



# arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.  
December 2009 Issue No. 34

## Editorial

It is not often that we get the chance to share ideas on the direction of the Church with well-informed Catholic people from overseas. So it was a welcome opportunity to be able to spend a couple of hours with Dr Tony Padovano, an active Catholic American, who is organising a major conference in 2011 entitled the American Catholic Council.

One of its themes is to celebrate what has been achieved since Vatican II. The greater involvement of the lay people in the parish councils, finance committees, etc is to be reflected upon as a significant achievement along with wider education in biblical studies and liturgy. The conference also hopes to reach out to younger people with notes of optimism for the future.

It is to be hoped that such a conference will also focus on what needs to be done and not simply allow those in authority to bask in the light of those achievements. The amount of influence exercised by parish councils and similar structures is usually much less than desired and the Church is still a long way from enabling the equality of men and women, recognised in all civilised societies, to be expressed in its structures and ministry.

Tony spoke of a Bill of Rights for all Catholics that is effectively enshrined in the 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law. This is something very few people know about, not realising that many of the things that they may be demanding should already be open to them.

The right to receive the Word of God and the sacraments from pastors has implications for how the Church should be flexible in achieving this. The right to advise pastors regarding the good of the Church and to pursue one's proper spirituality also means that restrictive Church structures need review. And, most importantly, the right to association, to hold meetings, to conduct research and publication leads on to the right to expect that the Church will only impose sanctions in accordance with the law.

It is to be hoped that the conference draws wide participation by Catholics from many countries and that the manner of participation enables such rights to be brought into stark contrast with the authoritarian attitudes of so many in the Church hierarchy. If it turned into an effective "Council of the Laity" then it could have the potential to be an epoch making event, since the voice of the people who are the Church are seldom heard above the clergy unless they are in complete accord with their views.

*John Buggy*

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## Letters

Encouraged by John Buggy's invitation in the September issue of *ArcVoice*, I submit the beliefs that define the faith I profess.

- I believe in God the source of all being;
- I believe in Jesus Christ, the human manifestation of God and the embodiment of His universal, limitless and unconditional love;
- I believe in the universal presence of God in the world we inhabit;
- I believe that institutional allegiance is not essential to faith and worship, that there are many ways that lead to God and that lives that reflect His justice, mercy, love and compassion are valid acts of faith and worship;
- I believe in the unique spiritual identity of every human being and that this identity survives our physical death.

*Phoebe Basson  
Vauchuse*

I have an interest in following up on some information reported in the article *If Only the church had courage* by Kevin Doherty for a project I am involved with in our deanery.

I am interested in obtaining more information about the "parish priest on the Northern beaches of Sydney" and his ideas for a project "Imagining Future Parishes within the Diamond Valley Deanery" that we are working on. It is interesting that similar ideas are coming up independently in a variety of places.

*Susan Kempen  
Deanery Resource Coordinator  
Diamond Valley Deanery*

[NOTE: The priest mentioned is Fr Rex Curry,  
PP of Parish of Pittwater, NSW]

I was most impressed with your editorial in Issue #33. Wagga Wagga is a conservative Diocese (I guess most are). I would like to stand up in Church one day and ask all the courageous Catholics to also stand up. Alas I fear I might be the last one, or only one standing! Nevertheless I will still persevere to push for reform. Keep up the good work.

*Drew Porter  
Wagga Wagga*

## Fiat justitia ruat caelum\*

Shane Reese

A comparison in organisational terms between other Christian denominations and our own Church shows two of its most distinctive characteristics to be the enormous authority and power vested in its human leader, and the sharp distinction that can be drawn between its two classes of membership, namely priesthood and people.

With his sovereignty being as close to autocracy as it is possible to imagine, and having the support of ordained clerics who are the only members of our Church who can exercise any power of ecclesiastical governance and who have a special obligation of obedience to him, the Pope is indeed secure in his office with his rulings rarely challenged let alone disregarded, especially if on universally important matters of faith or morals. Such a concentration of power, and so heavily centralised, might be thought almost inevitably to result in an oppressive rule but happily, with some few exceptions, such is not generally the case today. The laity who comprise something over ninety-nine per cent of the membership of our Church are canonically excluded from taking any part in its government, have little or no choice in who is sent to be their spiritual guides nor who is to govern the diocese in which they live. Despite this virtual disenfranchisement, the great majority of practising Catholics are content to accept that degree of subordination for the sake of remaining members in good standing of what they believe to be Christ's church on earth with whose help they do what they can to lead the good life without allowing themselves to be unduly troubled by any such imperfections as they may detect in its human management.

There is, however, a small but increasing minority of the laity, especially in Western Europe and throughout the English-speaking world, whose advanced education (compared with the general illiteracy of earlier centuries) has convinced them that they should speak out against what they perceive to be ecclesial maladministration or injustice. Their respect for those in charge is undiminished and, although there is no doctrinal requirement that they should do so, their experience causes them fully to accept that by and large their priests live holier and better lives than they do. They admire them for their selfless dedication to a life in God's service, and are forever grateful to them for the blessings they bring to their congregations in the exercise of their sacerdotal powers. 'No Priest: No Mass' is a daunting prospect against the eventuality of which we must all pray. This minority, however, does not accept that there is any valid reason for denying to half the membership of the Church, entrance to the sacred priesthood. Although both the present Pope and his predecessor have made it clear they believe the long continued practice of not ordaining women is unalterable, their views on this matter are far from having been accepted as correct even/especially amongst the 'illuminati'.

If – as so many thoughtful, practising Catholics believe – there are no sustainable grounds for barring women from the priesthood, the wilful refusal of those in charge to do so is a gross injustice to half the members of the Church and a major disservice to all of us.

*Shane Reese*

\* May Justice happen though heaven may fall

# Christmas – need it cost the earth?

Annie March

For years I hated Christmas. I was a sole parent with family interstate and precious little money. Yet I kept pretending it was wonderful. When I finally started being truthful, I discovered I wasn't alone in finding this season a misery. So I began to question the nature of a sacred festival from which a considerable number of people felt themselves painfully excluded. How could I reshape and reclaim it?

The first thing I decided to do was stop worshipping the god of shopping, because he lies. We say gifts are an expression of love. But love has to be through and through. How can I give you a scarf that's been made in a sweat-shop in Thailand? What sort of gift is a mobile phone if one of its components (coltan) drives civil war in the Congo? Is a CD a good present if our children's children will have to pick its broken pieces out of their soils and waterways? How about perfume? Not if the flowers it is made from have been so heavily sprayed with pesticides that the birds are dying.

When a friend gave me a card that simply said, 'I've planted fifty trees for you,' I was so moved I wept. Then I discovered an Oxfam catalogue, and Christmas shopping became a delight; I couldn't afford a buffalo, so I chose three goats, half a dozen ducks, a pig, some gardening tools and a midwife's kit. Family and friends got a card describing the third world communities whose livelihoods their gifts were supporting. Christmas presents as such are now quite simply outlawed; only trees, goats and ducks may cross my threshold.

Then there was the issue of eating. It seemed to me blasphemous to celebrate one of our holiest days by stuffing ourselves with food on a planet where millions of people went to bed hungry every night. The sacred, if it were to have any relevance, may not stop at the church door, but must also inform my food choices. Had my roast chicken spent its life de-beaked in a dark, cramped battery? What kind of carbon footprint were jet-lagged mangoes bequeathing my grandchildren? Who had been exploited, enslaved or poisoned to bring me my chocolate or coffee? House rules now stipulate that Christmas food is by and large local, organic, in-season and minimally packaged; and that everyone contributes a dish *and* washes up.

Because I particularly dislike the ways families can put moats around themselves, my WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) entry now includes an invitation to spend Christmas with my household. Young travellers are often desperately homesick at this season. Last year we were Dutch, Belgian, Korean, and Japanese. Everyone came to Mass. We cooked a multi-cultural feast, played rounders in the park, then came home to Black Maria – most hilarious and malevolent of card-games – in three languages. And we grieved, because all of us were missing beloved family.

This year is different and special, because my son is coming home. I've not seen Ben since he went to study human rights in Geneva two-and-a-half years ago. And yes, in January, I'll have to say goodbye again. It will be as wrenching as ever. Yet isn't loving and letting go at the heart of the Eucharist, of Christmas?

*It's not love that leaves or dies, just people. When I'm gone,  
and only love is left, give me away.'*

Sufi prayer.

First published in  
*The Tasmanian Catholic* December 2008.  
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# And Also with You

## Is the New English Version of the Mass a betrayal of Vatican II?

**Paul Collins**

**Summary of pamphlet published in July 2009 by Catholics for Ministry**

Mass-going Catholics are in for a rude shock in 2010-2011. For it is then that the new translations of the English of the Mass and sacraments are going to be introduced into parishes and communities. Without consultation and without ever 'road-testing' the new translations or seeking the opinion, let alone the consent of the faithful, a Vatican-imposed version of Latinised English is going to be foisted on Catholics in countries like Australia, the UK, the US, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and other places where English is widely used.

While the present translation is not perfect, it has the strength of following the rhythms and idioms of normal English speech and has gained a widespread acceptance among English-speakers. It has become part of the prayer of the community and is a genuine expression of the faith of the largest Catholic language-group in the world.

But, as *And Also With You* argues, it is more than this. For Catholics it is the basic symbol of their acceptance of Vatican II. Reactionaries have argued for decades that acceptance of the Council's renewed liturgy represents approval of all of the other reforms that Vatican II introduced. Backtracking on the liturgy connotes an abandonment of the other good things that the Council stood for, like consulting the laity, the collegiality of bishops in governing the church, our reaching out to other churches on religious freedom.

This pamphlet outlines the whole picture. It takes us back to Vatican II and explains how up until the mid-eighties English-speaking bishops' conferences were primarily responsible for the English we used in the liturgy. It shows how this has been subverted by the Vatican since 1985.

The English we are now using in the liturgy is not an absolutely literal translation of the Latin. What it tries to do is what all sensible translations try to do: find the nearest English idiom that communicates the ideas expressed in the original, rather than literally rendering the meaning of each individual word. This is known as dynamic equivalence. The translation to be imposed in 2010-11 retreats to a literal rendering of the Latin. It aims to capture the precise meaning of the original text with no regard for the English equivalent.

The result is a mish-mash, a pseudo-sacred English that reeks of Latinisms. It reads like a kind of odd, mid-Victorian rhetoric that is hard to say aloud. Much of it is incomprehensible and convoluted. The tragedy is that this will alienate more Catholics right at the time when we are struggling to involve people from Generations X and Y.

So at a time when millions of Catholics are alienated from the church because of hierarchical hypocrisy and seeming irrelevance, the Vatican is irresponsibly determined to introduce an even more alienating form of language.

The faithful were never consulted. So it remains to be seen if this imposed text will be ever fully accepted.

### Concluding challenge:

Perhaps the time has come for those of us who are still actively committed to Catholicism **to make a stand and reject outright this exercise in nostalgia which will make it even more difficult to hand on the faith to coming generations.**

<u>Present Form of Prayer</u>	<u>Proposed Form of Prayer</u>
Bless and approve our offering; make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth. Let it become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ your only Son, our Lord.	<i>Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the body and blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.</i>

Copies of this pamphlet can be downloaded from the Catholics in Ministry website [www.catholicsforministry.com.au](http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au) or requested in writing to Catholics in Ministry PO Box 4053 MANUKA ACT 2603

[www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org](http://www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org)

This website is worth checking out if you have any concerns about the forthcoming changes in the liturgy. There is space to say what you think and to add your name to the world-wide list of protesters.

# Lay Celebration of the Eucharist...

George Ripon

This of course is not a new proposal but, like others, it is ongoing because our Church continues to do nothing about the shortage of priests. The subject gets raised by some Sydney Anglicans from time to time though not that I recall recently and probably not by their Archbishop.

We start as always, at the **Last Supper** where **Jesus** and the twelve apostles gathered for the **Jewish Passover**. He blessed the bread and wine and offered it to them as His Body and Blood, which would be sacrificed for all. Before dealing with present problems I think it is worth reflecting on the significance of what occurred there. Jesus was the link between God and humankind and as the culmination of the redemption approached He established the way in which He (as God) would always be available *'on call'* to His people. Just as food and drink sustain the physical body, so the blest bread and wine would be food for the spirit and available *'as often as you do this'*. There was no involvement of the Jewish religious leaders; they were, in fact, otherwise engaged at the time.

Historically, as we know, only the apostles were present and, with all due respect, they were not a very intellectual body. In describing what **Jesus** did I try hard to avoid terms like *authorised, empowered or commissioned*, seeing these as concepts dear to the 'Magisterium'. Rather He said *'Do this in memory of Me'*. In the context of a shared spiritual meal they could invoke His presence for the blessing of those present. The reception of this form of prayer is found in the **Acts of the Apostles** at 2:42, *'the faithful devoted themselves ... to the breaking of the bread and the prayers'*. Later at v46 *'day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their houses'*. **So we have a distinction between formal prayer in the temple and the 'Breaking of Bread' in the home. Essentially it was a simple process to provide under the form of food and drink special spiritual nourishment.** That was then.

Over the centuries, however, with theology and tradition the process has developed into the Mass as we know it today. Theologians wrestled with Transubstantiation and the Real Presence. A common language, Latin (not the language of **Jesus**) was introduced. From my Irish-Catholic upbringing the reason given for Latin was that if we went overseas the Mass would be in the same language as at home! The fact that we still would not understand it was irrelevant. Anyhow

the format became established with celebration restricted to a male celibate priesthood. Priests were subject to a 6-7 year academic formation routine mainly oriented to theology, philosophy and Canon Law. To those who refer to the Last Supper as the first ordinations I raise the question, how many of the apostles would have qualified? So we have come a long way since the **Acts** and **Paul** [2 Cor. 11:23].

Before getting to the grist of my proposal, a word to women readers. I am very conscious of the hurt experienced by women at their treatment by our male-dominated church. Nevertheless at this stage I am proposing a male role for the new ministry of lay presider. The anti-woman bias in the church leads me to believe that we have a slightly better chance of a hearing for male candidates at this time. An article of mine on the role of **'Women in Priestly Ministry'** has been published in the September issue of **ARCvoice**. I also included comment on this role in an article on **'The Diaconate'** [**ARCvoice** March '09].

How do we persuade the Bishops to change?

So now we get to the nitty-gritty: how we select candidates and how we persuade the Bishops to change? Taking the easy one first, the **Parish Pastoral Council** – every parish should have one – would nominate suitable willing parishioners, (*virī probati – upright approved men*) and refer the names to a Diocesan body. Neither the local bishop nor the parish priest (if any) would have an automatic power of veto. Blessing and support would be preferable. A short period of part-time training, say six months(?) in liturgy and scripture would follow, after which the candidate would be commissioned. **The role would be Eucharistic celebrant only, no preaching, no counselling and definitely no confession.** The availability of these ministers could quickly get us back to the time when most parishes would have had a Saturday and Sunday PM Mass as well as AM Sunday, perhaps two in bigger parishes. The role as I see it now would be voluntary ideally (at this stage) for retired men but also available to those still in the work-force willing to serve. Weekend rosters would be prepared by the Pastoral Council.

To avoid confusion I stress that the role is not just a job for someone with time to spare. Aspirants should have a deep love of 'Church' and personal spirituality and be willing to make an appropriate commitment.

Now for the hard bit. Moving the Bishops to change is a real challenge. As a reformer I do at times have sympathy for our masters in Rome. For many centuries the church at grassroots level has been governed by male celibate clergy and it has worked well. Then in a generation, as we approached the end of the twentieth century,

vocations to the priesthood dropped off dramatically. As a result the average metropolitan parish with a Parish Priest and an Assistant lost the Assistant and now many of the remaining Parish Priests are being asked to take on a neighbouring priestless parish. As with the rest of us none of these priests are getting any younger. I do at times wonder if Rome realises how serious the problem is and what our bishops on their parishioner-funded ‘ad limina’ visits are reporting to the Vatican authorities? I would like to think that our bishops would be demanding answers to the problems on behalf of the ‘People of God’ back home in the pews.

In a changing world our leadership seems far removed from reality. **Jesus** promised that *‘the gates of hell would not prevail’*. I see it as a mistake to think that, irrespective of what Rome does, does badly or fails to do, ‘All shall be well’. It’s not the time to relax in a comfort zone. **If we can’t have priests operating as they do at present, we must consider other options.** If Rome is dead-set against married clergy (male or female) they must give us, the people, alternatives. **Jesus, through the Apostles, gave the Church the power to make new laws which would be ratified in Heaven. So the church can change and if ever there was a time to do so it must be now.** So why not, in consultation with the people, develop a new form of Eucharistic Ministry? I believe the resources currently deployed on resurrecting the diaconate would be far better spent on establishing such a new ministry. After all most of the duties proposed for deacons are already being carried out by Pastoral Associates – the vast majority of whom are women.

So back to the Church Authority. My own perception is that those in charge are horrified at any form of progressive change and, from their point of view, this is a major one. I can hear the cries, *‘This would be the end of church/priesthood and civilisation as we know it. God knows what they (the people) will want next?’* Maybe God does know! Anyhow, why run away from open consultation and debate? Why not listen to the ‘People of God’ [*Lumen gentium* Ch 2, section 9]. Here **Paul VI**, Servant of the Servants of God, refers to *‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood’*. **Sadly when push-comes-to-shove it’s generally the faithful who get the push and much of Vatican II gets the shove.** It’s worth recalling that the first celebrants were the working-class apostles followed later by those in

charge in the homes of the believers. The Church is always keen to appeal to ‘Tradition’ when it suits, so why not here and now?

I have already made passing reference to our bishops with the hope that they might vigorously raise our concerns in Rome. I was however saddened when I read the commentary by **Paul Collins** summarising the response of the Bishops to the Catholics for Ministry petition. A petition by 16,800 Catholics addressed to the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference sought support for married male priests, the return of married ex-priests and consideration for the ordination of women. The response indicated that the bishops were working on the problems but that *‘the issues were largely beyond the competence of the Conference’*. So who speaks for us and what is the role of our bishops and the Bishops’ Conference?

Bishops got a serve from his holiness the other day as he ordained five new bishops for Vatican jobs. *‘Don’t pursue self interest’* he said and *The Guardian (UK)* headlined it *‘Pope Benedict bashes the Bishops’* – concerns not entirely clear but here perhaps a respectful reminder to him that the vast majority of current bishops were directly appointed by him or his predecessor **JPII**. So can we expect the support of our own bishops for lay Eucharistic Celebrants? If they were elected by the people I would be confident of progress.

I am indebted to *ARCvoice* for publishing my items on ‘The Diaconate’, ‘Elected Bishops’ and ‘Women in Priestly Ministry’. However at times I get close to despair on whether we will ever see significant change in our Church. This feeling gets worse as I see the latest vibes from Rome: rumours of back to communion on the tongue, dropped references to ‘The Sacred’ and ‘Reverence’ – a slight on us in the pews – open promotion of Latin Masses and the priest *‘ad orientem’*, a euphemism for turning his back on the people.

As I try to reach a conclusion, another Vatican gem caught my eye from *CathNews* (18/09) *‘Priests cannot be replaced by the laity: Pope’*. In the year of priests his Holiness seems anxious to drive a wedge between the remaining priests and the people. So it seems that if we are to see change we – liberals, reformers or troublemakers, however we are described – will need to persist in our efforts. Perhaps, like **Job** [42:3-6] I have said enough, for the moment!!

**George Ripon**, now in retirement, is a parishioner at St. Patrick’s Church, Murrumbena in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. In his 41 years there he has (in his own words) interfered in all areas of parish life including the Pastoral Council, School Board, Liturgy, Music, Meditation and Ecumenism and now Church reform. This article was first published in *Catholica*.



# The labourers are few

Summary of part of ABC *Encounter* program  
16 August 2009 (edited)

## The Indian solution?

The ABC *Encounter* program faced the issue that Catholic priests in Australia are overworked and in increasingly short supply, which has prompted some dioceses to recruit clergy from overseas. But how ethical is it to take priests from countries such as India, where they may be needed? Is it time for the Church to look at more radical solutions?

The drastic shortage of priests has been troubling the Catholic Church in the West for some years now. Since around the mid-1970s there's been a marked decline in vocations among young men. While some say that things are improving and that the crisis will pass, there's no doubt that the church in the West currently has an ageing clergy, which is increasingly stressed from overwork and unable to provide the proper pastoral care that the job demands. In Australia, particularly in rural areas, priests often have to cover vast distances, and parishioners miss out on regular mass which for many is the most important aspect of Catholic life.

But in other parts of the world there are plenty of priests. India, Africa and countries in Southeast Asia are all ordaining young men in increasing numbers, and this has prompted bishops in the West to look to those countries for help. Apart from solving the priest shortage, there have been some expectations of benefits to Australia, including:

- They will have a revitalising influence on parish life (*Bishop Michael Malone*);
- They will teach a new sense of evangelisation, of being able to be proud of the fact that we are followers of Jesus (*Fr Brian Mascord*);
- They teach new ways with a different enthusiasm. The majority of our Indian priests come from a minority group within their own country; they have to stand up and be proud of who they are – and they are, they're proud of being Catholic and they're proud of being priests. That gives a dynamism that is different from where we are. They are able to bring to us a broader respect for religious belief and a sense that religion is important in people's lives. So if we could tap into that kind of attitude to faith development generally, then I think we're on a winner. (*Bishop Michael Malone*)

*Encounter* interviewed two Indian priests on their experiences and how they see the role of the priest in the Australia Catholic Church. *ARCvoice* has summarised some of their responses:

- **Language** – difficulties for Australians to understand Indian-English and vice versa;
- **Homesickness** – doubts about coming to Australia; because I'm coming from a very big family, I had no access to the kitchen. Even in the seminary there are so many cooks, the bell rang and everything was ready for us.
- **Adaptation to culture** – the role of a priest in Australia is radically different to what they experience in their own countries. In India, priests have solid roles in administration and the community is very dependent upon their priests as a leader in their village, in their town. People would be coming to them on a regular basis – unlike Australian communities;
- **View of Australia as a mission country** – a shift from seeing Australia as a country which sends out missionaries to one which needs and receives missionaries, a view not shared by Australians;
- **View of Australia as a very secular country** – that is the reason why that number of people coming to the church has dropped;
- **Surprise at lack of children's education on basic Christian virtues** – including the Catechism. In India, the children already know much more about Christianity than in Australia;
- **Family life at fault** – In India, the seed of vocation and religion is planted into the mind of the children by the parents who provide for all their physical and spiritual care needs. Australian children decide for themselves when they grow up. This is seen as a big mistake;
- **Ageing communities** – most of the people in the church are old;
- **Professionalism of the Church** – services and all these things are sort of mechanical, time-bound, just like any other profession. There is an office set-up and priests are told what to do, and where to go, and the roster and the time. These put limitations on pastoral duties;
- **Individual or independent thinking people** – unlike India, which has a communitarian outlook and most people are basically religious. The Church in Kerala is very vibrant and is involved in the life of the people who are attracted by the life of the priest;
- **Religion, spirituality, family life** – Indians are brought up in a very good family atmosphere, so it is difficult to understand families breaking up or couples separating. These events are very rare in India. □

## 'I believe that poverty is ...'

The Sunday Homily has the potential to be a heart-changing process. With its captive (albeit dwindling) audience, this should be a heaven-set opportunity to deliver a powerful message to create awareness and stir consciences. Yet how often is this precious time wasted with ho-hum, banal interpretations of long-familiar biblical events, and no attempt to link the story to the world we live in? How often is the odd joke the only 'message' remembered! Ordination does not automatically confer oratorical skills and there are times when the incumbent should admit that the task is beyond him and a laywoman or man be invited as guest speaker instead. We could all be the richer for the experience. The continuing popularity of groups like *Spirituality in the Pub* and *Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace* is witness to the craving in many souls for something more enriching than the usual Sunday parish diet.

Two presentations at the September meeting of the *Spirituality in the Pub* (SIP) group in Engadine addressed the topic: 'I believe that poverty is ...' They have been summarised by ARC member, Don Humphrey.

**David Wooldridge** is a representative of the Grameen Foundation, an offshoot of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Grameen Bank which provides loans to the poorest people in Bangladesh. David believes that poverty is an offence. Poverty is lacking the basic essentials – food, shelter and health. We all have an innate sense that poverty is wrong. Every major religion recognises that poverty is wrong and have a common goal to eliminate it. Poverty is unjust.

The solution to overcoming poverty involves our spirituality. True spirituality refers to the alignment between what we believe and what we do. Poverty is not a popular subject in our society but we all have a mandate to overcome it. If we are honest, we can see that we have neglected our mandate. We are not offended by poverty. When we lose the scandal, we lose our mandate. What is needed first of all is increased awareness and more personal accountability. We should remember that the parable of the Good Samaritan is all about love. We should also remember Jesus' words, 'What you do for the least of my people you do for me.'

There is some increased awareness, aid and involvement of governments, but we are losing ground. We should not denigrate the efforts being made worldwide to eradicate poverty but we must see that it is clearly not enough. Some would see it as an unwinnable battle. What is the solution? To really make a difference, we need not only awareness but also money and structures that work. Various organisations and governments have made many attempts. The greatest stupidity is that those wishing to eradicate poverty are often trying the same things over and over again and somehow expecting a different result. Many of the efforts being made by organisations are in fact poverty-inducing. When we simply give money, we encourage the poor simply to sit back and wait for the next handout. The best thing we can do in many cases is to give the poor the means to help themselves and leave them alone. The aim of the Grameen Foundation is to

give and to teach. It puts the tools into the hands of the poor and teaches them how to use those tools. Grameen helps to restore local self-determination. Grameen does not try to westernise other countries.

We ordinary people can have a positive impact. Imagine what could happen if five family members or a small group of concerned people did something concrete such as putting aside, say, 1% or 5% of their income to contribute to the eradication of poverty. We may only be a tiny droplet but if this occurred over and over again; all those tiny droplets together could form a mighty ocean.

What is initially a spiritual issue can lead to a sustainable response.

**Robert Fitzgerald**, a lawyer by profession, has had over 30 years active involvement in commerce, public policy, community service and church agencies. He was State President of SVDP and is presently a Commissioner on the Productivity Commission.

Robert said that he had been talking about poverty for the last 20 years. He believes that poverty is a matter of choice – a poor choice that society makes. Each time a government makes a budget it makes a choice of who will benefit, where it allocate its resources. Recent choices have benefited the elderly. That is a government choice but, at the same time, the unemployed are allowed to remain below the poverty line. In this country, 2.2 million live below the poverty line including 46% of those over the age of 65 and 16% of lone parents. They are all there as a matter of choice, society's choice.

Three things contribute to poverty: employment, income and health. But our society has the resources and means to overcome the problem. Australians think that poverty is bad. They want a fair go for all. If the average Australian is asked if they would be prepared to pay more tax to fix poverty, they will agree but they also think that it is unfair if one part of the community gets a benefit



and another part does not. They think that everyone should get a benefit. Unfortunately, the notion of poverty in Australia has changed. It has become more about a sense of exclusion, a lack of respect, of relationships and of dignity. When children, carers of their parents, were asked what was lacking, how they felt excluded, they said it was, more than anything else, a lack of respect.

Poverty can even depend on where you live. As a society we label some local government areas and consider that anyone living there is poor.

As individuals, we must ask, 'Who do we include?' 'Who do we exclude?' We need to listen and respond. Our choice is based on values.

Budget papers have deleted the word 'Justice' from their content. Justice has been undermined. However, the Church has never given in. The focus of our society should be how to allocate resources to poor people, including those who are indigenous and unemployed. □



## TO GROW A PARISH . . . Unearthing The Human

Harry Morrissey

Reviewed by Lynne Green

*Unearthing* is a telling word in the title of Fr Harry Morrissey's book. There's a clue about why, in his Prelude:

*'God never unearths life without providing  
a setting for its growth'*

Some words, dotting our journey with him, gather new meaning and challenge us to re-examine how we see ourselves, our lives together, and interplay between the two. The first of these is 'discerning'. Others include 'ecclesia', 'organic growth', 'basic ecclesial communities', 'pastoral awareness'.

He sees *discerning* as both a process and a sort of *mindfulness* that listens and looks, reflects, and decides what action to take: learning by being *attentive* to each other. For him, it opens up new ways of being church/ecclesia in our modern social context.

John XXIII's signalling of 'a new order of human relationships', opening Vatican II, helped make sense of what ordained ministers like Fr Harry had been uneasy about for some years. And why, in terms of outcomes and impact of their effort. At the outset, he chooses to speak of 'ecclesia', rather than 'church', for two reasons. Its meaning in New Testament Greek is 'called forth together', and this was how small local groups of Christ's *disciples* described themselves, people *learning* from his example.

The 'kernel' of this is Jesus' being *human*. So, verses 26-29 in Mark 4, heading chapters of the book, prompt us to base *ecclesial* life in the family, where fundamental human values are grown/learned, as if by *osmosis*. From this, he identifies an action focus:

'Faith in outreaching social justice is basic to the mission of the parish community.'

The book, from here, reflects on ways to involve as many as possible in deciding 'how to', 'what next', and 'can we try it differently?' Ways of discerning – scrutinised in key chapters – 6 and 7.

Ch. 6 looks at what makes 'Ecclesia' an 'organic whole', something developed at *grassroots* level, rather than *top down*, and so, capable of drawing on its own strengths. The focus on family continues, and includes approaches to sacramental programs, both Rites of Initiation and Reconciliation. The latter includes recommending we look again at the value of the Third Rite, re-visited in the final chapter, in the context of 'learning and growing as people who belong, somewhere'. It also considers whether our long-established Catholic school system needs to be re-assessed. Basic question: are parents too inclined to 'out-source' their responsibility as primary educators of children from within their own family?

Ch. 7, on establishing 'Basic Ecclesial Communities' considers aspects of the process, from choosing a *facilitator*, and forming *core groups*, to identifying *link persons*. Its focus, elements of faith development: 'pastoral awareness' and 'personal involvement'. Also included, the *seeding* of an idea about communities acting to discern the call of people amongst them to *ordained ministry*.

A review barely glimpses what this book keeps *unearthing*, a valuable image in two more ways. First, Fr Harry *models* getting down and 'fossicking' – he calls it – in the *soil* supporting our lives, our local *context* and *culture*. We also *meet* people he tells us about having *engaged with*, in his journey, in a comprehensive 'Annotated Bibliography', and *visit* writings associated with them. They include Cardinal Newman, Paul VI and John Paul II, Yves Congar, Tad Guzie, Paulo Freire, to name just a few.

Worth the read, more than once! □

# The Da Sistine Code

Alan Holroyd

The histories of art and religion are compatible and imaginative bedfellows. The history writer's intent is to use words to illustrate a significant event or episode and, because of illiteracy, the visual artist is used to transform the words into pictures that enable an almost unlimited 'readership'. However, whether it is words or pictures, interpretation is the mercurial ingredient that can become inflammatory and so cloud our vision.

But let's not let the facts get in the way of a good story – which introduces Dan Brown, the author of *The Da Vinci Code* and more recently the novel featuring the Masons. The big names that star in my story are Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) and the warrior pope Julius II (1443-1513, Papacy 1503-13). Readers will remember that there was a book written by Irving Stone called *The Agony and the Ecstasy* that was followed by a movie in 1965 starring Charlton Heston, Rex Harrison and our Diane Cilento – so my story is not new but it does reveal events that could not be shown or written about in those days.

Unlike *The Da Vinci Code* my story ends with a man lying prone on the floor of an art gallery – in Sydney's Brush Farm House Gallery at Eastwood. This is where I recently finished an exhibition of my artworks and as an invitational campaign I sent out emails every fortnight that showed one of the works to appear in the exhibition. Two weeks before the opening I attached my painting of Michelangelo's Delphic Sibyl that appears in one of the 12 triangular panels in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. These panels show male prophets and female sibyls from writings in the Old Testament. At art school, the teacher set us an assignment to copy the work of one of our artist heroes and so learn from the research and the practice of painting in the footsteps of a master. I had chosen the Delphic Sibyl because when we had visited the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel in 1997 we fell in love with this woman and her serene beauty. I can remember remarking to Lorraine that we could see the ceiling much better if we lay flat on the floor. She agreed but said that the Swiss guards might not take kindly to such pious behaviour.

**Back to Dan Brown.** Picture the last days of painting in 1512. The scaffolding is coming down and Michelangelo tells the papal communications officer, Fr Possiamo, that it's ok now for the Pope to come and take

a look. After all this time, Julius would be exceedingly happy to see the work he has commissioned. The Renaissance popes were men of immense power who fashioned themselves after the heroes of the Old Testament rather than being the simple followers of Jesus, the good shepherd, and so dressing well for every occasion was a delightful chore. For Julius, his acolytes would have worked hard to restrain him from wearing his suit of armour – the compromise on this occasion was the full papal dressage including the tiara.

The grand procession entered the chapel – not one man daring to raise his eyes beyond downcast. Stopping in the centre, Julius gestures to Fr Possiamo. 'Possiamo, take a look and tell me, is the ceiling finished?'

The priest raised his head and after barely a second returned to downcast. 'Yes, your Holiness. But ...'

'Good. Is there a favourable likeness?'

'Holy Father, perhaps you would be rewarded more fully by looking for yourself, but on second thoughts, raising one's head and scanning the extent of the ceiling is rather taxing on the neck, and I would strongly advise against it Your Holiness.'

'You're damn right Possiamo. Get on your back and take a good look and tell me what you see.'

The priest lowers himself and with pious elegance he rolls over, prostrate, facing the ceiling.

'Come on man! What can you see? Does it really look like me?'

'Indeed Your Holiness, it is an absolutely glorious sight to behold ...'

'Well done Possiamo! Tell the artist I will give him an indulgence for his troubles and his sins for today are forgiven. Now, which way is out?' □



Alan Holroyd is well-known to ARCvoice readers as our creative cartoonist! He reminds us that, when times are tough, it helps to have a sense of humour!



# The Whale and the Butterfly

## A plea for change



**Jacques Noyer - Bishop Emeritus of Amiens, France**

This article is translated and adapted from a Portuguese translation published by Frei Tito in [www.adital.com.br](http://www.adital.com.br)

I am happy to be part of the Church but I ask that it be fully alive. I ask that it be faithful to its mission and that it bring the word of Christ to our contemporaries, that it bear witness to a world renewed by the Spirit.

It is not a matter of safeguarding it as a treasure, with the risk of making it a fortress of outdated customs. Nor is it a matter of mending it skilfully so that it may survive one or two more winters. It is rather a matter of the Church finding the words and the gestures that will speak of God to today's world.

It is my Church. I do not want to dissociate myself from it. I accept its history often with pride, at other times with shame and resignation. I accept all of its aspects, the best and the worst, the Crusades and the Councils, Alexander VI and John Paul II, the Roman court and the saints ... I believe that this human story, with its saints and its villains, its acts of daring and of prudence, is holy because of the Gospel which it carries.

I ask only that it remain in history and that it not be frozen in eternity. I ask that its past should not be made so sacred that it becomes closed to the present. I ask that it renounce worldly success and vain riches so as not to sadden the Spirit.

I'd like it to be conscious of its need to change because the world, which is its mission field, has changed. I'd like it to be more alive to the activity of the Spirit rather than to the traces of the devil. New things are not inevitably values which will quickly disappear; often they are 'signs of the times' which foreshadow the Kingdom. The gates of hope must be opened rather than cultivating the archives of nostalgia.

The Church introduced education for all. It taught men and women to read and write. It wanted persons to grow and it agonises today because its own word is no longer accepted. Its 'catechism' may be very rich and logical, but today's adults need more than a catechism. They want their questions heard rather than being given ready-made answers. They want to dialogue with God and not just to hear about Him.

The Church denounced arranged marriages and marriages of convenience. It defended the freedom of spouses and promoted love at the heart of marriage. Today it is challenged to bring comfort to those whose marriages have irretrievably broken down.

Pentecost brought together so many diverse peoples in the same Spirit. The Church, particularly the Catholic Church, made every effort to preach to the nations and to encourage interchange. But today it seems content to insist that the rich nations of Europe recognise their Christian roots, while almost ignoring the actual mixture of peoples that pose a challenge to individual States, consciences and nations.

The greatness of the Church lay in its being always on the side of the poor. Even when it could not get justice for them, it consoled them with its charity. Up to the present time Christians are still to the fore in the search for more just policies and in organising emergency aid. It is in these activities that we come to understand Christ. There we really do encounter His disciples, but the mass media have fun identifying the Church with a Pope who seems caught in the role of the last absolute monarch, surrounded by ceremonial of another age, far from the pressing problems of its members.

To whom should this type of a plea be directed? To which saint could you direct this prayer? To what address could you send this correspondence? Would it have any chance of changing anything?

The weight of the Vatican's administration, which is less like a mammoth than like a beached whale on the shore, gives the impression that nothing can awaken it. My words will make less noise than the wings of a butterfly on the whale's back; yet, they say that the flight of a butterfly in the southern hemisphere can unleash a typhoon in the northern hemisphere. And besides, there are many butterflies, and in the wind which they stir up the Spirit also blows.

Why shouldn't they be capable of waking the whale? All it takes is a high tide, or a small storm, the water returns, carries it, and it lives. □

## Have your say!

**ARCvoice** is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the renewal and reform currently experienced in the Catholic Church

Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or of ARC

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