite essay, *The Divine Milieu*, copies had circulated from hand to hand among his friends and supporters. But Teilhard, a devout Jesuit priest, was seldom in the good books

of his ecclesiastical superiors and was forbidden from publishing or lecturing for many of his most productive years.

This was deeply painful to him as, despite the sophistication of his mind and the esteem of his scientific peers, there was a simplicity in Teilhard. He was consigned to an isolation that grated against his convivial nature.

Born in 1881, Teilhard grew up in the warm folds of a Catholic family in southern France; his first love beyond his family was the landscape of Auvergne, especially its rocks.

In his spiritual biography, *The Heart of Matter*, written in 1950, he begins: ‘I was certainly not more than six or seven years old when I began to feel myself drawn by Matter – or, more correctly, by something which “shone” at the heart of Matter.’ This was the beginning of his lifelong quest for a ‘unique all-sufficing and necessary reality.’

In the middle of 1923, Teilhard was a member of a scientific caravan finding its way through Mongolia and China, carrying an improbable cargo of fossils which would shed light on the development of the human species. Conditions were basic, but Teilhard,

despite his refined and gentle manners, never minded this. He had coped better than most as a stretcher bearer on the western front during World War I.

In China, Teilhard described himself as ‘a pilgrim of the future on my way back from a journey made entirely in the past.’ His travels in Chinese pre-history, as exciting as they were, turned his attention towards what the world was becoming. A letter to a friend on August 26, 1923, is collected in *Letters from a Traveller* (1962):

The more I look into myself the more I find myself possessed by the conviction that it is only the true science of Christ, running through all things, that is to say true mystical science, that really matters ... I keep developing and slightly improving, with the help of prayer, my ‘Mass upon things.’ It seems to me that in a sense the true substance to be consecrated each day is the world’s development during that day- the bread symbolising appropriately what creation succeeds in producing, the wine (blood) what creation causes to be lost in exhaustion and suffering in the course of its effort.

The ‘Mass Upon Things’ to which he refers is ‘The Mass on the World.’

The essay begins with a moment of stillness. Teilhard finds himself at the start of a new day perched out of doors on a high place. He has no bread, wine, or altar. Instead, 'I will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.' His utensils for saying such a Mass are simply 'the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit.' He brings to mind 'all those you have given me to sustain and charm my life' and, beyond them, 'the vast anonymous army of living humanity.'

I have read this essay on countless occasions and never fail to find another phrase of beauty and depth which had not caught my attention in quite the same way before. It challenges my understanding of the Eucharist or Mass, the central act of communal worship for many Christians. It is easy to mistake the Eucharist for what happens in church. The Eucharist is not confined to any particular liturgy, least of all one with so many airless rules and regulations that it is difficult to feel a pulse of life in its veins. When we gather for Mass, we bring to focus the entire Eucharist of creation: the bread is our toil, the wine is our pain:

All of us, Lord, from the moment we are born feel within us this disturbing mixture of remoteness and nearness; and in our heritage of sorrow and hope, passed down to us through the ages, there is no yearning more desolate than that which makes us weep with vexation and desire as we stand in the midst of the Presence which hovers about us nameless and impalpable and is indwelling in all things.

Jean Houston, a founder of the human potential movement and close advisor of Hillary Clinton, tells a wonderful story about her childhood. In the early 1950s, she was saddened by the divorce of her parents. The break-up hit her at a bad time: she was an adolescent, exceedingly tall, awkward, and self-conscious. By chance, she met an old man in New York's Central Park who asked her simply to call him 'Mr Tayer.'

The pair started taking weekly walks and this became a safe space for Jean, meaning, for her, a place of adventure that lifted her beyond her anxious

world. She was fascinated by the joy that this man in his seventies took in the smallest living thing, such as a caterpillar. In the middle of a great metropolis, he would exclaim about the caterpillar's 'wonderful, funny little feet' and told Jean that she, too, would experience her own metamorphosis, becoming not just a butterfly, but perhaps more like a cloud that floated above the cacophony of urban life. She later wrote in *Godspeed: the journey of Christ* (1988):

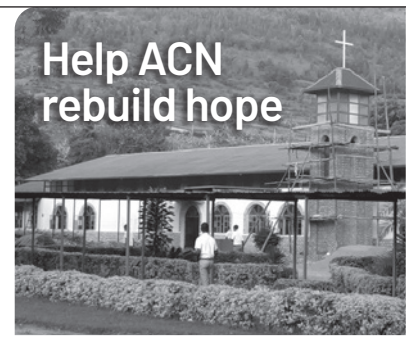
'Old Mr Tayer was truly diaphanous to every moment and being with him was like being in attendance at God's own party, a continuous celebration of life and its mysteries ... Always he saw the interconnections of things ... he was truly penetrated by the reality that was yearning for him as much as he was yearning for it.'

She told her mother that when she was looking at nature with Mr Tayer 'I leave my littleness behind.'

Only years later, when she came across one of his books, did she realise that the old man was Teilhard. Sadly, the austere church of the early twentieth century had little place for such an expansive spirit. At the time Jean met him, he was exiled from Europe and forbidden to teach or publish. One day, he failed to meet his weekly appointment with Jean, and she was sad. He had died alone. Ten people came to his funeral; only one, Pierre Leroy, attended his graveside. ☪

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Christian, as spokesman for these young seminarians, has now written to us on behalf of them all. **"Permit me to thank you for all the sacrifices you have made in order to enlarge and improve our chapel! We feel deeply honoured, and we are praying for you."**



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Mary Glowrey and her priest brother

PETER MATHESON (EDITOR, THE SWAG)

We are all probably aware that Dr Sr Mary Glowrey, servant of God, is on the path to becoming Australia's second saint. What perhaps is less known is that she had a younger brother, Edward, who was a priest of the Ballarat diocese.

Mary was born on 23 June 1887 in the small town of Birregurra, near Colac, in the western district of Victoria. Her father ran the general store. Mary was the third of nine children born into the Glowrey family. Six survived to adulthood. Edward was born five years after Mary on the 26 August 1892 in Garvoc after the family had moved further west, closer to Warrnambool. Mr Glowrey was now the proprietor of the local hotel. But soon after Edward's birth they were on the move again to Watchem in the Mallee district where the weather was warmer and drier for Mr Glowrey's health. Mary's autobiography reveals that her father left all his financial assets in the hands of a local banker who he thought was a friend. He turned out to be a thief and by the time Edward Glowrey (snr) sought to recover his assets they were all gone and the family was in debt.

My interest in the Glowrey story is that Fr Edward Glowrey was the first priest I ever met. Dean Glowrey, as he was known to us in the late forties, was parish priest of St Arnaud. My father was the school teacher at the Coonoer Bridge State School, a small farming community about 14 kilometres north of St Arnaud. About twenty children attended the school from Prep to Year 8, a number coming to school each day riding bicycles, or on their horses, riding bareback.

Dean Glowrey used to regularly visit his flock, and I remember him coming out to drop in on the Matheson's a few times during our couple of years at Coonoer Bridge. He always had a small bag of lollies for us pre-school kids. Needless to say, we loved his visits. Lollies were rare treats for many in those post-War years.

Dr Samantha Fabry, the Ballarat Diocesan archivist, has passed on as

much information as she could find in the records about Fr Glowrey, namely, "he was born in Garvoc in August 1892, ordained in Ballarat 25 May 1918 and died in Melbourne 29 December 1950. He was appointed the Administrator to the Ballarat Parish on 19 September 1942 and was also appointed the Diocesan Consultor at the same time. He relinquished both these positions in May 1947. Dean Glowrey was also Parish Priest at St. Arnaud where he is buried."

But the archivist also found a report of Dean Glowrey's funeral in the Jan-Feb 1951 edition of the diocesan magazine, "Light." The panegyric was preached by the bishop of Ballarat, Dr O'Collins, and the Mass was attended by Most Rev Justin Simonds, Co-Adjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, along with priests from Melbourne and Bendigo and nearly every parish of the Ballarat diocese. The choir gallery of St Arnaud's Immaculate Conception church was filled with children, not only from St Arnaud but from Ballarat's Loreto College, Convent of Mercy and Mary's Mount. The report also mentioned that Dean Glowrey's two brothers, Gerard and Harold were there, and his sister "Mrs T. P. Connellan." This was Lucy. The report mentioned another sister "Elizabeth" who had predeceased Fr Edward (known to the family as Eddie). The other Glowrey child to reach adulthood was Mary who was absent in India. "Elizabeth" mentioned in the magazine report was actually a younger sister of Mary's named Eliza by the family. Francis, Alicia and Joseph were the three children who died in infancy.

I was not at Dean Glowrey's funeral. In December 1950 when he died, we were living down in Gippsland. Dad had moved to another small State School at Cloverlea.

Dr O'Collins' panegyric noted: "All his life he was abstemious and self-disciplined. All his work was characterised by a close attention to detail, all eventualities were foreseen and provided for, all plans drawn up, and executed with extreme care." These words suggest that Edward Glowrey

possessed many of the organisational skills of his older sister.

In 1950 when Edward died, his sister Mary had been in India for 30 years. She had gone there as a fully qualified doctor and surgeon after studies at Melbourne University. With the help of different scholarships, she had graduated first in 1910 at the age of 23 with a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery, followed by a residency in Christchurch, New Zealand for a year, after which she returned to Melbourne to residencies in the Eye and Ear Hospital, St Vincent's, and the Queen Victoria hospital. She graduated in 1919 with a Doctor of Medicine, in obstetrics, gynaecology and ophthalmology. While studying for the Doctor of Medicine during those years of the First World War she also had a private practice in Melbourne's Collins Street. It seems that during those years she was also discerning a religious vocation. Inspired by a pamphlet about a Scottish doctor, Agnes McLaren, who raised the suffering of secluded Indian women, Mary in 1915 began to think of India. Her mind eventually set on a Dutch Order of Religious Women, the Sisters of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They worked in India, mainly in education, but they also had involvement in health care.

So she sailed from Port Melbourne on 21 January 1920 never to return to Australia. After settling in Guntur in south-east India a few hundred kilometres north of Chennai (former Madras), and beginning her work in a small clinic, she was accepted into the Sisters of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and took the name of Sr Mary of the Sacred Heart. As a religious, Mary was able to continue there as a practicing doctor.

The Archbishop of Madras had successfully appealed to Rome to allow Mary to function both as a religious and a doctor. She continued to devote her life to improving healthcare in India, where she expanded her small clinic into a full hospital that cared for 637,000 patients between 1927 and 1936. She went on to establish the Catholic Health Association of India in 1943 that now looks after more than 21 million people annually.

If Edward was somewhat like his older sister, it is no wonder that Dr O'Collins went on to say, "We could ill afford, in this diocese or in Australia, to lose a priest of his quality." If Ballarat could ill afford to lose a priest like Edward Glowrey, India could ill afford to lose a doctor like Mary Glowrey.

The bishop went on to say of Edward: "He was saintly, a gentleman, a zealous pastor, and beyond these he was a wise counsellor, a comforter of the sick and a devoted, much loved friend of the children of his flock. Perhaps his outstanding quality was his gentleness and his profound humility."

Humility must have run in the Glowrey family. When Mary was asked by her Indian superiors to write her autobiography when she began to decline, suffering from the cancer that was to kill her, she entitled her story "God's Good for Nothing." Her own story went unfinished. Bone cancer in her arms led to fractures that prevented her writing in the end. She died in Bangalore on the 5 May, 1957 at the age of 69. Her brother, born five years after her, died six years before her, at the age of only 58.

Devotion to Our Lady was always practised in the Glowrey household. Each night the Rosary was said and with it a prayer for priests and doctors. Mary Glowrey, recalling that practice many years later, wrote in her autobiography: "When my brother and I were respectively priest and doctor, I sincerely hoped that many another mother added that 'trimming' to the Rosary." ✪

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The Older Brother Syndrome

MARK O'CONNOR FMS

There is a sickness abroad in our Church and society. Some few people have a lust to punish others.

In the last five years working in the Diocese of Parramatta as Vicar for Communications, I have been struck by how this disease manifests itself – albeit in a small but vocal minority.

These punitive ideologues exhibit a striking lack of insight into their own personal flaws. Worst of all, they demonstrate a lack of Christian charity, all the more virulent because it spreads with such speed in a culture where social media can do much good but also enormous damage.

This noisy group, usually operating under anonymous pseudonyms (aka 'concerned Catholics'), delight in hurling insults at their fellow Catholics.

They are often the most fiercely critical of any serious discussion about addressing the injustices done to our long-suffering Indigenous peoples.

Or they unfairly and unreasonably attack our Catholic schools or teachers or maybe local priests they don't like.

Even Pope Francis and bishops are not spared. For they specialise in writing accusatory letters in slanderous campaigns that reveal themselves to be both bigots and fundamentally ignorant of the teachings of the Gospels and our Catholic Catechism.

We even saw the same phenomenon in the manifest injustices done to Cardinal Pell, by people who should have known better and understood how easy it is to scapegoat others. Ideologues can certainly exist across the political spectrum and so-called 'progressive' people can also be easily infected by this 'disease'.

Fortunately, our Catholic faith gives us a grace-filled remedy to counter this lust to punish others. It is called MERCY and its path is revealed in the Gospel of Luke's powerful story about the resentful older Brother who also had a lust to punish his delinquent younger brother.

Catholic writer Matthew Boudway a few years ago wrote a clever little piece

in *Commonweal* entitled, "The Prodigal Son, Revised Version" which spells out the exact problem and its cure. It's well worth re-telling:

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.

The servant said to him, "Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound."

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, "Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf. Aren't you worried that if you treat him so well after the way he's behaved, I might decide to leave? And where would you be then? I'm the only one who keeps this place running."

And the father said, "My son, you have a point. I hadn't considered your position. You've been loyal and steadfast. You've always done your duty. And no one can deny you lead an exemplary and objectively well-ordered life. As far as I know, you've never spent a denarius on prostitutes. In fact, you conspicuously shun them. Let me think this over."

Then, having thought it over, he returned to his younger son and said, "Ahem. Listen, I'm afraid I may have overdone it earlier. It's true I've missed you, and seeing you again after such a long absence got me worked up. I'd like to help you out, I really would, but my hands are tied. It would be unjust, unmerciful even, for me to pretend that your current situation isn't a complete contradiction of everything I tried to teach you. And what would the neighbours think? They might imagine I approve of prostitution and improvidence. Even your brother might get the wrong idea. No, I can't afford a misunderstanding like that. It would

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ruin everything. Why don't you come back after you've recovered the money you wasted. Then we'll talk. Until then, your brother and I wish you luck. We'll be with you in spirit."

I very much agree with Boudway's pointed and witty reflection. It is spot on.

Some in our Church and wider society, these days, are indeed 'suffering' – from an acute case of the 'older brother' syndrome.

'Older brother ideologues' are almost always complaining and questioning *other* people's 'orthodoxy' and/or good faith.

They claim to be worried about the transmission of the 'Faith' or a certain type of 'reform'. However, deep down they have appointed themselves as a parallel 'Magisterium'. Such people are convinced of their own exclusive possession of the 'truth'. They narrowly try to limit the presence of our gracious and merciful God and end up becoming mean-spirited, bitter and divisive.

Of course, anyone with any self-knowledge understands the real problem and what is at stake in these people's tragic 'disease'.

God's outrageous mercy threatens *all* of us sinful creatures.

We are all needy creatures and act most basically out of insufficiency. Sadly, other beings often stand as our 'competitors'. They, too, 'need'. They want the same things we want. And their gain seems our loss.

Not for nothing did Jean Paul Sartre, claim that 'hell was other people'. He must have met a lot of people infected with the 'older brother' syndrome!

I suggest that a lot of our primitive resistance to being merciful (and our desire to 'reform' and even 'punish' everyone but ourselves) is all about how 'original sin' connects with our ongoing capacity for infantile 'rage'.

The mercy of the Father to the younger brother was a *threat* to the 'older brother' and yes, it threatens all of us too!

Welcome to the 'Good News'! – which is necessarily also 'bad news' for those whose hearts remained hardened.

We dare not forget that no one ever promised us that a Church of mercy – which confronts our burning desire to savour the 'sweet delights' of resentment – will be painless.

But we do know that the Gospel of mercy

is above all a matter of grace. This life of the Kingdom is not a calculus where we 'reason' things out!

As Pascal so famously said: "*The heart has reasons, that reason itself does not know*".

Of course, it doesn't make 'sense' to the older brother! It's all a bountiful gift.

Our hearts do need to change – and not in the direction of multiplying in the church any more 'older brother' clones than it has already got...

May all of us – turn to the Lord Jesus and cleanse ourselves of any traces of this 'disease' of the 'older brother' syndrome.

May we listen again and again to the Risen Jesus and learn daily that our God wants *mercy* not sacrifice and certainly abhors the primitive lust to gratify ourselves by 'punishing' others. (cf. Matthew 9:13) ☞

Br Mark O'Connor FMS is the Vicar for Communications in the Diocese of Parramatta. This article, a version of which was published on 7 August 2019, appeared in Parramatta's *Catholic Outlook*, 5 Sept 2023, and is reprinted here with permission of the author.



Believing or belonging – which comes first?

BRIAN LUCAS, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC MISSION

In the course of taking some long service leave and doing some travel, I found myself walking down Newbury St in Boston, and I came across an old church building that had been repurposed. It was now jointly used by the Central Reform Temple of Boston, which described itself as "a progressive Jewish congregation" and the Emmanuel Episcopal Church, which described itself as "a progressive Christian congregation".

Apart from the novelty of a Jewish and Christian joint venture in the one building, what caught my eye were the words describing the Emmanuel Episcopal Church which said "believing is not a requirement for believing or belonging here".

The idea that you can be religious but not necessarily believe is somewhat

foreign to traditional catholic sensibilities.

But this idea might explain the 23 ministers of religion in Australia who said on the government census in 2021 that they had no religion.

It has been said that when one has a strong faith one has a strong sense of belonging to the church. I would like to challenge that model and reverse the proposition. A strong sense of belonging is the foundation for faith.

The Pew Research Center published an analysis of religious practice in Central and Eastern Europe (www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/, 10 May 2017).

Around the world, different ways of being religious:

- Believing. Behaving. Belonging.
- Three words, three distinct ways in which people connect (or don't) to religion: Do they believe in a higher power? Do they pray and perform rituals? Do they feel part of a congregation, spiritual community or religious group?
- Research suggests that many people around the world engage with religion in at least one of these ways, but not necessarily all three.
- Christians in Western Europe, for example, have been described as 'believing without belonging,' a phrase coined by sociologist Grace Davie in her 1994 religious profile of Great Britain, where, she noted, widespread belief in God coexists with largely empty churches and low participation in religious institutions.

- In East Asia, there is a different paradigm, one that might be called 'behaving without believing or belonging.' According to a major ethnography conducted last decade, for example, many people in China neither believe in a higher power nor identify with any particular religious faith, yet nevertheless go to Buddhist or Confucian temples to make offerings and partake in religious rituals.
- Many Central and Eastern Europeans, on the other hand, might be described as 'believing and belonging, without behaving.' While Pew Research Center's survey shows that majorities of adults across the region believe in God and identify with Orthodox Christianity, conventional measures of Christian religious behavior – such as levels of

daily prayer and weekly worship attendance – are relatively low.

Obviously, the interaction of believing, behaving and belonging is complex and highly culturally conditioned.

At a conference in March 2017 in Rome at the Pontifical Lateran University, German researcher Linda Dürrich offered this analysis of the connection between belonging and faith, drawing on empirical research by the Gallup Poll:

- One of the main findings of Gallup's research is the relevance of congregational engagement in relation to an individual's spiritual commitment, the congregation's spiritual health, and therefore its vitality. The sense of belonging an individual experiences is the prime mover for both his or her personal spiritual growth and the mentioned

Outcomes (Life satisfaction, giving, serving, and inviting). The causal connection is reflected as follows:

- The conventional wisdom is, 'believing leads to belonging' – that is, the deeper one's faith (spiritual commitment) is, the more likely it is that he or she will desire to belong to a congregation (engagement). The reality is just the opposite: It is belonging (engagement) that leads to believing (commitment). So, if you want your members to become more spiritually committed, help them become more engaged.

Parishes that are welcoming, where leadership encourages participation, will reinforce the sense of belonging. In turn this will help sustain people's faith. ☪



Enlarge the space of your tent (Is 54:2) – Abundance in the midst of scarcity?

AENGUS KAVANAGH FMS, PATRICIAN BROTHER RYDE NSW

When an Irish bishop was asked recently what he thought of synodality his response was 'Sure, isn't it the only game in town'. Whereas many Catholics yearn for a 'better way of being church', it may be a bit naïve to expect that the Synod outcomes will usher in major transformations in policy and practice. Hopefully it will affirm many of the aspirations of the millions of faith-filled Catholics who have had involvement at grass-roots level in the synodality process, and may push boundaries on a few juridical issues.

But, the whole concept of synodality, its championing by the Pope, and its world-wide embrace by the People of God through levels of engagement never before experienced in the history of the Catholic Church, are all powerful re-culturing pillars for changes that can happen now at diocesan and parish levels. It is time to take steps to shake-off the lethargy that has left mainly unheeded the narrative and exhortations of Pope Francis for the past decade.

A fresh look at 'vocations'?

Eminent Old Testament scholar and author, Walter Brueggeman, declared

decades ago: *'The power of the future lies not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity, but in those who trust in God's abundance'*. A perceived great scarcity in the Church now is in vocations to the priesthood. In the Western world especially the greatly reduced numbers of priests, their ageing and general lack of capacity to meet existing ministry and emerging needs is well known. Parish amalgamations and re-groupings are but expedient and band-aid responses adding to the burdens of the dwindling numbers of priests capable of coping with these added responsibilities, while eroding parish story and identity.

We continue to pray for vocations and rightly so. Is it time however to re-conceptualise the common understanding of 'vocations' in our Church to include those who share the priesthood of the baptised and not just those who are ordained, or those living consecrated lives? Shortly before his resignation, Pope Benedict XVI, urged that lay people ought not to just be collaborators but should also share in co-responsibility for the mission of the Church. The chasm in that gap remains. A respected Council Father of Vatican II, Belgian Cardinal –

Leo Joseph Suenens, speaking in 1968 said: *'It was the understanding of the lay identity that inspired the Council to create in every diocese in the world a diocesan pastoral council composed of priest, religious and lay people, in order to utilise and express the reality of their co-responsibility'*. Over 50 years later, Catholic historian Damian Gleeson's research reveals an Australian scenario less than committed to this Vatican II decree: *'As of September 2021, no Archdiocese, except Adelaide, has a DPC, and fewer than half of the remaining dioceses do'*. This is not to infer that a DPC is an only indicator of shared responsibility, but is to suggest that it is the litmus test of willingness and capacity of the clergy generally to bring the lay voice to the table of co-responsibility. To a lesser extent, a similar attitude exists in many cases in the composition and the impact of Parish Councils which remain widely viewed as rubber stamps for 'what Father wants'.

Collaboration to Co-responsibility – from rhetoric to action?

It is beyond the scope of this article to outline what this co-responsibility might look like in action. It is the wish however to encourage a focus on 'abundance in the midst of scarcity' in looking to the

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untapped potential for leadership and pastoral ministry among many parishioners who are deeply committed to their faith and to their church.

A frequent visitor to clergy gatherings in Australia has been Sherry Weddell, Co-founder and Director of the Catherine of Sienna Institute, Colorado Springs, USA. For decades she has been active in promoting parish ministry across dioceses in America. A dominant theme in her presentations is the discernment and expression of individual charisms. She echoes and contextualises to contemporary church, the teaching of St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 about the many different kinds of gifts that combine in the service of the same Lord.

The contention of this article is that the best hope for a transformed and sustainable Church lies in the willingness and the capacity of leadership at diocesan and parish levels to recruit, form, and train members of the lay baptised for much

more prominent roles in leadership and in ministry in the mission of the Church.

This calls for paradigm shifts as well as the provision of structures and resources for the offering of a range of formation programs and experiences to develop the competence and confidence of parishioners to become proactive in nurturing their faith communities. Thus formed, trained, and commissioned this fresh input of ministers would be able to complement and to expand options for faith expression and experience in parishes.

According to the Australian 2021 Census statistics approximately 20% of the national population ticked the Catholic box. A ballpark figure, that translates to 5.5 million claiming to be Catholic. Weekly Mass attendance by Catholics across the country hovers between 10% and 12% of the baptised, just over half a million. For many of the almost 5 million non-affiliated Catholics, commitment to religious practice is not on the radar.

It is reasonable to assume however, that a good proportion of the unaffiliated remain Catholic at heart but find little resonance between current week-end liturgy and their better inner selves. Many readers of this article can testify to loved members of their own families in this category.

There is some legitimacy in the occasional lament of 'lapsed' Catholics that they have not abandoned the Church but that the Church has abandoned them because they do not tick all the right boxes. We would like it to be otherwise, but that's the reality we are challenged to address.

Possible pushing of boundaries?

It is no longer feasible to just cater for the faithful remnant in a mainly devotional Church.

The synodal theme – 'Enlarge the space of your tent', along with the continued plea of Pope Francis to move from maintenance to mission, to 'field hospital mode', make it imperative that we become proactive in outreach to bring a range of faith expression options to our many Catholics who are wandering in exodus.

We need to move from beyond 'by the book' liturgies and prayer formats to creative and negotiated offerings which

bring religious experience to estranged people and communities, solemnising key events in their lives.

Does it have to be all or nothing, Church or secular, in the celebration of weddings and funerals? Note the increasing numbers of Civil Celebrations in these rituals.

How can we form, train and generally empower selected faith-filled parishioners to bring such religious experiences to situations such as the following, coming together in the most appropriate setting – church, church hall, out-door location, in a family home, to integrate prayer/reflection tailored to suit the occasion:

- Great sadness in the life of a family
- Great family joy e.g. special wedding jubilee, birth of a baby, other special birthday, graduation
- Celebrating God in nature... coming of new seasons, harvest thanksgiving
- 'Pop-up' stand, loaned space etc., in a local shopping mall bringing a religious dimension to the market place e.g. Lenten reflection and ashes distribution on Ash Wednesday
- Friday night P&P – Prayer & Pizza, gathering for youth of the parish.

And so on, for outreach and creative expression of options in bringing the Church to them, who though Catholic at heart, will not themselves come to the Church.

On another front, it remains possible now to embark on a number of initiatives with potential to develop and embed policies and practices to enable an advancement in co-responsibility for the mission and future of the parish. Annual deanery gatherings of Parish Councils for formation and training is but one such initiative.

Likewise, for a range of other moves to build-up resourcefulness within parishes to diminish an over-reliance on the personality and ecclesiology of the current pastor and to provide for the probable scenario where there will be far fewer priests.

All sounding a bit far-fetched? If so, what are some viable alternative options? ☪

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Only a brother

FRANK O'SHEA

(A RETIRED TEACHER WHO RESIDES AT POINT COOK, VIC)

The notion of sacrifice in the Christian Brothers ideal is now virtually incomprehensible. It was a life of plain food and plain rooms and weekend loneliness. No wife, no family, just the constant classroom grind.

The quote is from a speech at the launch of a book about Daniel Mannix, the much-written-about archbishop of Melbourne in the first half of the last century. The event was held at St Kevin's College in upmarket Toorak in Melbourne and the speaker was referencing his own schooldays at that expensive CB school. But for me, his subsequent words about Mannix were lost against his very human image of 'plain food and plain rooms and weekend loneliness.'

The plain rooms and the loneliness were things that rarely occurred to those of us who worked with the brothers, men who had kept their schools open on charity and a shoestring in the olden days. I give two examples.

Brother Joe (*not his real name*) coached football after school and then took an unreliable bus to and from evening classes at university; he had to be up for morning prayers the next morning and was expected to have lessons prepared and taught, records kept, meetings attended, parents spoken with, before taking cricket coaching that afternoon and then the slow bus once again.

He lasted three years until one morning he couldn't remember his own name. The order paid for his two years of treatment, and took the laudable course of suggesting to him that the life was not for him. I taught with Joe many years later and he was one of the best teachers of mathematics I ever worked with. He had married late and had no family.

Then there was Brother Theophilus (*not his real name*), the Head in a large, prestigious school. With a name like that he had to have a nickname, and the boys called him The Major, a reference to what appeared to be a haughty manner, though it did not seem to have any effect on the easy rapport they had with him. He later went overseas and worked as a classroom teacher in a girls' school in a country where the education of girls was regarded as low priority. He used his contacts to raise funds for that school and it is still functioning today, protected by armed guards.

I asked Theo once how he felt about the elite schools run by his order and by others like the Jesuits, and the Ursuline and Loreto nuns, places which were inaccessible to ordinary Catholics. 'We are a service OF the church,' he insisted, 'not a service FOR the church.'

And so we come back to the 'plain food and plain rooms and weekend loneliness.' Those schools were staffed by men who

had been told that they were special: they had a vocation, they could wear a roman collar, they were a cut above the lay teacher in the classroom next door. And they were in no doubt that they were providing a service FOR the church, ensuring that no pagan influences fruited in their locality. They were kept in line by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience – vows laid down by Benedict of Nursia 1500 years earlier for people in wealthy monasteries. Chastity of course meant celibacy; poverty covered the plain rooms and plain food – though most of them smoked.

Which left obedience and brings me back to The Major again. Before the Australian Royal Commission, he was monstered for not reporting to police, forty years earlier, his suspicions about a brother in his school. He had in fact raised the matter with the man in question but was told to mind his own expletive business and who the expletive did he think he was and if he ever mentioned it again he would go to an expletive lawyer. The Major did raise it with the Provincial, but never heard what happened. Joe died in his sixties and was spared the Commission smear that affects all of us who ever taught in a brothers' school. The Major, now in his seventies, is receiving treatment for serious depression. He rarely goes out, except to attend AA meetings.

Plain rooms and plain food and weekend loneliness. ☺



Response to Dubium 2

The Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on Monday October 2 published Pope Francis' response to "dubia," or "doubts," raised by five Cardinals.

Cardinals Walter Brandmüller, Raymond Burke, Zen Ze-Kiun, Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, and Robert Sarah introduced the questions to the pontiff in July and resubmitted a revised set of questions on 21 August.

The questions were written in Italian while the pontiff's response was in Spanish. The Cardinals asked for "yes" or "no" answers.

Vatican News provided a provisional English translation of Pope Francis' response to the Dubia. The following is their translation of Dubium 2.

Dubium regarding the assertion that the widespread practice of blessing same-sex unions is in accordance with Revelation and the Magisterium (CCC 2357).

According to the Divine Revelation, attested in Sacred Scripture, which the Church teaches, "listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine

commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit" (*Dei Verbum*, 10), "In the beginning," God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them, and blessed them to be fruitful (cf. Genesis 1:27-28) and hence, the Apostle Paul teaches that denying sexual difference is the consequence of denying the Creator (Romans 1:24-32). We ask: can the Church deviate from this "principle," considering it, in contrast to what was taught in *Veritatis splendor*, 103, as a mere ideal, and accept as a "possible good" objectively sinful

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situations, such as unions with persons of the same sex, without departing from the revealed doctrine?

Pope Francis's Response to the Second Dubium

a) The Church has a very clear understanding of marriage: an exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to procreation. Only this union can be called "marriage." Other forms of union realize it only in "a partial and analogous way" (*Amoris Laetitia* 292), so they cannot be strictly called "marriage."

b) It is not just a matter of names, but the reality we call marriage has a unique essential constitution that requires an exclusive name, not applicable to other realities. It is undoubtedly much more than a mere "ideal."

c) For this reason, the Church avoids any type of rite or sacramental that might contradict this conviction and

suggest that something that is not marriage is recognized as marriage.

d) However, in our relationships with people, we must not lose the pastoral charity, which should permeate all our decisions and attitudes. The defence of objective truth is not the only expression of this charity; it also includes kindness, patience, understanding, tenderness, and encouragement. Therefore, we cannot be judges who only deny, reject, and exclude.

e) Therefore, pastoral prudence must adequately discern whether there are forms of blessing, requested by one or more persons, that do not convey a mistaken concept of marriage. For when a blessing is requested, it is expressing a plea to God for help, a supplication to live better, a trust in a Father who can help us live better.

f) On the other hand, although there are situations that are not morally acceptable from an objective point of view, the same pastoral charity requires

us not to simply treat as "sinners" other people whose guilt or responsibility may be mitigated by various factors affecting subjective accountability (Cf. St. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 17).

g) Decisions that may be part of pastoral prudence in certain circumstances should not necessarily become a norm. That is, it is not appropriate for a Diocese, a Bishops' Conference, or any other ecclesial structure to constantly and officially enable procedures or rituals for all kinds of matters, because not everything that "is part of a practical discernment in particular circumstances can be elevated to the level of a rule" as this "would lead to an intolerable casuistry" (*Amoris laetitia*, 304). Canon law should not and cannot cover everything, nor should Episcopal Conferences with their varied documents and protocols claim to do so, as the life of the Church flows through many channels other than normative ones. ☪



Another look at Atonement Theory

ROBERT VAN MOURIK

"For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice."

T S ELIOT, "LITTLE GIDDING"

Atonement theory is a big deal, deeply embedded in our Christian theology and worship. But is it valid when it relies on a questionable doctrine of original sin, an idea conceived in the fifth century? A theory that portrays a vengeful God requiring a victim as sacrifice, transaction oriented, hardly a God of unconditional love. And we complain that our congregations are leaving our churches. Why would they stay to be told they are worthless sinners?

Richard Rohr writes about the Great Comma in the Apostles Creed, that comma that separates the beginning of Jesus's life from the end (...born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate...). What about everything in between? The great comma that reveals nothing of his life and how he lived. Isn't the how and why he lived important?

Marcus Borg writes that Jesus's own self-understanding did not include thinking and speaking of himself as the Son of God, whose historical intention or purpose was to die for the sins of the world.

Jesus did live to proclaim and exemplify the kingdom of God, a phrase that unfortunately has overtones of monarchical rule, patriarchy, and an afterlife. Redefined as a Field of Compassion by Judy Cannato and a Companionship of Empowerment by Diarmuid O'Murchu, these phrases connote a life of mercy, compassion, and justice for all. Not at some time in the future but here now.

Jesus sought to bring about a new way of living. As John Shelby Spong comments, he was denied and he responded by loving his deniers, he was betrayed and he responded by loving his betrayers, he was abandoned and he responded by loving those who abandoned him, he was tortured and he responded by loving those who tortured him, and he was killed and he responded by loving his murderers. Jesus made God visible in

a radically different way. Jesus was not a victim but someone who chose to give his life away.

Consequently, looking to the example set by Jesus, Spong reframes the Christian message, that there is nothing that we can ever do or ever be that will separate us from the love of God. Jesus's message is about love, enhancing humanity, not dragging us down, denigrating us. God is not a noun but a verb that must be lived. If God is the source of life, then we must live fully, love wastefully, extravagantly, and be all that we are capable of being and help others to do the same.

Embracing this understanding must lead to changes in our behaviour, the language of our worship and our expectations of our religious institutions. Our language and outlook should be more joyful and life affirming. ☪

Robert van Mourik is a Moderator of the St Lucia Spirituality Group which seeks to support those who wish to develop a more mature understanding of what lies at the core of spiritual beliefs.

Compulsory Celibacy

August 6th, Sydney's Catholic Weekly featured an article about the ordination to the priesthood of three married men in the Maronite Rite. One of them, Fr Maatouk said, "I am not on this journey by myself. My wife has been with me the whole time and we continue to share this journey."

In sharp contrast to this was August 5th Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend Magazine article "The name of the Father." This was the story of Brendan Watkin's search for his biological parents, all of which was heart wrenching and very sad.

Compulsory celibacy for Roman Rite priests was a decree by Pope Sylvester in the 12th century, because bishops were leaving their estates to their sons. Isn't it time for this decree to cease? Celibacy could them be a choice, and not compulsory.

I was a Sister of Mercy for 18 years in outback NSW. There was a centre at Narromine for priests addicted to alcohol. One priest said to me, "No one in the seminary ever talked about the loneliness, coming home to an empty house at the end of the day, and knowing that's what it is going to be like for the rest of your life."

I experienced, as a nun, the uninvited emotional and sexual advances from the bishop and two priests. I told no one because I would be blamed and probably the clergy mentioned too. I left religious life in 1974. Virginity intact, Thank God.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs) Clarice Melville, Kogarah NSW

Life for bishops?

The charism of inspiration on the hagiographer was transitory. Not so the charism of pastoral leadership. Hobart had Gilford Young for thirty-three years; Melbourne had Daniel Mannix for forty-six years; and Brisbane had James Duhig for forty-eight years. Heads of religious orders shuffle papers for a fixed term and then return to the coal face (or should that be to the solar farm). Could that not be the same for ordinaries? Appoint them at the height of their powers but for a fixed period of ten years after which they return to a bush parish somewhere for at least six

years. If their term as bishop and parish priest indicated that they were definitely foreman material, they could still have enough charge in the battery for a second appointment as chief pastoral servant somewhere.

Harry Moore SM, Kyogle NSW

Hospital chaplaincy and the people you meet

In my work as a hospital chaplain at Saint Vincent's in Darlinghurst, Sydney, I have the great opportunity and privilege to meet and minister to some very prominent and impressive people.

One such person who the hospital receptionist told me was the newly arrived patient, Barry Humphries! So with a mixture of nervousness and excitement I knocked on his door and. was pleasantly surprised with how happy he was to see the Catholic hospital chaplain. Fortunately, we had some common ground as we were both friends with the late Mary Rossi, when I said this Barry immediately said; "*You mean Saint Mary Rossi, anyone who has had ten children must be a saint!*" I was not going to argue!

Then Barry said to me in his distinctive whimsical style; "*Father over the last few years I have been considering crossing the Tiber and joining the church of Rome.*" This comment bought a big smile to my face and I could sense he was delighted with my reaction. We spoke about why he was in hospital with a fractured hip that needed an operation. Before I left I offered him a blessing and he was delighted to accept my offer. He asked for my card and to call in again. I saw him again and he was delighted that I made the effort and he made me feel special! He died a few days later.

It was such a privilege to meet and spend some time with a truly great Australian who has left an incomparable legacy.

Martin R Maunsell, Sydney NSW

Obits et al

Predictably, my perusal of *The Swag* begins with reading the obits of priests who have returned to God. Besides reminding me of priests I may have known over the decades and kilometres (e.g. Noel Molloy), I am nourished by

the richness of all these unique individuals who have built the kingdom in Australia.

The Swag's Spring edition contained an encore of such nourishment. Ian McGinnity's sharing of his humanity could be seen, by some, as risky but we are all reminded that Solo Man only exists in soft drink commercials. Bob Maguire's impact on those he served is well documented but Mark Coleridge's homily went a long way to explain the man behind the mask. By association, Bishop Mark took off his mitre and shared some of his clerical adventure with us.

I had never heard of Terry Williams (Cardiff PP) but he and Dick Buchhorn fearlessly shared their lives of servant leadership and creative ministry with the anawim.

May such prophetic lives energise and guide our church as synods listen to the Holy Spirit and discern what it means to be the active presence of Christ in our rapidly changing world.

Kim Crawford, Springwood NSW

Dick Buchhorn

Thank you for publishing Dick Buchhorn's "Some ideas seeking an airing" (*The Swag*, Spring 2023). It made for such sad reading. The Cardiff parish experience could stand for the whole Church: a Vatican II candle burning brightly only to be snuffed out by the hierarchy. Taking words from the article, spring has not come, it is still a frozen winter, the people have left, disillusioned and alienated.

Succeeding bishops have done this to the church, thanks to Pope John Paul II. JP II abhorred Communism with its centralised power and rigid, non-thinking conformity. Yet what he gave us, perhaps unwittingly, was a Church in that exact mould, the dead hand of which survives to this day.

Some years ago in a different context I wrote a Letter to the Editor published in *The Age* expressing the view that the Church as we know it needs and deserves to wither and die. It is a tragedy that back in 1979 Buchhorn was not describing a blip on the Church's path but predicting its future, and my

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

sentiment remains valid, the mixed efforts of Pope Francis notwithstanding.

Margaret Callinan, Hawthorn VIC

False allegations

A few months ago, I received an unexpected phone call from a senior priest of the diocese that I serve in to meet with him and the diocesan safeguarding officer the next morning at 10.30 am.

When I arrived at the meeting, I was informed that a sexual abuse allegation had been made against me twenty-one years ago at a state public school that I randomly attended to assist the wonderful parish catechists.

To say that I was shocked was an understatement! From that moment I was requested to sign a form to say that I would not publicly work as a

priest and also to inform the diocesan authorities where I would be attending Mass. I left the room totally in a daze wondering what my future was to be like.

I was interviewed twice by the investigator who was most courteous and professional in all my dealings with him. The alleged victim whose name I was given and then googled was a convicted drug smuggler in prison.

After three and a half months I was informed that the investigator concluded that every allegation made against me could not be sustained and I was now free to return to public ministry.

My point in writing this letter is to share with other priests that we are all vulnerable, as there are legal firms going into prisons to “recruit” some prisoners to make false allegations against priests

in the hope of gaining compensation from the redress scheme. If they don't succeed, they have nothing to lose.

Name and address withheld

True blue Aussie battler

People love the chorus “We are one, but we are many, and from all the lands on earth we come. We share a dream, and sing with one voice, I am, you are, we are Australian.”

I've composed a new verse, which the people here love: “I'm a true blue Aussie battler, I'm a dinkum Catholic too. I belong here under the Southern Cross, there's room for me and you. I stand for human freedom, human rights for everyone. In this Great South Land of the Holy Spirit, I am, you are, we are Australian.”

Fr Vince Hobbs, Labrador QLD

☪

NEWS

Vatican replies to the “Dubia”

Elsewhere in this edition of *The Swag* the Vatican response to the second “dubium” was printed. Christopher Lamb in an online article on *The Tablet* website, October 3, suggests that the replies from the Vatican's Doctrine of the Faith Office outline Francis' theological principles that will underpin the process of the Synod on Synodality.

Lamb notes: “The most striking element is the Pope's opening to blessings of same-sex couples, provided this does not become confused with marriage. Francis' opening is carefully and cautiously worded. He points out that Church law and bishops' conferences do not need to focus excessively on developing unique regulations for conducting such blessings, and a certain amount must be left to pastors' discernment.”

Another significant element Lamb has noticed is in the Pope's response about the priestly ordination of women. “While Francis emphasises that St John Paul II taught in a ‘definitive manner’ that women cannot be ordained to the priesthood, this is not the same as a ‘dogmatic definition.’ While in the past, the question of women's ordination was considered ‘case closed, discussion over,’ Francis' remarks show that discussions cannot be closed down.”

Lamb indicates that Francis' response reflects the impact of Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández as the Holy See's new doctrine prefect. It seems likely that he had a strong hand in formulating the responses as they were written in Spanish, and it was remarkable that the cardinals received a response to their *dubia* a day after submitting them.

The impact Cardinal Fernández is having shows that Francis now has a doctrine prefect ready to communicate the teaching of this pontificate pro-actively.

This is not the first set of *dubia* from cardinals that Francis has received. In 2016, Cardinal Raymond Burke and three other cardinals submitted a series of questions on Francis' teaching in *Amoris Laetitia*, asking for “yes or no” answers. The Pope did not reply.

Laudate Deum

Pope Francis has recently issued a new document, an Apostolic Exhortation called *Laudate Deum*. This is a follow-up to his previous 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, and makes clear his commitment to climate change with an even greater sense of urgency.

He writes: “I wanted to share with all of you, my brothers and sisters of our

suffering planet, my heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home. Yet, with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.

In addition to this possibility, it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons. We will feel its effects in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing, forced migrations, etc.” (LD, 2)

One aim of the document is to put pressure the upcoming COP 28 event in Dubai.

Illustrating that sense of urgency Pope Francis says: “the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident...”. And this time he really confronts climate deniers and even green-washing climate apologists.

He writes: “In recent years, some have chosen to deride these facts. They bring up allegedly solid scientific data, like the fact that the planet has always had, and will have, periods of cooling and warming. They forget to mention another relevant datum: that what we are presently experiencing is an unusual

acceleration of warming, at such a speed that it will take only one generation – not centuries or millennia – in order to verify it. The rise in the sea level and the melting of glaciers can be easily perceived by an individual in his or her lifetime, and probably in a few years many populations will have to move their homes because of these facts.”

The recent Consistory

On September 30 Pope Francis held the ninth Consistory of his ten-year pontificate, creating 21 new Cardinals, 18 of whom are under 80 and therefore able to enter a conclave. The date was opportune given that several of the new cardinals would participate in the October Synod, and that the Synod itself would encourage the participation of other cardinals and bishops arriving for that occasion.

The College of Cardinals as a whole has been replenished almost annually for the last ten years filling gaps created by age. It has also been rejuvenated with a sizeable group of 60 and 50-year-olds. Currently the college has 137 electors (out of a total of more than 230 cardinals).

The figure of 120 was indicated as appropriate by St. Paul VI. At times during the time of St. John Paul II, it reached a maximum of over 140 electors. The College thus appears somewhat “full” today, with well over two-thirds of the electors (99) created cardinals by Pope Francis. Only 39 received their red hats in the previous two pontificates.

At 1.3 billion, the population of Catholics around the world is almost as large as the population of contemporary India or China. Furthermore, the Catholic Church interacts with and influences the life of many more people beyond its members through the establishment of various institutions. Thus, Catholicism remains one of the largest and most complex social actors of our contemporary world, and why the world always watches intently when a new Pope is elected.

During his homily at the Consistory, the Pope said the following: “Brothers and sisters, dearest Cardinals, Pentecost – like the Baptism of each one of us – is not a thing of the past; it is a creative act that God continually renews. The Church – and each of her members – lives this

ever-present mystery. She does not live “off her name”, still less does she live off an archaeological patrimony, however precious and noble.

The Church, and every baptized member, lives the today of God, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Even the act we are carrying out now makes sense if we live it from this perspective of faith. And today, in the light of the Word, we can grasp this reality: you new Cardinals have come from different parts of the world, and the same Spirit that made the evangelization of your peoples fruitful now renews in you your vocation and mission in and for the Church.”

Nicaragua suppresses the Jesuits

The Tablet in late August reported that the Nicaraguan interior ministry had removed the legal status of the Society of Jesus in the country and said it would confiscate its assets.

The confiscation notice claimed that the Jesuits had not provided financial statements for the years 2020-2022 and that its board’s term of office had expired, violating transparency laws.

The measure primarily affects two Jesuit schools, Colegio Centro América and Instituto Loyola, though both are registered separately from the society’s legal entity. Local media reported that parents rushed to the schools to get their children’s academic records and certificates.

The rector of Colegio Centro América said that neither his school nor the Instituto Loyola had received any notification. The Colegio Centro América has existed for 106 years and the Instituto Loyola for 76 years.

The spokesperson for the Central American Jesuits, Fr José María Tojeira, said that the Nicaraguan Jesuits had in fact submitted the required documents but that the ministry had refused to accept them without giving any explanation.

Fr Tojeira said that the purpose of the “Association Society of Jesus” was used to hold and transfer funds to support retired Jesuits.

The government action comes less than a week after it closed the Jesuit-run Central American University in Managua, accusing it of being a “centre of terrorism”.

On 19 August government officials evicted the community Jesuits who worked at the university from their nearby residence. Although the property was privately-owned by the society, separately from the university, they were told: “It now belongs to the state”.

Last week the Central American Conference of Jesuit Provincials issued a statement condemning this latest series of attacks on the Church by President Daniel Ortega’s regime.

It said the “new government aggression” was “not an isolated incident” but part “of a series of unjustified attacks on educational and social institutions that are generating a climate of violence and insecurity”.

Renewal of Seminaries

Christopher Lamb, in *The Tablet* (August 19/26), suggested that Pope Francis’ recent remarks on the training and screening of candidates for ordained ministry make it clear he, at least, thinks a lot needs to change.

A renewal in the system of training men for the priesthood, with a focus on formation in a more synodal style, is among the topics for discussion at the synod assembly in Rome in October. It’s simply impossible to bring about a more synodal church unless all its leaders – lay and ordained – are formed in discernment, spiritual listening and collaborative decision-making.

Francis expressed concern about “rigidity” and the rising danger of right-wing ideologies among young people. “We need normal seminarians, with their problems, who play football” rather than someone “rigid” who goes around “sermonising”.

His critics predictably lambasted Francis for suggesting that priests should play football rather than preach the Gospel. But the Pope’s remarks were not about football but about the need for pastors who are close to their people and able to relate to them. The great danger is distant, clericalist priests “trapped in a theology manual”, driven by ideology.

Francis is warning bishops that it is quality, not quantity, that matters when it comes to selecting candidates. What might emerge from the synod process

Continued page 30

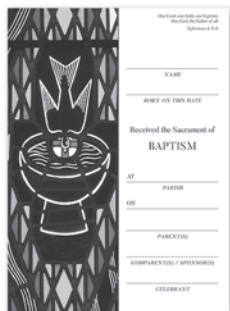


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on the training of priests? There may be recommendations for formation to be longer, more rigorous, and more focused on developing the skills needed for leadership in a synodal church.

Trainee priests might be required to spend more time outside the seminary institution, for example working in parishes or schools, so they become more attuned to the people they are going to serve. The Pope has also said he likes to seek advice about potential candidates for the priesthood from a wider group, including women in the parishes, junior clergy and fellow seminarians.

ACT lack of transparency

Senior Canberra-Goulburn priest Fr Tony Percy has criticised the ACT Government for the way it passed legislation decriminalising some drugs, raising alarm over whether the same “lack of due process” will be applied to its looming euthanasia laws. Source: *The Australian*.

Fr Percy – who has gone toe to toe with the ACT Government in recent months over its forced acquisition of the Calvary Hospital – said he was becoming increasingly concerned over the “total lack of transparency” in how major reforms progressed.

“This just feeds into the Calvary incident where there is a lack of due process and governance, no question at all,” he said.

ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith earlier this month revealed the Government took the commitment to decriminalise drugs “quietly” to the 2020 election and purposefully chose to introduce the reforms through a private member’s bill rather than government legislation.

Fr Percy said he was personally uncomfortable about the move to decriminalise the possession of drugs under certain thresholds, including cocaine, heroin and ice.

The ACT laws will decriminalise the possession of 1.5g or less of amphetamine, cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA and magic mushrooms and 1g or less of heroin. The possession of 0.001g or less of LSD will also be decriminalised. Those in possession of the drugs under the set thresholds will be given either a \$100 fine or direction to attend an

assessment or harm reduction session.

Fr Percy said Ms Stephen-Smith’s comments on how the ACT Government was able to “quickly” legislate its policy demonstrated the Government was being “disingenuous and dishonest” with constituents.

“The other issue that’s going to come up now is with voluntary assisted dying laws ... and the Government now is a law unto itself,” he said.

Sense of the faithful and The Synod

The “Sense of the faithful” group in Melbourne will host a conversation concerning the first assembly of the Synod.

They are delighted to host Susan Pascoe and Bishop Shane Mackinlay who will provide firsthand accounts of the first assembly, as well as offer suggestions for our roles in the year leading up to the second assembly.

They offer a cordial invitation to anyone who can get to Newman College (887 Swanston St) on 23rd November 2023, from 5pm to 8pm.

After the initial discussion there will be further opportunities for reflection over light refreshments. For catering purposes “Sense of the Faithful” ask you to register via “trybooking” www.trybooking.com/CLOTP

Celebrations planned for Bacchus Marsh Parish

St Bernard’s Parish, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria will celebrate the anniversary of the blessing and opening of St Bernard’s Church on 23rd June 2024 at an 11.00am Mass celebrated by Archbishop Comensoli. Mass will be followed by light refreshments and lots of catch-up chatter.

A book entailing the work of priests and parishioners in building our parish – physical structures and culture is being compiled. We would welcome information from former priests and parishioners for this publication. This can be sent to Bacchus Marsh Parish Office BacchusMarsh@cam.org.au 📧

2023... The year of cinema exorcists

THE EXORCIST: BELIEVER (FILM REVIEW BY PETER MALONE MSC)

It is 50 years since many were surprised, some shocked, with the release of *The Exorcist*. It was based on actual Catholic events, with a Jesuit production adviser introduced the cinema treatment of exorcisms and further explorations of diabolical possession. *The Exorcist* itself led to two sequels as well as two prequels and a lot of derivatives. On the occasion of this significant anniversary, the first of three planned Exorcist films has been released.

In 2023, we have already seen *The Pope's Exorcist* based on the actual Vatican exorcist, the Pauline Father, Gabriele Amorth. We have also seen *The Nun II*, part of *The Conjuring* series based on the Catholic American husband and wife team, the Warrens. In the two *Nun* horror films, the Vatican has authorised a nun as an exorcist. Now, we have the sequel to *The Exorcist*.

Unlike the original, this is not a Catholic film, though there are some emerging Catholic themes. For the first 40 minutes, audiences may be wondering whether they are watching right film. This part is a family drama with a forceful earthquake in a Haiti setting. Victor, Leslie Odom Jr, holidaying with his pregnant wife, who receives a number of the blessings from sympathetic motherly women with local powers and traditions, has to make a crucial life-decision after the massive earthquake destruction.

Then, 13 years later, the setting, a rural town in Georgia. Victor is living there with his daughter, Angie, quite a lively girl, and good friends with Katherine, the daughter of devout Christians,

quoting scripture, attending services at the local evangelical church, listening to the pastor's sermons, a very scripture-text spirituality. And audiences may still be waiting for the diabolical possessions!

The two girls go for a walk in the countryside after school, Katherine attempting a kind of hypnotism of Angie so that she can be in contact with her mother. The girls then disappear, frantic searches, eventual discovery three days later, 30 miles away. They have no memory of what has happened. They are taken to hospital.

So, there have been religious suggestions, the visit to a Catholic church in Haiti, the local religious blessings, the Georgia evangelical church, and a woman in the town reaching out with prayers and traditions from Africa and the slave tradition. And, eventually, a Catholic connection, with Ann Dowd as a former nun, with her own secret, working in the hospital.

And the position begins – with a rather evangelical theological analogy: after his death, Jesus descended into hell for three days then rose again; the girls were missing three days and experienced hell. And for resurrection – exorcism.

There is a sympathetic nurse at the hospital, Ann, a former nun, which brings in the Catholic themes and reference to the original film, giving Victor a book written by Chris MacNeill, the mother of possessed Regan 50 years earlier about her experience with her daughter, her being questioned about the experience so often, though she did not actually witness the exorcisms which the priests

effected, but she has spent many years investigating possession and exorcism in a wide range of cultures. She agrees to come to the town – and, quite vigorously confronts the demons in the girls, her attempt to exorcise, with some devastating consequences. At 90 while filming, Ellen Burstyn is still a force to be reckoned with as is Chris MacNeill.

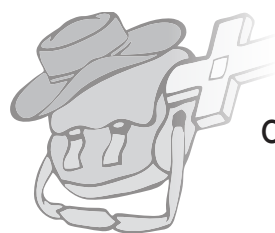
Which brings in the Catholic themes.

The nurse approaches a sympathetic priest, discussions about exorcisms, possessions, the priest going to the Bishop and his advisory board of clergy, their sympathy, but because it was not a strictly Catholic situation, the priest is asked not to participate. Which means that this is very much an ecumenical/interfaith look at possession and exorcism. With the priest absent, but having given her the text of the ritual, the nurse leads in the exorcism attempt, the local Minister, the parents, present and praying. The non-believing Victor, because of the sadness of his wife's death.

The priest's sympathy gets the better of his orders from the Bishop and goes in to participate as well. Not a good outcome. Again, it is Ann Dowd as the nurse who does the verbal summing up of the themes. While the issue is one of belief in God and evil, in its diabolical forms, she states that, experiencing the group coming together, the important thing is collaboration in belief, shared belief.

Audiences interested in exorcism themes have been given plenty to think about. Audiences for whom exorcisms are exotic and/or irrelevant, may well dismiss it out of hand, as was done with the original.

☪



The Swag Autumn Edition

Closing date for letters and articles is Monday 5 February 2024

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

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

Tell No One

**BRENDAN WATKINS. ALLEN & UNWIN 2023
(BOOK REVIEW BY FRANK O'SHEA)**

This is the story of the attempt by Melbourne man Brendan Watkins to find his parents, one a Catholic priest and the other, according to the publicity, a nun. That gives the immediate impression of convent misbehaviour or some form of unusual naughtiness by both parents. In fact, though the mother was in a convent for a few years before her pregnancy and subsequently joined another order where she stayed for 25 years, she was not a nun when the actual affair took place.

The author was eight years of age when he and his brother were sat down by their parents and told that they were both adopted. They were not told who their real parents were; the remainder of the book tells of the author's attempts to find out who his parents were. That effort takes up most of the book, but towards the end, the story seems to descend into a tirade against the Catholic church and the way they blocked all his efforts to find out who his father was.

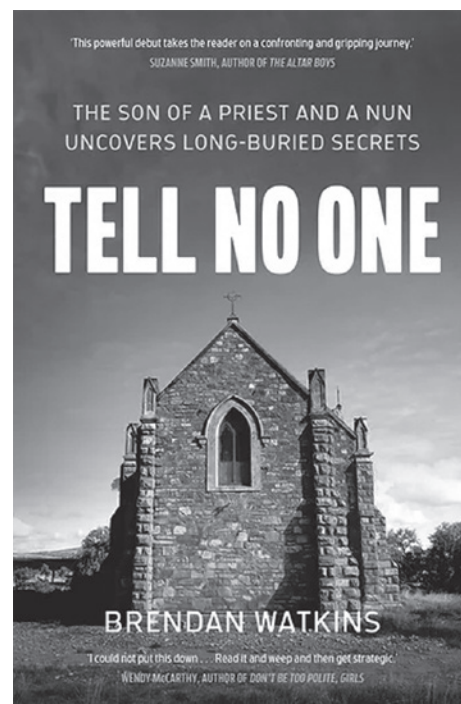
By the time Watkins began to search seriously for his parents, his father had died at the age of 90, but his mother was still alive. Her name was Maggie Becker and he managed to get in touch with her, helped by his patient partner Kate, the mother of their two children. A DNA test showed that Maggie was 78 per cent Irish, her family originating in the area of Kilkenny. He promised that

he would not tell the world that this kindly lady, now in her sixties, was his mother and though they met on a few occasions, the meetings were formal rather than affectionate.

He had great difficulty finding his father, who turned out to be a well-known outback priest name Fr Vin Shiel. As a young man, he had qualified as an architect and then went in to building and business. The Great Depression affected him and his work and he decided that, now aged 30, he would join a seminary and become a priest. The War caused him to abandon his first attempt in Rome and he went to isolated Mount Mellary monastery in the Knockmaeldowns in Ireland instead. Seven years later, he was ordained in Kilkenny and returned immediately to Australia.

It appears that Shiel was a good priest, a builder who made the bricks and plastered the structure and painted the walls of church and presbytery. In 'one of the largest and most inhospitable territories for any priest on the planet, Vin was a missionary in a desolate terrain of blood reds and bleached whites, where the only white inhabitants were miners and railway workers and their families, men on the run and half-mad clerics like my father.'

The author's attitude to finding out about his parents was 'contemptuous disappointment. A nun and priest,



exemplars of the compassionate Catholic faith. I'd been sacrificed for a sin committed against their God. How pathetic.' This reaction is carried through the book and interferes with what starts out as a wonderful read, the short chapters taking the reader on a vivid journey of discovery. Unfortunately, that attitude towards celibacy and the Catholic church in general takes from what is an intriguing read. ☹️

This review appeared in *Tintean*. *Tintean* is an Irish word, meaning fireplace or hearth; the site is a free monthly online, dealing with Australian-Irish matters. Frank is a member of the *Tintean* editorial collective.



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

Don't risk missing out on your 2024 NCP Membership Renewal or other NCP news.

Returned to God

ROBERT (ROB) JOSEPH EGAR

22/07/1933 – 19/09/2023



Robert was the seventh of nine children born to Eugene and Dorothea Eggar. His younger sister became a Sister of Mercy and younger brother, Tony, became a Passionist priest.

Rob's ecclesiastical studies were undertaken at St Francis Xavier's Seminary in Adelaide and St Patrick's College Manly. He was ordained priest in St Francis Xavier Cathedral on 27 July 1957 and served as Assistant priest at Croydon and Brighton, and Parish Priest at Morphett Vale, Salisbury and Seacombe Gardens.

He served on numerous Committees, including Chaplain at Flinders University, the Senate of Priests, Diocesan Consultor, Council of Sites & Architecture, Priestly Life & Ministry, SA Commission for Catholic Schools, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and several terms on the Council of Priests.

In June 1990 he was appointed Vicar General, a position he held for nine years and served two terms as Dean of the Southern Deanery. In the light of his extraordinary service to the Archdiocese, Rob was appointed a Prelate of Honour with the title of Monsignor in April 2002. Together with his dear friend Bob Wilkinson, Rob co-edited *The Swag* for four editions during 2009.

One of Rob's passions was the promotion of vocations and the support of students studying for the priesthood. Together with his friend Ros Rowett he formed a publishing group, *Pilgrims Quest* and produced a number of publications, especially on the priesthood, the Mass and other religious topics.

Rob retired in January 2009, living firstly in Dover Gardens and then at Murphy Villa, but he kept active right to the end. He died in the Royal Adelaide Hospital on 19 September at the age of 90 years. His funeral Mass was celebrated in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral on 3 October where his brother Tony was Principal Celebrant.

May he rest in peace.

BRIAN GLEESON CP

20/05/1936 – 07/09/2023



Brian Gleeson CP was professed a Passionist on 26 January 1956 and ordained a priest on 23 July 1961.

Many MSC were taught theology by Brian during his 13 years teaching at St Paul's National Seminary, 15 years at the Yarra Theological Union and during his years in the Passionist parish in Hobart.

Brian Gleeson, MA, M MR Sc, DTheol, Lector Emeritus, lectured in systematic theology and was the Head of the Department of Church History and Systematic Theology at YTU. He joined the faculty at the beginning of 2001.

Previous appointments were at Catholic Theological College Adelaide (two years); St Paul's National Seminary Sydney (13 years); Catholic Theological Union Sydney (eight years); Pius XII Regional Seminary Brisbane (1 year); and Good Samaritan Teachers' College Sydney (four years). His postgraduate studies were with the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium; the Gregorian University, Rome; and the MCD University of Divinity.

His doctoral studies were in the area of ecumenical eucharistic theology. Other areas of special interest and research include Christology, ecclesiology, sacramentology and ecumenism in general.

May he rest in peace.

TERENCE MAHEDY

04/10/1940 – 03/08/2023



Terence Francis Mahedy was born at Lockhart and grew up on the family farm at Urangeline, near Lockhart, with siblings Annette, Pauline, Catherine and John. He attended Glenara Primary School (near Urana) and St Patrick's College, Goulburn.

In his early twenties, Terence joined the seminary. He left after a couple of years, returning to the farm to help his family after his father died. In 1979 Terence began teaching scripture and catechetics in Wagga, attaining a Catechetical Diploma in 1981. He was 40 when he re-entered the seminary. He believed his life experience helped him relate to people. "I have walked the same path as them," he said. He completed his theological studies in 1984 at St Paul's National Seminary in Kensington and was Ordained at St Michael's Cathedral, Wagga Wagga on 23 September 1988 by Bishop William Brennan in the presence of 42 priests who welcomed him into their community.

Terence was the Spiritual Director for the Wagga Wagga Cursillo movement for 25 years, leaving the role in 2015, and had been the Chaplain to the Catholic Women's League Wagga Wagga since December 2008. Since his ordination Terence has served the Diocese of Wagga in the parishes of Albury, Leeton, and Griffith, and most notably, Culcairn since 1997 and Holbrook since 2008. Terence was generously faithful and caring to his parishioners, and at every opportunity actively engaged with the whole local community where he is much loved and respected.

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the swag



RETURNED TO GOD

ADRIAN NOONAN

14/09/1941 – 16/08/2023

✠ Adrian Noonan died at the retired priests' residence, Villa Murphy, in Adelaide on 16 August 2023. After completing his Seminary studies at Manly, Adrian was ordained by Bishop Bryan Gallagher in St Mark's Cathedral, Port Pirie on 21 July 1964. His first appointment was to Whyalla. Over the next fifty odd years he was assigned to parishes in most of the areas of the Diocese, notably the Inland Mission, based at Coober Pedy and Cleve. He was always enthusiastic and his sole aim was to be a good pastor to the people in his care.

Due to his failing health, Adrian retired five years ago and moved to Adelaide to be close to his family and took up residence at Villa Murphy.

At his Funeral Mass at Our Lady of Victories, Glenelg, something out of the ordinary for funerals occurred when the Funeral Director spoke of Adrian at the end of Mass. He had been a police officer in Coober Pedy during the time Adrian was Parish Priest there and recalled many incidents in which the two of them were involved.

Adrian willingly carried out the simple tasks of helping others, caring for others and sharing with others in his living out of the great commandment of love.

Oscar Wilde reminds us, "Some people cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go." It's the friend we can't wait to see and the one we can't wait to see leave! Adrian Noonan was not the latter.

Adrian was cremated and his ashes will be interred with his parents in the North Brighton Cemetery next year when his sister, who lives in Rome, is in Adelaide and can attend the ceremony.

May he rest in peace.

DESMOND (DES) PANTON

12/07/1937 – 26/07/2023

✠ Des served the Church in a very positive and pastorally enriching manner, giving fine example to both his brother priests and the community for 61 years. The Archdiocese is most grateful for his untiring service to the Church of Melbourne.

After his Ordination on 21 July 1962 at St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne, Des served temporarily at East Reservoir Parish (1962) and then was appointed Assistant Priest at the following parishes: Geelong East (1963), Kilmore (1966); St Kilda East (1968); Oakleigh (1969); St Albans (1974) and Manifold Heights (1979).

In 1980, Des was appointed Parish Priest of the Drysdale Parish (1980), where he served for 32 years until his retirement in 2012, whereupon, he was appointed Pastor Emeritus.

BRIAN SPARKSMAN

20/03/1936 – 22/07/2023



Brian Joseph Sparksman was born in Warwick to Jacob (Dick) Sparksman and Ellen Mary Eastwood. Brian had one brother Charles who predeceased him in 2003.

Brian attended school at Mt Marshall State School, Christian Brothers College Warwick and Downlands College Toowoomba. It was at Downlands College in March 1951 that Brian contracted polio. Although he recovered, Brian required assistance to walk with a calliper. It was a disability he rarely complained about or a barrier to him enjoying life.

In 1964, Brian commenced his study for the priesthood at Pius XII Seminary, Banyo and was ordained in Warwick on 6 August 1970 by Bishop William Brennan. In addition to his study at Banyo, Brian attended the Queensland Conservatorium of Music from 1969 to 1970. He also studied at the Catholic University of America from 1977 to 1980, attaining his Doctorate in Canon Law.

Brian served the parish communities of Holy Name Toowoomba and St Theresa's Toowoomba during different periods in the 70s, 80s and early 90s. He served as chaplain to Lourdes Home from 1994 to 2003.

In October of 1988, Brian was appointed Chancellor of the diocese, a role he held until 2014. During this time, he was Diocesan Ecumenical Officer from 1994-2015 and Vicar for Ecumenism from 2015-2018. In 2005, Brian released his autobiography *Ballinclay Lane*. Set against the backdrop of his battle with polio, the book delved into his physical and spiritual journey.

In 2018, Brian stepped away from active ministry and entered St Vincent's Care Services to receive full-time care.

At his funeral on 7 August 2023, Brian was remembered as a kind man of faith, a committed priest, an intrepid traveller, a classical music lover and a talented singer. Above all, he was remembered as committed to the ideals of ecumenism and respectful inter-faith dialogue.

PATRICK (PAT) JOSEPH TYNAN

22/10/1936 – 27/09/2023

✠ Patrick was born in Brisbane, Queensland to parents Francis Joseph Tynan and Muriel Annie Tynan (nee Williams). He has three siblings, Rosalind Inglis, Sr Kathleen Tynan and Br Bill Tynan.

His primary schooling was at Our Lady Help of Christians School, Hendra and St Columban's College, Albion and he attended high school at St Joseph's College, Nudgee. After leaving school Pat entered Pius XII Provincial Seminary, Banyo, where he trained to be a priest. After ordination he completed a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Queensland.

Patrick was ordained a priest on 29 June 1961 with his first appointment as an Assistant Priest beginning at St Patrick's Parish, Gympie. This was followed by Assistant Priest appointments at Our Lady Help of Christians, Hendra, Mary Immaculate, Annerley, St Francis's Church, West End and St Patricks, Gympie. At different times he was the YCW Chaplain for the Archdiocese.

Pat's first appointment as a Parish Priest began at the Holy Rosary Parish in Windsor, where he remained for seven years. He then moved to St Brigid's, Nerang for eight years.

These appointments were followed by Parish Administrator roles in St Joan of Arc, Herston and St Ambrose, Newmarket and as a chaplain to the Royal Brisbane Hospital until he retired in 2005.

Pat will be remembered as a caring Pastor who was committed to youth on the fringes. He devoted a lot of his life to young people in the YCW. He will also be remembered as an amateur historian who wrote about the early history of the Queensland Church. Since the early 1980s he was involved with the Neocatechumenal Way.

He will be much missed by his family and friends.

May he rest in peace.

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

| | |
|--|------------|
| ✠ Stephen Bohan (Sandhurst)..... | 22/08/2023 |
| ✠ Henry Byrne (Perth)..... | 14/08/2023 |
| ✠ Paul Carey SSC (Passionists)..... | 04/05/2023 |
| ✠ Stephen Cooney OPraem (Norbetines)..... | 09/07/2023 |
| ✠ Ronald Donoghue CCS (Christ the Priest)..... | 23/07/2023 |
| ✠ Peter Dunn (Adelaide)..... | 03/08/2023 |
| ✠ Allan Hartcher OFM (Franciscans)..... | 04/07/2023 |
| ✠ Michael Mullins SM (Marists)..... | 10/07/2023 |
| ✠ Francis Smith CScR (Redemptorists)..... | 02/08/2023 |
| ✠ Albert Yelds MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)..... | 03/09/2023 |

Please email obits to: editor@theswag.org.au

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

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

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

The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)

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

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

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

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