

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



As we bask in the light of the resurrected Christ, I wish everyone a happy and holy Easter. To our Eastern Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters, Christos Anesti. It was wonderful to see so many people attend the Holy Week and Triduum ceremonies in our parishes. Churches and congregations are definitely recovering from the COVID 19 downturn.

In recent issues of the online magazines *La Croix* and *America* articles addressing the clergy sexual abuse crisis have been prevalent. The articles concern the failure of the Vatican to deal pastorally and effectively with the issue. The magazines highlight a failure of leadership surrounding the issue of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy and religious. Fr Hans Zollner SJ, an acknowledged expert on this subject, recently resigned from his position on the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, (PCPM). This begs the question why?

I write this article on ANZAC Day after having celebrated the ANZAC Day memorial mass. ANZAC Day evokes an emotional response from most people, whether in favour of the day and what it commemorates or those who reject the idea of ANZAC Day and everything it celebrates. The day itself is fecund with ritual and meaning. The RSL services have a language which expresses the meaning and dignity of the day. Ex-service men and women have a language and a ritual which helps them to acknowledge their grief and to express their loss. Our ANZAC Day memorial masses also give

expression to our own sense of loss and the pain we experience through memory. This helps us as individuals and as a community to come together and to lament and to pour out our grief in a language and ritual that all can understand.

Unfortunately, this is not the case with the victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence and all other forms of abuse. Victims and survivors do not have a language or process or ritual with which to express their grief. In Australia we went through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In itself the Royal Commission was a cathartic experience which exposed the extent of sexual abuse within our community and within our Church.

The Scottish Redemptorist priest and scripture scholar, Denis McBride and the Franciscan priest and spiritual writer Richard Rohr, have both written about the need for lament. They speak of lament in the Old Testament tradition of finding a language for one's pain and sorrow.

They tell us that lament is not despair. It is not whining. It is not a cry into the void. Both Denis and Richard tell us that lament is the cry of those who seek the truth. It is the prayer of those who are deeply disturbed by the way things are. It is a cry of those who are seeking peace and a healing of the world's deep wounds.

As a Church we need to find a language of lament for those who have been wounded by the abuse of those in positions of authority. We need to find a language of lament for those who have been abused and damaged by those in positions of civic leadership and authority. We need to discover a language of lament for those of us in Holy Orders and religious life who have been wounded by our confreres who perpetrated these vile acts.

The parishioners within our Catholic communities whose trust was shattered by abusing pastors need a language and a ritual to express their grief. The parents of the children who were abused by predatory priests and religious brothers need to find a language to express their horror and shock upon learning of the truth of what happened to their children. They search for a language which will

help them to forgive themselves for their perceived failure to protect their children

Only through the language of lament seeking genuine reconciliation and expressing the reality of our grief, can we truly come to forgiveness and healing.

In one of his recent articles in *La Croix*, Massimo Faggioli writes, "The Catholic Church's inability to manage the abuse scandal ... has tarnished, for at least another century, the credibility of Catholicism, and the Papacy, to speak on a whole range of issues."

The psalmist tells us that the Lord hears the cry of the poor. Perhaps our leaders in faith will hear the cry of the poor, hear the lament of the broken, damaged and abused and help us to find an expression for their grief to bring healing to their wounded hearts, minds and bodies.

Yours in His Priesthood

James Clarke ☪



NCP Memberships 2023

**2023 Membership Renewals
were mailed in February.**

**Your prompt renewal will ensure
we are able to continue to meet
our financial commitments.**

Thank you one and all!



Peter Matheson



Easter 2023 has come and gone. It continues to raise our spirits in an often gloomy world. Like Thomas, we touch the wounds of the crucified Lord in us, his body on earth now, as St Teresa so eloquently said long ago. Through this Australian winter we look ahead to the Synod on Synodality, and the referendum to enshrine the Voice of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters into the Australian constitution, a constitution that failed to recognise their sixty-thousand-year presence on Australian soil.

Recently Pope Francis celebrated ten years as the Bishop of Rome. Or perhaps it is better to say many of us have celebrated his ten years on the chair of Peter. He still draws faint praise and opprobrium from certain quarters in the Church. Many have written articles attempting to sum up the ten years. John Swann has prepared an article reflecting on those reflections. Pope Francis was largely elected it seems to fix up Vatican administration and finances. But that has been only part of his agenda. By his style of leadership, he has attempted to fix up leadership in the whole church, and give us all an example to follow.

Austen Ivereigh sees Pope Francis seeking a transformation of the internal life and culture of the Church, at the heart of which is a conversion of power. “Where not long ago the Vatican was notorious for its haughty manner, its centralism and its authoritarianism, there is now a climate of service and of freedom” (*America Magazine*, Feb 16, 2023).

Yves Congar allowed his diary of Vatican II, *My Journal of the Council*, only to be published after his death, and when you read many of his frank comments we understand why. He was silenced and marginalised by the curia of Pius XII, and then appointed a consultor to the Council by John XXIII. Cardinal Ottaviani, prefect of the Holy Office, and chair of the Theological Commission charged with preparing the preparatory documents for the Council, felt his presence and “criticism” undermined confidence in the hierarchy and Magisterium.

Ottaviani felt no Council was needed. The hierarchy and Magisterium were enough for him (echoing Ivereigh’s critique of its haughty, centralised and authoritarian style).

Thankfully, John XXIII thought otherwise. And so too does Francis. The Synod on Synodality is a continuation of the reception of Vatican II.

The Synod on Synodality, an exercise of the whole church walking together, seems a natural conclusion of the decade of Francis. The new constitution for the Diocese of Rome published in early January attempts a missionary conversion after the parable of the Good Samaritan. It plans a synodal conversion involving active participation of all the baptised, and the creation of a range of consultative bodies, with every parish having a pastoral council, and as many as possible taking part in decision-making processes.

The upcoming Synod, and the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, are two topics of interest in this edition of *The Swag*. As the Synod has involved deep and wide listening, so too will the journey to the referendum on the Voice.

With Peter Dutton’s negative stance on the Voice and the subsequent defection from that stance by Liberals Ken Wyatt, Julian Leeser and Bridget Archer, the political thunder clouds have gathered to sadly distance us from the heartfelt pleas of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

We also note that there are different voices within the indigenous communities. And of course there are different voices encountered within our own Catholic communities on many matters, not just the Voice. Fr Frank Brennan SJ (Rector

of Newman College, University of Melbourne) and Sr Patty Fawkner SGS (Congregational Leader of the Good Samaritans) have written personal reflections about the Voice, which are republished in this edition. Allan Drummond has his own whimsical reflection on the *Tower of Babel* and the many voices in our world. We also reprint here the reflection that Sarah Bachelard gave during the opening of Parliament this year, in which she referred to the gift of wisdom needed for leadership, and this gift present in our First Nations people.

There are many other articles we hope will be of interest. Greg Trythall says ACCRAF, an NCP initiative to financially support priests working in remote areas of Australia, is running short of funds, and leaves us with a challenge. Terry Fewtrell explains his pessimism about the church in his *When the Well is Nearly Dry*. Kevin Liston adds his personal experience of clericalism versus laicism.

Paul Collins reflects on Opus Dei following the Four Corners program earlier this year. Gerard Stoyles from Wollongong reports on a programme he has developed involving parents in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of Initiation. Peter Wilkinson returns to our pages with the first of a series detailing the history of seminaries in our land. This first article looks at Polding’s failed Benedictine dream for Sydney. Denis O’Bryan and his fellow priests from the Diocese of Sale recently farewelled the Josephite Sisters (the Joeys) as they left the Diocese after 120 years. A slightly redacted version of Denis’ farewell address is printed here.

Peter Malone MSC went to the movies to report on *The Pope’s Exorcist* which reached our screens at Easter. Read about it in Reviews.

There are a number of other articles, some serious, some whimsical, but all, I hope, will help our ongoing reflection on being church here in Australia today and all paying homage to the presence of many “voices” in our Catholic community. ☺

The Francis Decade

JOHN SWANN

Fr John Swann is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Adelaide, who lives in Kapunda, SA.

Pope Francis recently celebrated 10 years of his pontificate.

There have been many articles and comments regarding how those 10 years are to be remembered.

Francis has certainly introduced the church to a different era. This began on the day of his election when he appeared on the balcony and greeted the people with *Buona sera*. And then he assumed the name of Francis – the first ever to do so. A few days later he explained why he had decided to become the first pope to take St Francis of Assisi as his namesake. “For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects Creation,” Francis said.

Over the past 10 years the Pope has certainly lived up to those ideals. And he has endeavoured to share those ideals with the wider Church. One has only to think of his many writings, from *Evangelium Gaudium* to *Fratelli Tutti*. And our Church really has changed during those years.

But it has not been an easy task. Francis has faced much opposition from those who prefer things to stay the way they were. He has endeavoured to bring the Church back to the spirit of Vatican II whereas his predecessors had done much to thwart the reforms of that Council. Pope Francis felt the need to pull the institutional Church back to God, to the spirit of the Gospel and its call to be evangelisers. His first major apostolic letter, *Evangelium Gaudium* set out his vision of what the Church should be.

Even though there have been many changes in the world over the past 60 years, the aspirations for change outlined in the Council documents still provide a blueprint of what the Church should be trying to achieve. Francis has been trying to see those hopes fulfilled. The Church still needs to respond to the ‘signs of the times’ as advocated by the Council.

Francis wants our Church to be more missionary, to be more pastoral and in recent times he is advocating a more synodal Church.

Here in Australia we have responded with our Plenary Council, although many think the idea of a Plenary Council was too limiting and a national synod would have been a better choice. Discussions in preparation for the Council in parishes and dioceses brought to light many positive thoughts and areas of concern. Sadly, many of these did not reach the floor of the Council. Time will tell how beneficial the Council was when we receive advice from the Vatican as to what we can or cannot do by way of implementation. Now we are preparing for the world-wide synod.

So what has happened in the Australian church during those 10 years? To what extent have we responded to the call of *Evangelium Gaudium* and the other documents from Francis? Some dioceses have responded positively, depending very much on the local bishop. Others it would seem have not changed very much.

The report that appeared following the Royal Commission *The Light from the Southern Cross* had many recommendations which have not been implemented in many places. Think of Parish Councils and Diocesan Pastoral Councils as an example.

Laudato Si with its message of care for the environment has been taken up in many places, especially in many of our schools. But *Amoris Laetitia* has not, I believe, been given the attention it deserves.

Mass attendance continues to fall dramatically. Indeed, COVID had a disastrous effect and we have never recovered from it. It seems that those who attended Mass out of habit have not felt the need to return, and there are suggestions that many now prefer to watch Mass online rather than in person – some even saying they have a better choice of liturgy and homilies!

But this phenomenon is not limited to the Catholic Church; other churches are

experiencing the same loss. However, little is being done to actually respond to the situation. Maybe we need to generate some energy and imagination as to how we can develop new approaches to evangelization and catechesis. Simply to reinstate the obligation to attend Sunday Mass has little effect.

There seems to be little effort to curb the Latin Mass advocates as Francis has decreed, and despite his many condemnations of clericalism, little is being done, even though it was raised repeatedly in discussions prior to the Plenary Council. Reform of seminary training and curbing the influence of Opus Dei remain works in progress.

Nevertheless, as we look back over the past 10 years there are many things to be thankful for, due to the influence and pastoral leadership of Pope Francis.

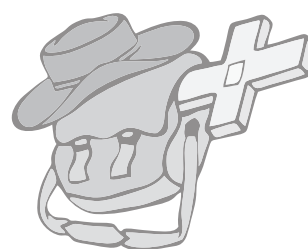
May God bless him and may the Holy Spirit continue to inspire and invigorate him in his efforts to bring the Church more in line with the ideals of *Evangelium Gaudium*. ☪

The Swag Spring Edition

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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.



Original synodality: Consultation in the early Church

CONSTANT MEWS

Constant J Mews is Professor Emeritus at Monash University, attached to the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies. This article first appeared in *Eureka Street* on Feb 22, 2023. It is reprinted here with kind permission of the author and *Eureka Street*.

The passing of Cardinal Pell on 10 January, 2023 occurred at a critical moment in the life of the Australian Church as its bishops consider how to respond to the call of Pope Francis in October 2021 for a synodal Church, based on communion, participation and mission. The news that he had penned an anonymous memorandum condemning the direction currently taken by the papacy appeared like a declaration of war against those he sees as enemies of the true Church.

Yet synodality (literally travelling the road together) is simply another word for perhaps the oldest tradition in the Church, that of coming together to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit. Given that the Cardinal had a particular interest in the early Church (his doctoral thesis was on Cyprian of Carthage, a third-century Church Father), it is perhaps surprising that he did not reflect more on what Cyprian had to say about diversity within unity as like there being 'many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root'.

The mechanism for resolving differences from the earliest days of the Church was that of the council, as attested by the account in Acts 6:1-6 about how the Twelve 'called a full meeting of the disciples', so that they might select those who could help distribute food to widows without incurring friction between Jews and Hellenists. While Acts names men appointed to this role, Paul makes clear in Romans 16:1 that they also appointed women, in particular Phoebe, a deaconess at Cenchræ. The emphasis in both Acts and in the Pauline Epistles is that decisions are made, not by bishops, but by the community as a whole.

Cyprian promoted the election to the papacy of Cornelius 'by the testimony of almost all the clergy, by the suffrage of the people who were then present,

and by the assembly of ancient priests and good men'. In emphasising that the bishop of Rome had the support of most of its Christian community, Cyprian rejected the claims of a rival pope, Novatian, who argued in favour of complete exclusion from communion of those who had lapsed from their faith during a period of particularly savage persecution. Cyprian favoured mercy and compassion for the sake of preserving unity within the Church.

These historical examples have great relevance to the contemporary Church – the need for appointing women as deacons, and of allowing divorced people and those who identify as LGBTQI+ to receive communion. Australian bishops (like those of any country) need to be aware that such policies are essential if the Church is to be perceived as listening to its oldest traditions. Yet in those early centuries, such traditions of consultation were inevitably shaped by the masculine paradigms of power within the Roman world.

Between the fourth and sixteenth centuries, Church Councils provided an authoritative structure through which doctrine and discipline were established. Prior to each council, it was common for a range of different interest groups to communicate their vision of what the council should establish. Articulate women, like Hildegard of Bingen, could use prophecy as a way of communicating their vision.

The problem with such councils, however, is that they became hostage to episcopal privilege and national ambition. The first Vatican Council promoted papal supremacy. Only with the second Vatican Council was there a concerted effort to return to this conciliar way of thinking as involving the whole people of God. Only 23 women attended that Council, however, and then only as auditors.

Words get tired, and need to be reinvented, to recapture their original meaning. Synodality is simply the most recent way of regenerating traditions of consultation that go back to the earliest days of the Church. Here in Australia we can learn from how a multitude of First Peoples, each with their own language and song-lines, their orally transmitted sacred traditions, have learned to live together in the same way as the branches of a tree, to use Cyprian's metaphor.

The precedent for acknowledging diversity within catholic tradition must go back to the New Testament itself, in which (by the mid second century, and then not universally adopted) did a consensus begin to emerge of combining four versions of the Gospel and a range of letters from different apostles. Even then, the official record gives only the vaguest hints as to what female followers of Jesus had to say. Paul may have been shaped by the cultural assumptions of his day, but he did recognise that the message of the Gospel was for all people, whatever their status in society.

One major challenge for those who call themselves Christian is to recognise the reality of the violence of sexual abuse and its lingering effects on those disillusioned by clerical failure to acknowledge these wrongs. In the medieval period, it was thought that celibacy was a legitimate way of overcoming failures of chastity within a clerical elite.

Such ideas operated within an understanding of sexual identity that privileged repression of the flesh. True synodality must involve recognition of those who have been abused by those in positions of power. The issues are not dissimilar to a debate within the national stage of acknowledging the voice of indigenous peoples within the constitution, and the violence to which they have been subjected over the last two centuries.

Whatever word we use for synodality, we must learn to travel together on the road. ☪

An Aboriginal Liturgy

CARMEL PILCHER RSJ

Josephite Sister, Carmel Pilcher, has coordinated liturgies for papal visits to this land and for the Beatification of Mary MacKillop in 1995.

In the last edition of *The Swag*, Tom Gleeson, Adelaide priest (not the comedian!) shared his heartfelt prayer: 'I hear the call for us to create an Australian liturgy, respecting our Indigenous culture, engaging and listening deeply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.' In this he echoes so many of our deep desires, and none more than our First Nation Christians.

I am aware that I write this on the land of the Darug and Gundungurra People, in the Blue Mountains where I live, but 'my country' is Adelaide that I share with the Kaurna people. It was there that I was first introduced to Aboriginal spirituality at the University of South Australia. Since that time, more than four decades ago, I have had a deep respect for our First Peoples and their ancient traditions, especially their cultural ceremonies.

As a student of liturgy and sacraments I have been fascinated that whenever First Nations' Peoples contribute to a significant ceremony, whether at national or local level, this always takes the form of dance, accompanied by song. Just as their music tells a story in symbol and ritual action, so does their art. Even though the digeridoo originated only in some tribal communities, we have come to associate the deep earthy sound, not only with our First Peoples, but with all Australians. For me it is a call to prayer, to communion with the life giving God in relationship with all of creation.

Over the years I've been privileged to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to prepare ceremonies that have marked major events: The Beatification of Mary MacKillop, the Reconciliation walk over Sydney Harbour Bridge, The Interfaith Lament marking the devastating Tsunami in the Pacific, and the Canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Rome, to name a few. In each of these times it was inspiring for me to listen to ritual specialists with thousands of years of practice, who taught me how to enrich Christian liturgy with cultural

elements that have been celebrated on our land by their forebears for tens of thousands of years.

Almost twenty years ago, I first became acquainted with the Aboriginal Mass that was celebrated in Melbourne as part of the Eucharistic Congress in 1973. After watching the recording, where Aboriginal people painted, ceremonially danced, sang and mimed the gospel in a space set up to represent a traditional ceremony that we would call a corroboree. Today it seems almost unbelievable, not only that such a ceremony would be conceived and prepared, but that it would be approved by the Vatican (within months) with only a couple of minor changes. But that was the early 70's! At the Mass the chief organiser, the then Fr (later Bishop) Hilton Deacon proclaimed what were to become prophetic words: 'this is but a beginning'.

I decided to delve deeper into liturgy and Aboriginal culture, and discovered the late great Kevin McKelson, a Pallottine pastor in the Broome diocese who made it his life quest to make the Roman Rite accessible to his people in the Kimberley. Kevin McKelson was no doubt inspired by Bishop John Jobst, his bishop at the time, who, appears to have had an epiphany moment in Rome during the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. He wrote back to his priests: 'we have incorporated into our liturgy ... next to nothing of the Native's culture, hence religion presented to them, particularly the liturgy, will always be alien and foreign to them.' (Letter to A. Piele SAC, 5 November 1964.)

Within months of the celebration of the Aboriginal Mass the Australian Bishops made a formal request to Rome that the Diocese of Broome be permitted to experiment further with inculturating the liturgy for Aboriginal people. They quickly received this permission on 30 May 1973, from the Secretary of State at the Vatican for a time of

experimentation for a 'suitable length of trial'.

Even before the Vatican Council Kevin McKelson began to adapt the liturgy to the needs of his people. First he translated into local language some of the hymns that they sang. No doubt encouraged by Bishop Jobst, he set about reworking the texts of the Roman Rite into the local languages of his people. To do this he sat with the elders in the La Grange Mission (now Bidadanga) and painstakingly worked through the English till he found language and thought patterns in their own languages that they could understand. Then he wrote down the texts – that had previously only been oral. From then on he kept refining, developing and renaming this Mass, eventually known as the Missa Kimberley. Other missionaries took up his English translation and made their own adjustments. Not satisfied, McKelson travelled the world studying liturgical inculturation with First Nations' peoples. He also visited Australian Cardinal Ronald Knox, the then head of the Office for Divine Worship in the Vatican, to try to have the Missa approved.

Other missionaries throughout the continent, but especially in the Dioceses of Broome and Darwin, continued to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to find ways to bring traditional cultural elements to the Roman Rite. This has had mixed success for all sorts of reasons. While Bishop Jobst was keen to have the church leaders in his diocese engage in further studies, no one suggested that the subject of liturgy be studied. At the time the great Benedictine, and key champion of liturgical inculturation, Anscar Chupugncio, was teaching at St Anselmo in Rome. While Kevin McKelson did seek his comments regarding the Mass, and received a favourable response, I often wonder what might be different if Australian missionaries had engaged in formal studies, not just in missiology, and the sciences, but also in liturgy and culture.

My own studies took me to the Broome diocese, to learn from the local people

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about the Missa Kimberley. In time a group of liturgists and myself studied the Missa, and eventually, with local practitioners developed what is now the Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit. Given that Kevin McKelson continued to develop the Mass, we like to think this is the next development, although the only major change was to add rubrics to the Mass. Now, not only has this Mass continued to be well received by the Catholic communities in the Broome diocese, but it has now spread to other parts of Australia where it is now celebrated.

So Tom, this might not be the Australian liturgy that you imagine, but it has stood the test of time, and in the words of Hilton Deacon, it could be a beginning. On May 30th it will be 50 years since Rome gave experimental status for the then 'Aboriginal Mass' to be celebrated. Last year at the NATSICC conference in Townsville, Aboriginal elder and NATSICC councillor for WA, Shirley Quaresimin said to me: 'It's time Sister' – and so Shirley and Madeleine Jadaifrom Bidadanga ceremonially handed the Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit to Bishop Charles Gauci, Bishop of Darwin, and chair of the Bishops Commission for relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics.

After 50 continuous years of experimentation is it not time that the Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit moves from experimentation status to official recognition? ☺☺

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

The ACCRAF Challenge

GREG TRYTHALL

Fr Greg Trythall, is Parish Priest at Williamstown, Victoria. He is a past member of the NCP Executive and is the current ACCRAF Chair.

I am not completely sure what motivated me to approach the former ACCRAF Chair John Swann in 2016 to help the Australian Catholic Clergy Remuneration Assistance Fund (ACCRAF). Soon after, John asked me to be the next NCP rep on the ACCRAF Committee and I agreed. Being a little naïve I did not realise at the time that the NCP Committee rep would normally take over as the Chair of ACCRAF as well! Since then, as ACCRAF Chair, I have been mainly swimming but at odd times sinking, in the job at hand as it becomes another ball in the air one tackles while trying to run a normal-sized parish in the west of Melbourne! Nevertheless, the Lord always gets us through the flood waters if His Spirit calls and we are meant to complete as we say, a God given task.

Accordingly, as I had enough personal money through working before priesthood, I thought I would use some of that and see firsthand that diocese, namely Broome, where the ACCRAF Funds have been mainly distributed over the last decade or so. It was quite an experience flying from Melbourne to Perth to Broome and a few days later to Hall's Creek – stopping briefly at the famous Fitzroy Crossing! Recall that in the last year Fitzroy Crossing floods caused that fair-sized bridge to collapse! This went on to cause all sorts of problems for commuters along the Great Northern Highway in north Western Australia not to mention the blocking of access for many aboriginal communities. Although, in the week in Broome Diocese, I attended a few Masses I cannot forget one particular Mass way out in the outback where there was a stray dog either side of me, about three elderly Aboriginal ladies, three Aboriginal primary school children, three older Aboriginal men who came late and others in a make shift Mass center. It was during those type of liturgies it dawned on me as a city slicker- how could the average priest in those outback areas have any hope of having sufficient

money on the plate to maintain church maintenance let alone sufficient to go towards a stipend! "No way Jose!" as they say! On the way back by plane there was no TV reception between Broome and Perth and I thought I first overheard at the Perth airport that West Coast had beaten my beloved Western Bulldogs in the finals. But to my surprise we had rolled West Coast that night and eventually became premiers in the AFL for the first time in 62 years. It was a joyful end to a long tiring trip.

At the moment we are a glass half full and half empty stage in regards to the future of ACCRAF. Thankfully, there have always been a few significant major archdioceses that contribute to ACCRAF such as Brisbane, Perth and in particular Sydney. Furthermore, other diocese often large in land size but relatively small comparatively in population have never stopped giving like Ballarat, Sale, Broken Bay, Parramatta and Wollongong. Canberra and Goulburn has been more than generous over many years. Fortunately, NCP member contributions have also made a big difference to the bottom line each year as well.

On the other hand, it seems the recent pandemic has resulted in smaller congregations throughout Australia and some of our normal diocese contributors have been slow to pay. If this slide continues, we will not be able to help Broome and other needy dioceses to any extent, in the short, or in particular, the long-term future. Not long before the pandemic there was nearly \$200,000 in ACCRAF funds at the Adelaide CDF. At the end of last year there was only \$30,535.90.

We invite all NCP members, readers of *The Swag* and those dioceses in Australia who do not give any money to ACCRAF, such as Armidale, Bathurst, Bunbury, Cairns, Darwin, Geraldton, Rockhampton, Sandhurst, Toowoomba, Townsville and Wagga Wagga to support us helping the mission of the church in our own

nation. While most of these dioceses struggle to pay their own clergy a decent stipend, I am led to believe that a couple of them could afford at least a few thousand every year to help Broome and the like in the future.

Last year ACCRAF disbursed \$163,092 to the Broome Priests Support Fund. Normally the average is around

\$140,000. Therefore, how can the dioceses, the clergy of Australia and our friends continue to help ACCRAF, and how may you personally enable us to support isolated priests in necessitous circumstances? Don't hesitate to be in touch with me or Fr Mark Franklin in Brisbane Archdiocese if you want to make a contribution.

We also need some generous souls to take over from Mark and me as clergy reps on the ACCRAF Committee, as our two four-year terms of Office are reaching completion in the middle of next year. (NB: Mark represents contributing dioceses so any person in that category would have to be from an already contributing diocese). ☺



Saying Yes to the Voice will herald a better future for us all

SR PATTY FAWKNER SGS

Sr Patty Fawkner SGS is the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, an adult educator, writer and facilitator, with formal qualifications in arts, education, theology and spirituality. She wrote this article after attending a Community Forum organised by her local federal member, Tanya Plibersek, to discuss the Voice to Parliament. This article was first published in the March 2023 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-journal of the Good Samaritan Sisters and reprinted with Sr Patty's permission. www.goodsams.org.au

Tanya Plibersek, my local federal member, recently invited her constituents to a Community Forum to discuss the Voice to Parliament. I was keen to attend. I needed to get a better understanding of the issues regarding the Voice and I wanted to listen to First Nations people directly, rather than to mediated voices. I looked forward to hearing from Linda Burney, Minister for Indigenous Australians, and Professor Tom Calma, Chancellor of the University of Canberra and this year's Senior Australian of the Year. I was not disappointed.

I am aware that the logistics of how the Voice to Parliament will work is still to be developed, but I came away from the Community Forum with four key convictions, or understandings, which will inform how I vote in this year's Referendum.

Linda and Tom reminded me that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is the world's oldest living culture.

My first conviction is of the utter uniqueness and preciousness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civilisation, lore, spirituality, and connection to country.

I came away from the Forum with a deeper appreciation of the gift of Indigenous culture to Australia rather than the deficit narrative we are constantly fed.

To have walked this land continuously for 65,000 years is testament to an inherent resilience, adaptability and wisdom – 65,000 years! All Australians should be immensely proud of this gob-smacking, amazing history.

There is a plethora of learning and wisdom to imbibe from Indigenous culture for those of us who have arrived within a mere 235 years. If my Maths is correct, in a comparable 24-hour day, non-Indigenous Australians began arriving 5.2 seconds before midnight.

Because my ancestors settled here along with all non-Indigenous Australians within the relative recent past, this 65 millennia story is now the story of all of us who call Australia home. Linda Burney said: "This is not just First Nations peoples' story; it is our story." This is my second conviction.

Because Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens share this story, the outcome of the Referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice will be significant for all Australians.

The Referendum is about us – all of us

This puts paid to the utterly skewed history once sung in our *National Anthem* proclaiming we were "young" and free. Thankfully, we now sing of our desire to be one and free.

However, the tragedy is that in the space of a few hundred years, the freedom, agency and flourishing of the first inhabitants of our continent have been diminished, devastatingly so. Proud possession has become tragic dispossession and our First Nations people, rather than being free, are now the most incarcerated people on the planet.

My third takeaway conviction is the indisputable democratic principle and tenet of good governance: that those affected by a decision should be part in making the decision.

The Voice will ensure that Indigenous people are formally consulted about laws, policies and programs being developed *about* them in Parliament.

Importantly, it will ensure that government can no longer abolish a national Indigenous representative Voice, which occurred too often in the past.

"We seek constitutional power over our destiny," Linda explained. Tom reminded us that yes, in the Referendum of 1967 Indigenous people were counted in reckoning the population, and "now we wish to be heard". "We cannot be voiceless in our own land," he said. "Policies were made for us, but not with us." True representation and self-determination, rather than tokenism, is the goal.

Tom noted that governments, in the face of recent natural disasters such as bushfires, drought and floods, have demonstrated the necessity of consulting locals about how to move forward, about how and where to rebuild. Shouldn't this also be the case for Indigenous Australians, he asked.

There are those within and beyond the Indigenous community who dismiss the Voice because they see it as merely

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symbolic and having no practical outcomes. Linda said that this was a misrepresentation. The Voice will be crucial in enabling First Nations people to tell governments what would make a difference in their lives in regard to health and well-being, education and housing, clean water, criminal justice and incarceration.

Indigenous people want a seat at the table; they want to make a difference in their own lives, and ardently desire to close the gap.

No one at the Forum said that the Voice to Parliament would be a magic bullet. There will still be much to do in regard to treaty-making and truth-telling. Linda Burney said that as a country we needed to be mature enough to talk truthfully about the past, so much of which is ugly and dark.

Truth-telling is essential. We cannot fall into the racist trap of dismissing

authenticated stories of the past as a 'black armband' view of history, that pejorative label cynically employed by former prime minister John Howard.

Treaty-making and truth-telling is essential but, Linda insisted, the Voice will be a necessary start.

Both she and Tom reminded the nearly 250 Community Forum participants that the Referendum can be boiled down to two fundamental issues: recognition and consultation.

My fourth and final conviction is that we cannot, we must not, let this opportunity pass.

"History is calling us to say yes to a better future for all of us," Linda said. I was moved by her belief that saying yes to the Voice will help us to become a country that can walk taller. "We will be a different country the morning after the Referendum," she said. If we say yes, all

of us, all Australians, will be irrevocably changed. She invited all attending the Community Forum to be part of the generation that makes "us" a reality.

For me, the generosity of spirit of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the gracious Welcome to Country with which we so often engage, is testament to the desire of Australia's First Nations people to be an "us" with all Australians. A vote for Yes in the Referendum will be an opportunity for all Australians to reciprocate.

During this Community Forum it occurred to me that I cannot but vote Yes. I was reminded that Indigenous civilisation is a gift to Australia, that all Australians are now inextricably part of this millennia-long story, that those impacted by decisions should have a say in those decisions, that the Voice is asking us to say yes to a better future for all of us, and that the time is now. ☪



A Parable of the Voice

ALLAN DRUMMOND

Students in South Sudan are more likely to know the story of the *Tower of Babel* than are kids in Australia.

So? I'm a New Testament Christian, but the OT contains some great stories which should remain part of the Western literary tradition. The Tower of Babel is a case in point. It's in Genesis Chapter 11, which is pretty early in the Hebrew timeline. You can be a fundamentalist and read the story as factual history if you want, but I won't agree with you. I prefer to see the story emerging after the fact, something like this:

A couple of kids are sitting about with their father after dinner of flat bread and goats' cheese, under a vast canopy of stars, which are assumed to be little holes in the dome which covers the flat Earth.

"Dad, how come that camel driver talks funny?"

"Yeah Dad. There's a lot of people who talk funny and I can't understand them either. Why do they do that?"

Dad, not knowing the answer, says:

Let's go over the story of Noah and the flood one more time and I'll answer your question tomorrow.

Next morning, dad goes down to the city gate and asks his mates the same question. No one really knows the answer, but they're all good story tellers. By lunch time, they have a story of proud men trying to build a tower to Heaven, and God punishing their pride by making it impossible for them to speak with one Voice, and so unable to complete the tower.

"Yeah Dad! That makes sense," says the oldest boy the next night, and the story is passed on from generation to generation.

If the story had not been made up, before I think we'd have come up with one to explain the modern world: so many people and groups shouting to be heard.

"Fix my problem!?"

"I'm a minority group. Listen to me."

"We demand an apology!"

"When am I going to see more of my ethnic / racial / disadvantaged / gendered / migrant / religious group represented in film / on TV / in literature / in board rooms / in the school curricula?"

I can't get rid of the idea that government should strive to do the greatest good for the greatest number, and that there'll always be someone who misses out, giving us all the opportunity to exercise our charity for fellow pilgrims on this glorious / awful / terrifying / exhilarating journey called life. But identity politics creates so many competing Voices, all demanding their rights, that we are heading towards becoming ungovernable, and the Tower of Democracy is looking a bit shaky.

(Allan Drummond is a retired teacher. He taught for many years at St Bede's De La Salle College in Mentone, Victoria. After retiring he volunteered for a couple of years in a De La Salle teacher training outpost in South Sudan. COVID, and the high cost of medical insurance forced him home again.)

How to vote on the Voice

FRANK BRENNAN SJ

This article was published in *The Catholic Weekly* on March 17, 2023, and is reprinted here with kind permission of the author and the editor of *The Catholic Weekly*.



What are Catholics to think about the proposed referendum on the Voice to Parliament? During the first year of his pontificate, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* said:

“An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.

“We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.”

Pope Francis then quoted with approval his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* that “the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics,” and that the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.”

Pope Francis added this observation: “All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church’s social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ.”

Our recent Australian Plenary Council endorsed the Uluru Statement from the Heart and encouraged, “engagement with processes for implementing the statement, including local, regional, and national truth-telling efforts.”

I suggest ten steps for Catholics inspired by our Catholic social teaching when approaching the forthcoming referendum. I couch these suggestions in terms appropriate for those of us who are not Indigenous.

We are all invited into constructive dialogue. We must strive to listen to community leaders who know what is good for their communities just as those of us who are not Indigenous know what is good for ourselves and our loved ones.

1. Be attentive to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Stop telling them what is good for them. Start listening to them. Accept that they know what is good for them, just as we know what is good for us and our loved ones.
2. Don’t expect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to agree about legal, political and constitutional questions. It’s called living in a democracy.
3. Form respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and engage in respectful conversations with those who are your friends.
4. Having heard a range of Indigenous voices, make your own decisions about what Aboriginal aspirations are morally justified. What would be right and proper for Australia in the 21st century? For example, the Commonwealth Parliament has power to make special laws about First Nations people. Many Aboriginal people now say, “No special laws without us!”
5. Know your history; know the Aboriginal history. The Australian Constitution does not even mention Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders. They belong in the Constitution. Their belonging should be explicit and particular.
6. The Constitution belongs to all the people. It cannot be amended except with an overwhelming majority of the

people. Educate yourselves about the Aboriginal aspirations at Uluru and be ready to discuss those aspirations at the family meal, the workplace BBQ or the local club.

7. Do something to get this issue of constitutional recognition on the right track. Speak to your local member. Ask that the parliament set up a process so everyone can have their say and so that the major political parties can own whatever is proposed. This is not just a matter for Indigenous leaders. It is not just a matter for the government. It involves all of us.
8. Having decided which Aboriginal aspirations are justified, you then need to make a wise decision about which of those aspirations are politically achievable. Don’t be afraid to talk to people with varying views when making that decision.
9. Having decided which Aboriginal aspirations are not only justified but achievable, you then need to decide to act. You need to put some skin in the game. You need to decide what concrete and just actions you will take. It’s not enough just to vote when the referendum comes around. You need to get on board urging the parliament to put the right proposition to the vote, and helping your fellow citizens make an informed choice.
10. Be respectful and attentive to those who disagree with you, but don’t be afraid to demand that they be respectful and attentive to you. Any national Voice worth its salt will have an elaborate system of local and regional ears to hear the local and regional voices which are needed to give credibility to any national Voice. That will be complex. There will be plenty of room for disagreement.

Whatever the politics of this referendum, we all need to take to heart Noel Pearson’s chilling observation about his people: “We are a much unloved people. We are perhaps the ethnic group Australians feel least connected to. We are not popular and we are not personally known to many Australians. Few have met us and a small minority count us as friends.” ☞

Eye of the heart enlightened

SARAH BACHELARD

Sarah Bachelard is an Anglican priest and theologian based in Canberra. She is an honorary research fellow at the Australian Catholic University, with special interests in philosophy, ethics and spirituality. She is the founder and leader of Benedictus Contemplative Church, an ecumenical worshipping community with a practice of silent mediation at its heart, and is a member of The World Community for Christian Meditation. We reprint this article from the Service for the Opening of Parliament, 6 February 2023, with the kind permission of Sarah.

Every week in religious communities around Australia, prayers are offered for those charged with leadership and the government of peoples. ‘Give wisdom to those who have responsibility and authority in every land’, so the Anglican version goes, ‘that we may share with justice the resources of the earth, and work together in trust’. It’s a theme as old as human community. The recognition that nurturing just and lifegiving relationships between peoples, negotiating competing desires and interests in a world of gift and limit, while caring for the very conditions of existence, is no straightforward matter. To those of you who commit to this service, these difficult responsibilities, on behalf of us all – thank you. For as I’m sure I don’t need to tell you, real leadership in the face of this complexity is demanding. It involves many elements – good intentions, good information, the willingness to nurture relationships and build consensus, and sheer hard work. There’s something else needed too, as the prayer I cited above suggests. Something absolutely vital. We call it wisdom.

Wisdom is the quality of those we relate to as elders, of those who speak with authority, whether or not they have positional power. It has to do with judgement, discernment, seeing a bigger picture. Of course, like every human quality – wisdom can be corrupted or reduced by self-interest. Guile and cunning are its debased expressions. True wisdom, though, is different. The wise perceive and connect to the depth dimension of reality and so enable creative, compassionate engagement with the fuller truth of things. Wisdom is a form of what the great Australian poet, Les Murray, called ‘whole-thinking’¹. As one contemplative teacher has put it, ‘wisdom is not knowing more things. It’s knowing with more of ourselves’².

For the wisdom traditions of the world this capacity for ‘whole thinking’, fuller knowing, is connected to the ‘heart’ – where ‘heart’ refers not to feelings alone, but to the centre or soul of a person. Wisdom is an integrated, attentive, compassionate responsiveness. It embodies what Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, former Senior Australian of the year, calls ‘dadirri’ – ‘inner deep listening and quiet still awareness’³.

‘Give wisdom to those in authority’. But where does wisdom come from? How does any of us grow in it, amidst the messy, busy and often overwhelming circumstances of politics, work and life?

Strangely enough, experience teaches that our access to this integrated, heart’s knowing is usually by way of the heart’s breaking. And maybe you know this for yourself. A time, perhaps, when a disappointment, failure, betrayal or profound grief threw you out of the life you’d known and had tried to fashion for yourself. A time when your ways of making sense faltered, and you found yourself unable to go on as before. Almost none of us undergoes heart-break willingly. Yet the great paradox is that if we can abide in this broken space without closing ourselves off by becoming bitter or repressed, we wake up at a different level. As the grip of our egoic illusions and fantasies of control loosens, we discover ourselves rooted in deeper ground. And gradually, we come to know ourselves more fully part of an interconnected, interdependent whole, capable of being responsible to the whole. Which is the beginning of wisdom.

This has nothing to do with valorising suffering or deprivation; licensing a society to neglect the vulnerable and dispossessed, or to fail to redress injustice. It’s simply the recognition that we don’t attain to ‘whole-thinking’ by cleverness,

but through the integration of our wounds. We cannot acquire wisdom as a possession – it grows within us as we are opened at the level of the heart. This is what Jesus means by poverty of spirit. And as he says in the text we heard read, it’s the poor in spirit ... those who have touched the tears of things ... those who walk humbly on the earth ... who are blessed. For they are connected to the fullness of life and so are capable of truthful vision, of mercy and of making peace.

And this speaks directly to a matter which you, Prime Minister, have identified as central to the work of this current Parliament. Our nation has received the great gift of a Statement from the Heart of the first peoples of this land. This is a wisdom text. Born of heartbreak – of long and continuing suffering, yet marked by an extraordinary generosity of spirit open to the possibility that the wounds of our history might be reconciled for the good of all – the Statement from the Heart can only truly be heard and enacted when those to whom it is addressed make contact with and listen from their own heart. This is its gift and challenge to us all. The call for a First Nations Voice to be enshrined in the Constitution is thus not just another policy proposal, to be debated at the level of strategy and argument. As well as a condition of lasting justice for Australia’s first peoples, it’s an invitation to our nation as a whole to grow in wisdom’s way.

At a time when petty factionalism is tearing at the fabric of national and international communities, and the crises of our age escalate, the necessity for wisdom in the government and among the peoples of the world is urgent. May this Parliament, this nation – all of us – grow in wisdom that we may share with justice the resources of the earth, and work together in trust.

☪

Notes

1. From his poem, ‘Poetry and Religion’ in Les Murray, *Selected Poems* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2007), p.94.
2. Cynthia Bourgeault, www.cynthiabourgeault.or
3. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, ‘Dadirri: Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness’, www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/, ©1988 Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr.

When the well is nearly dry

TERRY FEWTRELL

Terry Fewtrell is a resident of Canberra and active in Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn. He is a retired public servant and consultant and the author of *George, Elise and a Mandarin – Identity in early Australia*, highly commended in the 2018 ACT Literary and Publishing Awards.



Several of my articles on the Plenary Council have been published in *The Swag*. I have sometimes been asked why I write so strongly, perhaps angrily. I often reply that as with many Australian Catholics, my 'reservoir of tolerance and understanding is just about exhausted'. I know, in part, I write for therapy. So, your editor has asked me to explain why.

Since his election 10 years ago, Pope Francis has had a firm goal to align the church once again with the outcomes and directions of the Second Vatican Council. It is now effectively 60 years since that Council closed its deliberations and the deposit of its wisdom was placed in the hands of all Catholics, and especially the episcopal leadership. But for most of the past 40 years church leaders have largely ignored the counsel of its documents and much of its essential theology. When pondering my own frustrations with church leaders, I realise that the problems stem from those disconnections.

Almost 60 years ago I was a student at the Springwood and Manly seminaries, a member of a class that was ordained in 1971. I however chose to take another career choice in 1968 that led to a

fulfilling work life, a happy marriage, two enriching now adult children, and five impressive and fascinating young Australians as grandchildren. I regret none of those decisions, neither the decision to enter the seminary nor the decision to leave, at a time of great turmoil in seminaries, the world-wide church and personally. I would not be the person I am had I not spent those nearly five years immersed in that study and culture, but in addition I have also been broadened immensely by subsequent study and professional engagement.

I have remained a believer and probably part of my problem is that, despite the despair that many Catholics have experienced in recent years as the full extent of the sexual abuse scandals and cover-ups have been revealed, I have been driven to 'stay and fight' rather than walk away as so many others, understandably, have done. Even more so as I watched the lamentable efforts of bishops to protect the institution rather than confront Truth. It is a perplexing and sobering paradox that Catholics have an atheist Prime Minister to thank for forcing the exposure of much of the truth in these matters.

It is virtually impossible to imagine what could constitute a worse negation of its central mission, than the sexual abuse scandals and cover-ups. But still some church leaders seemingly resent the process that was required to get them to acknowledge its reality and its systemic/cultural triggers. I often wonder whether the cover ups, the moving around of offenders and other leadership inadequacies would have been tolerated had the governance of the church grown in the spirit of the Vatican II theology and ecclesiology. Diocesan Pastoral Councils and other lay engagement, particularly by women, would surely have resulted in greater transparency and accountability.

The entity that the Australian Catholic

church has become in the 60 years since Vatican II is significantly different to what was suggested back then. A truly pilgrim church based on a radical Baptismal theology is a long way from the inwardly focused triumphalist church that has re-appeared, with its arrogant male led certitudes, an immature relationship with women and a 'yes but' sense of inclusion.

I recall attending parish meetings in the late 1960s that were focused on how the church at a local level could respond to the challenges of Vatican II. I vividly remember an elderly priest counselling me that many parts of the church must die before a new church, inspired by the teachings of the Council, could emerge. Yet it seems that much of the effort in the church during the past 50 years has not been to face challenges honestly. Instead of imagination and hope, our leaders have given us fear and denial.

Such recollections these days come with a jolt, not just of *déjà vu* but of how so much time could be squandered and wantonly lost. *What sort of leadership has got us to this point?* I was part of the exodus from the seminary, the downstream effects of which were always going to challenge the Australian church. There have been other factors, demographic and cultural, that have been similarly obvious in their likely impact, requiring creative responses and proactive planning that any sensible organization would undertake.

But instead of honesty, transparency and an openness to the new, those responsible for guiding the faithful have been seemingly frozen, both in time and in thinking. That is certainly the impression they have created. It was Francis Sullivan, who had the opportunity to observe Australia's bishops close-up, who was led to the sad conclusion that the Australian bishops use inertia as a management tool.

This is evident in their seeming endless ability to engage specialist lay and other advisers only to find confounding and sometimes bizarre reasons for not accepting recommendations or at least working creatively through issues. This has been seen especially on issues

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of governance and the role of women in the church. Such approaches are damaging, if not abusive. They draw in engagement, raise hopes, purport to be open to new thinking and then back away, suggesting more thinking and work is required – so nothing results.

In short, they abuse trust and misuse the goodwill and specialist expertise that is proffered to them in the best of spirits. They ask people to draw from their wells and then cast the earnest offerings down the drains of incompetence and fear. This can be tolerated for only so long. The average Catholic works out that they are being ‘played with’ and good will is not part of the game. Many have walked away, disillusioned and angry by the incompetence of church leadership.

Why waste your time? Just let it die and let them wither on the vine with it. Those responsible are either ignorant of the damage they do to the declining numbers of faithful and to their own integrity and respect, or incapable of changing.

This was one of the clearest messages that the loyal Catholics gave to the bishops at the initial submission stage of the Plenary Council. We were assured that everything would be taken seriously, but that was an empty promise and criticism of the bishops and leaders was one of the first things to be swept off the table as the Plenary progressed. Either they are so self-absorbed they don’t realise the impact they have or are blatantly dismissive of it. Either way ignorance, denial and inertia become culpable.

So, I reflect again on those years in the seminary, amongst some who are now part of the episcopal cadre, and I am

reminded of the shared aspirations for a reforming church. I find it hard to reconcile some more recent utterances. It seems the Australian Catholic church of the past 30 years is now reaping the bitter harvest of several factors that started with the long pontificate of a man who seemingly was not seriously interested in the theology or ecclesiology of Vatican II. Gradually, but deliberately, key elements of Vatican II theology and ecclesiology were pushed to the side or buried. So much for the outputs of an Ecumenical Council, supposedly the church’s highest teaching authority.

The focus on certitude with no dissent came with its own prescriptions. It requires men with little critical thinking and scarcely any creative ability to work through problems and discern innovative approaches to keep the church ‘fit for purpose’ at the opening of the 21st century. So, we acquired a generation of men as leaders who were/are neither equipped nor disposed to the open and creative treatment of issues, be they theological, ecclesiological or collegial. We have also seen emerge a younger cohort of priests who, sadly, are more aligned to pre-Vatican II theology. Instead of walking with people in the realities of their lives, they offer a set of rules, lavish rubrics and effectively circle the wagons around those who comply and don’t question.

I once engaged with one such priest who was clearly leading his community towards a traditionalist approach. I told him how thrilled I was when I first heard the mass in English. His patronising gaze expressed only pity but remains with me to this day as a sad image of the church’s journey to irrelevance. *So, who is responsible? Who is accountable?*

Well, it is Francis who is calling ‘time’ to all this inward gazing. I say truly, thank Christ for Francis! His 2018 Letter to the People of God was an earnest cry for help, directed to ordinary Catholic, seeking their support in reforming the church. He called for an “active and assertive” laity. Effectively he asked for the help of the people to keep his bishops honest. And that is precisely where we still find ourselves today. Australian Catholics are aware that the opposition to Francis is real and remains a strong thread in the Australian church.

I hear there is hope in some of the newer episcopal appointments. I do see some glimmers of encouragement, but they need to be sustained by a willingness to speak authentically their own truth and to insist real issues are discussed openly and honestly. Then again, I hear of my own Archbishop deferring yet again the establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council, because there needs to be more thinking done. When it comes to the Australian church it seems that inertia is the sin of convenience, the avoidance of what appears difficult.

My wife and I have a 50% success rate in terms of offspring who still believe and are engaged with the church. That’s higher than the average so perhaps it is time to cap the well and conserve what is left. But then I think of the grandchildren. I seek only that the church has half a chance in their lives to be a relevant and an attractive option. The odds are not good. Sometimes I wonder if bishops ever really ponder such predicaments in a flesh and blood way. ☪



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 copy of *The Swag* or other NCP news.

Afghanistan needs nuns

FRANK O'SHEA

Frank currently lives in retirement at Point Cook, Victoria and adds, for the record, his teaching career (mathematics, mainly) was in a DLS school (Waterford) for five years, CB Chatswood, Sydney for three years, and Marists (Dublin and Canberra) 32 years. He would like to think he was part of a worthy endeavour.

The Taliban know what they are doing when they ban girls from high school and women from university. A modern society needs educated women, and the Taliban are determined that their country will not be modern, will look for its examples and its rules to an older time.

Wider availability of education has an effect on every society. John Baptist de la Salle recognised that back in the 1700s, an example that was taken forward a century later by Marcellin Champagnat in France and Edmund Rice in Ireland. All were committed to providing free education to the widest possible number of children. (There were established schools like seminaries and those run by Orders like the Jesuits or traditional orders of nuns, but society understood that these were for those who could pay.)

So we come to Australia a century and a half ago. A bothersome young woman, originally from Melbourne, was setting up schools in South Australia and Queensland. She called her teachers 'sisters' and put them in nun-like garb, but they were not an official Order and they lived in the community, not in convents. In time, she would run into problems with the male church establishment, but she seemed to be a survivor. In Ireland at the same time, Edmund Rice was effectively kicked out of the Order he had founded, some of his followers insisting that de la Salle was their real founder.

My point, however, is not about these troubles by the founders but I want to write about the effect of what they did. Living in a settled community of senior people, I meet many older women who were taught by nuns, most frequently the Joeys. Sadly, many of the stories are negative ones, as are the stories I hear from some of the men whose schooling was in one of the Brothers' schools. Books have been written about the

harsh treatment of boys in those latter schools, but it is surprising to hear similar if less serious stories of cruelty from girls' schools.

Perhaps we need to go back to the century before last and the first half of the twentieth century to remind ourselves where we came from and to appreciate the difference the Brothers and nuns made to society when they made education available to the children of the poor. At least one of those Orders took a vow 'to teach the poor gratuitously.' A vow!

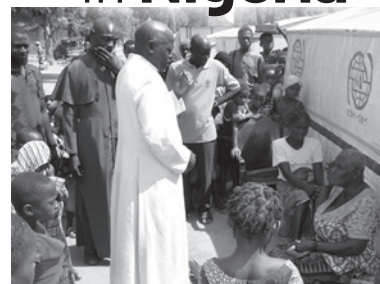
Today, we live in an educated world and we take for granted that though we may not know the educational background of those whom we meet, we accept that we are all more or less equal. Go back one hundred years and that situation was less sure; indeed, you would not need to go that far back to realise how fortunate we are and how we take for granted the educational standards of our society.

Of course, this situation is down to enlightened government as much as bodies of dedicated educators but it reminds us of where we started this discussion. That all members of society would be equal is a situation which the Taliban cannot tolerate. There is not much they can do about education of boys and young men, but they can bring the women back to a social position which they regard as endangered by education.

One of the better things Benedict did in his time was to declare Mary McKillop a saint. ☺

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Clericalism and Laicism: Culture and Lifestyle

KEVIN LISTON

After a career working with refugees and migrants, Kevin completed a Master of Theological Studies at ACU and a Graduate Diploma in Psychology at Monash University. His interests now are in renewal in the Catholic Church and in a contemporary Catholic spirituality that addresses the needs and cultures of our times.

The biases of clericalism seem to be built into the structures of the Catholic church. The problem is more complicated and the solution more complex than deficiencies in the formation of clergy.

Here I want to highlight some of the differences in the lifestyles and cultures of clergy and lay people as a partial explanation for the prevalence of clericalism and laicism, the excessive passivity shown by many lay Catholics towards clergy. I did not realise just how different the lifestyle of a priest is from that of most lay Catholics until I left it.

As a priest I did not worry about having a job or income, a house to live in, security for the future especially in retirement, health insurance and status in the community. No one depended on me for their lives and well-being. If I died my family and friends would be sad and would grieve for a time but no one's life would be seriously changed.

Once ordained, I had a platform and an audience who were committed to being there. Community relevance was a given. I was given 'masks' (a collar and vestments) that gave me, and others, a sense of being different from everyone else and I performed a rite that no one, including me, fully understood. At the age of 27, I was deemed an authority on morality and how people should live their lives and conduct their sexual relationships, things I had neither experience, appreciation nor understanding of.

When I left the priestly ministry, I had to find a job without any career qualification and secure an income. Being in a strange city, I had no connections or contacts other than my future wife's family. I had to find and pay for a place to stay, renting initially until I could buy a cheap flat in a run-down area with the help of a loan from my brother. I paid for a cheap car out of a basic wage. I was on my own

with neither status nor a safety net. Later than most, I learned to form a loving personal relationship leading to life-giving intimacy.

I joined a church community but was never an insider – that takes time, patience and persistence. Catholic congregations are generally more focused on the liturgy than on community. My needs were too practical and immediate for that church community.

Getting married meant a new intimacy. It also made me responsible for my wife. Then we had a child. I felt excited, privileged- but with more responsibility than ever. If I died then, two other lives would be deeply changed forever. I simply could not allow myself to die!

My experience of both lifestyles has made me uncomfortably aware of the depth of difference between them. The contrasting features of these lifestyles and cultures contribute more to clericalism than seminary formation. Most men coming out of seminaries do so with spiritualities, self-images, core values and perspectives on life remarkably similar to those they entered with.

Much has changed since the 1960s and 70s but clericalism is still a major issue.

It is common in churches these days to hear denigrating comments (mostly implicit) about the focus that so many lay Catholics have on themselves and their families, on their pursuit of social and financial security.

The reality is that people take responsibility as individuals or as families for themselves and their lives, often in demanding circumstances. Communities play a significant role in our lives but at the end of the day, I am responsible for making or paying my way. A serious illness, accident, mental health issues, marriage breakdown or a coincidence of adverse circumstances

can easily lead to poverty. So many who front up at Vinnies or the Salvos could give us lessons on this.

I do not seek to under-estimate the demands on priests who live in diocesan or religious communities, their courage and commitment. For many, living an authentic life, forming and developing relationships, managing expectations and responsibilities, often coping with loneliness and isolation are deeply challenging. Overcoming the easy, seductive bias towards a clericalist attitude can be a daunting task.

Similarly, many lay Catholics find themselves unprepared for relating to priests as adults and either fall into habits of laicism and passivity or quietly cease trying to engage.

The divisions of clericalism and laicism are universally recognised as destructive. My sense of meaning and value in life are expressed in my lifestyle but equally the lifestyle that I find myself living influences and can easily determine the meanings and values that inform my life.

Hopefully as we become familiar with a synodal way of being church, we will learn how to meet one another's needs. Until we eliminate or significantly reduce the negative impacts that these lifestyles have on ourselves and each other, clericalism and laicism will continue. And we will all be less than we could be for it. ☪

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Opus Dei: A Catholic Sect

PAUL COLLINS

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). He is the author of 17 books, the most recent is *Recovering the 'True Church'* (2022) A former head of the religion and ethics department in the ABC, he is also known as a commentator on Catholicism and the papacy and has a strong interest in ethics, environmental and population issues. www.paulcollinscatholicwriter.com.au

Back in late-January the ABC's Four Corners did a rather superficial exposé on Sydney's Opus Dei (OD) schools. It was disappointing because the programme lacked a broader context.

Sure, we learned that according to some ex-students and parents the schools weren't woke, and that some teachers touted particularly silly assertions about pornography and holes in the brain, virginity and sticky tape and masturbation as a "mental disorder".

There were more serious allegations, such as opposition to the cancer-preventing HPV vaccine, widespread homophobia and recruiting students to join OD. But we learned next-to-nothing about the organization behind the schools, except for a reference to that particularly silly novel and movie, *The Da Vinci Code*.

While OD is obsessively secretive, there's a lot of information available. I've written detailed accounts of OD in three books, including one published by the ABC in 2004, *Between the Rock and a Hard Place* (pp 192-202).

OD statistics are also publicly available: in 2021 the reliable website www.catholic-hierarchy.org reported that worldwide membership comprised 2115 priests and 93,510 laypeople. In Australia there are 20 priests, including Sydney Auxiliary-Bishop Richard Umbers, and 600-700 laypeople. Most priests are in Sydney, including Warrane College at UNSW. OD priests also staff the West Melbourne parish of Saint Mary Star of the Sea.

Founded in October 1928 in Madrid, Spain, by the priest, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the formative years of OD were during the lead-up to and during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). This was a terrible period for Spain and Catholicism and OD reflects the

anti-clerical violence of the time, as well as the Franco dictatorship that followed the civil war.

There has been much talk of OD's influence in Australian politics, but while it has some clout within the right-wing faction of the NSW Liberal party, nowadays its power-base in Australia is more imagined than real.

It was very powerful during the Franco regime in Spain. Nowadays, it still has some influence in Spanish, Italian, Peruvian and El Salvadorian politics and it did have power during the Pinochet regime in Chile. OD is also influential through the universities they have established in Spain and Latin America. In the US, Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas, John Roberts, Samuel Alito, Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch are said to have OD connections; they are certainly very conservative Catholics.

Talking about these justices I'm purposely vague because of OD secrecy. No one is ever sure who is an actual vowed member and who is only a co-operator, or just a supporter. It's kind of Latin-Mediterranean emphasis on secrecy makes it alien in the Anglo-American world.

It's founder Escrivá, who was declared a saint in 2002, claimed that OD was unique in Catholicism saying that it was not a religious order, but a true lay movement. In 1982 OD persuaded John Paul II to make it a "Personal Prelature", that is an extra-territorial diocese, which meant that OD members, both priests and laity, weren't subject to local bishops, but to the OD Prelate in Rome, a unique structure within Catholicism. That's why the OD Sydney schools are completely independent of the local Catholic Educational authorities.

Numerically small, OD has become a sect within Catholicism whose influence

has lessened somewhat since the death of John Paul II in 2005. However, last year Pope Francis moved to rein-in OD's independence. In the *Motu proprio, Ad charisma tuendum* issued on 22 July 2022, Francis decreed that the Prelate of OD not be ordained a bishop.

He will remain a priest and will be expected to submit an annual report to the Dicastery for the Clergy; previously it was a five yearly report. Effectively, the organization is being brought more in line with traditional ecclesial structures.

Full members of OD are either priests, numeraries, or supernumeraries. Numeraries are lay men and women who take vows (OD calls them "promises") of celibacy and obedience making them the equivalent of committed members of religious orders. They live together in Opus houses, or privately. The men are usually professionals of some sort contributing their entire salaries to OD. The women do domestic work, although some have outside jobs and professions.

Supernumeraries are married laypeople whose spirituality and lives are immersed on OD and who contribute financially. Others associated with OD are oblates, laypeople living a celibate life outside an OD house and co-operators, some of whom are quite wealthy who support and foster OD's activities.

A notorious OD supernumerary was FBI Special Agent, Robert Hanssen, probably the most damaging spy and traitor in US history. Ironically, his arrest was supervised by then-FBI Director, Louis J. Freeh, himself an OD co-operator.

Despite OD's claims to being a "lay movement", it's the priests who're in control and OD clergy exercise enormous influence over the lay members who are expected to reveal and confess the most intimate aspects of their lives to OD priests. Some numeraries are also involved in spiritual direction.

The spirituality of OD centres on Escrivá's book *El Camino*, "The Way", a collection of 999 aphorisms. By any

Continued page 18

objective reading the book is pedestrian and unoriginal, even though OD claims it provides a revolutionary *new* spirituality by emphasizing that everyone, including laity, are called to holiness.

But that is precisely what Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) aimed to do in 1418 in the *Imitation of Christ*. Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622) had a similar aim in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* first published in 1609. He was writing explicitly for ordinary Christians, not for religious and the book was popular in both Catholic and Protestant circles.

Both à Kempis and Francis were writing centuries before Escriva. Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) always said the *Spiritual Exercises* were as much for laypeople as Jesuits and adaptations of the *Exercises* are nowadays used for laity.

There is nothing revolutionary in Escrivá's spirituality. What he is really trying to do is set up a semi-monastic *cordon sanitaire* to protect OD members from so-called "worldlines" or "unorthodoxy". There is no doubt about the sincerity of members, but OD exudes elitest superiority, compartmentalised faith and humourlessness.

My fundamental disagreement with OD is that it is a sect, that its approach to life and ministry is profoundly uncatholic and that its spirituality doesn't free the spirit, but enslaves it.

A truly Catholic attitude is open, generous, ecumenical, supra-national, humble enough to laugh at itself and universalist. That doesn't mean it doesn't have parameters like scripture, tradition and church teaching, but genuine Catholicism embraces rather than excludes.

OD is the opposite. It's closed and sectarian, living within a narrow orthodoxy. It sees itself as the measure of all things Catholic. Unless you're a part of OD, you're an outsider.

It is precisely within this kind of context that the *Four Corners* programme completely lacked. It's a pity it didn't look a bit deeper. ☹️

Catholic Seminaries in Australia: 1835-2023

PETER J WILKINSON

Dr Peter Wilkinson is a missiologist and former Columban missionary priest. He has been a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, guest lecturer in Missiology at Yarra Theological Union, and consultant to the Australian and New Zealand Royal Commissions into child sexual abuse. He is the current president of Catholics for Renewal.

Part 1: Australia's First Seminaries in Sydney

Vicariate Apostolic of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land

In 1819 the 9000 Catholics living in New Holland and Van Diemen's Land were part of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Madagascar, and New Holland (with the adjacent islands). Its bishop, English Benedictine Edward Bede Slater, resided in Mauritius and had never visited his distant flock in *Terra Australis*.

However, in 1820, Bishop Slater sent two priests, Fathers Philip Conolly and John Joseph Therry, to care for these isolated Catholics and, when Fr William Ullathorne OSB arrived at Sydney in 1833 as Vicar General of New Holland, he found that both priests had cared well for some 22,000 Catholics scattered across the colony.

In 1834, after much pleading, Pope Gregory XVI established the new

Vicariate Apostolic of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land, and appointed the young English Benedictine, John Bede Polding, as its first bishop.

On his appointment, Polding stated publicly that "a seminary for the express purpose of educating clergy for this mission seems absolutely necessary" and linked his hopes for a locally educated clergy to his 'Benedictine dream'.

First Sydney seminaries

Before departing England in March 1835, Polding had recruited six seminarians whom he had designated 'catechists' so each could receive a £100 government stipend. The first seminary began aboard the *SS Oriental* on its passage to Hobart and Sydney with Polding instructing the seminarians: three Benedictine sub-deacons – John Spencer, Henry Gregory, and Joseph Sumner – and three secular seminarians – John Kenny, John Harding, and John Gorman. All were English except Kenny, a Scot.

On arrival at Hobart, Polding assigned Kenny to Fr Conolly as a catechist and on arrival at Sydney in September 1835 assigned Harding to Norfolk Island as a catechist. He sent Gorman home.

The Benedictine sub-deacons resided at the Bishop's House at Woolloomooloo where Polding continued to form them in theology, pastoral ministry, and community life. They were soon joined by four others: Irish-born Richard Walsh and Michael McGrath, and local-born Maurice Reynolds and Thomas Ferguson. On 8 May 1836, in St Mary's Cathedral, Polding ordained Spencer and Gregory to the diaconate, and the next day ordained Sumner to the priesthood, the first in Australia.

In January 1838 the *Australian* newspaper advertised: 'Seminary of St Mary's adjoining St Mary's Cathedral. This institution will be opened *pro forma*



Bede Polding

on the 26th of this month. Studies will be commenced on the 1st of February'. It was to be a modest new seminary/school which Polding was putting under the care of Fr Charles Lovat, a former English Jesuit and professor at Stonyhurst College whom Ullathorne had recruited in 1837 for the New Holland mission.

Enrolments began with 14 students, among them the young Tasmanian-born Daniel Vincent O'Connell who in 1848 would become the first Australian-born candidate ordained to the priesthood. Seminarian numbers peaked at 26 in 1849.



Daniel O'Connell

Polding's Benedictine dream

Polding's dream for the Church in Australia was a Benedictine abbey-diocese at Sydney, with an English abbot-bishop presiding over a community of mainly Benedictine priest monks. Before leaving England, he had sought permission to set up his Benedictine monastery and novitiate on arrival in Sydney, but both the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide and his own English Benedictine Congregation had refused. After further attempts in 1837 and 1839 Polding won approval for the monastery and novitiate, but not the extra Benedictine personnel he wanted for the daily monastic liturgical services and for the missionary work he planned to undertake.

Polding wanted the abbot-bishop and monks to have effective control over the diocese's future: the monks electing a new abbot-bishop whenever required,

the abbey-diocese's vast territory dotted with smaller monastic communities served by monk-missionaries with secular clergy assisting, and Benedictine nuns and other religious all working together in harmony and pooling resources under an uncommonly unified Episcopal-cum-monastic leadership. In 1851 Polding even petitioned Rome to make Sydney a Benedictine diocese 'in perpetuity' with the monastic community holding a perpetual right to elect the local bishop. However, Rome refused, insisting that future bishops be chosen from both religious and secular priests, that an adequate number of local priests be trained, and that a Tridentine seminary be established.

Immediate problems

The immediate problems in 1835 were four: insufficient priests (nine only) for a mostly Irish Catholic population of around 26,000, the Irish Catholics wanting Irish priests, the British colonial government wanting only English priests, and the English Benedictines unable to supply any extra personnel.

The success of the seminary, therefore, was critical. But whereas Polding wanted it to produce Benedictine priests, most of his seminarians wanted to be secular priests. On his visits to Europe in 1840-43 and 1846-48, where he tried to gather funds for 'the absolute necessity to erect a seminary', he consistently linked the seminary to his Benedictine dream and stated publicly that he preferred priests and seminarians coming to Australia to join the Benedictine order and to live in community. While he was happy for Irish seminarians to complete part of their studies at the All Hallows Seminary in Dublin, when they arrived in Sydney Polding preferred that they 'receive the [Benedictine] order and religious habit', convinced that having small groups of Benedictine priest monks on the mission would best avoid clashes between secular and regular clerics. However, his attempts to recruit newly arrived secular clerics into the Benedictine Order, especially Irish, not only had mixed success but were counterproductive. After 1850 not a single student or priest who had completed his studies in an Irish seminary joined the Order.

Also militating against Polding's Benedictine dream was the unstructured

nature of the Church in Australia. Between 1820 and 1876 both priests and bishops were constantly on the move. There were no parishes – only 'districts' – and no parish priests. Stability was rare.

While St Mary's Seminary was part of the Benedictine cathedral monastery, many of its presidents and professors were neither Benedictines nor English and it lacked a true Benedictine ethos. Fr Ullathorne had attempted to instil that ethos early on but in 1850 Bishop Henry Davis OSB separated the Benedictine novices and postulants from the other students. When the question of whether a Benedictine monastic priesthood or a secular (mainly Irish) priesthood was best suited to the needs of the Church in NSW, it could not be resolved. The issue came to a head in 1851 when several Benedictine lay brothers left the monastery and Polding suspended the seminary president.

In 1852, amidst the crisis, Polding opened a new St Mary's College at *Lyndhurst*, near Glebe, primarily to educate the sons of 'respectable' free settlers and prepare them for Sydney University which opened the same year. When the monastic community and novitiate moved to *Lyndhurst* the cathedral seminary continued to operate, but only as a preparatory school or minor seminary. While *Lyndhurst* functioned as an ecclesiastical seminary for both Benedictine and secular priests, it had few seminarians and was regarded by most of the secular clergy and laity as a thoroughly Benedictine institution. Also, by this time anti-Benedictine and anti-Polding sentiment was high and manifested in frustration with the direction and achievements of *Lyndhurst*.

The issue over Benedictine/secular priesthood erupted again in 1854, this time over the lack of discretion in admitting novices and postulants to the monastery, and the validity of the Benedictine vows. Several Benedictines sought permission to become secular priests, with some claiming that the Benedictine Order was a barrier to the local priesthood, and that not a single native of Sydney has been ordained a priest. From 1838 to 1847, all 20 of the seminarians formed at the cathedral seminary and ordained to the

Continued page 20

FEATURES

priesthood were immigrants who had commenced their studies in England or Ireland. The first Australian-born candidate was not ordained until 1848.

Over the 42 years (1835-1877) that Polding's seminaries operated, 36 priests were formed either fully or partially: 24 Benedictines and 12 seculars. Just seven were born in Australia. Fifteen had arrived in Australia as seminarians, including six already in orders. Another four were ordained deacons. Four priests and 2 deacons left sacred ministry after ordination, and most married.

The steady stream of locally born secular and religious priests so sorely needed in

the Australian mission had not eventuated, and the recruitment and formation of candidates for the secular priesthood had been short-lived. Of the 48 priests working in the Sydney Archdiocese in 1854, just half had spent time in the Sydney seminaries. The last three seminarians formed at *Lyndhurst* were ordained in 1869, and from then until 1875 the Church in Australia did not have a single functioning seminary.

Despite almost universal agreement that Polding's Benedictine dream was unworkable and unrealizable, even when St Mary's Cathedral, the earthly centre of his dream, was destroyed by fire in June 1865, he continued to cling to it

until his death.

When Polding died in 1877, one of the first decisions his successor, the English Archbishop Roger Bede Vaughan OSB, made was to close *Lyndhurst* permanently and secularise the remaining professed Benedictine monks.

In his assessment, Cardinal Moran was brutal: "His [Polding's] seminary failed, his college failed, his religious community failed, his Monastic Cathedral failed, his long-cherished scheme of setting the seal of the Benedictine Order on the whole Australian Church melted away like an idle dream". ☪



Parents, their children, and the request for Sacraments of Initiation

GERARD STOYLES

Fr Gerald Stoyles is a retired priest in the Diocese of Wollongong.

The current paper emerged from my research for a PhD. I completed my first PhD thesis in 2003. This thesis focused on parents of adolescents whose lives had led them into conflict with legal proceedings and subsequent conflict between themselves, their families and their parents. A major part of this thesis was the development of a programme designed to re-establish the bond between parent and adolescent child. Parents who participated in this programme greatly impressed me with their refusal to give up on their children, irrespective of the amount of damage that had been created within their relationships. The endurance of this parent-child bond was the strongest message I took away from this research.

Come 2016, I decided to embark on a second PhD. During the intervening years between both areas of research, I observed parents who continually presented their children for Sacraments of Initiation. The link between the commitment of parents in both my research projects was uncanny. These parents generally had little or no understanding of the sacrament itself or of the Church's requirements behind these sacraments. Nor did they experience a

relationship with their parishes. Yet despite these disadvantages, parents not only sustained the obligations of their sacramental requests but also returned to the parish each time a new sacrament emerged for their children. Parents also lacked participation in parish life, especially involvement in Sunday Mass, during the in-between times. What therefore motivated these parents to seek sacraments on behalf of their children? Why would they worry about requesting these sacraments when their own contact with the Church through parish life, and their understanding of the sacraments themselves, was sorely lacking? Herein lay the central research questions of the second PhD, namely, what motivated parents to seek sacraments for their children, and why, in the face of non-participation in parish life, did they return time and again for each of their children's three Sacraments of Initiation? It seemed a very small step from one PhD research project to the next.

The purpose of this paper is not to embark on the findings of my research although these findings were both unsurprising and fascinating at the same time. As an appendix in the thesis, I put

together a programmed approach for children's sacramental preparation that focused on the parent and not the child. This approach was shaped by PhD findings that emerged from investigation into the two research questions. All higher-level research needs to be founded on an empirical basis and I chose attachment theory as this basis. Attachment theory describes the bond between parent and child as protection, nurturance, formation and affection. This theory has grown over many decades through the achievements of different researchers. I considered only secure attachment relationships between parent and child rather than look at those bonds that were present among insecure and damaging relationships. It made sense that parents who were willing to sacrifice so much of themselves for the sake of their children's welfare and happiness would do so within a secure parent-child bond. The prominence of the child in the parent's life came through at every point in my research findings. The idea of a tripod served as a model for my programme. The three legs of a tripod individually maintain support of an overall structure while assisting this structure through their mutuality.

The first leg of the tripod: Parent-child attachment

Because parents are skilled in their

parenting role does not necessarily mean that they fully understand the nature and importance of relationships with their children. The continually recurring outcome of my research was that parent-child attachment and the primacy of the child shaped the chief motive for parents' sacramental requests on behalf of their children. Hence, the programme commences with discussion around the meaning of *parent* and *parenting*, positioned in the setting of attachment theory. From this reflective point, parents are moved towards understanding the emergence of their sacramental requests as a consideration of their overall commitment to the child's welfare, present happiness and future wellbeing.

The second leg of the tripod: The parent's image of God

The meaning of sacramental life is then drawn into the midst of attachment theory through parents' discussion around their image of God. Parents speak about where their image came from and what sustained or threatened this image. The personal nature of the image of God is emphasised and given its rightful place within the parental motive to request the child's sacraments. A further outcome of my research was the desire of parents for their children to be protected and loved by God, especially when they were no longer prominent in their children's lives. Parents saw the sacraments as providing a sure pathway for this protection of God to be realised. Hence, parents are challenged to consider how God has touched their lives and the lives of their children up to the point of sacramental request and where God fits into both this request as well as their personal and family needs. Finally, relationship with God is drawn back into attachment theory. That is, God becomes to the parent what the parent becomes to the child. God protects, nurtures, forms and loves them and their children in a way similar to how they, as parents, protect, nurture, form and love their children.

Third leg of the tripod: The domestic Church

Finally, parents are led into an understanding of the importance and prominence of parish life for themselves and their families. The sacraments are

not celebrated in a vacuum but rather come to life in the midst of parish and personal life. As baptised Catholics, parents are *ipso facto* part of the Church even though they might have been absent from it for many years. Yet, in their family life lies the seed of parish involvement and so parents are presented with an understanding of the domestic Church as being representative of the parish Church.

This representation is about relationship (again, attachment relationship) as well as ecclesiology, with both concepts being linked and presented. Where God is present in family life, so too is God present in the parish Church. Parents do not go to meet God in the parish as much as they take God, found in their family interactions and uniqueness, to their parish. In their parishes, parents and families find a similar level of support, welcome and guidance that they strive to bring to life in the midst of their families. The sacraments emerge from this parish relationship. They are not received and then left behind at the door of the parish church.

The three legs together

Binding the three legs of the tripod is the ongoing discussion of sacramental meaning and the role of the parish as part of this meaning. This sense is presented within the context of each programme leg and at the same time stands apart in prominence from the legs themselves. Thus, the significance of both sacrament and parish pervades the entire programme and is presented as the life-source for parents, for their children and for the welfare and fostering of their family and parish lives.

A final point to consider

The programme need not be restricted to the Sacraments of Initiation for children. The child remains the central focus of the parent's life and the sacraments provide parents with a way to care for the present and future wellbeing of their children. However, and outside any sacramental requests, parents can also be encouraged to rethink their relationship with the Church as part of this care for their children. Long absence from the Church will potentially have dulled parents' interest in Church participation, yet

children remain an essential part of parents' lives. They watch them grow through their developmental years, both with joy and, at times, with anxiety. The wellbeing of their children can be the motive for parents to consider participating in this programme.

The programme provides knowledge and understanding of sacramental life, of themselves as parents, of their families as Church and of their parishes as places of solace, prayer and protection. This invitation is not tricking parents into returning to the Church. Encouraging parents to see the Church through the eyes of their children helps them to think about their role in shaping the spiritual, religious and sacramental fervour both of their child and of themselves. This shaping happens first in parents' homes and is strengthened through their association with fellow parish members.

I found from my research that Catholic parents genuinely struggle to understand their faith and the many facets that structure our Church. This programme is an effort to bridge these gaps in understanding and urge parents and families to find again, and perhaps find for the first time, the importance and significance of God and the Church in their family lives. ☪

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Sisters of St Joseph depart the Sale Diocese after 120 years

DENIS O'BRYAN

Fr Denis O'Bryan PP, Clyde North, spoke on behalf of the priests of Sale acknowledging the contribution of the Sisters of St Joseph at a farewell Mass celebrated by Bishop Greg Bennet. Present were Sr Sue McGuinness RSJ, regional leader of the Sisters of St Joseph in Victoria and Tasmania, and a number of Sisters and Priests. This is an extract of his address.

It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Sale Diocese to express our gratitude for the presence of Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart within the Diocese over the past 120 years. It spans the years of every Bishop of Sale, from Bishop Corbett, our first bishop, to the present time with our tenth bishop, Bishop Greg Bennet.

The first schools opened by the Sisters in the Sale Diocese, at Traralgon, Morwell, Maffra and Omeo, were during the lifetime of St Mary MacKillop, and the Sisters have been present in the vast majority of the parishes of our Diocese.

In a very personal sense, I and my family live with a great gratitude to the Sisters of St Joseph as my three sisters, Anne, Julie and Fiona, and my youngest brother, Kevin, were all adopted from the Broadmeadows babies home. We have been very blessed. Many Gippsland families would have similar experiences.

50 years ago, in 1972, there were about 130 Sisters living in the Diocese of Sale, nearly half of them Josephites. In 1972 there were 25 Sion Sisters in Sale, and 12 in Warragul; 12 Brigidines in Traralgon; 11 Presentation Sisters in Bairnsdale, and 12 in Moe, 7 in Pakenham; 5 Good Samaritan Sisters in Korumburra.

And then there were the Josephites in every corner of the Diocese, in small and sometimes very remote towns: 3 in Cowwarr, 2 in Fish Creek, 5 in Iona, 2 in Koo Wee Rup, 2 in Lakes Entrance, 3 in Leongatha, 4 in Maffra, 5 in Morwell, 6 in Morwell East, 5 in Newborough, 2 in Omeo (68 children in school), 4 in Orbost (218 children in the school), 3 in Trafalgar, 6 in Wonthaggi, 2 in Yallourn, and 3 in Yarram.

In more recent years, the Josephites maintained a presence in quite a few places with only one Sister in residence. Many of these parishes were quite

small, and the presence of even a small community of Sisters was a large and cherished presence both within the parish and the larger community.

The Sisters had previously been in Sale, Bairnsdale and Traralgon, and they would in the future be in Churchill, Cranbourne and Narre Warren.

For many years the Sisters had no cars; they relied on public transport and other people to drive them. At the beginning of the school year, as the Sisters were returning home, I am told that they would fill up the greater part of a carriage on the train from Melbourne to Orbost, with little numbers disembarking at various stations along the way.

And then they had to travel to their convent. Omeo was very remote. In 1921 a writer described the journey from Bairnsdale to Omeo by public transport: "The traveller leaves Bairnsdale at about 7.00am and arrives at the City of the Alps by about 2.30pm."

My own memories of the Josephites begin at St Laurence's School Leongatha. I had started school at Hallston Primary, which had a total enrolment of 13 pupils from Prep to Grade 8, and one teacher. St Laurence's seemed huge.

The Sisters were marvellous; the whole school had only one teacher who was not a Josephite. There was always a natural prayerful atmosphere; faith was nurtured and the Sisters were constantly in demand by families for prayers and encouragement. But I also remember to this day their love for Australia, Melbourne Cup Day, and ANZAC Day, with the annual telling of a humble and courageous story of service, Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli.

In my seminary years I came to appreciate the Joeys in a new light when Sr Doreen and Sr Christina, and others, would join with the seminarians and a few others to run Christian Living

Camps in the Sale Diocese. Friendships were formed. Sr Doreen Dagge became involved with youth ministry in the diocese, including with Brendan Hogan, now parish priest at Narre Warren.

As a priest though, in Omeo and Yarram, where I worked closely with the Sisters, I came to a deeper appreciation of their powerful presence, and the charism of being a Josephite. We shared meals and prayer together every week. We laughed and relaxed, enjoyed day trips away, and loved our time in the parishes. The convents were places of great hospitality for priests and parishioners. The Sisters have had a wonderful ability to meet and welcome the humblest people, the poorest people, with the same dignity with which they welcomed the bishops to their convents.

My most enduring memory is of the Sisters as companions in prayer, faith and mission. The relationship between the Sisters and priests has been deeply cherished.

Sr Declan Keeghan, a woman of great faith, was a person who had a fun sense of humour and who laughed at the funny side of her own life, and was the only person I know to get lost in Omeo while walking. She suffered motor neurone disease so courageously.

Sr Maria Dunell in her ten years at Omeo was also an ambulance officer, in a place that had no paramedics. The ambulance officers included teachers, farmers, and Maria. They received training regularly. On one occasion Maria was driving the ambulance at the bush races at Hinnomunjie, between Omeo and Benambra.

In these bush races the ambulance follows immediately behind the horses. Maria missed the start of the race so sped up to catch up with the horses, which she did. Then the other ambulance officer warned her to slow down; he said that if anyone fell off a horse that they would probably run over them. At one stage, I believe the race caller was tipping the ambulance to win the race!

Sr Ellen Lane is a reminder of the marvellous contingent of Irish Sisters

who came to the Australian mission. She may have thought that Omeo was remote, but she later went the Balgo Mission on the edge of the desert in northern West Australia, a truly remote place.

Today makes us think of the vocations from Gippsland to the Josephites. There may not be any Josephite Sisters in Gippsland now, but there certainly are Gippslanders among the Josephite Sisters.

The vocations have come from everywhere, including Orbost (Sr Lynette Young), Omeo (Sr Lucia Flanagan) and even Gibbo River, far north of Omeo (Sr Edith Toland).

We think of the evolution in ministry: the motor mission based at Fish Creek,

bringing catechetics to tiny rural state schools around South Gippsland; pastoral associates in many parishes; and so on.

We think of the sacrifices made. Parishioners and friends in the community have been so generous to the Sisters. They have recognized that they lived simply and often in poverty before Government funding for schools began in the 1960's. They kept the schools running at their own cost. It was and is a witness that is much appreciated. People reciprocated. In my years at Omeo people were generous with food and hospitality, and the men ensured that the Convent never ran short of wood for the stove and for heating.

I began by remembering back to 1972, fifty years ago, and what a different

picture we see today! It has been fifty years that have seen great change. I am reminded of the words of Pope Francis in 2015 that we live not so much in an era of great change, but in a fundamental change of era.

We are acknowledging a particular moment today, which Bishop Greg described in his homily as moment of sadness for the Sale Diocese, and we feel the loss. But our ministry in the church in Australia continues and we pray the intercession of St Mary to enlighten our way forward.

Today we wish to acknowledge the extraordinary gift that the Sisters of St Joseph have been to the people of our Diocese over the past 120 years. ☪



'Drip feed' of anti-Judaism from Catholic pulpits has to stop

TERESA PIROLA

Teresa Pirola, ThD, is a Sydney-based freelance writer and Catholic faith educator.

Micro-messages that perpetuate anti-Jewish stereotypes emanate from many (not all) Catholic pulpits on any given Sunday. This article explores this claim and argues that, while the remedy may be simple, the habit is hard to break.

I will speak as a Catholic. Not because the problem is confined to these Christian circles, but because that is the community I know best, having been immersed and active in the Catholic community all my adult life.

What is an 'anti-Jewish micro-message'? I use the term to refer to those moments when a homilist utters a small, subtle, seemingly innocuous comment about a Jewish character or event in the readings of the day, with the resulting overall homiletic effect of presenting Judaism in a negative light.

A typical example, in an otherwise well-articulated homily, might be something like this:

'In today's Gospel, Jesus shows up the hypocrisy and legalism of the Pharisees...'; or

'Unlike the "bad shepherds" of Israel, Jesus is the Good Shepherd...'; or

'The Jewish leaders conspired with the Romans to have Jesus crucified.'

What's wrong with that, you ask? After all, when we read each relevant scripture passage, it would appear that Jesus *does* challenge some Pharisees; there *are* some bad shepherds in the biblical memory of Israel; and a certain small group of Jewish authority figures *do* get involved in Jesus' demise.

Further, presumably the homilist has no anti-Semitic intent. And he isn't commenting on Judaism *per se*. In fact, in the first quote above he hasn't mentioned the word 'Jew' or 'Israel'. What's the problem here? Besides, it's just *one* sentence, which half the congregation probably didn't pay attention to anyway, and for the other half that did, it wouldn't necessarily have registered as being anti-Jewish. Again, *what's the big deal?*

I will leave aside, for another discussion, the exegetical complexities of engaging with the text: such as the distinction

between the theological intention of the author and the historical evidence; the tumultuous socio-political context that framed the development of the Gospels; and the precise meaning of references to 'the Pharisees' and 'the Jews'. The point I wish to highlight here is that micro-messages such as these typically arise as the *only* time that Judaism is mentioned in the homily. During the 10-20 minute presentation from the pulpit, the *one* moment when congregational ears are pricked to register 'Jew', the *sole occasion* when the homilist draws explicit attention to 'Judaism' or 'Israel', is a negative frame of reference: hypocrisy, legalism, bad, conspiratorial.

Even where a negative reference can be justified by the homiletic context, the problem is that there is no counterbalancing positive reference associated with 'Jew', 'Judaism' or 'Israel'. No mention that Jesus himself lived and died as a faithful Jew; that he shared certain Pharisaic beliefs and forms of piety; that Scripture *also* mentions Pharisees who welcome Jesus to their table and who protectively alert him to pending trouble; and that some of the greatest figures in the story of Israel are depicted as shepherds.

Rather, on a given Sunday, parishioners

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hear the 'Pharisees' (who we all know to be Jews) linked with 'hypocrisy' and 'legalism'; on another Sunday, they hear 'Israel' linked to 'bad shepherds'; on still another Sunday, 'the Jewish leaders' are highlighted as 'opponents of Jesus', and so on. Herein lies the problem: week by week, comment by comment, the Jew and the Jewish tradition are linked to that which is unethical or disreputable and therefore the *contrast* to Jesus and Christianity.

It is subtle, almost subliminal. Yet the impact is infectious and poisonous, especially when one considers that this pattern of negativity has a sobering historical backdrop: many centuries of Christian antagonism towards the Jewish people, described as the 'teaching of contempt'. While never formally adopted as church teaching, a strain of anti-Jewish sentiment crept into Christian theology and catechesis at least as early as the patristic era. In the centuries that followed, what had begun as theological arguments directed against Judaism mutated into anti-Semitic defamation, leading beyond distorted preaching to outright persecution of Jews at the hands of Christian societies. It wasn't until twenty years after the diabolical tragedy of the Holocaust that the Catholic Church, at the Second Vatican Council, decisively condemned antisemitism, effectively repudiated the 'teaching of contempt' and re-set its theological compass so as to commit to a new era

of respect for and reconciliation with the Jewish people.

Vatican II represents a ground-breaking achievement in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. However, reception of the Council takes time. It is not possible to heal a 2000-year-old wound in just 60 years of ecclesial renewal. Thus, even today, many parish congregations unquestioningly absorb micro-messages that portray Judaism in terms of inferiority and negativity, when in fact what they need in their theological and pastoral formation is a drip feed of *positive* messaging to reinforce the gains of Vatican II: messages that affirm Jesus as a faithful Jew; the Jewish roots of Christianity; the Church's permanent link to the mystery of Israel; the gift of the Jewish Scriptures, upon which the New Testament depends for its foundations; the gratitude owed to Judaism for introducing ethical monotheism to the world; and Jewish covenantal life as a living, enduring reality, to name a few.

Consider, for example, this statement of Pope Benedict XVI:

Jesus, a son of the Chosen People, was born, lived and died a Jew (cf. Rom 9:4-5). Mary, his Mother, likewise invites us to rediscover the Jewish roots of Christianity. These close bonds are a unique treasure of which Christians are proud and for which they are indebted to the Chosen People. (*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, n. 20)

Or this statement of Pope Francis during his visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome in 2016:

From a theological point of view, it is clear there is an inseparable bond between Christians and Jews. Christians, to be able to understand themselves, cannot not refer to their Jewish roots, and the Church, while professing salvation through faith in Christ, recognizes the irrevocability of the Covenant and God's constant and faithful love for Israel.

These statements communicate esteem for Judaism – respect for its ancient story and its vitality as a living tradition – as well as gratitude for the inextricable closeness of the relationship between the two traditions. They model the fruits of

the Council and have the potential to shape stock homiletic expressions:

'Today's first reading anchors our Christian faith in the time-honoured story of God's people, Israel...'

'This ancient psalm, which remains part of the vitality of Jewish prayer today and continues to be prayed in Jewish synagogues, expresses...'

Jesus, of course, teaches as a Jew. His message, drawing deeply from Torah, challenges us to...'

As you can see, framing a brief positive statement is not rocket science. Once we are aware of the problem of drip-feed negativity, it is relatively simple to include a positive message about Judaism in a homily that shows respect for present-day Jews and does justice to contemporary Catholic teaching. What is difficult is breaking an old habit. And that takes education, which requires time and focused energy not always available to time-strapped parish priests who cannot instantly be across every pressing issue of theology and justice. Thus, including a topic such as "Preaching without unintended anti-Judaism" on the agenda of a clergy conference could be a practical help to homilists.

To sum up, anti-Jewish micro-messaging persists in Catholic parishes in our time. Multiply this tendency over months and years of preaching, in parishes across the country and the globe, and we have what should be *unthinkable*: a constant drip feed of subtle, unintended anti-Judaism being digested 'intravenously' by church-going 21st century Catholics.

Fortunately, solutions are within reach. The fruits of 60 years of interfaith dialogue have produced a wealth of scholarship and church documents illuminating the Jewish-Christian relationship within its proper historical and theological context. But there remains a gap between what these documents 'say', and the ease with which their insights emanate from pulpits. Missing is an effective facilitation of the flow between the two.

The sooner this need is named and prioritised, the stronger the footing for parish-based progress in Catholic-Jewish relations. ☪

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Know we are forgiven – the gift of Grace

JOY LUBAWY

Joy Lubawy is a retired teacher, academic, published author and is actively involved in her parish of Our Lady of Fatima, South Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Let me share a true story, stories (as our Lord knew so well) are a great way to explain things. There was a woman called Helena, a culturally Polish woman living in war-torn Germany in 1940. She was in enforced labour, working in a munitions factory alongside Polish prisoners of war and fell in love with a young prisoner, she was 24. In time she discovered she was expecting a child, and about that time the allies successfully obliterated the munitions factory along with her sweetheart, and so she hid her pregnancy from authorities then going underground, protected by her family.

Stefan was born in May of the following year, food was scarce, vitamin C was practically impossible to source. Helena went out, after curfew, along railway tracks to find rose hips to get supplies to keep her growing child healthy. She was a hero. Their city was bombed many times, she kept that child safe. It was chaos all around her, buildings on fire, people starving, but she found ways to let him grow. He had to remain quiet, he was not allowed to cry as that could alert someone who would report the child to the Nazi's. Life was grim, grimmer than many of us could possibly imagine.

War ended, she declared herself a displaced person and began the long hard trek to safety, from refugee camp to refugee camp across Europe.

She applied to Canada for refugee status, but they were only taking married couples with children. Australia, I am proud to say, was accepting single mothers and their children, so she found herself on a ship bound for Australia and would never return.

What did she know about Australia? Nothing, except it was a long way from home. She spoke no English and arrived in Melbourne and was then 'shipped' (as she called it) to Bonegilla which was the starting point of a brand-new life. In time, work was arranged for her, and she and her son learnt a new language, she married a former Polish Prisoner of War who found himself in Adelaide, and they made a new family, with three babies being born, one prematurely who only survived six weeks.

They worked in factories, then bought a little farm in the hills, later they grew tomatoes in glass houses and raised their children successfully. They attended Mass every weekend, they observed all the rules, they didn't eat meat on Friday, they prayed the Rosary, they made efforts in all sorts of ways to gain acceptance and forgiveness from a God who at that time was not promoted as being a God of Love, but more one of vengeance and control. They lived in fear of judgement.

You know that woman was terrified

when death came for her as an older woman, living with her daughter in Brisbane. The priest came to anoint her one last time, she turned to him with absolute fear on her face. She had never ever known she had been forgiven for having a child outside marriage. That was the theology of the time, the price that people paid for what I would call a faith that sought to control not to enlighten, to judge not to encourage and support, or to preach the gift of Grace.

How many times did she go to Confession and ask for forgiveness, how many acts of contrition did she endure over all those years, and each time she took her guilt and pain to the foot of the Cross and then as she left the church, she picked it up and took it home with her again?

That woman was my mother-in-law. I loved and respected her, she was not fond of me unfortunately, as I was Australian, and married her precious son, and would never be the right match somehow. I understood that. It was the saddest moment for me though when her daughter told me of her terror at the point of death, I have carried that anguish on her behalf for 30 years. I wept for her pain.

My insight these days is that when we sin, the person most injured is ourselves. My sins have broken friendships, trust, and at times caused anguish to others but it was the damage to my own self-confidence and sense of worthiness that was most damaged. I know though I am forgiven. Grace. ☺



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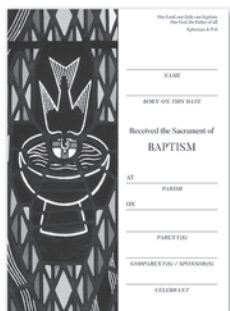


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Alone or with someone else?

BRIAN LUCAS

Fr Brian Lucas is the National Director, Catholic Mission.

One of the hot button issues of the Second Vatican Council was the way in which collegiality would be understood. How were the bishops of the world to relate to the papacy and the Roman Curia and to each other? This is now front of consciousness with the exhortations of Pope Francis around synodality.

In the Decree “Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops In The Church” (*Christus Dominus*) there was specific mention of the co-operation that should exist among the churches:

36. From the very first centuries of the Church bishops, as rulers of individual churches, were deeply moved by the communion of fraternal charity and zeal for the universal mission entrusted to the Apostles. And so, they pooled their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches.

Working with others presents constant challenges. How often do you hear it said that if you want a job done properly then you have to do it yourself?

There is the tension between centralised efficiency and decentralised local engagement and enthusiasm. For the busy parish priest there is the temptation to take the tasks to oneself and it is not always easy to delegate and share responsibilities. How often do you find it frustrating when you cannot complete a task because you are waiting for someone else to do their part or provide some information?

Even more frustrating is when the delegated task is completed below standard or has to be redone. If only you could do it all yourself! The reality is that we need others and need to work out how to engage effectively with them.

Fundamental to successful enterprises is a network of good relationships. Whether it is supplier to manufacturer to distributor to retailer to customer, or within an organisation that provides community and social services, relationships are at

the heart of success.

Good relationships are the foundation for a collegial spirit that enables people to work well together. They are fundamental to the work of mission.

The activity of the church – what it does – can be described as its mission. Mission in its broadest sense includes everything that the church does in the service of the kingdom of God.

The synodal church, that Pope Francis speaks of, is about listening so as to discern God’s designs.

We no longer rely on our own resources – the Lord frustrates the designs of the nations as the psalmist says. He defeats the plans of the peoples – his designs not ours shall stand firm for ever.

Christ gave his disciples the new commandment of charity – Love others as I have loved you – The motivation to preach, worship and care for others comes from realising the love God has for humanity in Christ and the call to respond to that love.

The fulfilment of God’s plan for humanity is set out in John’s Gospel 10:10 – “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” – inextricably links the proclamation of the gospel with the advancement of humanity.

The partnerships that Catholic Mission enjoy with the missionary churches we support give us energy to share our resources with those local churches who are in need. By working with them, rather than for them, we can build capacity and confidence and move beyond the culture of the “hand out”.

This firm conviction translates into multiple forms of assistance and wide-ranging benefits for the churches that are poor, oppressed, marginalised, and those who find themselves in situations of persecution, oppression, discrimination, or isolation, whom the Church looks upon with preferential love.

We are grateful for the support the priests and people of Australia provide for the missionary churches. ☪

Fr Maher's funeral

The two articles on Fr Maher's funeral made me feel very sad, that someone thought it necessary to remove "Come As You Are" from his funeral Mass. As the writers said, this hymn conveys a deep spiritual meaning.

We are taught God loves each one of us unconditionally, warts and all, so we should be able to come *as we are*, for that is how God loves us, not pretending to be a saint, holy, looking down on others, considering my ideas are always right, better than another's. A favourite saying of mine is "God loves each one of us, as if there was only one of us".

Jesus had no time for treating others as of less value. He broke the rules to bring the Woman at the Well to believe in him, accepted her as she was and didn't refuse the invitation to stay in a Samaritan town. He accepted them as they were. Where would Jesus walk in Sydney? Would he be criticised for eating with sinners? By what I have read and heard of Fr Maher, he would be the first to accept me as I am and forgive those who couldn't accept him as he was, and what he chose as appropriate for HIM for HIS funeral Mass, an expression of his own spirituality. Isn't that what we are honouring at a funeral Mass?

As for myself, I would be very hurt if my Sisters removed a hymn I chose for my funeral, as an expression of my relationship with God. I would hope they would accept me as I am – as God does.

Mary Fermio RSJ (Bacchus Marsh)

Australian Sabbatical

Yes, I agree wholeheartedly with James Clarke in the Autumn edition of *The Swag*. Let's do all we can to ensure an Australian based Sabbatical for our current overworked, overtired and so often underappreciated, clergy. (As a religious woman member of our Church for 60 plus years, my heart has been crying out for them often. I walked with my own priest brother for some years through gradual mental and physical breakdowns until his death freed him.)

Suggestions for Sabbatical Program:

- Any program based on wisdom contained in Tom Gleeson's *Cultural*

Reconciliation article in the Autumn edition of *The Swag* would surely be blessed.

- Involvement in a Life's Healing Journey as offered in the rough tenderness of Australian Bushland at Douglas Park, plus periods of deep reflection in other significant remote areas of Oz.
- Meaningful experiences with various groups (e.g. LGBTIQ+) with opportunities to create long-term friendships.
- Any experiences anywhere that help to bring about an on-going answer to Fr Rod Cameron's longing quoted in Tom Gleeson's article:

"Jesus you came to light a fire, and, my brother, my Saviour, you have kindled that fire in each of us... We must learn anew the law of your love, the compassion of your heart and begin to be Australian people, and bring alive what it is to be truly catholic, to be true to the Gospel in the light of this land, this holy land, this land of the Holy Spirit."

Christa Murphy SSPs

Defence Strategy Review

Emeritus Professor Joseph Camilleri's essay in the Swag-Summer 2022 on this review ordered by the Albanese Government is for me welcomed, because it raises questions about our nation's defence force or more appropriately a lack of it. War for me personally has been a large part of my life since 1939, and aged nine years living in London when "Will we go to war with Germany" was a question on most peoples' minds. My memory is of thinking that wars must be fought in the parks because, if in the streets, windows would be broken! After many adventures, the loss of two homes and minor fragmentation injuries at 14 years of age from a V2 rocket, at eighteen years I was called up for two years National Service in the British Army of Occupation in Germany from 1948 to 1950. Returning to England I found that most people were concerned that the Major Powers seemed to be threatening a nuclear war and that like many other people I decided to emigrate to Australia for safety. Shortly after I arrived in Melbourne I enlisted in the

CMF (Army Reserve) serving to 1981 when I retired as a Major. My last posting was as an instructor at the 3rd Division Training Group. In retirement I became a tutor at Mannix College on the history of WW11 and anthropology. I tell you these things because I know a little about war and I fear that the clouds of war in Australia's part of the world are gathering, I also fear that as in the past our young men and women will be involved in war untrained, ill led and equipped; hopefully we will be able to avoid a war.

Professor Camilleri's essay is for me the most important in the summer edition of the Swag. I had hoped that the Plenary Council would have resulted in a rejuvenated Australian Catholic Church, capable of being a leader in an Australia which would either through diplomacy, humanitarian projects, and of course a capable defence force, maintain the peace which Camilleri hopes for. Sadly, Terry Fewtrell's essay and others informs us otherwise. I am reminded of Ian Morris's book *War, What is it good for?* He describes how in 2011 he attended a conference in Canberra of the Strategic Policy Institute hoping to help them sort out a muddled approach to defence thinking. However, the conference ended with him being less informed of Australia's defence matters than when he arrived. I feel that many of the people involved in the Plenary Council feel the same way. Terry's closing comment was "Australian laity are at the same point as they were when they started". Enough said. My conclusion is that ecclesiastical matters like defence matters are complex, ambiguous and dynamic, three words I impressed on students; just when you think you have mastered a human situation everything changed. Here is a reason to consider how much power should be removed from the Vatican and assumed by our chosen Australian bishops. So, Camilleri's essay warrants our study if we are to achieve some of his objectives, not all of which I can agree with, but important are his peace keeping, peace building, mediation, aid and humanitarian programs. I often find pertinent quotes in *Evangelii Gaudium*, for instance, the message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that

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the unity brought about by the Spirit can harmonise every diversity. I feel that this objective will never be achieved until we deprive the Vatican bureaucracy of some of its sometimes-dubious powers.

Eric Horne (Glen Waverley)

From the USA

A heartfelt welcome to you at your post as new editor of *The Swag*, and thank you for taking up the baton from Peter Maher, whom I long admired and appreciated and for whom I felt very grateful.

I am a retired US clergyman who has the good fortune of receiving *The Swag* from an Australian layman friend. This is the only publication I receive that I read from cover-to-cover upon receipt. The articles are thought provoking, uplifting and sometimes just “provoking”, but also very encouraging.

If there is something similar in the US, I'm not aware of it. So many of the articles give voice to so many people and issues in the church here in the US. I'd compare *The Swag* to *The National Catholic Reporter* and *Commonwealth* magazine.

Andrew Katkoff, the bishop who ordained me, served in Australia at the Russian Catholic Mission in Kew. We were members of the same religious congregation, The Marians. He has since passed and I'm not sure if the mission is still operating. Fr George Branch served there till his death several years ago. My brother, Fr Seraphim, also served there for a few years in the 1960s.

Once again, welcome and thank you to you and the entire staff of *The Swag*. Perhaps I should consider an online subscription.

Alexei Michalenko (USA)

Harry Moore's letter

I enjoyed Harry Moore's letter in the last edition re “a sin against the Holy Spirit.” From the start of the Plenary Council, I always thought that what the Spirit said would have to be within the confines of Canon Law. Would this be a suppression of freedom of speech?

Frank McInerney (Casterton)

Harry Moore's Dream

I had a dream. I dreamt that the disciples of Jesus were not judged and valued by the colour of their skin, or the number of X and Y chromosomes they had, nor the mysterious changed DNA of those who have received clerical ordination, but by their willingness to hear the call of God and act on it.

In my dream, I saw an Australian “Successor of the Apostles” (This bloke was a successor of Thaddaeus or Jude as he is known by Luke). He took seriously the challenge of Pope Francis that we were not to usher in an era of change but rather a change of era. Accordingly, he summonsed his Director of Catholic Education, Mrs Black, and his Director of Evangelisation, Aunty Violet. The Bishop and the Directors had Doctorates in their respective fields. He reminded them of their co-responsibility with him for the pastoral care of the people of their diocese.

There was a desperate dearth of ordained pastors in their diocese. The chief pastor explained that the laity would be unleashed and that, in future, all the heavy lifting of pastoral care would be entrusted to laity.

He informed them that, in future, there would be at least five lay ministries in the diocese. The Ministry for the Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying, the Ministry of Readers, the Ministry of Funerals, the Ministry of Rites of Initiation, that is, Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. He instructed them to collaborate in the production of modules for each of these Ministries. For reasons of academic credibility, and to forestall any snide comments about Mickey Mouse modules, he also directed them to liaise with the Australian Catholic University and have modules accredited as units towards a Bachelor of Theology. Because of the remoteness of many of their parishes, these modules were to be available online.

The Chief Pastor was a holy man, farsighted and fearless in the face of the Catholic Taliban who attempted to white-ant his leadership. He convoked a meeting of all Parish Pastors and Parish Council members (over half of whom were women). Aunty Violet, Mrs Black and Mr White presented a plan. Bishop

Fearless sat unobtrusively in the middle row, listening and treasuring things in his heart. Initially, the plan had a stuttering start. There were the same old excuses for not getting involved like “I am not worthy” etc., until the bishop explained that all disciples including himself are called by God *because* they are unworthy. Gradually, the plan took off.

There was a real ritual to the Commissioning of new Ministries by the Bishop. In a moving ceremony, the Parish Council and the Pastor of each parish formally presented the candidates to the bishop who formally questioned them, approved them, and presented them with their signed Certificates of Commission. From this moment on, the people of even the most remote parts of the diocese were confident of Pastoral Care when they were sick and a Catholic funeral when they died.

Other dioceses were observing closely, ready to condemn if the plan fell over, but they liked what they saw, and that was how the Era of the Laity started.

Then I woke up and went to Sunday Mass and was mugged by reality.

Harry Moore SM (Kyogle)

Decline of practicing Catholics

We are very aware that the number of practicing Catholics is falling. The reason is obviously not apparent to some of the Church leaders. I would like to know how the following situations are justified: cardinals presenting as princes in their flamboyant outfits; bishops wearing mitres and carrying croziers; and do they need priests to assist them at Mass? The Book of Proverbs says: “Pride comes first, disgrace comes after; with the humble is wisdom found” (11:2). Look at all the young attending New Age Christian churches in their area. ☹️

Terry (Toowoomba)

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

Pope Francis and the digital world

A Tablet mid-week editorial recently reported (March 15) on an interview between an Argentine journalist and the Pope to mark his tenth anniversary. The journalist asked, "How do you send emails?" The Pope replied, "What do you mean?" Journalist, "An email, how do you send an email?" The Pope, "By hand." The Pope explained that all his correspondence is drafted in longhand and handed to a secretary. The Pope told the journalist, "It is a limitation I have, let's say, an impairment." The editorial concluded: "It is practical testimony to his (the Pope's) desire for frankness and literal encounter in the church – he is remarkably friendly about critics who have made their criticisms to his face. It's one of the odd details that have made Pope Francis what he is. And one of the reasons why he's not reading this."

New Council of Cardinals

On March 7, a few days before the 10th anniversary of the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis reconstituted a new "Council of Cardinals." In all, nine cardinals were chosen by the pope, including five newcomers.

The five newcomers are Jesuit Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg and general rapporteur of the Synod on synodality, Cardinal Gérard Lacroix of Quebec, Cardinal Sérgio da Rocha of Salvador de Bahia, primate of Brazil, Cardinal Juan José Omella of Barcelona, and president the Spanish Bishops' Conference, and Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, president of the Governorate of Vatican City State.

The four Cardinals continuing in the Council are Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo of Kinshasa, often seen as the representative of Africa in this council, Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay, the only Asian member in this council, and the Cardinal-archbishop of Boston, Sean O'Malley, a Franciscan particularly committed to the fight against sexual violence in the Church.

The Cardinals that are being replaced include Cardinal Bertello from Vatican

City, whose term of office had expired, the Honduran Cardinal Óscar Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, stepping down due to age, and Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the powerful archbishop of Munich, who had presented his resignation to the pope in May 2021 for what he said was his mismanagement of sexual abuse cases. His resignation had been refused by the pope.

Second Adelaide Diocesan Assembly

The Second Diocesan Assembly (22/10/2022) was an important synodal milestone for the Adelaide archdiocese and for Bishop Pat O'Regan who will be representing Oceania at the International Synod in October. The Assembly has been a further synodal step for the bishop and the people "Together on the way" in Adelaide.

A participant at the Assembly, Rene Pols, writes of the challenge ahead.

"We were sent off to meet in regions during 2023! No agenda has been given but we have been given a budget of \$10 per person attending. It is now March 2023 and we are all struggling with what we are going to do. The Western group have already had their assembly which they had already been planning. Others wonder how they can come together in large geographic areas where aging parishioners need to organise ourselves. But what do we need to do? Just talking for the sake of it is simply a waste of time and money. If young people are the future of the church, how do we talk to the young in our schools and those in State school? More of the same will simply not "cut the mustard". In our region we have been pulled together geographically rather than by the old "Deanery Structure" so we have to forge new relationships with lay people emailing one another to ask what and how will we do this and what do we hope to get out of it.

Some people were disappointed by the second diocesan assembly. I sensed that many were hoping for a "Great visionary plan that would solve many problems and lead the way" announced in an inspiring, charismatic address by +Pat. Instead, we had him wearing a "tradies' high-viz shirt". I have the increasing sense that +Pat is leading in an unobtrusive way

and is facilitating and allowing the Adelaide community to mobilise and develop local responses to local problems. Structuring change around the DPC and PPC's is clearly important. So also, is his use of local scholarship and talent as during the first session of the second assembly, whilst he keeps a low profile. Facilitating the mobilisation of the base of the pyramid is a difficult and a slow process. It will be interesting to see how the regional assemblies will evolve. Certainly, in our parish we are looking at longer term planning and considerably more sophisticated thinking about our strategic directions that are more likely to be sustainable even when priests are moved.

Easter has come and we again recalled the way the Jewish people, and we in their footsteps, have been "together on the way" as the people of God but this time the challenge is with us and has been left to us with some funding to do it. This is different; it feels unsettling; difficult; messy and seems really hard to make anything substantial happen. We are wondering about talking to the funded Chaplains in State schools; perhaps we need to become more ecumenical and talk to the other Christians in our Region? Synodality is messy; this initiative is in our hands. Are we up to the task?"

Parramatta's first Diocesan Synod

On March 5th Parramatta's bishop, Vincent Long Van Nguyen, announced his intention to hold a two stage Diocesan Synod. He wrote:

"Not long after my Installation as your pastor, I desired to hold a Diocesan Synod in order to develop a pastoral plan which would follow my predecessor's "Faith in Our Future" and chart a new pathway for the Diocese. However, we had to wait for the long-delayed national Plenary Council to conclude.

Today, after much prayer and consultation, I formally announce the convocation of the Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta. This will be the first Synod in the history of our young Diocese. Like the national and universal synods, ours will be also held in two phases. The first assembly will be held from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 October

Continued page 30

2023 and the final assembly will be held near the middle of next year 2024.

Recognising the fruits of the Plenary Council and in the spirit of synodality, to which you have already contributed so deeply, I invite you to walk with me as we discern further a framework by which we can revitalise our Church in the Diocese and discover together a path of renewal for all of us.”

Diocesan Assembly for Perth

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB has announced, via a Pastoral Letter, the convening of a diocesan assembly on Saturday 23 September. The Assembly will consider the re-establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council. Under the leadership of archbishops Goody and Foley, Perth did have a Diocesan Pastoral Council for some years, but it was discontinued in the late nineties. The recent Australian Plenary Council has called for the establishment or re-establishment of such councils in every diocese, and Archbishop Costelloe hopes the assembly in September will decide whether or not the time is now right to re-establish a Diocesan Council for Perth.

The View from Rome of Sydney

Christopher Lamb's *View from Rome* in the April 1 edition of *The Tablet* asked “what is going on in Sydney?” Lamb's comment was related to a critical assessment of Pope Francis' ten years written by George Weigel entitled *A Somber Anniversary* in which he described the Pope as an autocrat presiding over a “slough of dysfunction” and creating a “miasma of fear.” Weigel's article was syndicated to a number of official publications in several English-speaking dioceses including *The Catholic Weekly* in Sydney. While Cardinal Sean O'Malley, the Archbishop of Boston, immediately had the article pulled from his diocesan paper *The Pilot* it remained on *The Catholic Weekly*. Lamb was in Sydney last July reporting on the Australian Church's Plenary Council. He noted that the Archdiocesan publication ran a series of hostile articles about the Council and was critical of synodality. Lamb concluded: “It has left some people asking: what is going on in Sydney?”

Death of John Bushell

(John Bushell, the Former CEO of the Melbourne Catholic Welfare Bureau – now Catholic Care – died on the 29th March this year at the age of nearly 86, and was buried from St Finbar's Church, East Brighton, on April 3. Chris Pearson, his former deputy for 14 years, delivered the eulogy. This is an extract of Chris' eulogy.)

John was born in England (on the 4th August 1936), and, having graduated from Manchester University, he was sponsored by Miserior (the German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Co-operation), to take charge of Boys' Town in South India, in Tamil Nadu State.

Ever the lateral thinker, he built an award-winning, architecturally designed campus, including home-styled accommodation with communal areas and workshops.

It was here that he met Pat, and when his term in India was finished, he came to Melbourne where Pat, and some of her family, had already migrated. After they married, John was invited – again by Miserior – to work in Africa.

John and Pat spent the next 8 years in Nigeria, West Africa, where John was a Development Consultant to the seven Northern Catholic Dioceses of Nigeria.

He established a Five-Year Development Plan which included meeting the Health, Education, Agricultural and Community Development needs of the Northern Dioceses.

Among many other things, he set up a Famine Relief Program, which included not only the logistical aspects of distributing aid, but more especially focused on improved agricultural, water and land use practices.

After 8 years in Nigeria, and with a young Richard, John and Pat returned to Melbourne, where Samantha was born.

John joined the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau in Melbourne – or ‘the Bureau’ as it was known at that time. It later became Centacare and now, Catholic Care – the Social Welfare arm of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

He personally collected new arrivals from the adult hostel in Springvale,

depending on their work times – usually 5.00 am! – and drove them to work, until arrangements could be made for the purchase of their own vehicles.

John was appointed the first layman in charge of the Bureau and spent nearly 30 years as Director or CEO.

John spent the final 5 years of his working life establishing a Bequest Office for the Archdiocese of Melbourne – the first of its kind in Australia. As a result of the success of his endeavours, a Resource Development Office was established, and other Dioceses throughout Australia sought John's advice.

In 2010 John retired! In the 34 years of our friendship, it was clear to me, that his love of the Scripture, his commitment to prayer, reflection, spiritual reading and his dedication to the Eucharist were the hallmarks of his spirituality. He also had a rich spiritual insight into, and love, for iconography.

John had a genuine presence to anyone he met. ‘Presence’ is a befriending place, a healing place, perhaps an unofficial sacrament of our humanity.

There is a joy and a cost of being present to one another. John's sensitivity, generosity, integrity and compassion characterised his presence in relationships. His quality of life was measured by the ease of being present – to himself, to others, and ultimately, to his God.

This was the John that I knew. And our prayers are with you, Pat, Richard and Samantha and your extended families, in your grief. 🙏

Chris Pearson

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

The Pope's Exorcist

REVIEWED BY PETER MALONE MSC

The Catholic Church in the cinema headlines once more. Exorcisms again! World audiences have become accustomed to Exorcism films. In fact, it is half a century since *The Exorcist* was released, 1973. It caused some shocks at the time but Catholic reviewers and audiences took it in their stride.

And since then there have been both sequels and prequels and a regular succession of films, some serious, some horror exercises, some spoofs. So *The Pope's Exorcist* arrives with a certain amount of cinema baggage.

And there are the books. The film announces itself is based on the actual "Pope's Exorcist", Father Gabriele Amorth SSP, who began his ministry at age 60 in 1986. He wrote many books about his exorcisms, thousands of them. William Friedkin, the director of the original *The Exorcist*, interviewed Father Amorth and others associated not long before he died and released a documentary with these conversations, *The Devil and Father Amorth* in 2017, a year after the Pope's exorcist died.

World audiences consist of non-believers (including those who do not give God or the devil a second thought) and those who are hostile atheists. Then there is the audience of believers, especially Catholics. The responses are quite different.

Many bloggers responding to the Friedkin documentary are fiercely angry, attacking non-credible promotions of God. Surprising how an aggressive atheist's nerve can be touched.

As regards those for whom God is neither here nor there, maybe there, but irrelevant, they will treat this film as another horror movie and like or dislike it accordingly:

scares, special effects, some blood and gore.

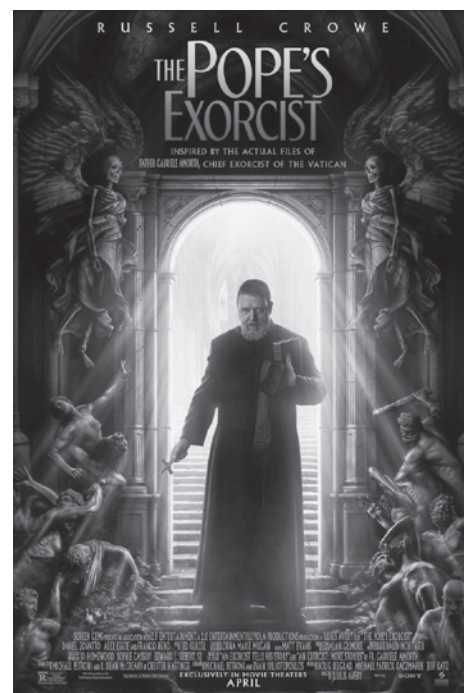
So, a Catholic response? There has been a long history of diabolical possession and exorcism rituals. Not every day experiences for most of us. The setting is 1987, Fr Amorth early in his exorcist career/ministry. The film challenges us concerning Father Amorth as a credible priest. In many ways he comes off well (but we don't know if the portrayal represents the actual man). As always, even in movie biographies, some characters and events are dramatized for dramatic purposes.

A bearded Franco Nero appears as the Pope, not particularly resembling John Paul II of 1987. Catholic audiences may be surprised to see him sitting in a large baroque chapel poring over an old tome, mysteriously scrawled, probing the case.

Scandinavian actor, Max von Sydow, was serious, very serious, in 1973. But here, of all actors, is a very portly Russell Crowe – who might resonate with many 21st century audiences. He speaks Italian and so has an accent, credible enough, when he is asked to speak English. He rides a motor scooter, also has a sardonic sense of humour (and a whiskey swig now and again), joking a lot – and he reminds us that the devil does not like jokes.

At first we might wonder at his methods which do not have universal Curial support. But he soon explains (perhaps to our relief) that many of his cases are psychological rather than satanic possession and have to be treated accordingly, with therapy. Father Amorth has noted this in his books.

There is a case focus at the centre of this film, a family, a young boy, possessed



(and the expected curses, foulmouthed, contortions...), the devil playing havoc with him, his mother and his sister. But there are aspects and church history which would excite some Catholic interest. The setting is Spain, an Abbey in ruins with secrets that Father Amorth, with the local priest, Thomas, praying and attempting the exorcism. In an eerie basement, they find the caged corpse of a Friar who in 1475 was possessed, inaugurating the Inquisition – so that all its subsequent actions were Satan-inspired. It seems that the demon, Asmodeus, has engineered Father Amorth's presence in order to possess him and work for the destruction of the church from the inside. Horror fans may not notice any of this!

The Pope's Exorcist is not essential viewing but has its interest as well as its exorcism-horror conventions. A recommended film would be, *The Rite*, with Anthony Hopkins and some background of the courses in Rome held for exorcists from around the world. ☞

Springboards – A deeper Ignatian way

Author: Christopher Gleeson SJ. Order from the Publisher: wilkinsonpublishing.com.au

A thoughtful collection of scripture, prayers and reflections for students, parents, teachers and individuals seeking a more reflective and balanced

life. The Ignatian wisdom collected in 'Springboards' includes prayers for Pentecost, seasonal prayers and God's Word for our daily lives.

A book to help soften people's hearts, increase gratitude, revive drooping spirits, come alive and soak in God's love.

Bleiburg: Massacre of the Croatian People 1945

REVIEWED BY EDMUND CAMPION

Author: Rev Zvonimir Gavranovic. Published by AFT Press.

To order: Rev Gavranovic, St John XXIII Parish, PO Box 23, Stanhope Gardens NSW 2768.

Email: Zvonimir@john23rd.org.au

Cost: \$50.00 when purchased from Rev Gavranovic. Postage and handling - \$15.00 one copy/\$25.00 for two or more copies.

You will receive a signed copy of the book with the words: *May all who read this book be inspired to serve humankind with reconciliation, forgiveness and a lasting peace.*

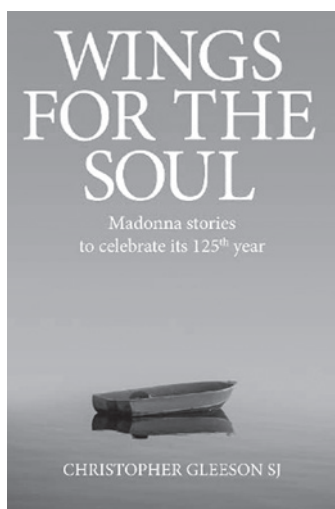
This is a masterly book that can change lives. Zvonimir Gavranovic has spent a lifetime studying this and meditating on its wider meaning. His research is impressive, his findings are sure and

his application to everyday life is sound. He knows that nurturing hatred for wrongs done in the past is bad for you. Yet if he urges forgiveness, he does not want us to forget our bloody past. It is a nourishing book. ☪



Wings for the Soul – Madonna Stories to celebrate its 125th year

Author: Christopher Gleeson SJ. Order from the Publisher: wilkinsonpublishing.com.au



The following words form part of a review of Chris's book written by Andrew Hamilton SJ.

Fr Chris Gleeson keeps distinguished and enduring company. Fathers Michael Watson, Eustace Boylan, Herbie Wilkins and Chris edited and wrote for *Madonna* for almost 100 of its 125 years. Like the previous editors he has brought to the magazine its distinctive conversational tone, a spirituality that speaks to the lives of its readers, addresses the events of the day, and shares insights drawn from the best writing. When we read *Wings for the Soul*, the collection of his contributions over the last 20 years, we

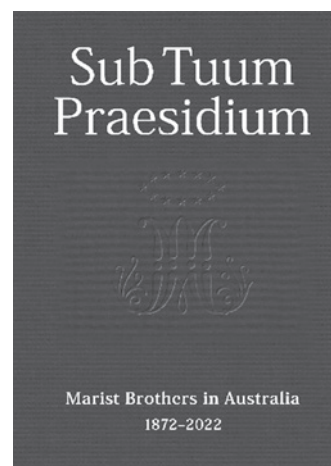
are invited to revisit the ways in which we have read our times in the light of the Gospel and have responded to them. The writing in this collection betrays a rare hospitality to people and to good words. In it many hundreds of people are mentioned, each with praise and gratitude. They include teachers, parents and students met in his work in Jesuit schools, his fellow Jesuits, friends and people in the news. Many people also find a place in this book through their words, including singers, poets, Biblical writers, novelists, journalists, children and saints. In each case their words are not only pertinent to the topic under discussion but illuminate it. ☪

Sub Tuum Praesidium – Marist Brothers in Australia 1872-2002

This book is a detailed history of the Marist Brothers in Australia over the past 150 years. It contextualises Marist people and works within the social and political history of Australia and the Church. It portrays the characters, tensions, successes and failures, as the Institute followed its mission through changing circumstances.

To order: www.thehermitage.org.au and search under shop for Marist Resources.

☪



Returned to God

JOSEF (JOE) BUTSCHER SAC

22/05/1933 – 29/01/2023

✠ Joe SAC died peacefully at Villa Maria (Cabrini) Nursing Home, Queens Parade, Ashwood with his community around him. Born in Floders/Hauerz, Germany, he came to Australia in 1958 and dedicated his life to his Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Beagle Bay, Derby, Lombadina, Mullewah and the Rossmoyne Pallottine Centre for Aboriginal boys and girls. He then came east to Kew, Melbourne, where he trained lay missionaries as well as doing parish work.

Joe was a prayerful and energetic priest who will be missed by many. May he rest in peace.

SALVATORE (SAM) BENEDETTO DIMATTINA PE

07/10/1933 – 23/03/2023

✠ Sam's parents, born on the Isle of Stromboli, immigrated to Melbourne in the late 1920's and like many other Italians worked hard in their family fruit shop in Caulfield. Sam attended Christian Brothers College, St Kilda and it was there his evident ease of learning across all disciplines, music and sport were identified. He had imbued a deep love of his Catholic faith from the witness of his parents who had carried with them a spirituality forged through generations across the Aeolian islands.

A devotion to the Eucharist, to prayer, Our Lady, a profound understanding of the connection between faith and culture, and above all charity, were formed in the young Salvatore, who was always known as Sam. Entering Corpus Christi College in the early 1950's he was ordained for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in July 1959.

His obvious academic ease with philosophy and theology, languages, music and pastoral gifts soon saw him depart for St Peter's College Rome where he completed his Licentiate and Doctorate in Social Sciences at the Gregorian University. His doctorate completed in 1964 focussed on Catholic Social Principles in the lives of the laity: It was a timely thesis as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council reflected deeply upon the mission of the baptised in the life of the Church and world.

Upon his return Sam taught social sciences part-time at Corpus Christi College Werribee. He was appointed to parishes as an Assistant Priest, Administrator and Parish Priest in the inner Northern suburbs where he was able to engage with Italian communities and other migrants for whom he had deep empathy.

The experience of growing up in a family business made it easy for such a gifted priest to connect with parishioners through liturgy, music, formation, community groups and with a focus on the mission of the Church. In 1981 he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Justice, Development and Peace, and Chair of the Archdiocesan Commission for Justice and Peace. He continued in this capacity until 2006 serving under three Archbishops. In this period, he undertook and participated in major projects such as *Common Wealth Common Good* and made many international visitations on behalf of Catholic Missions.

Sam was a beloved pastor. He was kind, encouraging and charitable. He was able to speak the Good News in a manner which touched people's hearts and lives. Throughout his ministry he formed close friendships with parishioners which led to generations of connections which enriched his life.

He was a loyal man of integrity. If someone was in need, he would find a way to assist. His father imbued in Sam a deep sense of care for his brother priests and many found in him great support.

Sam never forgot his roots. His studies in Rome reconnected him with Stromboli, his aunty and cousins. He spent many annual holidays travelling to Stromboli bringing family and friends along with him. Many enjoyed the gentle beauty of the island and the telling of stories which echoed for many generations under the nightly glow of the volcano "idu".

He loved his family and they were devoted to him. He made his connection with his brothers Dom and Bob, and their families, a priority and he was rewarded by their loving care until his final breath. He admired the commitment of his brother, Brother Tony CFC.

His cousins too formed part of the rich connection of family forged over generations. Enduring friendships spanned from Germany, Italy, United States and across Australia – all these reflected something of Sam's profound loyalty, witness as a priest, goodness and human warmth.

He retired early due to ill health. His daily routine of Mass, prayer, meditation, good food, siesta, a little "holy water" and ongoing connection to family and friends enabled him to live independently for many years. He made the choice to retire to Justin Villa Balwyn during the long Covid restrictions.

It was tough decision, but one which brought him the comfort he needed as the sun began to set. He was not afraid to die. He always said, 'we spend our lives preaching the resurrection, so don't delay me when the time comes!'

May he rest in peace and rise in glory!

Continued page 34

RETURNED TO GOD

ROBERT (BOB) MAGUIRE AM

14/09/1934 – 19/04/2023



Beloved Melbourne priest, social justice campaigner and media personality, Fr Bob Maguire, died at Cabrini Hospital, Malvern, Victoria.

Fr Bob's untiring charity work, advocacy for the poor and wicked sense of humour made him a popular figure in Melbourne and across Australia.

The youngest of four children to James and Eileen, Bob was born in Thornbury, Victoria and educated at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, Armadale, and Christian Brothers College, St Kilda. In 1953, Bob commenced studies at Corpus Christi College, Melbourne, and after his ordination at St Patrick's Cathedral on 24 July 1960, was appointed temporarily as Assistant Priest at Belgrave Parish and then Heidelberg Parish in 1961.

In 1962, he was appointed as Assistant Priest in Ashburton Parish and then as Assistant Priest for a period at Braybrook Parish in 1966. Later in 1966 he served as Assistant Priest in Kew East Parish for three years and was then appointed as Assistant Priest for Ivanhoe Parish in 1969. In 1970 Fr Bob was appointed the Assistant Priest for Seymour Parish and then went on to serve for three years as Chaplain for the Catholic Military Vicariate of Australia.

In 1973 Fr Bob was appointed as Parish Priest of St Peter & Paul's Parish, South Melbourne until his retirement in 2012 whereupon he was appointed Pastor Emeritus. In 1989, Fr Bob was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, for service to homeless youth. In 2003 Fr Bob launched the Father Bob Maguire Foundation, to provide food relief, social inclusion and educational support services "so that no one is left behind".

In 2001 Fr Bob was awarded the Centenary Medal for his years of dedicated service to the congregation of Ss Peter and Paul's Parish and to the local community, and in 2011 he was named Victorian of the Year.

Fr Bob was a member of the NCP Executive from 1977 to 1982 and editor of the *NCP Newsletter* from 1982 to 1985.

May he rest in the gentle peace of Christ.

DESMOND LEO PURCELL SJ

21/10/1932 – 24/12/2022



Born in Melbourne and educated by the Christian Brothers at Victoria Parade, Des entered the Society of Jesus at Loyola, Watsonia, in 1950. During his formation he completed an Arts degree at Melbourne University and taught at St Patrick's College, East Melbourne. On 2 January 1964, he was ordained at the Cathedral next door to the College.

In 1965 Des travelled to India for the final year of his spiritual formation. This was a turning point. He stayed on in India, working for "Famine Relief" in Bihar. In 1966 he went to Kerala to meet the Superior Generals of the Franciscan Clarists and the Congregation of Mother Carmel and invited them to work in Hazaribag. This was a masterstroke that made a huge difference to the apostolate there in subsequent years.

At the age of 35 Des embarked on Hindi studies and taught at St Xavier's, Hazaribag and St Joseph's, Mahuadanr. After undertaking an MA in Guidance and Counselling at the Ateneo de Manila, he returned to India as a retreat giver.

In 1976 Des moved back to Australia, where he worked in Perth (as a counsellor to Religious), Melbourne (as Province Secretary, retreat director and director of a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers), Brisbane (as Parish Priest at Toowong), then Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne as a retreat director.

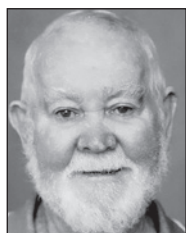
During his many years in the Canberra Archdiocese, he did Mass supplies in a swag of country towns. As he explained in a newspaper interview, "I spent my early years as a priest in India, going around from village to village, so sleeping out and moving on has been part of my life as a priest". Open to new experiences and welcoming to all, Des as a spiritual director was a master of discernment, an encourager, honest responder and compassionate listener. For him, joy was always a sign of God's love. He took joy in parish initiatives that involved the laity, in the visits of an Indian missionary or the planning of a family gathering.

His whole approach was summed up in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), which filled him with joy. His last couple of years were spent in care at Nazareth House in Melbourne, where he died peacefully on Christmas Eve, aged 90.

*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.*

BRIAN RUSSELL CSSR

20/09/1936 – 11/02/2023



On 26 February, 2023, a Memorial Mass was celebrated at St Brendan’s Church, Coragulac, Victoria, for Fr Brian Russell CSsR who passed away in Perth, WA, on 11 February, 2023. Brian was a loved son of Patrick and Agnes (nee Sheedy) Russell and brother of Dan, Ted, Ellen, Kathleen, James, Norah, Kevin, Michael and Fr Des CSsR (all dec) and Sr Patricia SGS. He was highly respected by his nieces, nephews, extended family and a treasured confrere of the Redemptorists in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Members of the clergy, postulants and students from the Redemptorist Formation House at Kew – Redemptorist Province of Oceania joined Fr Michael O’Toole, relatives and parishioners for the Memorial Mass.

Brian cherished his early life in Coragulac. In his latter years, health permitting, he came home to celebrate the Easter Triduum with the communities of St Brendan’s Coragulac and St Joseph’s Pirron Yallock. He endeared himself as a priest, gentleman, wide-ranging scholar but particularly for his warmth and uncomplicated way of speaking from the heart.

Educated by the Good Samaritan Sisters in Coragulac and later at St Patrick’s College Ballarat, Brian was professed as a Redemptorist missionary in 1957 and six years later, ordained a priest by Bishop James O’Collins. 25 years were then spent in Asia. For the last 25 years of his life, he devoted himself to his mission in North Perth, St Vincent De Paul Society and all who called on him. His kindness, thoughtful input and guidance was treasured by all.

VINCENT TIGGEMAN

05/03/1929 – 23/03/2023

+ Vincent was born in Adelaide into a family with a strong Irish, German and Scottish heritage and a deep Catholic faith. At the age of 10 he contracted Polio requiring over a year convalescing and it was during this time that his vocation emerged. At age 12 he entered St Francis Xavier Seminary where he completed his secondary education. He was a brilliant student and topped the State in the Latin exam. He was one of the first students to enter the new Seminary.

Vincent was chosen to complete his priestly studies in Rome where he was ordained on 21st December 1951. He completed a doctorate in Canon Law before returning to Adelaide. He was then appointed Secretary to Archbishop Beovich, a position he held for ten years, and accompanied him to Rome of an ad limina visit in 1970. He was made a Monsignor in 1971.

As Archbishop’s Secretary, Vin took some testimonies in regard to the cause for Sr Mary MacKillop’s sainthood, he became devoted to her and he was delighted to be able to travel to Rome for her canonisation in 2010.

For many years Vin headed the Matrimonial Tribunal in Adelaide and was a founding member of the Australasian Canon Law Society and served it for 28 years. In addition to his Tribunal work Vin served in the parishes of Christies Beach, Morphett Vale, Hectorville, Dulwich, Glenelg, St Peters and Pennington.

Vincent retired as parish Priest in 2004 and took up residence in Murphy Villa. As his health declined, he spent his last days in The Southern Cross Homes at The Pines where he died. Vincent will be remembered as one who had a deep and abiding care and concern for everyone he met, encouraging them to develop and use their gifts for the good of others and to give glory to God.

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

† John Archbold OMI (Oblate Fathers)..... 17/11/2022	† Brian Harris OMI (Oblates)..... 23/02/2023
† Rev John Boyd-Boland OFM (Franciscans) ... 15/03/2023	† Brian Johnstone CSsR (Redemptorists)..... 16/04/2023
† Bernard Cleary SSC (Columbans)..... 09/03/2023	† Rev James Knight SVD (Divine Word Missionaries)..... 24/11/2022
† Rev John Conroy MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)..... 09/04/2023	† Rev Laurence Mooney OSA (Augustinians) .. 14/04/2023
† Neville Drinkwater (Canberra & Goulburn) .. 29/01/2023	† William Ryder SM (Marists)..... 15/04/2023
† James Elmore CP (Passionists)..... 30/09/2022	† Rev Pacificus Scarf OFM (Franciscans)..... 08/10/2022
† Rev Romuald Green OFM (Franciscans)..... 13/12/2022	† Rev Erwin Schmutz SVD (Divine Word Missionaries)..... 05/10/2022

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

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

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

The National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)

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

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

The Objects and Purposes of the Council

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